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HOW TO WEAPONIZE A PHILOSOPHER: HOBBES' DEADLY ARSENAL

by

JAMES WEBB

Under the Direction of Timothy Renick

ABSTRACT

This is a complex argument about the history of transformations in value through the rise of modern liberalism. I argue that there are several contradictions that emerge from these transformations. I argue that these contradictions emerge as double effects of liberalism, in tension with the project of liberalism and thriving in spite of it. My data are the theories of Thomas Hobbes and the interpretations of his work. Hobbes is a good datum for the project because he is representative of several of these transformations in value due to the time when and concepts with which he writes. I conclude that these transformations have negatively affected the quality of our theory and negatively effected our ability to theorize.

INDEX WORDS: Hobbes, History, Politics, Religion, Philosophy, Value, Weaponization, Recuperation, Dialectics

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by

JAMES WEBB

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Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

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DEDICATION

To my parents, friends, comrades, and teachers, the imperatives of whom brought out this critique in spite of myself. Against hierarchy and recuperation, which are as disgusting as they are oppressive. For the common good, though it no longer exists. For the commune, though it exists not yet.

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1. THE FIELD OF BATTLE

My original purpose for this critique was born from a narrow, reactionary motive. I had two simple questions: Was Thomas Hobbes a Christian or was he an atheist; if he were either of those things, then why could we not come to some sort of consensus after nearly four hundred years? I was displeased with the answers that I could find, which were generally that Hobbes hid his atheism because he feared being burnt at the stake. The massive amounts of Hobbesian theology were therefore clever artifacts and were not to be taken seriously.

Worse, the explanation for Hobbes' atheism seemed imprecise, even cartoonish: Enlightenment rationalism was the culprit. Religion was said to be relegated, privatized, made an issue of personal belief and stripped of its political and ethical authority. Religion died because of scientific rationalism. I thought that this account missed the mark. Religion is still a deeply enmeshed social phenomenon, which is inextricable from political and ethical practices. Furthermore, nearly every Enlightenment philosopher, scientist, historian, poet, and so on, owed an enormous debt to the development of Christianity and the philosophy of religion.

This debt came in part from the methodology and rigor of the medieval Christian theologians; one cannot help but notice the threads of Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* in Kant's *Critiques*. Furthermore, the debt is also an ethical debt; Enlightenment philosophers inherit the moral and political motives of the Christian philosophers who preceded them. To steal a famous metaphor, I did not think that the contemporary history of religion appreciated the giant stature of those theological shoulders.

I was not incorrect in my judgment, but neither incorrect was the history that I had thought cartoonish. The fact is that the Enlightenment irrevocably altered not only the social

function of religion but also the idea of value in general; however, part of that alteration diminished our ability to describe and evaluate the history of values. There are therefore two sets of questions involved in the analysis of the Enlightenment and religion. Imposed on us are firstly the normal epistemic issues involved in any historical investigation, but there are also the epistemic issues of our moral sensibility, which limit and inform the quality of our theory of religion. Alasdair MacIntyre's following statement is a sort of epigraph on this point:

> There are two levels of conflict involved. At one we have to give due recognition to the conflicts of the past within and between cultures: Homeric versus Platonic, Judaic versus Christian, biblical versus classical, Aristotelian versus Augustinian, the Enlightenment versus the Christian, and within each of these antagonisms there is to be found a set of subordinate disagreements.
>
> […]
>
> Yet we cannot identify which conflicts in the present reproduce which conflicts of the past themselves and we cannot indeed characterize those conflicts of the past themselves in a way sufficient to enable us to understand what was and often still is genuinely at issue in them until we have confronted another set of conflicts. (MacIntyre, *Three Versions* 229)

In other words, we have conflicts about the truth of propositions and we also have conflicts about the theories and meanings of those propositions. We can therefore disagree about things in several different ways. I could accept the propositions of someone's argument while being in total opposition to the theory that they use to explain the propositions.

The propositional set of conflicts involved is the debate about whether Hobbes is a Christian or an atheist. The theoretical and meaningful set of conflicts is in explaining the

presence and utility of such an anachronistic and unanswerable question. In order to investigate this second set of conflicts, I cannot merely investigate the history of how people have interpreted Hobbes; I have also to question the underlying morals in contemporary theory of religion that make this issue of the Enlightenment such an important one. The issue is not the simple debate over one philosopher's religious commitments or even of a general period in philosophy; the issue requires an assessment of our moral agenda in interpreting the moral commitments in the history of religion.

The full investigation of these two sets of conflicts would have required an exhaustive genealogy of Enlightenment era works and a subsequent genealogy of the interpretations of those works. Instead,wWhat follows is my attempt to provide a sort of genealogy for a single, representative, philosopher: I have tried to tell the story of Hobbes' contributions to these several kinds of conflicts in the history of value.

Hobbes is a good fit for this inquiry for several reasons. The first is that he lived during a time when the transformation of ethics through the Enlightenment was just beginning to coagulate. Hobbes precedes the conclusion of the genealogy but begins to develop the premises. In other words, Hobbes represents one of those first sets of conflicts, specifically how the emerging theories of the social contract and the Westphalian state clashed with religious institutions for political authority. Hobbes is also a good representative for that second set of conflicts, because the way that Hobbes deals with the interaction between religious and state authority is not at all obvious and he has been interpreted in a large variety of ways on political and theological matters.

My investigation of Hobbes' role in the development of axiology has three general moments. In the first moment, I consider the question of Hobbes' religion directly. I present the

best argument for Hobbes' Christianity, and then I present the best argument for his atheism. The point is not to decide whether he is one of those things, but to show that there is no interpretive consensus on the point. The question is in a state of *aporia*.

The second moment of my argument is to reproduce the first moment in another area of Hobbes' relevance: his politics of absolutism and rebellion. I present an argument for why he is a statist. Then I present an argument that Hobbes not only enjoins conditional rebellion, but that he implies anarchism. The point of this second investigation is to demonstrate that Hobbes is axiologically ambiguous even in issues where he is totally clear about what he believes. In other words, the same *aporia* of Hobbes' religion persists in questions that are settled.

The third moment of my argument is to advance a theory that explains what is going on in the philosophical disagreements about Hobbes. In other words, it is where I explore the second question that motivated my original inquiry: why is it that our value-concepts seem so poorly equipped to describe the issues at stake in the moral, religious and political philosophy of someone like Thomas Hobbes? To answer this question is partly to describe the transformations of value in history and also partly to consider the institutional limitations of the crucibles where value is currently produced.

What follows is a chapter in the story of the development of value.

2. WEAPONS FOR ECCLESIA

Hobbes' religious inclination is a puzzle without a known solution. He is ambiguous, alternatively interpreted as a Christian or atheist when the need arises. Philosopher and historian Aloysius Martinich identifies two general categories of Hobbes interpreters: “those that give a secular interpretation and those that give a religious interpretation. A religious interpretation

[holds that God] plays an important part in Hobbes philosophy. A secular interpretation is not a religious one" (Martinich, *Two Gods* 13). This division (secularist and religionist) breaks down in the minutiae of Hobbes' interpreters—their motives, their values—but the division is a useful one. I will therefore mirror Martinich's terminology and call the former group 'religionists' and the latter group 'secularists.'

The religionist is historically in the minority of interpreters of Hobbes' work. Even as post-modern, anti-essentialism has softened judgments about Hobbes' religion, "the consensus of scholarly opinion" now counts Hobbes, at most, as "a tepid theist." Martinich's view, which he expresses extensively in *Two Gods of Leviathan*, is that "Hobbes was a sincere, and relatively orthodox, Christian" (1). Martinich's argument for the religionist interpretation is refreshingly simple: "for the most part Hobbes meant what he said" (16). In other words, when Hobbes says something of himself, an interpreter should take him at his word unless there is a compelling reason not to. Because Hobbes claims Christianity of himself, we should take him at his word absent a compelling reason otherwise.[1]

There is a strong *prima facie* case that Hobbes, as he claims, is a Christian: half of his masterwork *Leviathan* is a theological project. A glance through *Leviathan's* table of contents paints Hobbes as a systematic theologian; he moves from general considerations "On Man" to detailed discussions on scripture, angels, prophets, the "kingdom of darknesse" the proper "Christian commonwealth" and so on:

> Much of what he wrote presupposes, not merely the existence of God, but the existence of the Christian God. The most prominent examples [are] parts III and IV of *Leviathan*, which deal with the full range of theological concepts […] Far from being perfunctory or

[1]This interpretive maxim seems like a platitude. Nevertheless, Hobbes is not often given that much credit. I will later argue that this strange anti-charity is due to Hobbes' historical ambiguity.

> hackneyed, sarcastic or ironic, his treatments of such issues as the Trinity and the Redemption of humankind by Christ are ingenious and novel. It would have been absurd for Hobbes to concoct original theories for Christian doctrines if he were not intellectually committed to them. (Martinich 27,8)

Absurd indeed! Unless Hobbes had had some compelling reason to concoct theories about things that he thought were total nonsense then the presence of such exhaustive theology makes it probable that Hobbes is some sort of Christian.

Martinich has placed the burden of proof on the secularist: “I am not denying the possibility of a seventeenth-century atheistic philosopher. I am saying that it is unlikely” (40). Most people were not atheists in 1640, and there were “virtually no atheistic models of reality” for Hobbes to draw on (40). Martinich's view is not the majority interpretation, but it is the most parsimonious interpretation because it is the view that Hobbes consistently claims of himself. Any case for Hobbes' atheism must be able to answer the *prima facie* evidence of Hobbes' Christianity. We can evaluate the followingcases for Hobbes' Christianity or atheism with this question in mind: which among them explains the presence of the overwhelming amount of Hobbesian theology the best?

I will now survey the various secularist arguments, that is, that Hobbes is an atheist. Because Hobbes lived during an ideologically volatile time, we should try to distinguish the different arguments that people have used to reach the single conclusion of atheism, lest we conflate the different arguments. We can isolate two general camps of secularists. There are the secularists of Hobbes' own time and there are the secularists of our own time. I will call the former 'period' secularists and the latter 'modern' secularists.

Period secularists are generally Christians who think that Hobbes is harming their

religion, and they deduce that he is therefore an atheist; contemporary secularists argue that Hobbes was clever enough to disguise the truth of atheism in religious language. In other words: “[Hobbes'] contemporaries said that he was an atheist as a way of maligning him; our contemporaries say it as a way of praising him” (9). Hobbes is an ally to the modern secularist, who cheers on the demystification of religion, but he is an enemy to the period secularist, who recoils in horror from Hobbes' naturalism. Having isolated the motives for these various secularisms, we are in a better position to understand their arguments.

Period secularists asperse Hobbes as an atheist to abuse him, as a way of maintaining the legitimacy of religious authority: “'Atheist' was only one of a cluster of words used in a similar way. 'Heretic,' 'Antichrist,' and 'papist' are three others” (Martinich 21). To call someone an 'atheist' was to cut the legs off of their claim to religious authority. Martinich gives many examples where this political function of the 'atheist' epithet is obvious, but I do not think the point is controversial. Sectarian differences in Hobbes' time were “more acrimonious than they are in the twentieth century” (32). In seventeenth-century England, your Christianity was likely to be made illegal at least once during your life. Accusing someone of atheism rarely considered the beliefs of the accused; rather, the accusation was about whether the accused counted as a legitimate Christian.

There are two different ways to accuse someone of atheism. The first is accusing someone of atheism by *consequence*. The second is accusing someone of atheism by *intention*. To call someone an atheist by consequence is to say that their beliefs entail atheism, whether the person believes that or not. To call someone an atheist by intention is to say that they recognize themselves as an atheist and argue for atheism.

Virtually all period accusations are the first kind: period critics called Hobbes an atheist

“not because he aspired to atheism, but because he was advancing a theoretical case for a politically charged religious view with which they disagreed. In particular, he was supporting a case for the state-controlled Church of England that would be episcopal in polity and Calvinist in theology” (33). Calling someone an atheist is to deny a resource to one's enemy, and consider how many enemies a statist, politically episcopal, theologically Calvinist philosophy would provoke! “He was opposed on the right by Protestant scholastic theologians, who had adapted Aristotle to their needs, and on the left by Arminians, who were avowedly anti-Calvinistic” (334). I will explore the significance of Hobbes' many enemies later, but the point is that Hobbes' composite, unpopular theology in 1651 explains why period secularists might call him an atheist.

Such kinds of accusations are not hard to point out in sectarian conflicts in our own time. People who share a value-heritage often accuse each other of getting it wrong. In Hobbes' case, period secularists are *themselves Christians*, and their accusations against Hobbes entail a theologically normative claim. When Christianity is presupposed as true, the idea that someone would *by intention* argue for atheism appears ludicrous. It should therefore be little wonder that period secularists did not care about Hobbes' subjective Christianity when his atheism appeared objectively entailed.

It is not implausible that Hobbes is some kind of atheist by consequence, especially if his project is to “answer the challenge that the new science of Copernicus and Galileo posed for religion” (5). It is plausible that trying to use natural science as a theory for the true religion, as Hobbes did use it, is a fool's errand doomed to contradiction, but it does not follow that Hobbes' attempt is insincere. For example, Hobbes is an ontological materialist, but that position amounts to atheism only if God must be immaterial. Hobbes sees no contradiction between ontological materialism and the existence of God, angels, or heaven; materialism implies only that God must

be material like everything else that exists. Even if this argument is wrong, it points to an error in Hobbes' reason rather than in the content of his religion. In light of our earlier guiding question—which theory explains the existence of Hobbes' religious arguments the best—the theory of the period secularist is plausible, but extremely uninteresting.[2] Such arguments do not explain why Hobbes would write so much theology and they also require the secularist to themselves be a Christian with a theological bone to pick.

Contemporary secularists accuse Hobbes of something less plausible but more interesting; that is, they accuse him of atheism by intention. There have been several versions of this contemporary, secularist position, which range in strength. Martinich engages with three: "The most important secularists are Quentin Skinner, David Gauthier, and Edwin Curley" (13). It is not my purpose to engage these arguments (not the least reason for which is that Martinich has already engaged them.) Rather, I would like to put these arguments through the crucible of outlining their commitments and suppositions. By doing so, I hope to boil off their weak elements, leaving us to discover the most logically interesting case for Hobbes' atheism.

The least interesting of these cases is Gauthier's. His argument is that Hobbes is an atheist because Hobbes' theology is superfluous to his political philosophy. In other words, Hobbes' treatments of God, angels, etc. are superfluous premises in his argument for political absolutism. Martinich replies, "perhaps [religion] is superfluous, but it is fallacious to conclude that Hobbes does not rely upon [it]" (44). Everyone should be able to recognize that philosophers sometimes believe superfluous things; they are not paragons of parsimony.[3] Gauthier's argument is to strip

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[2]An explanation is more logically interesting than another when it accounts for data with minimal amount of factors. An explanation is more plausible than another when it is more likely to be the case. We aim for both of these attributes in a scientific explanation, but they do not necessarily correspond. Accusing Hobbes of atheism by consequence is plausible but not interesting.

[3]Some historical examples include epicycles in astronomy, phlogiston, the "climate" theories of race, the theory of humours in medicine, and so on. These are not just incorrect theories, but theories that offered comprehensive explanations for puzzles that we only retroactively recognize as superfluous to those puzzles.

the ore of Hobbes' politics from the dross of his religion, but it requires hindsight in order to make it, which Hobbes necessarily did not have. Furthermore, this argument from superfluity does not explain *why* Hobbes writes so much purportedly superfluous theology.

The next-more-interesting argument is that Hobbes has an ulterior motive for writing theology – trying to appropriate the Christian tradition: "Some may argue that, far from presupposing religious beliefs, Parts III and IV of *Leviathan* are designed to undermine religion in a clever way" (Martinich 28). Skinner makes a weak version of this general argument. Skinner argues that Hobbes' philosophy is intentionally atheist, but his method is questionable: "[Skinner] does not argue from Hobbes' text at all. Rather, he argues that what Hobbes means is what his contemporaries interpreted him as meaning" (355). Skinner's argument accounts for the *prima facie* puzzle of Hobbes' theology, namely, that the theology is a trick. The problem with Skinner's argument is that he relies on the wrong kind of evidence. If we want to determine *Hobbes'* intentions for religion then we probably need to read things that Hobbes says about religion.

Curley's argument is more methodologically sound. Martinich credits Curley with making "the most sustained and well-wrought case that Hobbes was 'rather likely … an atheist'" (339). Curley's method is to examine Hobbes' historical hand-print, that is, what Hobbes says in his letters, what historical events conditioned Hobbes' philosophy, what kind of person Hobbes was in his biography, and so on. Curley has not, however, put the issue to rest. To illustrate, Hobbes was a scathing and unforgiving critic of people who he did not think appreciated the consequences of his work; in this vein, he attacked quite a few representatives of the Church and had an antagonistic relationship with the institutions of religion. Curley's interpretation is that Hobbes betrays his atheism in such attacks despite his extensive theology. It is just as plausible,

however, that Hobbes betrays his Christianity in such attacks. If Hobbes were a Christian, his religion in conjunction with his arrogance and wit would lead us to expect a public attack on religious institutions just as much as if he were an atheist. In other words, Hobbes' psychology probably conditioned his publicly acrimonious relationship with religious figures more than his theological commitments.

In any case, the problem for the secularist is to explain the preponderance of Christian data in Hobbes' philosophy, and demonstrating that Hobbes fiercely opposed a lot of religious authority does not explain that preponderance. In order to account for all of the data, the secularist must not only demonstrate that Hobbes' theology is redundant to his atheist politics, but also explain how that theology is insincere, and *also* explain why the political philosophy required a fake theology rather than the rejection of theology. If Hobbes were a closeted atheist, he could have easily written no theology, said a few words on religion to hedge his bets, and written whatever else he wanted to.

Either from respect or condemnation, most attempts to explain Hobbes' theological work reduce to ignoring data: "Curley wants to prove that Hobbes is an atheist in order to enhance [Hobbes'] reputation as a philosopher, not to condemn him. [Like the Grand Inquisitor] he is illegitimately interpreting the speaker to mean the opposite of what he says, merely to get the words to fit their interpretation" (Martinich 352). Even if Hobbes' is plausibly an atheist, the secularist must explain why Hobbes cannot be *some sort* of Christian. The secularist must explain why Hobbes *would consistently lie*. The secularist must provide a *theory of error to account for the prima facie case.*[4]

[4]By 'theory of error' I do not mean the type of moral skepticism. I mean simply that theories without consensus must explain why reasonable people get things wrong. For example, an error theory would address the question, 'if Adam were created good, then how could he err?' In this case, the error is to explain how basically reasonable people might err in taking Hobbes at his word.

There are three logical possibilities for Hobbes' religion. Hobbes may be a sincere Christian who believes contradictory things; he may be a sincere Christian who is right where other Christians are wrong; or he may be one of the best manipulators of all time, who is capable of bamboozling his readers even today. The secularist *must* argue the third of these possibilities on peril of doing bad science and bad history.

Fortunately, the most interesting case for Hobbes' atheism is this last possibility. Unfortunately, the last possibility is also the least plausible case. I believe that there is a good case for the strong, implausible judgment, but I would first like to show how difficult the argument is to make. I have so far argued for Hobbes' Christianity only at the *prima facie* level. Now that I have discovered the conditions of the best case for Hobbes' atheism, I shall briefly illustrate the best case for his Christianity.

The person who has made the best case for Hobbes' Christianity is Martinich. As he moves beyond the *prima facie* case, Martinich accounts for Hobbes' Christianity in its historical situation. There are two claims here: (1) Hobbes is an orthodox Calvinist; and (2) orthodox religion faces massive challenges at this time in history. Therefore, Hobbes is a Christian, deeply moved by the promise of scientific knowledge, who made enemies by seeking the truth of God in the form of science (1-7). Notice, the puzzle is solved. It is clearly explained how Hobbes' Christianity was so misconstrued as atheism. The case is compelling, and I encourage unslakable readers to read *The Two Gods of Leviathan*.

As I mentioned in the previous section, there are issues of propositional truth and issues of theoretical explanation. Martinich argues that Hobbes is chiefly doing *theoretical* work for a Christian ontology: “Various theories have been proposed to support Christian doctrine [….] One of Hobbes' chief projects was to create a new theory for Christianity, a theory that would make it

compatible with the modern science of Copernicus, Galileo, and Harvey" (7). In other words, Hobbes explains the *why* and the *how* rather than the *that* and the *whether*.

Hobbes tends to explain religious facts rather than disputes the facts themselves. We saw this already in Hobbes' account of God and materialism. Martinich illustrates idea rather well by "exploiting a biblical metaphor:"

> Hobbes thought that the Roman Catholic Church had poured the new wine of Christianity into the old skins of Aristotelianism, which were now cracked and leaking doctrine. His project was to pour the old wine of biblical Christianity into the new skins of scientific theory. (7)

Hobbes' theory contends Galileo's (unforeseen) challenges to Christianity much as Kant's later theory contends Hume's (unforeseen) challenges to the certainty of scientific knowledge.

For example, Hobbes attempts to integrate the scientific theory of materialism with the theory of knowledge about God. As a materialist and humble theologian, Hobbes held that speaking about God was mostly beyond our rights.[5] There are three theses to differentiate: (1) We can have no idea of God; (2) we can have no knowledge of what God is like; (3) we can have no knowledge of God. Hobbes asserts the first two, but believes that we may have some knowledge of God without an idea of God. Hobbes is basically within an orthodox theological tradition here (Martinich 185).

The third thesis is a claim about God's existence; the second thesis is a claim about God's essence: "To say that God is infinite is to make an ontological claim. To make the corresponding epistemological claim is to say that God is incomprehensible, as Hobbes occasionally does"

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[5]I do not mean legal rights. This is a question of "right" in being logically able to talk about something without going beyond the limits of cognition. Kant's transcendental deduction, for example, is about our "right" to make claims about the world. In this sense, Hobbes would question our epistemological right to talk about God's attributes.

(Martinich 191). Few Christian theologians are confident enough to assert that they know *how* or *why* God does anything, but few will dispute the fact *that* God exists. The claim is born from humility on the part of the theologian, who cannot deny God's infinite importance, but is incapable of describing it at all.[6] This humility is coherent with Hobbes' cosmological proofs for God; some entity beyond humans must have conditioned human existence, but that entity remains inaccessible. These are arguments that Hobbes inherits directly from his theological predecessors. It is just poor reasoning to conclude (as secularists are tempted to do) that Hobbes is an atheist in asserting 'we may have no knowledge of God's essence.'

The difference between Hobbes and medieval theologians is the *first* claim—that we can have no idea of God—which is consistent with his scientific materialism. Hobbes is an empiricist about human ideas. As Martinich explicates: "All human ideas are analyzable or reducible to sensations and God cannot be sensed" (186). Hobbes recognizes the problem of our finite phenomenology against an infinite God, but he also recognizes that people will question how an infinite thing affects us: "For Hobbes, the basis for believing in God is strictly analogous to the basis for believing in bodies" (192). That is, the existence of bodies is inferred rather than observed, but we would be unable to make sense of our existence without inferring such.

In other words, Hobbes devises a novel, scientific theory for a standard belief in God. Instances of this sort of theorizing (making a new theory for an old belief) permeate *Leviathan.7* Martinich puts it bluntly: "[Hobbes recognized] that certain propositions did not have the consequences traditionally attributed to them" (Martinich 39). Angels may exist, but exist materially; the Kingdom of God may exist, but may not exist yet, and so on. Hobbes consistently

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[6]When asked the malevolent question of whether she *knew* she was in God's grace, the Maid of Orleans dumbfounded her persecutors when she answered: "If I am not, may God put me there; and if I am, may God so keep me. I should be the saddest creature in the world if I knew I were not in His grace."

[7]Instances of this sort of theorizing also permeate this very paper, maybe even more than I realize. See how many you can find!

brings the truths of religion into theoretical coherence with the method of science.

Furthermore, far from retreating into deism, Hobbes does this theoretical work about specifically Christian concepts. For example, he recognizes the difference between speculative and honorific talk about God. There may be no empirical idea of God's attributes, but we are fully within our rights to speak about God non-literally. For example, if we call God 'merciful' we might mean two things by it: speculatively, we might mean that God shows mercy out of remorse; honorifically, we might call God 'merciful' because “he does good things for humans” (Martinich 197). Hobbes is of the latter type of theology: “Worship which naturally men exhibite to Powers invisible, it can be no other, but such expressions of their reverence, as they would use towards me […] Beyond that reason suggesteth nothing” (Hobbes 1.12.9). Hobbes may attribute human virtues to God during his theology, but he does so because there are no other predicates available.

Much of Hobbes' skepticism about religious theory is ostensibly motivated by this sort of humility: “The Name of *God* is used, not to make us conceive him; (for he is *Incomprehensible*; and his greatnesse, and power are unconceivable;) but that we may honour him” (Hobbes 1.3.12). The same claim about God may be foolish or respectable depending on the intention of the speaker: “[Hobbes] devised various explanations that would justify preserving the ordinary talk without being mislead about its ultimate logical character” (Martinich, 202). If Hobbes were an atheist for this sort of theoretical talk, then so would be Aquinas, Anselm, and Grotius.

Martinich's explanation does, however, face a problem. If Hobbes were trying to reconcile the new science with religion, then he did not appear to succeed. The religionist must provide its own error theory; namely, if Hobbes were a Christian, then how could so many people err in their judgment of his Christianity? How could so many people conclude that he was

not a Christian?

I already explored the simple answer to this question: Christian religious differences were "more acrimonious in the seventeenth century" than they are now. People were unlikely to recognize Hobbes as part of a tradition that they thought he was attempting to ruin. There was no such thing as "bracketing" in the seventeenth century history of religion. Hobbes' critics would accuse him of atheism from their own theological perspective. This simple answer is too simple, however. Contemporary history of religion cares little about theological presuppositions but contemporary Hobbes scholars still fall prey to the illusion that Hobbes is obviously an atheist.

There is a more complex answer to the question that can explain more of the error. Both period and modern secularists accuse Hobbes of atheism because he represents a historical *turn* in the content of what religion was. Hobbes' theology exists during a very volatile time for religion. Hobbes is the heir of a theological tradition whose philosophical rigor contained the seeds of its own revolution.

Whatever his intention, Hobbes did not succeed in reconciling systematic theology and natural science. To conclude Martinich's biblical metaphor, "As it came to be worked out historically, the new skins turned the old wine into the vinegar of atheism. But I do not see that Hobbes should be faulted for his ingenious efforts" (7). I am not sure if the situation is so dire as the metaphor suggests, but the point is that there was a moment of self-negation contained in Hobbes' theology. Hobbes hastened the onset of religious uncertainty *in spite of* the confidence that he held in his theological work.

Thus, "his critics were [descriptively] correct, to a large extent, in sensing that his attempt to salvage religion would not work" (Martinich 80). Whatever sincerely clever arguments Hobbes has about God's scientific justification, the ideas are *not obviously* compatible: "The

challenges [of reconciling] was great – perhaps impossible to achieve – and there were no other models that Hobbes could draw on. If his theories are logically [contradictory], it is not because he wanted them to be but because he was struggling with an enormous problem" (28).

It is possible to misinterpret the complexity of Hobbes' religiosity, in part, because of this ambiguous historical position that he occupies, but that does not explain why Hobbes is, as a matter of fact, so *often* misinterpreted. Hobbes is not just ambiguous; he is dangerously ambiguous. He confounds the concepts of his period in a way we no longer do. Hobbes is the enemy of *many people*: he had the "misfortune to subscribe to a theology that was falling into disfavor." He is the enemy of speculative theologians for his treatment of nature; and he is the enemy of Arminians who are anti-Calvinist (Martinich 334); he is the enemy of liberals for his absolutism; and he is the enemy of royalists for his support of *any* stable sovereign, including Cromwell; he is the enemy of the modern Christian for his union of church and state; and he is the enemy of the modern atheist for the same reason; he is the enemy of medieval statists for making religion a legal matter, and he is the enemy of the Westphalian statist for reminding us that the modern state is a recent invention.

Hobbes is not a simple failure to reconcile religion and natural science; he is a "glorious failure" (8) who is misinterpreted because of how many people he can *threaten*. The enemy of my enemy is a useful weapon, and Hobbes is tempting to misinterpret because his ambiguity makes him an *extraordinarily adaptable weapon*.

Martinich demonstrates the plausibility that Hobbes was some sort of orthodox Christian. He has described Hobbes in a specific, detailed history, and he has argued that, absent some evidence to the contrary, we ought to take Hobbes at his word regarding his religion; however, there is a case for Hobbes' atheism that accounts for the same historical data with a similar elegance.

Indeed, if my theory is correct, then Hobbes should be able to threaten even the best religionist case. I identified several conditions that such a threat must meet: the atheist case must show the plausibility of atheism and also explain why Hobbes would invent an entire theology to lie about his atheism. I will now proceed to examine the best way that the secularist may weaponize Hobbes' ambiguity.

3. WEAPONS FOR THE NATURALIST

Earlier, I distinguished between two concepts: the plausibility of an argument and the logical interest of an argument. These are not random attributes; they are two different virtues an argument can have. A plausible argument has good grounds for accepting it as true; but an argument is logically interesting when it elegantly explains all of the data of a question. In other words, there is a difference between the strength of an argument's *truth* and the importance of what the argument *means*.

There is no necessary connection between an argument's plausibility and an argument's interest.[8] I have tried to strip away the uninteresting payoffs for Hobbes' atheism to determine what the most interesting case for his atheism would be. That secularist argument is that Hobbes, an atheist, manipulates Christian concepts, for his entire life, to support his political philosophy. This argument is eerily similar to the religionist argument, which is that Hobbes, a Christian, uses Christian concepts, for his entire life, for which his political philosophy provides an instance. In other words, the secularist and religionist arguments share most of their *propositions*

[8]For example, the link between Hume and Kant is fully appreciable only when comparing the payoffs of their philosophies. Hume famously argues that we have no ground to believe in the law of causality. Kant's *Critique of Human Nature* argues for why we can create a locally true law of causality. The payoff of Humeian skepticism is a paralysis of judgment, *in spite of* Hume's desires. The payoff of Kant's transcendental idealism is to hew a right of science from the mountain of Hume's skepticism. The point of the first *Critique* is not obvious without appreciating the target of its implications.

about Hobbes. The difference is in what those statements *mean* and what data those statements explain.

This particular version of the secularist argument is interesting because it signifies the persistence of the same sorts of conflicts that Hobbes himself was entering into. We saw before how Hobbes himself often disputed the theoretical explanations of traditional Christian concepts without debating the concepts themselves. Similarly, the best arguments for and against his atheism share their opinions on the facts of what Hobbes is doing. The arguments differ in terms of their theoretical explanations about what he is doing, and in doing so, these arguments reproduce a lot of what Hobbes was himself doing. What remains to be seen is whether there is a plausible case for this most logically interesting argument that considers Hobbes an atheist.

In *Hobbes and Christianity*, Paul Cooke makes this argument as plausible as I think has been made. Cooke's argument shares several elements of Martinich's. Martinich's argument has two basic parts: (1) Hobbes' project is to reconcile the truth of Christianity with the new methods of science; (2) Hobbes subordinates religious authority to the sovereign *because* only the sovereign has the authority to dictate those matters. Cooke addresses this explicitly:

> I agree with Martinich concerning this goal, for Hobbes *does* very much aim toward reconciling the Bible with the findings of unassisted human reason, with the findings, that is, of modern science. But I must disagree with Martinich concerning what this reconciliation means for Christianity […] Martinich does not believe Christianity is done any harm, while I believe that Hobbes aims to place it in permanent eclipse. (Cooke 32)

Cooke's point is that, yes, Hobbes synthesizes Christian theology with scientific theory, but the reason that Hobbes does so is more nefarious than Martinich realizes. Hobbes does theology not from apophatic humility, but because Hobbes needs to subordinate the political elements of

Christianity to his sovereign.

This theory answers the previous puzzle about why Hobbes, were he an atheist, would write theology so prolifically: “Hobbes was aware that his readers were persons with deep intellectual commitments to theology […] To persuade such readers, Hobbes had to be [religiously] persuasive, but Hobbes' capacity to be persuasive does not necessitate the genuineness of his commitment to those things he understood so well” (Cooke 34). In other words, Hobbes needs theology to ensure people will accept the value of his version of the common good.

The common good of Hobbes' political theory is *peace*, because war is execrable. War is a state of being; it “consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary” (Hobbes 1.13.8). War is the state of “every man against every man,” which obtains whenever we are “without a common power to keep [us] all in awe.” There is nothing sadder and more pointless to Hobbes than the life of people living in a state of war:

> In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society: and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death. And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short. (Hobbes1.13.14)

Any common power that can secure the peace must be preferable to the state of war. Therefore, religion must be either managed such that its power keeps people in peaceful awe, or not

admitted into the state at all.

Cooke argues that Hobbes chooses the former, and that the second half of *Leviathan* is the means to this end: Hobbes writes to persuade "educated readers for whom faith in God remains a real possibility and yet whose understanding of religion is susceptible to transformation" (Cooke 204).

This theory makes *sense* of an atheist Hobbes who also writes comprehensive theology. That is, given that peace is the highest good, a sovereign's command of religion is necessary to ensure that peace. Hobbes hid his atheism, not because he was afraid of being burned at the stake or some such nonsense, but because being a candid atheist would undermine his project to make religion "consistent with his teaching about the human situation [in] the state of nature" (Cooke 14).

Such is the logically interesting value of Cooke's argument, but, as I have shown, that is a different matter from whether Cooke's argument is true. Before I analyze the implications of Cooke's argument, I should examine its brute plausibility. To understand Cooke's arguments, we must first say something about the role of Hobbes' so called "teaching about the human situation in the state of nature."

Hobbes is one of the first of whom we call "state of nature theorists." He is so called in that he deduces the matter of his philosophy by analyzing the "natural condition of mankind." Hobbes admits only two kinds of knowledge:

> Whereof one is *Knowledge of Fact*; the other is *Knowledge of the Consequence of one Affirmation to another.* The former is nothing else, but Sense and Memory […] The latter is called *Science* [and] this is the Knowledge required in a Philosopher; that is to say, of

him that pretends to Reasoning. (*Hobbes* 1.9.1)[9]

For Hobbes, the only knowledge not deduced from consequences is history. All other knowledge is derived from analyzing consequences. Accordingly, *Leviathan* flows from general observations "Of Man" to the consequences "Of a Christian Commonwealth."

Chapters 13 and 14 of *Leviathan* are Hobbes' account of the state of nature and the consequently derived natural laws. The state of nature is one of equality, liberty, and alienation. That is, people are equally fragile; each is at liberty to preserve themselves, and we have no natural connection to other people. It is not that people are inherently brutal and selfish, nor inherently compassionate and altruistic. People are naturally inclined to preserve themselves, and being brutal and selfish is the only logical way to preserve ourselves in the absence of social institutions. From the state of nature, Hobbes deduces two laws of nature: the first is to seek peace when possible and defend oneself otherwise; the second is to give up liberties in order to make peace possible, when others also will (1.14.4,5). To put the rest of the book into a single sentence: one should therefore cede authority to a sovereign who commands the religion of the state.

Systematic, deduced philosophies like this are no longer in vogue, but they were well established during Hobbes' time. One tempting way to read Christianity into Hobbes is to read him in light of the Christian scholastic tradition, from "Richard Hooker, and, most powerfully to Thomas Aquinas," whose *Summa Theologica* is the example *par excellence* (Cooke 64). In other words, Hobbes' deduction of natural laws somehow obtain their lawful status from God. After deducing a list of natural laws beyond the two mentioned above, Hobbes says outright:

These dictates of Reason, men use to call by the name of Lawes; but improperly: for they

[9]Chapter 9 of *Leviathan* consists of two pages. The first page is a longer version of what I quoted. The second page is a fascinating diagram of the taxonomy of sciences, and is an excellent illustration of how Hobbes conceives of deduction from one area of knowledge to another.

> are but Conclusions [whereas] Law properly is the word of him that by right hath command over others. [The] same Theoremes, as delivered in the word of God, that by right commandeth all things; then are they properly called Lawes. (1,15)

Chapters 13-15 of *Leviathan* paint a compelling picture that God is the foundation of Hobbes' natural law, *apparently* linking Hobbes with the Christian natural law tradition.

Cooke's rebuttal is that this apparent equation is really an equivocation: "This equation is a tactic, a part of Hobbes' ambiguous style directed at disguising his fundamental departure from Christianity" (64). Cooke will argue that every time Hobbes appeals to God in this way, it is because Hobbes is craftily encouraging Christians to see their tradition in the state.

Cooke's argument has three general parts: (1) God is logically superfluous to Hobbes' political philosophy; (2) Hobbes departs significantly from scholastic theologians; (3) Hobbes departs from the orthodox Christianities of the period.[10] Alone, none of these elements strictly bar Christianity from Hobbes, but the combination accounts for what Hobbes' "fundamental departure from Christianity" is.

Cooke's first task is to prove that God and the second half of *Leviathan* are superfluous to the theory of the contracted sovereign state. This part of Cooke's argument relies on the ambiguous senses of *obligation* in political philosophy, and it is the matter of the third chapter of *Hobbes and Christianity*. The law of nature obliges humans to form a commonwealth, but the question for us is whether that obligation requires God.

There are two points here. The first is that obligation is the alienation of a right: "Obligations only occur when [people] give up some liberty or right themselves. They are self-assumed and not set over human beings by any other means" (Cooke 53). The second is that

[10]Each of these components contains extremely technical debates about things like obligation, freedom, reason, piety, and so on. I will not be entertaining them at that level of detail. I encourage interested readers to read *Hobbes and Christianity* for detailed accounts.

obligations arise from mutual fear: “The laws of nature oblige because human beings always seek their own good, the primary good being maintenance of life itself” (Cooke 56). This read is consonant with the chapters in which Hobbes speaks of natural obligation:“God is not necessary to establish a basis of obligation upon which Hobbes' political philosophy may operate” (Cooke 60).

If Cooke's argument stopped there, it would be no argument at all; philosophers sometimes rely on superfluous premises; however, Hobbes' purportedly disguised atheism looks more apparent after considering what the natural law is *for*. The Christian scholastics deduced natural law not only from the “eternal law” of God, but *for* it: “Higher divine reason, the *telos*, which Aquinas' eternal law proclaims [is] neglected in Hobbes's natural law teaching where self-preservation is the chief end” (Cooke 64).

Hobbes' sense of reason is not some divine spark through which we discern good and evil; it is the means through which we create the possibility of good or evil. Without establishing peace, “the notions of Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice have there no place. Where there is no common Power there is no Law; where no Law, no Injustice […] They are Qualities that relate to men in Society, not in Solitude” (Hobbes 1.13.13). In other words, our reason does not participate in the law; it creates it. This change in the source of the law is a notable departure from the natural law theology.

Cooke continues by comparing the different notions of self-preservation for both Hobbes and Richard Hooker: “Hooker writes that Christ has provided this natural law of loving one's life for the protection of the church [so that] they might live a long life and [be] persuaded of the verity of divine love” (Cooke 66). Cooke argues that there is no such *telos* for Hobbes above peace. I argued earlier that Hobbes' religious skepticism is born more from humility than

dismissal, and I reassert that here. Hobbes does embrace the virtue of this loving humility when thinking about God; his harshest criticisms of religious people are how they delude themselves through arrogance into thinking that their finite selves know something infinite.[11] That said, the humility of Hobbes' theology does not seem needed for his deduction of a commonwealth from the natural law.

The fact that Hobbes is neither Aquinas nor Hooker is hardly proof that he is an atheist. The plurality of Christianities means that theologians often depart from their predecessors, and the cunning of history deems them heretics or saints. In other words, if we accepted the sectarian abuse among Christians as evidence for who is non-Christian, then we miss everyone from Pelagius to Jeanne d'Arc. If Cooke relied purely on such historical departures, then he would be making a poor argument, but he does not.

Cooke argues that "Hobbes's departure from the theological bearings held by his religious contemporaries actually represents a departure from Christian orthodoxy" (113). That is, Hobbes' departure is not a systematic natural-law theology, nor a reformation of Christianity, nor Martinich's "glorious failure" to provide scientific backing to theology. Rather, Hobbes' departure is a calculated effort to drain the marrow from religion, leaving the skeleton undisturbed.

"Before we can say Hobbes departs from orthodoxy, it must be established that there is such a thing" (113). Such begins Cooke's survey of the Protestant reformation. This is the most direct counter-argument to Martinich's case that Hobbes is an orthodox Calvinist. It is the most direct counter-argument to the case that I presented earlier, that Hobbes is a Protestant, who

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[11]"When men that by their own meditation arrive to the acknowledgement of one Infinite, Omnipotent, and Eternall God […] it is not *Dogmatically*, with intention to make the Divine Nature understood; but *Piously*, to honour him with attributes, of significations, as remote as they can from the grossenesse of Bodie Visible" (*Leviathan* 1,12).

encourages humble piety for matters of faith along the vested, sovereign authority who dictates formal religious doctrine.

Hobbes unequivocally states that God, who by right commandeth all things, elevates theorems into laws, and in doing so “Hobbes was endeavoring to elevate the status of natural reason, as many of his contemporaries wished to do” (Cooke 120). Cooke surveys many reformers, but the important ones here are Luther and Calvin: “The Reformers' approach to the authority of Scripture was conservative; that is, they wished above all to conserve the text as utterly authoritative […] They believed that through the Holy Spirit believers would understand the Bible in the only proper sense, its true, natural, 'literal' sense” (Cooke 121,2). Luther and Calvin are suspicious of reason; left to its own devices, reason will adulterate the Bible. Hobbes is also suspicious of adulteration, but he does not privilege the *Bible* as a surer path to knowledge than independent reason. Both are plausibly adulterations. The final word of religion for Hobbes is the sovereign, contra the text.

Cooke also dissociates Hobbes from the liberal Protestants of the time, notably the Arminians and the Oxford Rationalists (Cooke 125,6). These groups are closer to Hobbes' sense of independent reason: “Reason was the instrument to bring [people] to Scripture, to defend Scripture from the interpretations of extremists, particularly those of the Calvinist position with their stark predestinarian views, as well as those that give the authority of interpretation to the Roman Church” (Cooke 125). In other words, the purpose of human reason is to honor God. Cooke's primary example here is Chillingworth, who, like Hobbes, “believed that human beings could not finally know whether the tenets of Christianity were true or false.” Unlike Hobbes, however, Chillingworth's reason “always bows in genuine belief before the God of the Bible and it never serves a view of man independent of the claims of the Bible” (130).

This idea that natural reason is the humble attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible is the nearest to Hobbes'. Reason forms a natural limit on the types of questions that humans may investigate. But where Chillingworth's reason "throws up its arms and falls on its knees, submitting to the words found in Scripture" Hobbes' sense of reason absolves us of the need to worry about scripture at all (Cooke 132). Hobbes is concerned with deducing the proper political life for humans *within* our limited abilities, rather than risking errors by pursuing knowledge of what cannot be known. Cooke isolates Hobbes outside of Christianity by divorcing him from each Christianity in turn. That argument substantially addresses the cases for isolating Hobbes within one of the many Christianities available. Cooke goes on to a detailed reading of several chapters in part three of *Leviathan*, but I believe that the case that Hobbes is an atheist is made quite plausible by now.

In any case, let us grant, for the moment, that Hobbes is an atheist. There is still something left to explain. If Hobbes were an atheist peace-lover, and religion destabilizes peace, then why appropriate theology? Why not eliminate it from politics entirely? These questions return us to the logically interesting aspect of Cooke's argument. Cooke must first argue that Hobbes sees religion as a threat to peace, and then Cooke must explain why Hobbes would opt to "tame" the threat rather than slay it.

The first argument (that religion is a threat to peace) is a familiar enough one: "England and the world of Christendom of the seventeenth century general offered sufficient example of this" (Cooke 88).[12] My thesis is not a survey of religious violence, so I will grant this premise for the sake of argument.

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[12]There are theories *ad nauseum* about violence and religion. Cooke argues that the Christianity of Hobbes' time is basically premelinneal, concerned with a future world, unconcerned with the present, and so on. In other words, a Christian would have no reason to swear allegiance to a mortal king; therefore, there is no reason to respect the mortal king; therefore, religious violence. Whether this is true or not is irrelevant to this paper.

The second argument (tame, rather than slay, religion) can obtain for only prudential reasons, that is, religion is too powerful to destroy, so it must be "tamed" (Cooke 206). Cooke has to explore Hobbes' psychology of religion in order to argue that Hobbes thought something like this.

On the psychological level, I previously showed that Hobbes considered the attempt to speak knowingly about God to be arrogant. Hobbes argued that we should theologize out of piety rather than attempt to know something that is by definition unknowable.

These remain true statements; however, arrogance is the psychological *result* of dogmatic theology, not its psychological *cause.* The *cause* for such arrogant theology is the *fear* of things unknown:

> This perpetuall feare, always accompanying mankind in the ignorance of causes, as it were in the Dark, must needs have for object something. And therefore there is nothing to be seen, there is nothing to accuse, either of their good, or evill fortune, but some *Power*, or Agent *Invisible*. In which sense perhaps it was, that some of the old Poets said, that the Gods were first created by humane Feare. (Hobbes 1.12.6).

Religion emerges psychologically in order to address the fear of death. Hobbes follows this invective with a non-fearful way to conceive of God: "from the desire men have to know the causes of natural bodies, and their several vertues, and operations; than from the feare of what was to befall them in the time to come." Therefore, while there is theoretically a pious way to do theology in Hobbes' account, most theology is in fact born of fear.

Cooke argues that *Leviathan's* second half is written to suppress these fears: "*Politics* comes into being to secure human beings from fear of violent death at the hands of men, but *religion* comes into being because of fear of what lies beyond death" and without addressing that

second fear, a "remedy from the disorders of commonwealth cannot succeed" *(Hobbes and Christianity* 205). In other words, securing our mortal lives cannot sate our "yearning for a fuller understanding of the meaning of life." Therefore! Hobbes appropriates the soothing powers of religion and strips away the rest. We have arrived at the most interesting and plausible explanation for how all of Hobbes' religious talk could be atheism.

There is *still* not exactly ground to call Hobbes an atheist, or even non-Christian. There are plenty of Christian philosophers who delve into even stranger, heterodox waters.[13] I am content to take Hobbes at his word and analyze the virtues and detriments of whatever kind of Christianity that Hobbes says he belongs to. But I must also conclude that Hobbes is an historical anomaly:

> Anglican divines, the Oxford rationalists theologians, Puritan clergymen, and the Cambridge Platonists, among others, were each offended by Hobbes's application of reason to revelation. [Reason] was to operate within certain broad bounds beyond which Christian faith was violated; […] in this important sense Hobbes departed from orthodoxy (Cooke 132).

Hobbes is again the enemy of *many people*. He is ambiguous, adaptable, transitory. Whatever Hobbes secretly, *really* believed is not as interesting as the importance of his ambiguous legacy to the history of philosophy.

Why could Hobbes, whose natural politics secure us from death, not provide a good reason to accept the politics without religion? What was lacking in his naturalistic explanation? Hobbes' use of non-natural motives for his natural politics illuminates something of the change he represents in the history of philosophy:

> Hobbes reveals the modern propensity to ask the 'how' of things to the exclusion of the

[13]In modern philosophy, Kant and Hegel would be the exemplars.

> 'why.' The overlooking of 'the problem of life'—the question of origins and of what [people] ultimately [are]—represents the [exclusion] of this realm of thought in the debates concerned with political and moral life […] But the 'problem of life' remains *the* real question behind a great part of moral discussion. (Cooke 235)

Hobbes was a person who was confident and certain in his values during a historical period where confidence and moral certainty were starting to dissolve. Out of sincerity, cleverness, or both, Hobbes uses the Christian tradition to preserve a *common moral criteria* in a time of increasing moral uncertainty within the moral language: "Hobbes' argument shows the potential result of [religious] quarreling: it reduces the awe; it lowers the degree of authority the Bible will have over human beings" (Cooke 167). Hobbes' treatment of theology is simultaneously a *mirror* of the historical uncertainty infecting the Bible's moral authority and a *challenge* to the historical uncertainty infecting moral authority in general.

To ask whether Hobbes is secretly a Christian or secretly an atheist is to miss the significance of this ambiguous, historical challenge. In broader terms, to demand clarity about whether a historical figure is part of one subjective identity or another is to miss the significance of the fact that it is not clear in the first place. The *lack* of clarity is *itself* data to be explained. To demand clarity in Hobbes' case is to miss the significance of the *lessening certainty* about what the good, political, moral life is for the human. Furthermore, the demand for such clarity in a climate of moral uncertainty betrays a host of moral problems operating in the background of our allegedly historical investigation. Our moral failure is to read Hobbes without this historical transition in mind, which has led to a Hobbes that can mean anything, about any topic.

4. WEAPONS OF THE STATE

So far I have spoken only about the religious heritage that informs the confused history of Hobbes' philosophy, but Hobbes is not merely an adaptable weapon in the history of religion. Hobbes is an adaptable weapon in the history of modern politics. He is interesting not just to people like Cooke and Martinich, but also to anyone interested in the history of the liberal, Westphalian state. I shall now begin to explore how the disputes in the history of Hobbes' politics, ethics—his values in general as they relate to history—expose the same interpretive and moral problems that they expose in the history of religion.

Our investigation of Hobbes' religion has reached a state of *aporia.* I have shown how, despite this *aporia*, that is, despite the question being descriptively unanswerable and normatively suspicious, the question of whether Hobbes was a Christian or atheist remains valuable ammunition for historians of Hobbes. He is easily transformed into ordinance for the cannons of the history of religion. The question is a non-starter, yet it is started quite often. What exactly is *going on here*? How can we best explain the problems we encounter during our interpretations of his religion?

Martinich advances one theory: "[Secularists] do so out of a strange kind of respect for [Hobbes]. Since they […] read Hobbes because they think that he can help them attain their aspiration, they are happy to abandon his own argument when they think he fails them" (*Two Gods* 11). In other words, people are not faithful enough to what Hobbes actually says and means.

Infidelity to Hobbes' writing, however, is only one of the more obvious and cruder ways of stating the problem. Hobbes' adaptability is not just a problem of interpretive charity; in fact, it is *because* contemporary, secular liberals want to be charitable to Hobbes that they ignore his

arguments that are less-than-brilliant. The principle of charity has an ulterior motive, granted, but that does not explain the subtler utility of Hobbes.[14] Cooke and Martinich are generally faithful historians, and both of them use Hobbes as a weapon.

Martinich claims that his argument is "truer to what Hobbes said and meant," (45) but so what? Getting the true meaning of an argument is one of many virtues when interpreting someone's work. We often talk about the influences of someone's work, their ethical applications, their psychological stories, whether they are hypocrites or not, and so on.[15] There is what Hobbes said and meant, and there is also the legacy of Hobbism. Getting the true meaning of an argument is a good, but it is not a good in a vacuum; it is a good *for* a particular hermeneutic.

The hermeneutic issue here resonates with our earlier point about the difference in theoretical and propositional disagreement. Investigating what Hobbes' said and meant is an issue about his propositional belief, but the problem that we are currently investigating concerns the theoretical explanation for why Hobbes is easy to misinterpret. In other words, the said and meant criterion is the wrong too for the job. To put it counter-factually, even if every reader of Hobbes were charitable to him and tried to get at what he said and meant, that would not eliminate the problem of figuring out what Hobbes signifies, or why he should signify. Martinich and Cooke weaponize Hobbes to make their particular hermeneutic the valuable one. An alternate motivating value for the interpretation of Hobbes is a threat to Martinich and Cooke alike.

The reverse of this hermeneutical medal is not a tidy solution either. Hobbes is not

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[14]The principle of charity: when arguing against someone, assume that they make the best argument possible and interpret their arguments as valid when the arguments are ambiguous.

[15]Augustine's psychological history in the *Confessions* is informative to his theories of grace and free will. Lenin's philosophical critique of opportunism did not prevent him from creating totalitarian security measures after seizing power. Cartoonish misinterpretations of Darwin led to forced sterilizations and the most evil, governmental eugenics programs. What these thinkers truly "said and meant" is the tip of the iceberg of their historical importance.

necessarily identical to the legacy of Hobbism, but the legacy of Hobbism—its influence, its ethical application, its psychological story, its hypocrisy, and so on—is also not a good in a vacuum. Even if every reader of Hobbes were attentive to his historical legacy, that would not eliminate the problem of figuring out what he said and meant. The point is not that there is no value in investigating each of these values of Hobbes; the point is, contrarily, that there is too much value to be extracted from Hobbes for any of our candidates to deal with!

Hobbes is so threatening because he is ambiguous. Do not misunderstand; I do not mean that he is linguistically ambiguous, but that he participates in a historically ambiguous time in philosophy. This does not just mean that he is the enemy of many enemies; he is the *heir* to several traditions but is servant to none. His style and concepts are informed by systematic, deductive theology, but his methods and *values* are the embryo of something new. It is *our* contemporary moral imposition that says he is valuable for what he "said and meant" and it is the same moral imposition that fails to provide us with any way to agree on what he "said and meant." Therefore, absent a theoretical explanation of the his commitments, Hobbes can mean anything.

When I say that Hobbes can mean anything, I mean that he can mean things that he explicitly opposed. So far, I have shown the process of his weaponization only in a controversial area of his philosophy, namely, whether he upholds Christianity or destroys it; however, the same process occurs in even questions which are more-or-less solved. That is, I can (and if I am right I should be able to) demonstrate Hobbes' historical ambiguity in areas where he is not linguistically ambiguous at all. Hobbes is unambiguously against the practice of rebellion against an absolute, sovereign power, but just as he participates in the simultaneous destruction and preservation of Christianity, his philosophy can *legitimately* imply not only rebellion against the

state but *anarchism* as a preferable choice to his own sovereign.

The point is that even though Hobbes' perspective on rebellion is linguistically clear, the question of Hobbes' philosophy of rebellion will be just as unanswerable as the question of his religion. My goal is to expose the historical ethics that envelop Hobbes' political philosophy. It is true that Hobbes opposes rebellion, but there is also some truth to the implausible thesis that he provides a right to rebel against the sovereign, even when he obviously did *not* (and could not) say or mean that. Even in this settled issue, his adaptable, historical ambiguity will isolate the embryo of Hobbes' transitory values.

The argument that Hobbes prohibits rebellion is extremely easy to make. I have established that the highest good for Hobbes is peace. Because Hobbes is a good, deductive philosopher, the arguments that the sovereign is absolute and rebellion is prohibited are deductions from the argument for peace. I will go through each of these deductions in turn.

Peace is the state where our lives need not be solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short. Hobbes accepts this axiomatically and holds this position consistently. The commonwealth is the means to peace: "The finall Cause [of] men, (who naturally love Liberty and Dominion over others,) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves [a commonwealth] is the foresight of their own preservation […] that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of Warre" (Hobbes 2.17.1). In other words, the whole point of a commonwealth is to secure peace when we are naturally induced to make each other insecure.

The only way that Hobbes can see to secure such peace is by a near-absolute transfer of power to some sovereign power:

> The only way to erect such a common power […] is to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, in plurality

> of voices, unto one Will […] This is more than Consent, or Concord; it is a reall Unitie of them all, in one and the same Person […] as if every man should say to every man, *I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my selfe, to this Man*. (Hobbes, 2.17.13)

And there we are. There are details for Hobbes to work out, such as what kind of sovereign should be used, and under what conditions a sovereign is meaningfully a sovereign, but the general point is clear. Subjects transfer almost all of their natural liberties for civil peace, and they definitely transfer the right to rebel.

The value that Hobbes places on peace does not mean that he is a pacifist. The office of the sovereign may and should make war when an external force threatens the civil peace (Hobbes 2.18.12). There is a difference, however, between the justice of a war waged by the sovereign against external power and the subversive war waged by subjects against the sovereign; subjects have no right at all to punish the sovereign: "No man that hath Soveraigne power can justly be put to death, or otherwise in any manner by his Subjects punished" (Hobbes 2.18.7).

Just as the sovereign may use *any means necessary* to protect the peace from enemies of the state, so may the sovereign avenge itself on rebels. Because rebellion threatens the civil peace in the commonwealth itself, Hobbes is extremely harsh on rebels:

> Upon this ground it is, that also in Subjects, who deliberately deny the Authority of the Commonwealth established, the vengeance is lawfully extended, not onely to the Fathers, but also to the third and fourth generation not yet in being, and consequently innocent of the fact, for which they are afflicted: because the nature of this offence, consisteth in the renouncing of subjection; which is a relapse into the condition of warre, commonly called Rebellion, and they that so offend, suffer not as Subjets, but as Enemies. For *Rebellion is*

but warre renewed. (2.28.23)

A rebellion is nothing but the willful reversion to a state of nature that, apart from being unjust, is *offensive* to Hobbes: "If the essential Rights of Soveraignty be taken away, the Common-wealth is thereby dissolved, and every man returneth into the condition [of] warre with every other man, which is the greatest evil that can happen in this life" (2.30.3).

However, there is more to Hobbes' absolutism; the sovereign does not have a blank check to do anything it pleases. The sovereign has all *civil* authority and has no *civil* obligations; however, the sovereign is obliged by *nature* to ensure peace in civil society: "The office of the Soveraign [whatever its form] consisteth in the end [of[the procuration of *the safety of the people*; to which he is obliged by the Law of Nature, and to render an account thereof to God" (2.30.1). A sovereign is obliged to meaningfully be a sovereign.

While the lack of a legal rebellion may not satisfy later liberal sensibilities, Hobbes' ideal sovereign is not a fat, selfish despot. A sovereign who is tyrannical and cruel may find their peaceful society crumbling around them, with no one to blame but themselves. In other words, while a sovereign cannot act unjustly (because the sovereign is the possibility of justice) a sovereign can unwisely be in contradiction with the faithful purpose of the sovereign. This point is a far cry from justifying rebellion, but it is important to distinguish between the civil authority created in a contract and the natural liberties that people cannot alienate.[16] To put it another way, one of the sovereign's duties is to prevent rebellion; if the sovereign fails to prevent rebellion, then something has gone wrong on the natural level, rather than the civil.

I have asserted that Hobbes represents a moment where history turns, where he bears the

[16]Hobbes distinguishes true and false liberties. False liberty is liberty from the law, which, because the law ensures liberty of bodily saftey, such liberty is a contradiction in terms. True liberties are civilly inalienable, and seemingly odd for Hobbes to admit. They will be important later, when considering whether there is ever a right to rebel.

embryo of some sort of change in values. Therefore Hobbes should not be the only one to betray these ideas about the sovereign, and he is not the only one. His position on rebellion is a mirror of his historical moral, which inheres in period philosophers who do not accept most of Hobbes' arguments about the natural state of humanity. The distinction between the natural and civil realms is one part of Hobbes' ambiguous heritage.

In keeping with the distinction between theoretical and propositional disagreement, the systematic theologians before Hobbes will share some of his propositions and some of this theories. Thinkers whose theories are much kinder to our human nature than Hobbes' will share Hobbes' premises on certain matters. I demonstrated already how Hobbes' theories about theological concepts often do not question the concept itself. To make this point in the realm of politics and natural law, I shall consider how the political theories of Hugo Grotius bear on the justice of rebellion. By examining Grotius and Hobbes in parity, I shall expose some of the elements of Hobbes' moral inheritance.

Grotius is an interesting foil for Hobbes because Grotius is considered a supporter of law through cooperation, whereas Hobbes thinks we can cooperate only when coerced. My task is to show that Hobbes and Grotius share and rely on a common moral heritage in spite of their conceptual differences. Hobbes values peace because it is not war; Grotius values peace for itself. Both Hobbes and Grotius, however, argue for the right of war in eerily similar ways. Because foreign invasion destroys the commonwealth, Hobbes allows the sovereign the ability to wage war (2.18.12). Grotius likewise argues:

> In the first principles of nature there is nothing which is opposed to war; rather, all points are in its favor. The end and aim of war being the preservation of life and limb […] war is in perfect accord with those first principles of nature. If [for that purpose] it is necessary

> to use force, no inconsistency with the first principles of nature are involved. (Grotius 1.2.I.4)

Though their motives are different about the right of war in general, both Hobbes and Grotius admit the ability for states to make just war. They do not admit that all wars by the state are just, but that they are at least sometimes permitted.

Wars of *rebellion* are not so clearly permissible to Grotius. Considering rebellion, Grotius asks: "The question to be considered is simply this, whether it is permissible for either private or official persons to wage war against those under whose authority they are, whether this authority be sovereign or subordinate" (1.4.I.2). Grotius helpfully starts with his conclusion to this question: while there is a provision to passively disobey sovereign commands that are against "the law of nature or commandments of God," there is no provision to resist: "If from any such cause […] on the part of him who holds the sovereign power, unjust treatment be inflicted on us, we ought to endure it rather than resist by force" (1.4.I.3). Rebellion is not just on Grotius' account.

Grotius' argument is the same as Hobbes':

> By nature all men have the right of [self-defense.] But as civil society was instituted in order to maintain public tranquility, the state forthwith acquires over us and our possessions a greater right, to the extent necessary to accomplish this end. The state, therefore, in the interest of public peace and order, can limit the common right of resistance. (1.4.II.1)

Because the very purpose of the state is tranquility, the state can and should ensure that tranquility by restricting the right of resistance. Without securing itself, "there will no longer be a state, but only a non-social horde" (Grotius 1.4.II.1).

Grotius considers types of war along two categories: wars are waged by either private or sovereign powers and in an either domestic or foreign theater. Therefore there are eight (basic) logical permutations for war. Wars are either foreign or domestic, and waged by any permutation of private individuals and sovereigns. Rebellion is war waged domestically, by private individuals, against a sovereign power. Each of the other warfare relationships is potentially just, but rebellion has some peculiar quality that is against the law of nature.

What, then, is the peculiar quality? It cannot be the destruction of a state, because sovereigns justly destroy other states, "as by David against the King of the Ammonites." It cannot be that people must obey all sovereign power, for non-subjects may war against kings, "as by Abraham against the King of Babylon" (Grotius 1.4.I.1). The unique quality of rebellion is that it destroys one's *own* state. Rebellion is self-contradictory, destroying the security of the subject as well as the sovereign. Rebellion therefore destroys itself.

Hobbes is certainly in agreement on this point. The whole point of a society is to trade "my Right of Governing my selfe" so that I can be safe. To rebel against the sovereign power does not merely damage the people quantitatively; rebellion undermines the quality of life: "Lawes are of no power to protect [people], without a Sword in the hands of a man, or men, to cause those laws to be put in execution" (Hobbes 2.21.6). The law of nature is to self-preserve, and if the sovereign is required for self preservation, then rebelling is to reject the law of nature.

The logical interest of this argument is hard to understate. If rebellion is "but warre renewed," then rebellion does not simply destroy a state; it destroys the *conditions of possibility* for a state. Rebellion is not unjust on this account as it is absurd: "This warre of every man against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be Unjust. The notions of Right and Wring, Justice and Injustice have there no place. Where there is no common Power, there is no

Law, no Injustice" (Hobbes 1.13.13). Rebellion is therefore not so much detrimental to society as logically incompatible with it.

Grotius would agree on this point: "Maintenance of the social order, [which] is consonant with human intelligence, is the source of the law properly so called" (Prolegomena" 8). Rules against theft, the obligation of promises, and the right of retribution, are made possible by the social order. Rebellion cannot be just because it is *logically prior* to the concept of justice in the first place! This is why Hobbes considers it absurd how people "clamor" on about the right to govern themselves. The concept is nonsense to him.

There are, however, exceptions to the prohibition against rebellion. Grotius conceives of these exceptions as justified by necessity: "Even some laws of God carry a tacit exception in cases of extreme necessity […] hence the well-known saying: 'Danger to life breaks the Sabbath.' […] The same principle holds even more manifestly in the case of human laws" (1.4.VII.1). He concludes by way of example that, "The Maccabees, therefore, had no justification except extreme and unavoidable danger. This justification held, at any rate, so long as they kept within the limits of self-defense" (1.4.VII.5).

Hobbes admits of exceptions for similar reasons but through another argument. While there are no *civil* justifications for rebellion, there are "true" liberties that subjects retain from nature, "that is to say, what are the things, which though commanded by the Soveraign, [the subject] may neverthelesse, without Injustice, refuse to do" (Hobbes 2.21.10).

I am foreshadowing a bit here, but far from being contradictory with absolute sovereignty, Hobbes' argument for absolute sovereignty *entails* the conditional ability to resist the sovereign. People give up their right to self-government *for the purpose* of securing their lives. We are not obliged to do anything contrary to that purpose: "If the Soveraign command a

man (though justly condemned) to wound, or mayme himselfe; or not to resist those that assault him [yet] hath that man the Liberty to disobey (Hobbes 2.21.12). It is the right of nature to preserve one's life; therefore, you are never obliged to roll over and die.

This does not mean that the sovereign has civil limits. The sovereign can do anything, but the sovereign's civil authority cannot nullify my natural right to self-preservation: “"Tis one thing to say, *Kill me, or my fellow, if you please*; another thing to say *I will kill my selfe, or my fellow*. It followeth therefore, that No man is bound by the words themselves, either to kill himselfe, or any other man” (Hobbes 2.21.14,15). You are not obliged to roll over and die, but you should not expect leniency either. It may be within your rights to commit regicide, but it is certainly within the rights of the next regent to torture you to death in public view.

Hobbes derives a host of “true liberties” on these grounds, including, for example, resisting arrest and deserting an army, so long as the goal is to preserve one's life. Hobbes qualifies these liberties in virtue of their purposes: “When therefore our refusall to obey, frustrates the End for which the Soveraign was ordained; then there is no Liberty to refuse: otherwise there is” (2.21.15). Both I and the sovereign are obliged to be *faithful* to the purpose of the contract in the first place, but where I can be civilly punished, the sovereign's only judge is nature.

The important qualification here, however, is that self-preservation *alone* does not entail a right to rebel. The ostensible purpose of a rebellion is not just to self-preserve, but to dismantle the sovereign power. Neither Hobbes nor Grotius is willing to justify some opportunistic ideologue's attempt to seize power, not ever. They are willing to permit only the defense of one's life in conjunction with the authority of the sovereign. I will later explore whether there are more

transcendental Hobbesian arguments for rebellion, but Cromwell's sort of rebellion is right out.[17] So is, for that matter, the American Revolution.

I have shown that Hobbes and Grotius share an argument about the justice of rebellion, but I have not compared Hobbes and Grotius just to make this pedantic point. By now, the similarity in their prohibitions against rebellion should be apparent, but the point is to isolate the historical elements of these arguments that betray their mutually inherited moral framework.[18] In isolating these common elements, I am not simply arguing that Hobbes and Grotius share several moral sentiments and behaviors that we no longer do, although I am arguing that. I am also arguing that the common value-elements in Hobbes' and Grotius' philosophy dialectically engender moral disagreement *born from* moral agreement.

This datum requires a theoretical explanation. Despite the propositional agreement that Hobbes and Grotius share on the nature of rebellion, their theories about why rebellion is unjustified begin to show the transformation of how philosophers conceive of value. Hobbes' and Grotius' theories are quite similar, with the only major change being that Hobbes requires a vicious state of nature to get to the same place that Grotius starts from. To state it from another perspective, there are still plenty of liberal statists around today who do not admit the possible justice of rebellion, but such statists rarely recourse to Hobbes' dismal picture of human nature. I am arguing about the ambiguous (really, irreducibly, ambiguous) changes in the theoretical explanations for historical values that persist and transform to varying degrees.

I am now prepared to consider how these ambiguous theoretical issues speak to the

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[17]A transcendental argument is of the form: In order for *x* to be possible, *y* must be a condition for *x*. *x* is actual. Since everything actual is possible, therefore *y*. To foreshadow a bit, we can question whether Hobbes' state can *possibly* secure its ostensible purpose of security, and whether it is meaningfully a state at all.

[18]For some context, Hobbes and Grotius lived at the same time, and were born in 1588 and 1583, respectively. *On the Law of War and Peace* and *Leviathan* are published in 1625 and 1651. Both books are composed during wars, namely, the Thirty Years War and the English Civil War. These factual circumstances are not the heritage I am considering, but these historical data indicate the extent to which the questions of lawful warfare and sovereignty are pertinent to the time.

character of Hobbes' and Grotius' common heritage.

The first elements I will consider are the *concepts* of the philosophy. These writings of these authors are about extremely broad topics, the elements of which cohere into some rigorous, systematic account of humanity. This sort of philosophy takes concepts like human nature and natural law as axiomatic. Hobbes' book does not begin with political critique, but rather a section "Of Man." His first chapter is an argument for empiricist epistemology, and he spends a great deal of time contemplating how humans are in their natural condition. He considers the difference between the types of knowledge, how science should operate, and so on. Grotius also considers such broad concepts. He devotes his first chapter (one chapter!) to the questions "What is War? What is Law?"

No philosopher today could get away with this sort of inquiry. Grotius and Hobbes are able to do so because they share some common moral presuppositions. For examples: peace is the highest good; the end of war is peace; people are naturally disposed to seek their own interests; there are divine laws, natural laws, and civil laws. These thinkers share some common, minimal understanding of people's nature. We do not have this common understanding today. Not only do these suppositions crumble under anti-essentialism, but the importance of autonomous thought in liberalism makes such dogmatic suppositions untenable *prima facie*. Hobbes and Grotius are capable of having more *confidence* in the conceptual baggage they bring to their work.

This sort of conceptual assurance speaks to the *style* of the philosophy. Grotius and Hobbes share the element of being stylistically systematic. That is, they do not just consider a broad range of concepts, but they organize those concepts into some coherent whole. Science, for Hobbes, means the unity of the flow of concepts that contain one another. The idea that we may

figure out truth from what consequences are contained in concepts would come to be called "analytic" reasoning (contra "synthetic" reasoning.) Recall that, for Hobbes, *every* branch of philosophy operates by considering the consequences of things. The character of this kind of philosophy is that all of the parts hang together. All of the arguments in *Leviathan* seem to depend on one another.

For example, the compatibility of absolute sovereignty and the right to resist arrest cohere with the *mood* of how Hobbes conceives natural and civil rights. Each realm provides unique elements that paint the picture of the commonwealth: you can resist death, but the sovereign can punish you; this is not a problem because everyone likes to live, and the sovereign will wisely respect the lives of its subjects. If the sovereign is unwise, then it will be deposed, and we will claw our way out of nature again.

Hobbes crafts his philosophy seductively and elegantly, in a manner that could come only from this confidence in his state of nature. Grotius treats his subject similarly. He proceeds from general observations about war, and considers in turn every aspect of war as was known to him. This systematic style persists for quite a while in the history of philosophy, ending sometime around Hegel and Marx. This style required a confidence in the importance of the work that is not so obvious in contemporary philosophy. Contemporary academics are humbler in their goals, happy to contribute to a conversation and illuminate new problems in theories. Hobbes wanted to secure peace for the whole of humanity, and he devised a complete theology towards that end; Grotius wanted to explain justice in war so that people would know how to avoid flagrant abuses of power and punish the abuses that remained.

The character of Hobbes' heritage is therefore a different kind of confidence in doing philosophy. Even where he departs from this heritage, the character persists. His *methodology* is

a good example of his historical ambiguity. For example, Hobbes and Grotius, though writing in similar styles, did not reason in the same manner. Grotius is much more in line with Aquinas' type of reasoning, where he introduces a question, provides a preliminary answer, considers arguments for and against, then repeats his answer. Hobbes deduces all of his arguments from his premises, in a method more similar to contemporary, sentential logic.

This method is a good example of his ambiguity, because it contains the seeds of empirical science; *however*, deductive logic is not equivalent to contemporary empirical science. Logic relies on hypothetical inferences to preserve hypothetical truth; contemporary, post-positivist, science has very little use for propositions that are not observed. Few people think that ethics and poetry are consequences of physics, as Hobbes did. But the embryo of contemporary science began in this more deductive manner. When Kant famously praised Galileo for setting physics on the "royal road" to science, he is praising the way Galileo made empirical observations *after* deducing the consequences of physical motion according to laws that he had previously known.

Hobbes made use of his deductive method to conclude the truths of things like materialism *as well as* human nature. It is not until much later on that the contemporary, more *post hoc* empirical science comes to fruition.[19] For that matter, Hobbes would likely have had scathing criticisms of our contemporary model of science. Science does not require either Hobbes' "trayne of consequences" nor Kant's categories of understanding to make sense of the manifold of experience. We have a different set of moral baggage in our contemporary science than both Hobbes' philosophy and the immediate negation of Hobbes' philosophy.

My only point in this survey is this: Hobbes inherits a philosophical confidence that

[19]Hypothesize, test, refine, but say nothing about the way that the inter-subjective, transcendental unity of apperception enables this process.

begins to degrade soon after his time; and the inherited confidence degraded in spite of the sincere attempts to salvage it. So far, in terms of Hobbes' political philosophy, I have provided evidence only for the first half of this claim. I examined the links between Hobbes' and Grotius' moral heritage and examined the similarities in their political arguments. I will shortly examine the process of degradation in this arena of political sovereignty, but we saw both halves of this process at work already. Both elements—confidence and the degradation of confidence—appeared in my analysis of Hobbes' treatment of religion.

On my account, Hobbes attempted to provide a new theoretical analysis of standard truths. Hobbes provided a theory to explain how, for examples, God and angels are material, that prophets are true but should not be recognized politically, that the kingdom of God was eternal but not yet arrived, and so on. Similarly, Martinich and Cooke devise different theories to analyze the truth of Hobbes' philosophy, but they agree on the proposition that Hobbes is, in fact, providing new theories about old propositions. Hobbes provides these theories in a confident and systematic way.

The fact remains that, whether by accident or subtle intention, Hobbes' new theories for religious propositions end up sacrificing the religious propositions. Why? God, materialism and sovereignty are not logically incompatible; however, they might be morally incompatible in a new, less confident milieu that cannot cope with nor comprehend the association of God with political science. Empirical science transformed from deductive inference to random experimentation to hypothesized experimentation to radical subjectivism to positivism to formalized, technical methods. So too did moral confidence change from axiomatic certainty to a natural deduction to utilitarianism to toleration.

What remains to be seen is how the political, scientific, ethical, and religious seeds that Hobbes plants bear fruit that Hobbes would not and could not have recognized as his own. Hobbes' historical ambiguity means that he can be weaponized *even against Hobbes himself*. I will demonstrate this potential by examining whether, despite all of the above, there is yet a Hobbesian right of collective rebellion to be cultivated from his absolutist seeds. Even when he is clear on a point, such that rebellion is not justified, that point obtains only given Hobbes' moral suppositions. For *our* degraded moral confidence, Hobbes will legitimately and consistently imply anarchism. In this way, I can provide a theoretical explanation to the propositions of moral transformation, that is, that moral confidence degraded even when every historical transformation of it is born from an attempt to salvage that confidence.

5. WEAPONS OF LIBERATION

The argument about Hobbes and rebellion parallels the argument about Hobbes and religion. Previously, when we asked whether Hobbes is a Christian or an atheist, we arrived at a state of *aporia*. Even after granting the metric of getting at what he "said and meant," there is not an obvious answer to the question. There is a similar *aporia* in the question of rebellion, but it extends beyond the limits of the "said and meant" metric. Hobbes clearly says that there is not ground for rebellion, and he means it. Nonetheless, I argue that his historical ambiguity persists.

I will now argue the presence of Hobbes' ambiguity *in spite of* his clear condemnation of rebellion. The 'in spite of' here is the most important element of the entire argument because it exposes additional elements in the process of weaponononization. The weaponization of Hobbes' religious ambiguity is easy to explain; it results from Hobbes not being totally clear and scholars reading him selectively. The weaponization of Hobbes' statist ambiguity is harder to explain; it

results from his arguments up against a 400-year-old patina of confusion that has occluded the purpose of the social contract.

To demonstrate this ambiguity 'in spite of,' I am going to argue something seemingly absurd. Not only am I going to argue that there is a Hobbesian right to rebel against the state, but that Hobbes' philosophy contingently asserts a *political anarchism*.[20] This may be the least plausible thing that anyone could argue about Hobbes. He is not an anarchist himself. The question is so settled that Martinich even presupposes Hobbes' non-anarchism: "If Hobbes was an atheist, then he was also an anarchist" (*Two Gods* 26).[21] Therefore, Hobbes' anarchism is the perfect thing to illustrate Hobbes' potential as a weapon. If Hobbes can be sincerely and charitably weaponized for anarchism, then my argument about his ambiguity is proven.

The general argument for these claims (rebellion and anarchism) relies on Hobbes' contractual nature of the state and the purpose of that contract. If the contract's purpose is frustrated, then it is not in force and there is no obligation to the state. This argument is not even so much an argument for Hobbes as it is a tautology: if there is no contract in force, then there is no contract in force. The purpose of Hobbes' contract is to secure, not just peace, but the ability to expect peace. If the purpose of the state either does not or cannot ensure peace, then the contract is frustrated and there can be no obligation to the state.

Susanne Sreedhar has detailed this argument—that rebellion is permissible in a frustrated state—in *Hobbes on Resistance*. The salience of her argument rests on Hobbes' set of cases where subjects may rightfully disobey the sovereign. Hobbes explicates the occasions of justified

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[20]A political anarchist is one who advocates for positive resistance to the state. This is one step beyond the philosophical anarchist who argues that we simply have no obligation to obey the state.

[21]Bishop Bramhall did famously accuse Hobbes of anarchism in his "The Catching of Leviathan." However, this accusation was in the same mood as he accused Hobbes of atheism and fails for the same reasons we previously discussed. I do not think that it is controversial to say that almost no one today would call Hobbes himself an anarchist. Not even I am doing that.

disobedience: “If a man by the terror of present death, be compelled to doe a fact against the Law, he is totally Excused; because no Law can oblige a man to abandon his own preservation” (Hobbes 2.27.25). I mentioned several cases earlier, such as the right to resist arrest or flee the gallows. The general form of these rights is the right to self-preserve.

Sreedhar explores this right in her first chapter: “The right of self-defense can be best characterized as the *right to take whatever actions one judges necessary to avoid an immediate threat of death*” (8). This right is not just present against direct attack, but also includes things like stealing bread when starving. The right is properly the right to “*save one's own life*” when the power of the sovereign is either unavailable or unwilling (9). Self-defense is contained in self-preservation, but Sreedhar points out that self-preservation is a much “broader right of nature” (11).

Hobbes' support for the right to self-preserve is not controversial. The controversial part is whether rebellion can result from self-preservation. Sreedhar faces two obstacles in deriving rebellion from self-defense. The first obstacle is hermeneutic: Hobbes might just imply inconsistent things. The second obstacle is philosophical: the right to rebel appears to be collective while the right to self-preserve appears to be individual. Sreedhar must show that the right to rebel derives from the right of self-defense. The rest of Sreedhar's book is for making rebellion consistent with Hobbes' philosophy. I have little stake in the consistency issue. I will be focusing on whether rebellion is really contained in Hobbes' philosophy, inconsistently or otherwise.

One crucial point is that Hobbes' concept of rights is not identical to the modern concept of rights. In order to figure out the place of rebellion rights, I must first talk about what a Hobbesian right is. Sreedhar identifies three elements to the right of self-defense: “self-defense

[is] a *subjective, permission*, right *retained* by subjects in a commonwealth" (8). The right is *subjective* in that the individual must judge whether their own life is in peril. The only qualification Hobbes states is "that of sincerity" (Sreedhar 12). The person must sincerely feel themselves at risk, but no one can make that judgment but the person.

The ideas of *permission* and *retention* are more complex. The right is *retained* because it is a holdover from the state of nature, rather than created at the genesis of social contract.[22] It is a "vestige" of the right of nature, but not identical to the right of nature (Sreedhar 15). For example, the right to legal representation is not a retained right because there are no courts and laws in which to retain representation. Self-preservation, on the contrary, finds a new theatre of relevance inside society. We retain rights either when the help of the law is unavailable (when you are waylaid by vagabonds) or when the law is not helpful (when the state tortures and executes you.)

The idea of *permission* is the most peculiar of these three elements. A Hobbesian right gives "freedom from blame; it bestows a kind of moral permission on an action" (Sreedhar 13). Hobbes' right to self-preserve is a "blameless liberty" and it does not incur *any* reciprocal obligation to respect that right. These are not the kinds of rights that our modern, liberal philosophy recognizes. In contemporary parlance, one has a right when other people are obliged to respect that right. It would make little sense to talk of the right to vote if the state were also within its rights to ignore the vote. While there is an empirical case that the state ignores votes all of the time, such ignorance is still in contradiction with our purported rights: not so with the concept of permission rights.

Sreedhar asks for the "reader's indulgence" on this conceptual point, but the importance

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[22]There is a pedantic point here that will become nonetheless important. Sreedhar's rebellion right is retained *in a commonwealth*. She does *not* argue the similar point that self-defense is justified when the state *reverts* to the state of nature. The right of self-defense is prior to but also contained within the civil law, for Sreedhar.

of permission rights is not merely an argumentative indulgence (Sreedhar 14). These kinds of rights demonstrate a radically different idea of crime and punishment than we have today and they imply an entirely different pantheon of rights against the state. Sreedhar's argument cannot function without exposing the historical transformation of what constitutes a right: “The right of self-defense does not impose any duties on anyone else to respect its exercise” (16). To use contemporary terms, the right of self-defense is more descriptive than normative. It describes the fact that people will naturally defend themselves. A sovereign power that ignores the natural behavior of self-defense is digging its own grave. We can identify the cases where resistance to the sovereign is descriptively blameless by identifying those cases when it is descriptively reasonable to expect people to defend themselves.

After we have examined Hobbes' concept of rights, his right of rebellion against his state looks less ludicrous. Hobbes' account of resistance is a natural consequence of the *functions* that he attributes to the state. Self-preservation is built into the reason why Hobbes' state exists, and self-preservation is inalienable because to alienate that right would contradict the whole point.

I have already shown that the reason for Hobbes' state is to ensure the possibility of peace. If we are obliged to suffer death silently, we are not assured of our peaceful existence. In other words, the contract was either never in force or stopped being in force. This point should not be controversial. Contracts can be broken, and Hobbes would have been a poor philosopher if he did not account for these cases of contractual frustration.

Sreedhar isolates three criteria for determining whether the social contract is in force. The first is that contracts require a *reasonable expectation* of fulfillment. To illustrate by counterexample, people cannot contract in the state of nature because the most reasonable expectation is that the other party will renege (Sreedhar 42). Since there is no trust, it is

unreasonable to expect trust. This is the same question-begging argument that political realists use to talk about national security: everyone has every reason to kill everyone else, because no one trusts each other, so do not trust anyone yourself. Self-confirming prophecies like this are irritating, but are valid: "the premise is that it is unreasonable to expect people to overcome such a powerful human urge" to avoid putting themselves in danger (Sreedhar 37).

Sreedhar's second criterion is the principle of *necessity*: "One only transfers those rights that are necessary to achieve the purpose of the covenant" (49). Simply, it is not necessary to transfer self-defense in order to secure the peace: "The principle seems to be that a right *can only be retained in the social contract if it can be retained by everyone without a loss of peace*" (Sreedhar 50). This criterion may actually be too strong. The principle is only contingently consistent with the principle of reasonable expectation, which would prohibit the alienation of self-defense in almost all cases.[23] In other words, if alienating the right to self-defense were necessary for forming the state, then the state could exist only if most humans were suicidal. In any case, Sreedhar's argument is that, contingently, giving up self-defense is not necessary to ensure the peace. The irresistable power of the sovereign ensures the peace for Hobbes.

Sreedhar's most important criterion contains the previous two, and this is the principle of *fidelity*. The principle is that contracts are in force only when they are faithful to their purpose: "Since the fundamental purpose of the social contract is the preservation of life, a covenant within it not to do what one can to preserve one's life is void" (Sreedhar 48). This principle is inextricable from Hobbes' philosophy. We covenant with the sovereign *for reasons*. If those reasons are undermined, then all bets are off.

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[23]Whether the right of self-defense is inalienable *at all* or inalienable in the *social contract* is a point of debate. Sreedhar's necessity principle argues the latter, and she gives the example of the soldier contract as an occasion where you can alienate the right to self-preservation. The point is important only because she has to reply to and distinguish herself from Hobbes scholars who argue that total inalienability of self-defense is incoherent with Hobbes (34-6). The point is irrelevant to my argument, but explains Sreedhar's motive for the necessity principle.

All of Hobbes' other resistance rights are derived (in accordance with these criteria) as descriptive, blameless, tendencies that are natural to humans: “It is manifest, that every Subject has Liberty on all those things, the right whereof cannot by Covenant be transferred” (Hobbes 2.21.13). Things that undermine their own purpose cannot reasonably be transferred. Humans will not roll over and die when ordered and anyone who expects otherwise is in for a surprise. Hobbes was not so naive in this way. He does not demand anything of citizens other than that they give up what rights are necessary to ensure their best interests, as he understands them.

Sreedhar's principles are supposed to work together in a Hobbesian fashion to form a coherent account of resistance. All the parts build from each other:

> The cases in which obeying would undermine the point of submitting to the sovereign are *exactly* those cases in which the power of the sovereign is not materially reduced by a subject's disobedience [….] The beauty of this picture is that there seems to be a perfect symmetry between what Hobbesian subjects can reasonably be expected to do and what they must do. (Sreedhar 110)

The faithfully upheld contract, demands nothing more or less than the reasonable alienation of rights in exchange for peace. This picture may sound a bit too coherent, but it is a tempting argument to accept that is faithful to Hobbes' own systematic style.

I can now set up a criterion for when rebellion may be justified on this account of rights. Rebellion may be justified when doing so does not disrupt the possibility of peace. Such is possible only when there is no peace to disrupt. Far from being a subversion of the contract, Hobbes is “required to allow the retention of [resistance] rights because of his commitment to uniting enlightened self-interests with political obligation” (Sreedhar 130). To put it simply, if the state is contradictory to the purpose of peace, then those who are so affected cannot be blamed

for having a go at it themselves.

Sreedhar's argument is simple: “[Hobbes] explicitly endorses the following principle: a subject has no obligation to obey the soevereign if he judges that the sovereign is not providing for his security. If we add a plausible premise [that the sovereign is not providing security] this implies a right of rebellion (Sreedhar 139).

Hobbes states the moment when obligation to the state ceases: “The obligation of Subjects to the Soveraign, is understood to last as long and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them” (2.21.21). Sreedhar completes the *modus tollens*: “If a number of subjects suffer lives that are fundamentally insecure or if they have persistent reasons to fear violence at the hands of others, then they have no obligation to obey the sovereign” (141). Hobbes understands that a sovereign may at least possibly fail at the job of securing the peace. A sovereign failure is not inconceivable to him. Because a rebellion cannot destroy what is already destroyed by the sovereign, the *possibility* of a rebellion that does not destroy peace seems true. Therefore, a conditional Hobbesian right of rebellion is plausible.

The final task is to prove that this criterion for rebellion does not describe an empty set. In other words, rebellion must not merely refrain from disrupting the peace, but it must itself work toward securing a peace. This is possible only if the state is in contradiction with securing peace *and* that collective, seditious resistance is the most reasonable way to secure peace. To make the point totally clear, “[Rebellion] is a question about whether Hobbes' theory of political obligation confers a right to conspire with others in order to strip an established sovereign of its authority” (Sreedhar 135). There are more specific questions, such as the right to continue rather than initiate a rebellion, what specific conditions frustrate a covenant, and so on, but these are

secondary questions.[24] None of these questions matters without answering whether we have a right, not to defend just ourselves, but to conspire with and defend others.

Echoing this positive half of the argument, Sreedhar concludes: "a subject has the right to rebel if and only if that subject judges that the sovereign is not providing adequately for his security and that rebellion is the best means to his self-preservation" (137). Given that rebellion is almost always more dangerous than even the most self-absorbed sovereigns, insecurity alone is insufficient. Rebellion must also be the most reasonable means to preserving one's life. The rest of the book is her pre-emptive defense of this argument, where she accounts for Hobbes' arguments against rebellion and tries to make them internally consistent.

Martinich has made a point-by point critique of Sreedhar's argument, where he defends the absolutist interpretation of Hobbes. Unlike hid disagreement with Cooke, Martinich's disagreement with Sreedhar is about the truth of the propositions. His critique is that Sreedhar simply does not get at a right of rebellion through the right of self-defense: while Hobbes accepts the right of self-defense and the other resistance rights, the chasm between those rights and rebellion is too wide for Martinich to accept. (*Review of Hobbes on Resistance*). Rebellion is qualitatively different from all of the other resistance rights in that rebellion is a communal activity. Rebellion requires defense of others in common. Sreedhar has an argument for how a collective rebellion is individually justified, but Martinich just does not accept the technical details of Sreedhar's argument.

The fact that philosophers disagree about technicalities is no more uncommon than the sky being blue. The uncommon point of Martinich's critique is not where he disagrees, but where he agrees. Martinich argues from the same theoretical hermeneutic as Sreedhar does. Both of them make the argument that their interpretation is closer to what Hobbes actually said and

[24]Hobbes clearly absolves rebels who continue rebelling once the rebellion is underway (*Leviathan* 2.21.17).

meant. Sreedhar asserts, “The goal of this book is to construct the most plausible and most accurate interpretation – *i.e.*, closest to the text – of Hobbes views on resistance” (6). Martinich counterattacks, “If the proposition that subjects have a right to rebel had been put to Hobbes, he would have denied it” (*Review of Hobbes on Resistance*). When I previously presented the arguments about Hobbes religion we discovered how difficult the question was to answer. Similarly, Martinich's and Sreedhar's arguments are totally irreconcilable; just as before, we have reached a point of *aporia*.

I have already stated that I do not care about this particular hermeneutic. What Hobbes *really, truly, intended* about rebellion is as irrelevant to this paper as was his truly intended religion. So what is the point of this exercise? The point is to prove that Hobbes' ambiguity exists in (1) a variety of topics besides religion and (2) in a topic that is not apparently ambiguous and (3) in both theoretical and propositional matters. Arguing that Hobbes provides a right of rebellion is an even more marginal position than arguing for his orthodox Christianity. Nevertheless, these questions result in *aporia* given the value-suppositions that inform our hermeneutics of Hobbes.

There are several possibilities to wade through. If one accepts the hermeneutic of getting at what Hobbes said and meant, then either Sreedhar or Martinich is right, or Hobbes was inconsistent in his philosophy and there is nothing to be right about. Alternatively, it is possible that his philosophy contains a set of moral suppositions that the hermeneutic cannot cope with, like showing a paradox to a science fiction robot. The limits of the “said and meant” hermenutic require that Sreedhar try to make things consistent (Sreedhar 143), but I do not have to worry about that question. Even if Hobbes *were* inconsistently implying the right of rebellion, he would still be implying it, and it would be bad science to ignore it. Therefore I will not worry about the

possibility that Hobbes is self-contradictory or whether one or the other of these positions is the true one.

What I will worry about is the degree to which Sreedhar and Martinich overlook the parts of Hobbes that are contrary to their politics. They weaponize Hobbes in their interpretations of him, and the interesting question is how they have done so. Sreedhar is not ignorant of this aspect:

> There is a disagreement about how we ought to understand Hobbes' place in the history of political thought. Some see him as a protoliberal, arguing that […] natural liberty and equality, individual rights, and government serve to make it a harbinger of modern liberalism [….] Others, in sharp contrast, emphasize those aspects of Hobbes' philosophy that appear to stand firmly against [liberalism]. (172)

Accepting her false dichotomy for the moment, Sreedhar is firmly in the first camp. She weaponizes Hobbes to support a well-established canon of liberal rights. She has *recuperated* Hobbes' proto-social contract neatly into the tradition of liberal, 18th century political thought.[25]

The only major problems in Sreedhar's argument (both logical and ethical) result from this recuperative agendum. The major logical problem is that, while Sreedhar argues that the right of rebellion is *retained* in the social contract, she arrives at rebellion by presupposing the lack of force of the social contract. Sreedhar does not want to presuppose such a breakdown; she wants that the right of rebellion be a right held by people "in a commonwealth against their sovereign" rather than a right held by enemies of the sovereign (156). There is an alternative, more consistent description of the right to rebel; that is, the right is not a retention from nature but a *reversion* to nature. That is to say, people have a right to rebel against the sovereign

[25] Recuperation is to bring a dangerous or subversive idea back into impotence and normalcy. We will later see how recuperation functions in political institutionas.

because a sovereign who provides chaos is not and never was a sovereign at all.

This argument—that the right of rebellion is a reversion to nature rather than retained in the commonwealth—has been what I have been arguing so far. It has also been what Sreedhar has been arguing but has refused to conclude. Her attempts to address this problem are not satisfactory and rely mostly on assertion. She asserts: "Hobbes does not seem to understand political membership in this way […] The person who is commanded to incriminate himself is still a member of society; he just has the right to disobey that particular command. He is not permitted to then rob a bank" (Sreedhar 157). In other words, resistance to a particular demand by the sovereign does not mean that we are totally removed from the sovereign state.

There are several immediate problems here. A basic problem is that her claim does not appear true: obligation to a sovereign *ceases* when the sovereign loses the power to protect its state. I have shown this point already, and so has Sreedhar: subjects are obliged, as Hobbes says, "no longer than the power lasteth." A larger problem is that Sreedhar's deduction is not valid. She has neglected her previous points of *permission* and *subjective* rights. A permission right does not incur an obligation to respect it. If you are commanded by the state to incriminate yourself (which, by the way, is exactly what a grand jury does today) then on Hobbes' account you are not to blame for refusing to testify. This point is true, but let us recall the other half of it: the state is also not to blame when it throws you in its murder pits.

Hobbes' state is absolute; it can throw you in its murder pits for even more trivial reasons than refusing to self-incriminate. This fact factors into the *subjective* decision to, for example, rob a bank if I am commanded to incriminate myself. After all, I might judge that robbing a bank is the only way to escape the arm of the law. It might even be permissible for me to rob a bank if my only crime is adjusting my waistband. Why? Because I might judge that the state is going to

execute me for adjusting my waistband, which it empirically sometimes does. If the consequence of refusing to self-incriminate is prison, and if the consequence of prison is the loss of life, (which prison often entailed and sometimes entails) then I am totally at liberty to do whatever I can to save my life. Sreedhar made this point *herself*, but she does not seem prepared to accept the implications of her argument.

This problem is not just a logical problem. It is a problem of value. It is an ethical problem. Sreedhar's liberal recuperation of Hobbes causes her to underestimate the ethical importance of conclusions that *she herself draws*: "We find Hobbes' lack of liberal intuitions in general distasteful, but he offered subjects certain rights that we do not" (175). For example, liberals no longer think that attempting to escape prison is justified – quite the contrary. Citizens are coercively disciplined and expected to police themselves; bodily force is used only *after* people fail to behave themselves. Hobbes consistently argues for the right to resist the law, including killing police officers in order to escape custody. Today, contrarily, simply going limp during an arrest is not only grounds for additional legal punishment but is also condemned on moral grounds. Sreedhar does not account for resistance to this first order coercion, because the limits of her values provide no tools for such an account.

Sreedhar could have easily echoed Jefferson's *Declaration* in her treatment of Hobbes' right of rebellion, that people are entitled to rebel only after "a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism." What she does say is that "if the sovereign fails to protect so many of his subjects that they are moved to rebel, then the blame lies at the door of the sovereign. If a well-functioning commonwealth dissolves, it will probably not be because of the unjustified resistance of the subjects" (167). I like this point, because it is the logical conclusion of Hobbes'

description about human nature; however, the same recuperative agendum prevents Sreedhar from recognizing any subversive ethical implication from Hobbes' arguments, just as the hermeneutic she shares with Martinich entails a shared *aporia* in interpreting Hobbes.

The ethical problem with recuperation is not simply nostalgia or a hermeneutic that limits her argument; the problem is that it forces Sreedhar to *dull her own blade* by casting Hobbes as a reminder of liberalism. Sreedhar argues that Hobbes' philosophy sometimes supports rebellion, and I would agree, but her theory falls short of explaining why. Whether she is right or wrong about Hobbes, she has made use of him in order to support the logically uninteresting theory that liberalism has lost its original spark: "What becomes of Hobbes if we come to recognize that *we* are not prepared to allow liberties where he was? Turning our attention to this aspect of Hobbes' philosophy renders him less a foil than a mirror in which we may somewhat uncomfortable look upon our own (perhaps unjustified) illiberal tendencies" (Sreedhar 175). Her history of liberalism can speak about only the presence or loss of the original liberal state. That history cannot speak about the transformations in the ethics of the liberal state.

Sreedhar is positioned for a *coup de gras,* and she turns her blade at the last moment. Consider the following rewrite of what I just quoted: "What becomes of Hobbes if we come to recognize that we are not prepared to allow liberties where he was? Turning our attention to this aspect of Hobbes renders him less a foil than a mirror in which we may look upon the *culmination of our liberal tendencies* that *outgrew and contradicted their creators*." Hobbes could not possibly have predicted what would become of his ideas. A friend of mine put it pithily: "Hobbes couldn't even know what a big mac was." Hobbes could not have understood the development of the Westphalian state through and beyond the industrial revolution. The development of things like the state and rights have not lost the spark of liberalism as much as

developed it into a form contradictory with its origin.

I am now prepared to argue that Hobbes' philosophy would mean anarchism today. This claim is true in case the function of the state is *essentially no longer for securing peace for its subjects.* There are three elements in that claim to recognize. The first is the action of securing peace. The second is the question of whether peace is essential. The third is for whom the peace is intended, that is, subjects or someone else. If the nature of the state itself has changed on these measures, then a statist Hobbesian is today operating on false premises. Hobbes' dictate of obedience is *conditional* on the fact that the state, where the law is available, essentially secures its citizens.

The element of peace is not obviously the essential purpose of the state in 2013. In the modern state, the militarization of the police, the omni-partisan centralization of power, the transformation of prisons from reformatories to unpaid labor camps, the apparently infinite technology of surveillance, the ideological monopoly on power, the illegalization of public spaces, the privatization of universities and public works, the uncritical acceptance of all of these things by public faces, as if they were natural states of affairs, *and so on* are not obvious indications of a state that is attempting to secure the possibility of peace for its subjects. Even when the "help" of all this law is "available," it is not obviously helpful. You do not have to look hard to find the chilling trend of police officers systematically murdering people.[26] There is not an obvious contract between subject and sovereign; rather, there is a contract among the representations of the sovereign with itself.

You can certainly argue that all of those things are aimed at the possibility of peace, but

[26]I say and mean murder, not shooting. Atlanta generally faces at least one of these murders every three months. They are trivially easy to point out. I doubt that the people subjected to this campaign think that the purpose of the law is to secure them. The law, rather non-consensually, rather non-contractually secures itself against its citizens, rather than for them.

let us not pretend that they obviously are. To do so would be putting an absurd amount of faith in the continuity of political science. Being in a state is not even obviously *contractual* anymore: we are thrown into the midst of the so-called "contract" and there are both practical and legal obstacles to leaving it. Being stateless is effectively illegal, not that it would do much good when all of the land on Earth is the sovereign domain of some state or another.

Absolutely none of the functions of the contemporary state is obviously directed to security, or more precisely, the functions are not obviously directed to the security of citizens. On the contrary, the functions of the contemporary state are just as plausibly described as a domestic terror campaign with the aims of compliance and discipline through whatever means it chooses. The "whatever means" is familiar to Hobbes; the omnipresent, coercive state apparatus that polices rather than punishes is not so familiar. Hobbes' sovereign could do whatever it wanted to subjects in a commonwealth. The sovereign could not, however, alter the game of the commonwealth and meaningfully remain a sovereign.

So in one sense, it is true that all of these functions of the state provide for security. The question is security for whom? The answer: security for the nation, rather than the public. The state is materially capable of securing itself without providing the security of citizens. This was less true in Hobbes' time. This was the whole point: the sovereign emerged from the social contract, and the security of the state and the security of the people were purportedly inextricable. Today, the state apparatus can secure itself without and in spite of the security of its people. If the state has outgrown the material need to secure its people, why would it secure them? Out of kindness?

I am not going to assert anything further positive about the function of the contemporary state. My point is that it is not obvious that the essential function of the state is still peace as

Hobbes understood it; indeed, it appears more plausible that the function of the state is no longer peace as Hobbes understood it. Why would it be otherwise? The function of every other philosophical apparatus has undergone transformation since 1651. To assume that the essential function of the state has endured for almost four hundred years would be an uncritical, suspicious charity that would never fly in any other science but political economy.

But the problem of the transformed state is our problem, not Hobbes'. Hobbes did not have to worry about the transformation nor was he able to worry about it. He neither could wonder nor had any reason to wonder if his state would change over time. Hobbes was too confident in himself and it was natural for him to hold that confidence. We do not have the same luxury. Sreedhar's recuperative discourse leads her to identify this worry but prevents her from engaging it. Like with Hobbes' “glorious failure” to save religion from its own rigor, Sreedhar is participating in the discourse of saving the liberal state from itself.

Of course, even if Hobbes would not recognize the function of the contemporary state as his own, that does not make Hobbes an anarchist. Martinich is surely correct in saying that Hobbes is not an anarchist; however, it is also correct to note the contingent anarchism resulting from the evolution of the state that contradicted its genesis. While this does not make Hobbes an anarchist, it makes him ambiguous in an even more dangerous and beautiful way than before. He does not function only as a useful reference for some political argument or another; he conditions the genealogy of political authority and represents several of the moments when the idea of authority transforms. Hobbes can be the weapon of even anarchists because the conclusions of his ideas are up to the cunning of history. His are admirably, beautifully, *incomplete* ideas that history transforms or rejects.

The genesis of an idea may be negated by the development of that idea. Recuperation is

the subsequent clean-up job to obfuscate the history of that development. For this particular case, the liberal state has altered its objectives, while retaining a semblance of the values of its formative moments. The values are still purportedly property, life and liberty, but the meaning and application of those values are antithetical to what they were before. The expectation to suffer silently in prison is one particular change, but a general change is the degree of confidence in politics (and values in general) that was lost soon after Hobbes, and not without good reason. Hobbes confidently believed that the absolute government would act in the general interest of the people. Can anyone today say the same with such confidence? Certainly no one should.

The loss of confidence in matters of value, including the purpose of the sovereign, is part in parcel with the loss of the common good. Hobbes' common good was peace. It was unequivocally peace. The contemporary state *does not have a common good like this*. Contemporary philosophers other than communitarians rarely talk about one. Contemporary liberals do derive ethical principles from something held in common, but in a distorted, negative form. The common "good" for the contemporary liberal is the utilitarian imperative to let everyone do what they want so long as it does no harm. This sort of imperative does not, however, speak to a common good. The utilitarian imperative speaks only to a *common wrong*. The state may, in the name of national security, democracy, pluralism, or whatever, proscribe common sets of social and legal opinions, but such a state is incapable of prescribing much at all. The form of the state has outlived the need for common morality and replaced it with common immorality.

There is a lot of explaining needed to make sense of the transformation of liberalism into its contemporary form. What happened here? How is it that Hobbes' state apparatus could survive the loss of its moral impetus and even contradict that moral impetus? To answer these ques-

tions, we need to turn to the history of ethics and consider the differences between how Hobbes and a modern liberal conceive of moral inquiry.

6. WHY TO WEAPONIZE A PHILOSOPHER

I began this inquiry with "two sets of conflicts" in mind. The first set is simply the propositional conflicts in getting our description of history right. They are the conflicts in understanding Hobbes' arguments in relation to his contemporaries like Grotius. They are the conflicts that motivate the debates among historians of philosophy like Martinich, Cooke and Sreedhar. They are the conflicts about whether Hobbes is a Christian, atheist, or anarchist. And these conflicts have reached their dialectical limits. There is no answering them until we have established a common metric of theoretical evaluation, a moral for judging what Hobbes said and what his philosophy did. Establishing such a metric is the second set of conflicts that are before us, and I have been attempting to demonstrate both how crucial and difficult this task is. The *aporia* resulting from my analysis of several of Hobbes' projects should make my claim at least plausible.

The next logical step would appear to be to engage the second set of conflicts, that is, to discover what shared values inform our historical investigations. Even more humbly, we might at least invent some shared reason for such investigations. Were it only so simple! The second set of conflicts at stake in this investigation is not in picking which sort of values we treasure in our historical investigations; the second set of conflicts is the conflict over whether there are functionally any such values in 2013 and whether there should be.

Therefore, the purpose of looking at Hobbes' values is not to exercise our comparative muscles; it is to expose what he represents in this history of value that has resulted in this sort of

value-*aporia*. Furthermore, things do not represent in a vacuum; they represent for the values of the perceiver. I have mentioned this point before, but I shall now codify it explicitly: the most striking change in the history of ethics is the loss of our access to the common good. Furthermore, it is not just that we contingently avoid our common moral *telos*, but that the loss of confidence in the moral of the commons has made the question itself invalid.

It is not my task to catalogue the positive elements and particular changes in this history of the distorted common moral.[27] I have described some of the particular elements of the change in reference to Hobbes, but that is not the main point. The point is to *explain* these data by advancing a theory and to *expose* the consequences of this loss in our contemporary study of philosophy and religion.

Alasdair MacIntyre has advanced a theory that begins to explain these data in his moral history *After Virtue*. I do not intend to portray MacIntyre's history as the silver bullet for the lycanthropy of moral confusion. His positive project is incomplete and sometimes rings of nostalgia. For example, he is ironically the harshest on his potentially closest allies: "The *Übermensch* and Sartrian Existentialist-cum-Marxist belong in the pages of a philosophical bestiary rather than a serious discussion." This said, MacIntyre's critical project, just as he describes the Nietzschian and existentialist-Marxist, is at its "philosophically most powerful and cogent in the negative part of the critique" (MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 22). I do not mean to hoist MacIntyre by his own petard; the point is that he is addressing the same, enormous problem as those Nietzschians and Marxists, and his attempted solution is as vulnerable as theirs are.[28]

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[27]Not only is such a task beyond the quantitative scope of this investigation, and not only are there plenty of genealogical theories to choose from, but I do not think that the point is even controversial. Scholars in 2013 are less confident to proclaim general value judgments than their 20th and even 19th century predecessors.

[28]For the unslakably curious, MacIntyre's solution is a form of communitarianism. It involves decentralized centers of moral inquiry along a positive assertion of traditional, ecclesiastical virtues. He develops this over many works.

In other words, I do not buy MacIntyre's solutions to the problems of contemporary moral confusion and I have none of my own to propose. MacIntyre is valuable because he has recognized the same problematic ambiguities in the history of value that have informed our investigation of Hobbes' weaponization.

After Virtue begins with a piece of science fiction that describes the loss I have been talking about in a clear, intuitive way:

> Imagine that the natural sciences were to suffer the effects of a catastrophe. A series of environmental disasters are blamed by the general public on the scientists [….] A Know-Nothing political movement takes power and successfully abolishes science teaching in schools and universities, imprisoning and executing the remaining scientists. Later still there is a reaction against this destructive movement and enlightened people seek to revive science, although they have largely forgotten what it was [….] Nobody, or almost nobody, realizes that what they are doing is not natural science in any proper sense at all. (MacIntyre 1)

MacIntyre's thesis follows quite simply: “In the actual world which we inhabit the language of morality is in the same state of grave disorder as the language of natural science in the imaginary world” (2).

There are two points that bear on the analysis of Hobbes. The first is that the transformation of Hobbes' political absolutism to the modern state is not binary, but at least ternary: “[This] history had to be written in [at least] three distinct stages. The first was where the [things in question] flourished, the second where they suffered catastrophe and the third where they were restored in damaged form” (MacIntyre 3). It is not that Hobbes inherited confidence in his values that immediately evaporated after him. Hobbes represents several

moments in a history of value transformations that have since themselves transformed: first political confidence flourishes, then suffers catastrophe, then is restored in distorted form. I demonstrated this in only a few values, and only with one philosopher. Hobbes' politics and religion are merely exceptionally good examples; we could, however, pick any car on the train of history and analyze its relation to the common good and common wrong.

The second point is that this history of evaluation is itself "not an evaluatively neutral chronicle" (MacIntyre 3). To tell a history of the *loss* of moral functioning is to condemn something about contemporary morality. To tell a history about the loss of philosophical confidence is also to condemn something about the modern production of knowledge.

The next question, then, is what the nature of this loss entails for the modern production of knowledge: the loss is not merely a loss of some particular moral maxims; the loss is a transcendental loss regarding our *ability* to converse about value. I showed this before in Hobbes' specific politics. Concerning the moral of the state, we cannot even generally stipulate that the *telos* of society is peace. We can only make one in a plurality of arguments about the state's *telos*, in parity with other candidates such as freedom, equality, class exploitation, guilt, vengeance, or whatever.

Even this description of the loss is too sanguine, however, because we lack the criteria to evaluate what would even count as a *telos* of society: "The most striking feature of contemporary moral utterance is that so much of it is used to express disagreements; and the most striking feature of [these disagreements] is their interminable character [….] There seems to be no rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture" (MacIntyre 6). I have already shown the interminability of some issues (religion and rebellion) in interpreting Hobbes' values. MacIntyre briefly does the same with abortion, socialism, and just-war theory, but we could

demonstrate interminable moral disagreement by picking any contemporary moral issue *at random* and listing the antagonists. This propositional thesis is easy, too easy, to demonstrate. What remains to be explained is how we arrived at this state of moral disarray.

The rest of *After Virtue* is to fill in the details of the moral history that is analogous to the science fiction at the book's start. It is only one possible version of this tale.[29] MacIntyre argues that there are "key episodes in the social history which transformed [and displaced] morality" and that only through understanding this history can we "understand how the idiosyncrasies of everyday moral discourse came to be" (36). MacIntyre's episodes are the same episodes as in standard, European history: the heroic period, the classical period, the Christian period, the Enlightenment, and the Emotivists. The last of these episodes mark the final (so far) major phase in developing the liberal dictum that all is permitted so long as it does not hurt others. I have previously called this dictum the "common wrong" in contrast to the common good.

MacIntyre's genealogy is a fairly standard story of European history, and will be questioned on the same grounds. It describes the transformation of moral ideas within a relatively small slice of the world and perhaps places too much explanatory power in the story of western philosophy. On the other hand, the cannon and sail lent and lend an enormous amount of material power to the story of western philosophy. Western history and World history after 1803 are inextricable whether we like it or not. In any case, MacIntyre's genealogy, even if too narrow, certainly addresses the story I have been telling about Hobbes, and it addresses the problems of the dominant political ideology of the present world.

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[29]One of the problems with MacIntyre's theory of history is that he has few tools to argue that we should agree with his theory of disagreement. We can have all sorts of interminable meta-disagreements with him even if we accept the premise that our contemporary morality is one of interminable disagreement. For example, Marx and MacIntyre have incommensurable theories of the loss of moral confidence, and each of them will see the other as a symptom of the problem rather than a truly equal critic. For this reason I am concerned only with the parts of this theory that explain *why it is easy to weaponize philosophers* such as Hobbes.

The purpose of a genealogy is not to list a series of events, of course; the purpose is to bring to light overlooked aspects in the development of events. That overlooked aspect is this: the degradation of moral confidence in history was neither accidental, nor malevolent; *it was an ironic, tragic result of a series of attempts to save confidence in morality*. The loss of common moral confidence is not a good thing and was not considered to be a good thing until recently, if at all. Such a loss impedes our ability to identify value in the world. All else being equal, it would be preferable to have our ethical theses be at least communicable with one another.

It was only after the continued failure of people like Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Kant, and Mill to retain moral confidence, only after the hammer of critique (with sound logic!) pulverized this moral bedrock, only after a chain of failed ethical projects, that moral philosophy was privatized – privatized, because the alternative was to abandon moral philosophy entirely. Given how good the moral philosophers are at demolishing the arguments of their opponents, there was no realm left for moral philosophers to explore. The common wrong was the compromise, the peace-treaty, to save the bit of earth that remained unscorched.

To use MacIntyre's words, the Enlightenment was an attempt in "justifying morality" that "had to fail." It is not that "Kierkegaard, Kant, Diderot, Hume, Smith [and so on] were not adroit enough at constructing arguments," but that they are the "inheritors" of a moral framework "whose internal incoherence ensured the failure of the common philosophical project from the outset" *in spite of itself* (51). The common incoherence that MacIntyre is talking about is the attempt to derive a common moral good from human nature alongside the divorce of moral good from human nature itself: "Although each [philosopher] attempted in his positive arguments to base morality on human nature, each in his negative arguments moved [more and more toward the claim] that no valid argument can move from entirely factual premises to any moral or

evaluative conclusion" (56). 'Is' was divorced from 'ought' even in the attempt to derive the 'ought' from the 'is.'

What followed were arguments to account for the 'ought' without appeal to 'is,' whether that was Kant's categorical imperative or Mill's rule utility. These arguments, however, came with a price: "Each moral agent now spoke unconstrained by the externalities of divine law, natural teleology or hierarchical authority, but why should anyone else now listen to him? It [was] this question that both utilitarianism and analytical moral philosophy must be understood as attempting to answer [and] it is precisely this question which both fail to answer cogently" (68). The price for freedom in moral inquiry was the lack of a common purpose for moral inquiry.

Hobbes never had to pay that price. He is early enough in the history that he never had to question whether human nature entailed a politics, and he certainly never had to question whether human nature was valid in the first place! At the same time, Hobbes comes late enough in this history of ethics that he can sincerely attempt to construct political science as a natural science. Hobbes' transitionary moral location allowed him to say without a shred of irony that his political deductions from human nature could ensure an eternally peaceful society.

Once we have seen the diminution of confidence through this history of philosophy, we can begin to understand why Hobbes is weaponized in many interminable moral arguments, even against himself. I have made this point already, but there is a new implication at this point: Hobbes is *not by happenstance* the enemy of everyone's enemy; he is the enemy of everyone's enemy because he is conducive to our purposes. Our contemporary value theories (including politics) are exercises in disagreement. Without some common moral to direct our interpretive purpose, an ambiguous figure like Hobbes can be interpreted only in limited quantities lest he

reveal the embarrassing, background, moral disagreements. To put it another way, Hobbes is doomed to weapon-status because unless one is willing to sincerely consider and judge his axiological significance—not only whether peace is the highest good but whether there is a highest good for people—then he is useless for anything besides undermining the arguments of your opponents.

Fortunately for Hobbes' legacy, demolishing the arguments of one's opponents is presently in high demand. I have spent some time describing the permutations of Hobbes' potential as a weapon: I have examined some of the battlefields he inhabits, who the combatants are, and how he is used in those arenas, but I have said little about weaponization in general. The purpose and existence of a weapon is determined by the objectives of its user. For example, the weaponized purpose of a bat is to beat someone, but the existence of a bat as a weapon is also contingent on the need to bludgeon. A bat is not a weapon when you need to play baseball.

I have claimed that Hobbes is a good weapon because of his historical ambiguity, but that does not *necessarily* make a good weapon of him. Historical ambiguity is a useful weapon given the ambiguous status of moral confidence *in our own society*. It is specifically in a liberal, bourgeois setting, which values private liberty rather than critical consensus, where an ambiguous figure like Hobbes is the most divisive and *therefore* the most valuable as a weapon. Being the enemy of one's enemy can make you either a weapon or a fair-weather ally. Hobbes can be a fair-weather ally to Arminians, royalists, and 18th century liberals, but he is a weapon to people like Martinich, Cooke, Sreedhar, and myself. The former groups uses him in a game of high-stakes baseball about the truth of his ideas. We use him to bludgeon enemies in a war about his significance.

The difference lies in the supposed moral agreement versus the lack of moral agreement

in the conversations relevant to the interpreter. Hobbes is always politically dangerous, but the significance of being politically dangerous varies. He is either a politically dangerous conversation partner or a politically dangerous piece of data. I have certainly not engaged Hobbes as a conversation partner; in fact I agree with MacIntyre in claiming that our moral alienation makes doing so impossible. What I have done is shown that Hobbes is a dangerous weapon not only in religious or political battles, but that he is dangerous to a liberal world-view that cannot appreciate him as anything *but* a weapon. Where moral confidence is a spectre of the past, identifying the existence of moral confidence provides a house for that wraith to haunt.

I am not saying that the lack of moral confidence precipitates a lack of moral discussion. On the contrary, we should expect to see many competing moral inquires. The lack of confidence just precipitates a common supposition of the common wrong. On the side of the common wrong, we have deontologists, utilitarians, intuitionists, emotivists, nihilists, objectivists, capitalists, and so on. There also remains a small field for renouncers of the common wrong, though they have certainly not reconstructed a common good to satisfaction.[30] In any case, the logical limitations on the construction of the common good are powerful, but not necessarily insurmountable. There is at least the logical possibility of discussing the *question* of the common good. That said, the logical limitations are not the immediate set of limitations that we confront.

The limitations immediately before us are the political and moral limitations that undermine the construction of a common good before it can begin. The question is whether any meaningful resolution of moral theory is possible given the *institutionalized* loss of moral confidence that characterizes the humanities in the liberal, corporate university. Our ethical

[30]MacIntyre's taxonomy of these renouncer theories is the subtitle of his third book: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition. He considers this taxonomy to be exhaustive. While I think that we can conceive of more versions of moral inquiry than these, these three are all attempts to account for morality *after* the loss of confidence was obvious *and* these attempts do not accept the liberal permission of limitless disagreement.

disagreements are, indeed, sometimes the results of the logical contradictions among our moral theories. MacIntyre points out an additional cause of disagreement in his third book *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*: "What appears to be an *impasse* resulting from the theoretical commitments of those involved in debate may sometimes, in part at least, be one brought about by institutional arrangements and social habits" (MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions* 6).

In other words, what appears to be an ineradicable disagreement between theories may appear as such because it is politically inexpedient to solve it in the institutions that produce knowledge, "as is the case in the university today" (MacIntyre 6). In other words, even if one holds hope for a possible future of common moral inquiry, the actual arrangements of knowledge production may not ground such hopes.

This is a bold, but not unmerited, accusation. Where knowledge of common wrong has done away with knowledge of the common good, there is no need whatsoever to sponsor the inquiry into a common good:

> Nothing is more striking in the contemporary university than the extent of the apparently ineliminable divisions and conflicts within all humanistic enquiry. In psychology psychoanalysts, Skinnerian behaviourists, and cognitive theorists are as far from resolving their difference as ever. In political enquiry Straussians, Neo-Marxists, and anti-ideological empiricists are at least as deeply antagonistic. In literary theory and history deconstructionists, historicists, heirs of I.A. Richardson and readers of Harold Bloom similarly contend. (MacIntyre 6)

Why should it be otherwise? The value of the common wrong is the personal expression of one's values and the assurance of being unmolested in expressing them. Nothing affords the promise of personal inquiry into a topic of one's choice like the liberal university. The price of this promise,

however, was that "moral and theological truth ceased to be recognized as objects of substantive enquiry and instead were relegated to the realm of privatized belief" (MacIntyre 217).

To emphasize, the loss of confidence was a price, not a plot. The liberal university was a nobly motivated attempt to include as valid objects of inquiry those things that were not approved by authority, to end the forced exclusion of atheists, Jews, Aristotelians, and so on. Just as with Hobbes' scientific theology, however, this attempt to free the university contained the seeds of its own negation. The problem was that the freer pursuit of knowledge was the fragmentation of the production of knowledge:

> Liberalism […] appealed to two sets of premises, one true and one false. The true premises concerned those [exclusory] injustices to individuals of which the pre-liberal university was certainly guilty. The false premises propounded the thesis that human rationality is such [that] if freed from external constraints imposed by religious and moral tests, it will produce both progress and agreement among all rational persons. (MacIntyre 225)

Natural science thrives under such an environment due to the "quiet, informal, unstated" exclusions that they retain as a privilege for reliably revolutionizing the technology of the state. Other areas must either mimic the technical acumen of the natural sciences (as in social sciences) or allow totally unconstrained disagreement (as in literary criticism.) Philosophy takes both routes, with analytic and continental camps routinely excommunicating one another.

All of these consequences are unfortunate enough sacrifices in the specialization of academic disciplines, but the common good suffers the most damage. Questions of morality are all but eliminated because moral theories "cannot accept the indifference presupposed by such tolerance" of the limitless disagreements permitted in the humanities (MacIntyre 225). In the

modern university, moral inquiry means challenging a class of students either to push a fat man in front of a train to save five other men or not to push him. Even saying, "YES! Push that man onto the tracks!" is antithetical to the "free" pursuit of knowledge by the student. In this way, the liberal university carries on its ironic, exclusory campaign.

Of course the liberal university cannot exclude inquiry in the same way as its predecessors did. The liberal university "achieve[s] this exclusion not by formally placing the excluded doctrine under a ban or prohibition, but by admitting it only in reduced or distorted versions, so that it unavoidably becomes an ineffective contender for intellectual and moral allegiance" (MacIntyre 219). We saw this process at work before in Sreedhar's attempt to recuperate Hobbes' conditional anarchism into the history of liberal rights.

One of the most chilling examples of this exclusion-by-distortion is the recuperation of Nietzsche's genealogical critique of Protestant, liberal ethics.[31] Nietzsche is one of MacIntyre's exemplars, who provides one alternative to the common wrong, and Nietzsche had nothing but scorn for the mendacity of the liberal university. Nonetheless, "genealogists now occupy professional chairs with an ease which might have [certainly would have!] discomfited Nietzsche." It is permitted to love the aphorism, permitted to say (as Nietzsche sometimes did) that the scientific university is a house of life-denying guilt, permitted to argue that the form of the university must change, so long as those arguments are "expressed in conventional academic journal articles and lectures" (MacIntyre 218).

Furthermore, MacIntyre points out that recuperation is "not merely a problem for the genealogist." Anyone who considers the genealogical critique to be a legitimate *challenge* to the

[31]In brief summary: Christian morals are motivated by the promise of vengeance against those who were stronger at them in life, and this association of the good with weakness survives the death of the church and permeates liberalism. I have no intention of arguing for or against that perspective, but it is an extremely substantial ethical challenge to the limitless disagreement allowed by liberal tolerance.

“whole conventional academic mode” faces the dilemma of either rejecting the university or being recuperated by it (220). In other words, being anti-liberal does not entail being pro-Nietzschean. Indeed, this is the entire logical problem beneath the institutional problem: the loss of a common moral is a real loss. It is a loss even for people who commonly renounce the common wrong.

The Thomist is one such alternative renouncer. The Thomist is MacIntyre's alternative to the Nietzschian, and the Thomist is at as much risk of recuperation as the genealogist. Both the Thomist and the Nietzschien are in a sort of transcendental solidarity: while they are at odds in almost every positive thesis, they recognize that common moral confidence has disappeared from public life and that nothing like it has since come to take its place. As I stated before, the philosophical disagreements between the Thomist and Nietzschean may be possible to solve, or they may not be.

The problem is that the Thomist and the Nietzschean are not even in a position to work out their philosophical disagreements. The point is that, in the university, any debate about some common moral *telos,* whether one is upholding a moral tradition or destroying it, must be performed either in the distorted, reduced mood of moral uncertainty or not performed at all.

We are finally in a position to understand the obstacles to addressing the second order conflicts, which lie subterranean to the conflicts of Hobbes’ religion and politics. The first obstacle is that the institutions of knowledge (re)production are rarely interested in solving this set of conflicts. Such a lack of interest is coherent with the pluralistic, inclusive motives involved in the evolution of the university. The university is pleased to encourage the investigation of first order conflicts. It is pleased to question Hobbes’ religion. It is even pleased to allow a person’s expression of religion in the argument about Hobbes’ religion. The university remains, however,

ill-equipped to judge such investigations.

More accurately, it is not the university that encourages or fails to judge; the university is not the type of thing that has the agency to judge or refrain from judgment. Stated accurately, the first obstacle to answering the second set of conflicts is that the university must limit the *discursive space* available for questions about value. It must limit (rather than does limit) because such a limitation is part of the price of the freer pursuit of knowledge. For example, if the university were to take one version of Christianity as dogmatic, then the question of Hobbes' religion would be entirely fixed upon the axioms involved. It would not even meaningfully be a question, but rather an undiscovered statement. The benefit of the university is that Hobbes' religion is not determined prior to investigation. The detriment of the university is that Hobbes' religion is indeterminable even after investigation.

The first obstacle is not the most terrifying one, however. The first obstacle is just that the modern university encourages a value of pluralism, the concept of which contains a contradiction or two. The first obstacle is nothing more than the fact that actions sometimes have contradictory effects. The first obstacle is no more unfamiliar to life than the ocean being salty. The truly vicious obstacle is in the case where scholars do share some semblance of a common value. Even when scholars *agree* on some common purpose (*e.g.* getting at what Hobbes "said and meant,") the *aporia* of liberalism remains tenacious. This is the case with every single interpretation of Hobbes that I have heretofore presented. Martinich, Sreedhar and Cooke share a common value of figuring out what Hobbes really meant to argue. They totally fail to resolve even the most basic questions about what Hobbes really meant to argue.

The second obstacle to these second order conflicts is that, even when we *want* to devise a common academic purpose, we no longer seem capable of the confidence necessary to do so.

This failure is evident even in the criticisms of the university and *even in my own argument*. The Thomist and the Nietzschien may share a transcendental solidarity, and we are grateful for it. That said, the reverse of the medal is the depressing, abject failure of our attempts to banish the devil of uncertainty. We have no way to determine what rite would even be effective to banish it. It is possible that no such rite exists. This is the terrifying obstacle.

There is a deliciously recursive irony to this history of moral philosophy. The problems for our investigations of Hobbes are partly inaugurated by Hobbes himself, and they are inaugurated totally contrary to Hobbes' wishes. Hobbes' confidence in the legacy of scientific rationalism was second only to his confidence in himself. We would have to pity poor Hobbes, were he still alive, for his confidence could not stand against the subsequent cunning of history.

It must not be forgotten that Hobbes, though an excellent example, is still one example of many. Beyond Hobbes, we can generate plenty of examples of theories that are either not politically viable studies or viable only in distorted forms. Freud is an excellent example, though he is excluded less by the liberal drive to tolerate disagreement and more by the fetishization of the politically useful techniques that characterize post-positivist, social sciences. Let us also not forget the poor Marxist professor, whose life purpose of appropriating the production of ideology is in blatant contradiction with the institutional exploitation of their labor and theft of their work. To tell the story of institutional recuperation and transformation will eventually require an exhaustive genealogy.

7. SPOILS OF VICTORY

Since I have yet to complete this exhaustive genealogy, my purpose here has been twofold: to expose the *aporia* of the interpretive conflicts that result in Hobbes' weaponization

and to isolate the set of conflicts that explain the *aporia* of those interpretive conflicts. One consequence of the history of these conflicts is the loss of common moral confidence in our academic circles. This loss encourages us to weaponize moral confidence rather than be morally confident. The fact that weaponization is characteristic of our moral investigations is not problematic by itself. By itself, weaponization may have just been another chapter in the story of the common good. The problem arises when weaponization is conjoined with the loss of confidence in a common struggle. The problem is when there are no good battles to fight with those weapons. More precisely, the problem arises when we have no tools to figure out what a good battle would even be.

Do not misunderstand. When I speak of having a good battle in common, I am not speaking of the same inclusive pluralism that I have criticized. I am not fantasizing that subjugated peoples and repressed classes may work towards some pluralistic dialogue with their oppressors. To speak of "our" battle is to include only a particular "our." We are speaking of those who are oppressed and coerced by the power of the university. We are speaking more precisely to those who will not have their hunger for education sated by a meager, recuperative bone that the capitalist may deign to throw us. We are speaking of those who will not accept the hierarchy of instruction and those who will not accept the commodification of their work.

If a reader asked at this point, "So who, positively, are you talking about? Am I in this class or not?" then I would give the frustrating answer to figure it out yourself. Given my argument, I cannot provide a positive definition of what this "our" is.[32] The common wrong has limited us to defining ourselves negatively against the state and against the capitalist. Few people

[32] That all said, we can give signs in lieu of a definition. If you believe that students should adapt to a curriculum rather than develop it, if you believe that the purpose of education is to produce a healthy workforce, if you believe that students should ever pay for access to your privileged monopoly on information, if you believe that education is legitimized by the state, then you are the oppressor.

want to be in the class of oppressor, and fewer would admit it. The veil of the common wrong makes it hard to deny someone's purported resistance.[33] That is no problem by itself, because then we just have a diversity of resistance. The problem arises when this purely negative resistance is conjoined with the recuperative ability of the oppressor. The oppressor locates the most useful instance of resistance, repurposes it, and erases the other instances. This was the same problem that we saw earlier in the university's inclusive exclusion. Our lack of confident access to a battlefield combined with the limits of the common wrong leaves us vulnerable to recuperation.

The question is whether we are necessarily vulnerable. As I mentioned before, there are both logical and institutional obstacles to the common good. It may be true that common confidence is strongly, logically impossible. But because the institutional obstacles occlude our vision of the logical ones, the logical disagreements are unanswerable before first addressing the institutional ones. For now, the question is whether the liberal university could provide arenas of struggle against oppression that are *also* not vulnerable to recuperation.

One reason to hold some hope for the university is that these problems I am talking about are not new ones. Even though the beast of the liberal university outgrew the leash of its purpose, the beast of engenders calls for its own reform. In other words, the climate of disagreement results in disagreement with the climate of disagreement. When it is working at its best, the machinery of the university, like the machinery of science, improves on itself each time it is wrong. Indeed, the machinery will improve itself only through being wrong. Being wrong

[33] I am speaking here of genuine efforts to resist oppression in good faith that are susceptible to the tragedy of recuperation. I am speaking of the cases where people's subjective desire to resist oppression does not necessarily match the objective function of their behavior. I am *not* speaking of the mendacious efforts of the state and economic apparatuses, of the universities, of the police, of the courts, and so on, to delude and seduce people into oppression with a human face. I am not speaking of any reform that merely absorbs more people into the ranks of the oppressor.

becomes a weapon. Furthermore, the tragedy of recuperation has been recognized plenty of times already. The entire idea of area studies and the entire business of post-modernism are (at their best) attempts to carve a place of resistance to the capitalist rule of education. Many people have attempted to wrest control of the apparatus from the state.

One reason to abandon all hope for the university is that these problems I am talking about are not new ones. If the process of reformation is itself included in the calculations of the oppressor, then simple negations will be invariably assimilated. To put it another way, the machinery of the weapon improves, but improves for whom? The weapon improves for its *wielder*. Indeed, this is the whole problem. Let us assume the controversial premise, just for the sake of argument, that we were once the wielders of the university.

Let us assume that all of the 20th century inclusivism and pedagogy and post-modernism and recursive, self-referential Marxism were in good faith and were at one point dangerous and subversive weapons. I am quite willing to stipulate all of these general intentions to the self-reforming university; however, the present reality is that, we wield this weapon *no longer*. Universities are corporate ventures with business models. They exist to reproduce the skills and ideologies necessary for productive and reproductive labor. There are good reasons to think that this has always been the nature of the school, but even given our stipulation otherwise, the value of the 2013 university is certainly economic and not pedagogical.

Faced with these facts, we may either wrest the weapon from its wielder or try to find other weapons. The past history of resistance to the institution has generally opted for the former, of seizing control of the weapon.

If the weapon could be retaken, then I would not be opposed to doing so. Surely such a recapture is logically possible. There is no *a priori* obstacle to doing so; however, all the attempts

so far to seize control of the weapon have failed. Why do I say that they have failed? I could go through a history of examples and point out the particular recuperations of particular struggles, but I will put it more simply and brutally: capital and state oppression are *thriving*. If the intentions of the liberal university were to destroy such things, then both I as well as science demand a counter-explanation of the persistence and health of capital. The *a posteriori* obstacle to shattering the institutional limitations is that there can be no partial success. There can be no individual steps on the road to a liberated educational system. Resistance to the institution by means of seizure must proceed absolutely or else the virus of capitalism will re-infect the body of the university and *then mutate* into an even more deadly virus.

I am not saying that this more traditional notion of seizing control is impossible, but that it is hard. I am not saying that this more traditional notion should not be pursued and planned for, but that its conditions for success are high. I am also not saying that resistors should isolate into camps and snipe at one another. I am saying that we need to consider different methodological weapons. Because looking at the future is impossible, and because the weapons of the 20th resistance have either failed or been stolen from us, I have tried to look at some of the weapons of the past. I have tried to salvage an old arsenal for a contemporary war.

The idea of salvaging old propositions and theories for new conflicts should sound familiar by now, because that is what Hobbes did himself. To the religionist, Hobbes salvaged the old propositions of Christianity and used new scientific theory. To the secularist, Hobbes used Christianity as a theoretical tool to ground his political propositions. However you slice it, Hobbes explained and proposed things in strange, dangerous ways. Do not misunderstand. The values and battlefields of the 17th century are not and should not be the same ends of us who decry oppression; however, the existences of those conflicts are valuable *reminders that our*

current situation is relatively new.

Recuperation is a clean-up job; it is a strategy of making people forget and distort a history. Recuperation is the attempt to make a contingent fact appear to be a necessary law. Recuperation encourages people to believe *absurd and false things*, for examples, that capitalism has existed since Babylon, that there have always been nation-states, that school has always been in the "public" sphere, or that the "public" sphere has always included the state. Orwell illustrated this perfectly in seven words, "We've always been at war with Eurasia."

Hobbes is a reminder that none of those apparently eternal truths is true. We should think of other reminders that other things are also not true. The development of state capital and neoliberal pluralism are historically located and historically vulnerable. They are not unapproachable machines; they operate according to their own logic and they betray the traces of the history that conditioned them. There was something before them; there could be something after them.

The point is to resist without being recuperated. If we want to learn how to do that, then we should probably look at theories and people that have proven difficult to recuperate. We must be able to isolate the dangerous ambiguities contained in our theories of value, and I have tried to do that with Hobbes. I have tried to isolate Hobbes' dangerous ambiguity at two levels of conflicts: the historical conflicts and the interpretive conflicts. Recall the distinction between disagreement about propositions and disagreements about theoretical explanations. Hobbes was a statist but for totally different reasons than a modern statist is; he was a statist-anarchist. Hobbes was a Christian but for totally different reasons than many Christians are; he was a Christian-naturalist.

In order to oppose oppressive institutional apparatuses like the contemporary university, we must be able to distinguish and weaponize the various theoretical explanations for its existence. We need not necessarily have a ready-at-hand program or alternative idea of how to manage the apparatus. Such programs have proven vulnerable to recuperation. We should, however, attempt to cultivate the possibility of alternatives, and that means cultivating our minds such that we are not deluded by recuperative fables. We should also promote ambiguity in a way that resists recuperation. If we are able to tell the story of what liberal education was itself the alternative to, then we are better equipped to produce alternatives ourselves.

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