



The Stranger, Prudence, and Trust in Hobbes's Theory

Author(s): Frederick D. Weil

Source: *Theory and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 5, (Sep., 1986), pp. 759-788

Published by: Springer

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/657309>

Accessed: 12/06/2008 16:37

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=springer>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We enable the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

The stranger, prudence, and trust in Hobbes's theory

FREDERICK D. WEIL

Department of Sociology, University of Chicago

In recent years, a number of interpreters of Hobbes's social and political theory have attempted to place it more firmly in its historical context, relating it not only to other theoretical developments, but also to changes in social and political structures.¹ Despite their differences, the more recent interpreters have converged on several key points regarding Hobbes's place in seventeenth-century English history. Just as much recent historiography has moved away from interpreting the English Civil War or Glorious Revolution as bourgeois or capitalist revolutions,² recent interpreters of Hobbes tend to criticize the picture of Hobbes as a bourgeois or capitalist theorist. They emphasize several features in place of this. The aristocracy did indeed decline in this period, and Hobbes was a critic of aristocratic virtue, in at least some sense of the term. But more importantly, this was a period of crisis for monarchical absolutism but of strengthening of the nation-state, and Hobbes was willing to accept either in principle as long as sovereignty was clear and undivided. And structures of political liberalism and religious toleration were importantly developed at this time, and Hobbes contributed to the theoretical defense of both – perhaps paradoxically, given his absolutism.

I suggest an interpretation here that attempts to account for these factors in a new synthesis, and I also try to show how his much-discussed theory of human political nature relates to the broader historical context.³ I argue that the debate about the decline of the aristocracy and the rise of the gentry and the bourgeoisie, while suggestive, is not central. Instead, the expansion of political participation in a large society – in the context of the first breakdown of absolutism in a nation-state – appears to be the key sociological factor underlying the tension between pride and fear in Hobbes's account of human political nature, on which his theory builds. Hobbes's implicit recognition of these historical developments distinguishes his theory in important respects from those of Machiavelli

and Locke, despite other similarities. This sociological grounding also conditioned Hobbes's prudential arguments for the moderation of religious conflict, which consist of a re-equilibration of the public and the private realms. These prudential arguments, in turn, form the basis for Hobbes's liberalism or proto-liberalism. And his attitude toward the growth of trust among mutual opponents and dissenters from state policy turns out to be a factor that plays a key role in many current liberal theories and analyses of the historical development of liberal sociopolitical structures. Because trust is the obverse of fear, and because it must be cultivated "artificially" under the new historical conditions, it links Hobbes's sociological modernity to his prudential liberalism.⁴

The stranger: the sociological basis for Hobbes's view of human nature

Until fairly recently, many interpreters claimed that Hobbes was an early ideologist of the rising bourgeoisie,⁵ perhaps the first, but more recent interpreters challenge this view on the basis of further textual interpretation.⁶ And current historiography makes this interpretation still more unlikely by indicating that the rise of the bourgeoisie cannot be dated from this period, that class divisions did not play a key role in the upheavals of seventeenth-century England, and that these upheavals did not revolutionize that country's social structure as later revolutions elsewhere were to do.⁷ Perhaps it is more justifiable to suggest that this century marked a turning point in the development of political structures – to which we can trace the development of the modern nation-state (secular, post-feudal, post-absolutist) and of a liberal political culture that legitimates political contestation. If so, the historical developments most relevant to Hobbes's theory might be these: that the Civil War and Glorious Revolution represented the first breakdown of western absolutism in a modern nation-state; that religious conflict, which had been declining, rose again and was then defused; and that rights of political participation, or citizenship, began to extend to an increasingly large proportion of the population. All these developments sufficiently alarmed the existing elites that they were prepared to resolve their own conflicts, short of victory, mainly in order to contain the further spread of participation more broadly in the population. These historical and sociological factors created a decisively different context for social theory from those of the Renaissance or the period of absolutism, and they suggest where we might begin looking for elements of Hobbes's originality.

Hobbes wrote, in part, as a partisan in the Civil War, but he was clearly

more concerned with political stability than with which side should win. For he recognized, as did others, that the rift among the elites was superficial compared to the potential conflict that would result from more general involvement. In this moreover, as Q. Skinner⁸ has shown, Hobbes did not make a unique contribution: some of the most characteristic elements of his theory were developed simultaneously and independently by other writers. After the execution of Charles I, the abolition of the House of Lords, and the proclamation of the Commonwealth in early 1649, the revolution had become more radical than most of the moderates in the Presbyterian Party wanted, and it was obviously completely unacceptable to the royalists. At the same time, some of the more radical groups wanted to go even further. Thus, for the Independents, who wished to consolidate their position, it was necessary on one hand to prevent the further spread of revolution, and on the other hand to gain the support of those to their right; they greatly needed a theory of political obligation to legitimate the new regime. Milton's argument that the new government reflected the will of the people was apparently sufficient to convince many of the left, such as Gerrard Winstanley the Digger; and many on the right were persuaded by a series of arguments (the "de facto" theories) to which Hobbes contributed. These arguments, developed over the following several years, turned increasingly away from religious (mainly Pauline or Calvinist) injunctions to obey the powers that be, as largely ineffective and unconvincing, and made the argument instead that de facto government was the only stop to anarchy: that people in a state of nature — that is, a state of war of all against all — had equal and absolute rights to everything needed for self-preservation, and that political society is thus the product of natural necessity. In this respect, Skinner argues, Hobbes (who only for the first time in 1650–1651 published his major political works in England in English, although he had completed the *Elements of Law* before 1640) distinguished himself from the other theorists mainly in completely eliminating religious justification for political obligation and by his characterization of human political nature.

But we need to be more specific about Hobbes's contribution, for Machiavelli preceded him in eliminating religious justification and in his low estimation of human political nature ("A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good" [*The Prince*, chapter xv]). Does Hobbes do more than simply apply Machiavelli's principles to his own contemporary situation, perhaps taking care only to hide the source of his ideas (since Machiavelli's name was virtually synonymous with that of the devil in seventeenth-century England) in order to make it more ef-

fective or acceptable?⁹ For like Hobbes after him, Machiavelli posited a selfish or egoistic human nature and a natural equality among people, and he regarded rational calculation on this basis rather than traditional religious ethics to be the only effective way to achieve the desired social order – and while Machiavelli preferred a republic and Hobbes a monarchy, both put internal cohesion above the choice of regime form. And like Hobbes, Machiavelli took into consideration a context of war and conflict and high levels of mass political participation in his theory.¹⁰ To this extent, then, Machiavelli seems to anticipate Hobbes’s argument of the need for political order in preference to a murderous “state of nature.” But while Hobbes considered ambition and the quest for glory to be purely destructive of social order and thus advocated their suppression, Machiavelli wanted to redirect them to invigorate the regime.¹¹ For Hobbes, fear plays a more central role.¹² And while Machiavelli may have advocated an Italian coalition for the purpose of driving out the foreign invaders, he remained oriented to a city-state (or perhaps an empire with a city-state as its center).¹³ Hobbes accepted the context of a nation-state. And finally, while Machiavelli’s highly “political” theory of *virtu* can be seen as an attempt to revive or introduce an element of ancient republican virtue,¹⁴ Hobbes took an “unpolitical” and utilitarian approach to resolving extreme (especially religious) conflict by attempting to exclude it from the public agenda.¹⁵ Thus, Hobbes differs from Machiavelli, a previous modern theorist, at least in part by his emphasis on fear, by his assumption of a large sociopolitical context, and by his attempt to depoliticize important issues of conflict. This comparative sketch has brought us almost a full circle from the assertion that Hobbes contributed little new compared to his contemporaries, besides his psychology and his secularism, with only a few elements with which to consider his originality – but they will prove important.

Leo Strauss’s account of Hobbes’s characterization of human political nature as a dynamic of fear and pride is probably still best.¹⁶ However, Strauss’s critics assert that he is wrong to accept this as the real starting point of Hobbes’s political theory, rather than his reaction to his historical context.¹⁷ And to the extent that Strauss *does* ground his interpretation in an historical context, Keith Thomas has convincingly challenged his characterization of the decline of aristocratic virtue and his suggestion that Hobbes replaced it with a theory of bourgeois virtue.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the main core of Strauss’s account remains persuasive, and if the historical factors considered above are indeed most relevant, then this interpretation of Hobbes’s psychology must still be put into the appropriate historical framework.

Hobbes takes Aristotle as a negative point of departure in constructing a self-consciously anti-traditional account of human nature, for Aristotle's view was incorporated into the traditional theory that Hobbes found unsatisfactory. Aristotle's theory, in Hobbes's view, and particularly its effect on contemporary thinking in the Church and in the schools, is pernicious to the public state, and he states that "scarce anything can be more absurdly said in natural philosophy than that which now is called Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, nor more repugnant to government than much of that he hath said in his *Politics*, nor more ignorantly than a great part of his *Ethics*" (*Lev.* 46 [687; cf. 798]).¹⁹ At the beginning of the sections on secular government in both *De Cive* (V, 5; cf. I, 2) and the *Leviathan* (17 [225–227]), Hobbes directly confronts Aristotle's assertion that man is by nature a political animal. Comparing humans to other animals that Aristotle calls political (bees, ants, etc.), Hobbes first of all denies that people are naturally sociable – that there is a natural agreement among them as there is among social animals – but rather asserts that their coming together in society is artificial (the opposite of natural) and by compact. Moreover, people are kept in society by force; they are kept peaceful and made to direct their actions to the common benefit through fear of punishment. The reason for people's natural unsociability is their natural egoism: everyone competes with everyone else for "honor and dignity" – that is, for glory – and this egoistical competition is the grounds for "envy and hatred, and finally war." For glory lies in comparison with others, and everyone thinks only of his own private interests, not the common good: therefore, people are not naturally sociable but rather naturally vain, and can only be kept peacefully in society by force or threat of force. Hobbes agrees with Aristotle that humans alone among the social animals have the power of speech and of reason, but he believes that these only lead to dissension. For among humans, who can reason, each one vainly thinks himself to be wiser than all others and better able to govern; and each strives to reform and innovate, some one way, some another, until all vain persons plunge themselves into conflict and civil war. Likewise, people use language, the "art of words," to confound the truth with their own selfish ends, representing good as evil and evil as good; whereas really "there is no authentical doctrine concerning right and wrong, good and evil, besides the constituted laws in each realm and government" (*De Cive*, preface); there is not natural justice but only the conventional justice of the artificial state, and the de facto state is the only barrier to anarchy and civil war. Thus, the artificial but lawful state is not naturally harmonious or hierarchical, as is Aristotle's virtuous state, but is rather an uneasy association of vain people held together by fear of punishment.

There is more than a superficial similarity between Hobbes's representation of all humanity and Aristotle's representation of the many, that they must be kept in check by force or threat of force; and Strauss believes that this represents a lowering of ultimate goals or limiting of horizons and perhaps a denial of the efficacy of wisdom unaided by force.²⁰ However, Hirschman points out that by Hobbes's time traditional orientations were thought to be ineffective in restraining the dangerous passions (pride, avarice, lust) of the powerful few as well as of the many, and that while Machiavelli advocated redirecting them, Hobbes argued that they should be suppressed.²¹ For like the many of Aristotle, Hobbes's human being is ruled by passions; by nature, his passions are stronger than his reasonableness. The natural basis of everything one thinks or does lies in the passions: all life is motion, and the small beginnings of voluntary motion are called endeavors toward or away from some object – appetite and desire, or aversion. For humans are naturally hedonistic, and each person is a measure of all that is good or bad for himself, calling good what he desires and evil what he hates, “there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good and evil to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves” (*Lev.* 6 [120]). Thus, it would seem that there is, in fact, no final aim or goal for humans as social animals or for society as a whole; that is, Hobbes seems to have rejected traditional teleology, and this is the case. For felicity – which is the gratification of desires – does not reach a stable condition of fulfillment as it does in traditional thought. A person may become satiated with some particular sensual pleasure, but the desire for egoistic gratification, that is, vanity, has no end, for egoistic gratification consists in our mutual comparison, each with one another. Aristotle's society begins with natural human need and ends with the gratification of natural, harmonious sociability; Hobbes's human being begins with the natural desire and vanity and ends either in war or in an unfulfilling (constraining) artificial society, or (if he is ultimately successful) he ends as a domineering lord over all others. Thus, the desire for anything is the desire for power, and this desire, especially, can never end except in the end of life, death: and to have no desire is to be dead.

So that in the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire for power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight than he has already attained to, or that he cannot be content with moderate power, but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well which he hath present without the acquisition of more (*Lev.* 11 [161]; cf. 8 [139]).

Now death, of course, is the great equalizer: no natural person is immor-

tal, and all people are equal in that they all die. Plato and Aristotle insist on the natural superiority of some people because of their wisdom, but deny that anyone can know by natural means what happens after death (although Plato-Socrates optimistically says that nothing can harm a good person either in life or after death [*Apology* 29A–B, 40C–41D]). Most of Christian theology and the scholastic tradition, on the other hand, say that God’s judgment of our life on earth will affect our state after death, whether we will be blessed or damned, and that our knowledge of this judgment (although not of its results) is certain: we know by revelation, miracles, natural reason, doctrine, and so on (there is disagreement concerning the means by which we know). Hobbes here agrees with the ancients against the Christian schoolmen that

there is no natural knowledge of man’s estate after death, much less of the reward that is then to be given to breach of faith [here, of a contract], but only a belief grounded upon other men’s sayings that they know it supernaturally, or that they know those, that knew them, that knew others, that knew it supernaturally; breach of faith cannot be called a precept of reason or nature (*Lev.* 15 [206]).

Indeed Hobbes denies in several places – and even on scriptural evidence – that anything worse can happen to a person, that there is any greater punishment reserved in hell-fires, than death: the worst evil Hobbes can imagine is to be revived from death in order to die naturally a second time (*Lev.* 38 [489–491], 44 [647–691]).

Thus, it becomes clear that his skepticism, together with his denial of a summum bonum in life, clears the way for an assertion of the natural equality of all people. Hobbes makes this assertion on the grounds that, not only is there no greatest good, but that death is the “chiefest of natural evils” (*De Cive* I, 7): “They are equals who can do equal things against the other; but they who can do the greatest things, namely kill, can do equal things. All men are therefore among themselves by nature equal; the inequality we now discern, hath its spring from the civil law” (*De Cive* I, 3). Because people live by their passions and can have no natural knowledge of any good greater than felicity – such as it is – the worst evil is to live a short life, to die too soon; and because one’s greatest appetite or desire lies in his vanity, there can be no greater blow to his pride than to die violently, at the hands of another. The only thing worse than simple death is violent death, before our natural time, at the hands of another; and there is no one so weak that he does not have the power, if only “by secret machination, or by confederacy with others” to kill the strongest person, and there is no one “so dull of understanding

as not to judge it better to be ruled by himself, than to yield himself to the government of another,” and thereby expose himself to the mercy of the other for his life. Thus, Hobbes also denies, if not the existence, the effectiveness of natural inequalities of the mind as claimed by traditional theory in respect to the only absolute he recognizes, violent death; for “prudence is but experience, which equal time equally bestows on all men.” “Whether therefore men be equal by nature, the equality is to be acknowledged; or whether unequal, because they are like to contest for dominion, it is necessary for the obtaining of peace, that they be esteemed as equal” (*De Cive* III, 13; *Lev.* 13 [183]).

A tension therefore exists within human political nature between an unlimited desire for power, vanity, and an absolute fear of violent death at the hands of another. The one is the cause of all civil disturbances, and the other the cause of prudent reasonableness and peace. Strauss presents, on this problem, an outline of Hegel’s insight into the growth of man’s realization of the need for civil society from his original antisocial nature in Hobbes’s theory.²² The very equality of all vain persons causes them to overestimate their own worth, wisdom and power in relation to others. However, people come into real, physical conflict over (1) competition for the objects of their desires which they cannot all enjoy, (2) defense of their own goods which others try to seize from them and, (3) the vain desire of “every man . . . that his companion should value him at the same rate he sets upon himself” (*Lev.* 13 [184–185]). The vain person, who lives in his own imagination, and believes himself to be superior to all others, steps out of his imaginary world when he attempts to assert his claim to superiority in the physical world. The ensuing struggle between the two claimants to superiority soon takes on the character of a struggle to the death, in which the lesser person realizes that his life is in danger and comes to know fear: thus natural person moves from the passion of vanity, or desire for power, to the passion of fear. The first social relationship to arise from this struggle is the master-servant relationship; and from the loser’s (the servant’s) fear for his life arises the first higher form of self-consciousness: the servant’s self-consciousness based on fear is a more advanced form than the master’s, which is still based on vanity. This form of domination is “natural” because it proceeds directly from the passions (vanity and the desire for power) of the master; and “natural” society based entirely on conquest – despotism – is theoretically possible (see *De Cive* V, 12; *Lev.* 17 [228]).

Thus, fear of death shatters the natural person’s illusions on which his

vanity rests, and introduces prudence into his outlook, “a certain foresight of future evil” (*De Cive* I, 2, note 2). And the prudent person knows that, unless he is “successful” in the extreme, unless he becomes an absolute despot – which is always theoretically possible, but practically probable only on a very small scale – he cannot kill or subdue all his potential enemies (that is, everyone else). All prudent people but the absolutely powerful live naturally in mutual fear of each other, and Hobbes presumably considers the person without fear, even a successful despot, to be imprudent. For the prudent and reasonable alternative to the condition of mutual fear – which is the condition of anarchy, the war of all against all – is compact: we seek “to get some fellows; that if their needs must be war, it may not yet be against all men, nor without some helps” (*De Cive* I, 13). Thus, Strauss argues, reason itself grows out of the fear of violent death at the hands of another; and the highest reason suggests a compact of all persons in society.²³ And in order that there be no further conflict among people caused by their “pride and other passions,” they establish over themselves “artificially” the absolute sovereignty (the form of the regime left open, although monarchy is preferred) of the Leviathan, the “King of the Proud” (*Lev.* 28 [362]).

Now, the primary passions of vanity and fear constitute a spectrum whose polar extremes define two types of personality: the proud man and the tame man.²⁴ The proud man is the vain and egoistical man. He seeks domination over others, and the society produced by his success consists of a natural hierarchy of strength; in its extreme form it is the “natural” society of despotism. The proud man is an aristocrat, his virtue is courage, and he seeks honor. The tame man is no less egotistical than the proud man, in that he also worries about his own survival and well-being, but he is the fearful man and seeks to avoid a fight. The society produced by his success can only appear with the disintegration of the proud man’s natural hierarchy of power, for the tame man’s society is the “artificial” state established by compact, out of disorder, by mutually fearful men. (It need not be a democratic or a capitalist society, as indeed, seventeenth-century England was not.) The goal of the tame man is peace and safety and his virtue is prudence. Thus, the two men are the two ideal types of the egoistic personality. Hobbes recognizes both types, but frankly doubts that in his contemporary state of affairs – in a state of civil war in which the domination of the medieval aristocratic structure and the “divinely appointed” absolutism have irremediably crumbled – that a stable social order can be built on the principles of the proud, or aristocratic man. For, barring outside conquest by another aristocratic or monarchical power, it would take too long for paternal

dominion to grow “naturally” into despotic dominion (*De Cive* IX, 10; *Lev.* 20 [256–257]); moreover, aristocratic magnanimity cannot be relied upon as the basis of the “artificial” (contracted) state, for there are too few aristocrats:

The force of words being . . . too weak to hold men to the performance of their covenants, there are in man’s nature but two imaginable helps to strengthen it. And those are either a fear of the consequences of breaking their word, or a glory or pride in appearing not to need to break it. This latter is a generosity too rarely found to be presumed on, especially in the pursuers of wealth, command or sensual pleasure, which are the greatest part of mankind. The passion to reckon upon is fear” (*Lev.* 14 [200]).

This would seem to constitute an argument against a warlike aristocratic ethos based on honor, and most interpreters agree that in one form or another, it is. However, interpretations that Hobbes is introducing as alternative anti-aristocratic, pro-bourgeois,²⁵ or even pro-democratic ethos have not held up well. Keith Thomas has argued against these views that Hobbes remained, if anything, loyal in his theory to the aristocrats who employed him, and that he did not have much sympathy for the interests of free-market capitalists, especially if their interests were harmful to the independence of the sovereign or to social peace.²⁶ Rather, Hobbes simply argues against aristocratic militarism based on honor and glory-seeking and in favor of aristocratic quietism – a line of argument that was not unique at the time, but reflected the demilitarization of the aristocracy and the contemporary situation in which the aristocracy found itself (especially during the Commonwealth). Indeed, much current historiography indicates that while the power and prestige of the aristocracy in mid-seventeenth century England was declining – and this was temporary – it was not matched by a rise of a capitalist gentry or the protest of a declining backwoods “mere” gentry.²⁷ There were no important class-based alignments in the Civil War, but rather a conflict between the Court and the Country.²⁸ Many historians argue that this demilitarization was a primary cause of the decline of aristocratic influence:²⁹ as long as the aristocracy had to be able to field knights for battle, they were able to maintain their influence over the large landholders who stood beneath them in the feudal hierarchy. However, in the century before the Civil War, not only was this requirement let expire, since England did not maintain a large internal army, but the landholdings of the gentry increased: the effective social distance thus decreased between the aristocracy and the high gentry.³⁰

Hobbes’s argument against aristocratic “vainglory” can thus be seen

partly as a call for the aristocracy to conduct itself appropriately to its new circumstances. But this does not entirely explain Hobbes's desire to suppress vanity entirely (or rather, to centralize it in the sovereign Leviathan), nor does it account for the importance he assigns to fear: Machiavelli also wrote in the context of a declined aristocracy, a centralizing (city-)state, and high levels of conflict without arguing as Hobbes did. The difference, I would like to argue, lies largely in the size of the political unit.

The social and political theory of the city-state, or polis, is predicated on the idea of a small society, and the social and political theory of feudalism is predicated on the idea of an organic society; but modern social and political theory is predicated on the idea of a society of strangers. The passage from traditional to modern society is, in part, a change from macro- to mass-society.³¹ Theoretically, in the polis all citizens know each other either directly or by reputation. The polis is meant to be a moral community, closed, and small enough to achieve the mutual trust needed to permit the mutual responsibility and supervision of actions or manners. Feudal society is "cosmo-politan" in its aims for perfection, or rather the salvation, of its members in the city of God; but, although it is a large society, its population is sufficiently depoliticized that the rulers, the aristocracy and clergy (the functional equivalent in this respect of the citizens: the enfranchised), can and do know each other directly or by reputation. Besides, the feudal structure of reciprocity and the organic theory of familial society bound the politically inactive members to the center, to the moral community. Of course, crises existed within the structures of premodern society, periods of civil war or challenge to authority when mutual fear became a factor in social relations. However, so long as everyone's legitimate place was known to all, these crises represented aberrations: indeed, strangers were to be feared, but they were – by virtue of being strangers – out of their natural place. The natural "home" of the stranger in the large city, the Babylon, was always considered to be outside the moral or holy community, and illegitimate.³²

The developments of the early modern age had a decisive impact on this situation. The levelling of European populations under the absolute monarchs and the undermining of the Church's moral authority by the Reformation made it impossible for everyone to be either known to each other or to be organically integrated into one moral community. And these changes were made sharper in England by the rise of mobility of all kinds,³³ the disproportionate growth of the elite sectors of the popu-

lation (especially the gentry),³⁴ and the increase in political participation, which reached levels in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century that were not reached again even after the Reform Act of 1832. About thirty to forty percent of the adult male population probably had the vote by the time of the Long Parliament, and non-voting political activity was presumably higher.³⁵ As the conflict between the Court and the Country increased over the first part of the seventeenth century, Parliamentary elections assumed a more central place in the struggle; and since the demilitarized aristocracy's traditional place of leadership had decayed, the large gentry were drawn into the power vacuum, and electoral competition and sub-elite participation rose. This widespread participation did not decline again until stable prices and a demographic slowdown reduced social mobility, leading by the 1720s to a situation in which the elite, despite its internal conflicts felt secure enough to advocate restriction of the franchise.³⁶ And the struggle between the established Church and the Puritans contributed a religious mobilization of its own – which was fueled in part by fears of resurgent Catholicism and in part by disaffected “surplus” sons of the gentry, who could not be absorbed as landholders and who entered the Puritan ministry in large numbers.³⁷

In these struggles, old *principles* of conflict resolution were overturned – they could not be accepted by the new participants – and if new appeals for stability and restriction of participation were to be effective, they had to be made on the basis of new principles. Because the Court party and the old aristocracy were not able to reassert feudal and absolutist principles (divinely or “naturally” ordained hierarchy and monarchical rights), and because the rising gentry and merchants were also not able to supplant the old elites entirely, it was necessary to find new grounds on which to appeal to both sides, especially since both the Court and the Country parties – and later Tories and Whigs – were ultimately concerned to restrict political participation to the elite level.³⁸

Here, then, is a sociologically new basis for Hobbes's grounding of political order in fear. The political and religious mobilization had lessened the importance of “place” in society and had also given large numbers of mutual strangers legitimate and equal rights to the same things – to unclaimed property, to the public spotlight, to egoistical vanity: that is, they gained the right to be political actors, citizens. This new nation of strangers naturally caused men to become fearful; and when the residual structure of authority broke down in the Civil War and threatened to be-

come anarchy, the role of fear became decisive. Hobbes takes this new structure of fear as empirically given: it becomes so intolerable in his theory that all prudent strangers are willing to give up their “absolute rights to everything” out of mutual and mortal fear, and to contract with each other to establish an artificial repository of terror – and of pride – in the Leviathan.

This, then, is how the citizen of the nation-state differs from the citizen of the city-state,³⁹ and the change also provides a reason why Hobbes could not easily accept the possibility, suggested by Machiavelli, that vainglory could be safely redirected into the *virtu* of the regime. It is not just that modern society is not a small society – feudal society was a large society – but rather, that in the large modern society the citizen does not have a natural place; and because all legitimate citizens cannot be known to each other, and because as citizens they all have legitimate and equal rights to the same things, they become mutually fearful and diffident about each other. This new situation, of course, undermined the basis for the old organic, familial, and naturalistic imagery in social and political theory and gave Hobbes’s atomistic, mechanical, and artificial imagery a more plausible empirical referent: the new social and political order had to be built as an artificial construct out of the disconnected atoms of the disintegrated old natural order. And as we will see, once the body of citizenry had outgrown the limits of natural comprehensibility,⁴⁰ and even under the repository of fear in the Leviathan, a new and artificial structure of trust had to be constructed to ensure the legitimacy of the new regime and to limit or resolve forms of conflict that could not simply be suppressed by force.

These were the important consequences of the extension of citizenship in a large state. Even if citizenship in the post-absolutist nation-state was extended only to a minority of the adult population and was later cut back again, later extensions in most cases only increased the proportion of citizens in the population (or extended certain privileges of citizenship more widely)⁴¹ without changing this basic principle of citizenship – or the underlying structure of fear.

Prudence: Hobbes’s attempt to neutralize the effects of religious fear by a re-equilibration of the public and private realms

The sociopolitical developments we have focused on were, of course, only part of the cause of rising levels of participation in the seventeenth-

century conflicts, and they were probably a less important part than was renewed religious conflict. To be sure, “Protestantism, patriotism and property were closely linked,”⁴² and these elements were bonded within the revolutionary segments of the population especially in opposition to the king’s papist sympathies. However, the very fact that fears of papist connections seem overdrawn in our more secular times merely serves to highlight the divisive power that religion still retained in Hobbes’s time; nor does the fact that religion was no longer as divisive an issue by the time of the Toleration Act of 1689 alter the fact that during the Civil War it was. Rather, the defusing of religious conflict is itself a significant development: it is related to the recognition by the emerging parliamentary parties after 1660 of their fundamental unity of interests and the need for moderation.⁴³ The elites learned these lessons from the conflict of the Civil War, from the hints of potentially greater conflict (of anarchy) that they almost failed to prevent, and from their success in the war. It may be debated to what extent Hobbes’s specific religious positions were accepted, but these elites did in effect accept Hobbes’s general argument that religious conflict must not be allowed to disrupt the peace in society, and turned away from the more radical forms of Protestantism that some had earlier supported.

Although Hobbes felt that when people were mutually fearful of each other, reason would impel them to join civil society, he was aware that the fear of God’s wrath is potentially a greater fear, and that it tends to disrupt civil authority. Hobbes says that fear of other persons, of civil authority, is “commonly the greater fear,” which means that “the greatest part of mankind,” the tame men, will at most times not be inclined to play martyr out of religious motives (*Lev.* 14 [200]). But Hobbes also realized that his times were not ordinary in this respect, for the Civil War was, in Walzer’s phrase, a “revolution of the saints.”⁴⁴

When therefore these two powers oppose one another, the commonwealth cannot but be in great danger of civil war and dissolution. For the civil authority being more visible and standing in the clearer light of natural reason cannot choose but draw to it in all times a very considerable part of the people: And the spiritual, though it stand in the darkness of School distinctions, yet because the fear of darkness and ghosts is greater than other fears, cannot want a party sufficient to trouble, and sometimes to destroy a commonwealth (*Lev.* 29 [371]).

And for Hobbes, religious strife was not simply a theoretical but rather a practical danger, and indeed, in his time it was the primary cause of dissension and civil instability. In 1641 he wrote to the Earl of Devonshire, “the dispute between the spiritual and the civil power has of late,

more than anything in the world, been the cause of civil wars in all places of Christendom.”⁴⁵

It is very difficult to be certain about Hobbes’s own religious beliefs. To be a publicly declared atheist in his day was dangerous, and Hobbes had a “terror at being arraigned for heterodoxy;”⁴⁶ therefore he would have had good reason to be circumspect about atheistic views if he had held them – especially because, as an “immoral” writer, he was vulnerable to suspicion of it. But it is not clear that Hobbes held such views; in fact, he reportedly “died in mortal fear of hell-fire.”⁴⁷ Indeed, Glover has argued that Hobbes was not only *not* an atheist, but that his theological arguments were developed with such sincerity and with sufficient consistency that they threatened to contradict his political conclusions.⁴⁸ For Glover shows that, for Hobbes, the subject may justifiably be released from his obligation to obey the sovereign if he (the *subject*) judges that obedience endangers his chances for salvation; and likewise, that a Christian living in a pagan state has a right to accept the authority of some Christian Church – an empirically rare case in Hobbes’s time, but one which contradicts his theory of unified sovereignty, as we will see.⁴⁹ But whether or not Hobbes was an atheist, it remains significant that he was concerned to make a strong and clear case to many who were not atheists; therefore it is best to consider “not Hobbes’s sincerity of conviction, but the effects which his words seem designed to produce” upon the warring “saints.”⁵⁰ And here it is clear that Hobbes wanted to prevent fear of God’s judgment from overriding fear of civil authority, to the extent of disrupting the commonwealth.

Hobbes’s strategy is to argue, in effect, that there is no privileged knowledge of religious truth between the time of the Revelation and the Second Coming – that is, during the historical present. Knowledge comes by interpretation of the Word, but Hobbes’s preference of the proper agent of interpretation is the civil sovereign.⁵¹ However, this essentially negative argument can hardly have been adequate to assuage the fears – and the motives for political action – of those who felt that obedience to the civil interpretation of God’s law was incompatible with their own salvation, that is, those who still feared the wrath of God more than they feared the civil laws and felt that the two contradicted each other. To a certain extent, Hobbes answers this problem by defending the Word and its civil interpretation as against individual reason or individual inspiration: to this extent the question is the old one concerning the public expression of worship, which is simply not resolvable by reason or faith, but rather entails a public decision. But here, although he is os-

tensibly defending Anglican orthodoxy, Hobbes attempts to strengthen his position by heterodox fideist-skeptical arguments⁵² that bring him to the point of religious toleration. Hobbes attempts to assuage religious fears by means of a radical separation of Hellenistic from Hebraic strands in the Christian tradition, reducing our knowledge of God's attributes to knowledge of His existence and power – the purely Hebrew I AM – and by reducing our knowledge of His law to His word; and Hobbes says, “all that is necessary to salvation is contained in two virtues, faith in Christ, and obedience to laws” (*Lev.* 43 [610]). But because Hobbes is skeptical about our ability to interpret the laws correctly with certainty (“who shall judge?”), he concludes that “there can therefore be no contradiction between the laws of God and the laws of a Christian commonwealth”; and because he obviates with Pauline arguments our duty to play martyr by disobedience, even to an infidel sovereign, he essentially reduces the requirements for salvation to faith alone (*Lev.* 43 [624–625]).

Thus armed with an anti-Hellenistic faith and a materialistic interpretation of the Word (especially concerning an earthly Kingdom of God), Hobbes's argument moves to a critique of the ideology of the Catholic Church, comparing it to a “Kingdom of Fairies,” and declaring the Papacy to be “the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof.” But Hobbes does not or cannot stop here, “for it is not the Roman clergy only that pretends the Kingdom of God to be of this world, and thereby to have a power therein, distinct from that of the civil state” (*Lev.* 47 [712, 715]). He proceeds to argue for the untying of the “knots” on Christians, whose “consciences were free, and [whose] words and actions subject to none but the civil power” before the establishment of politically active Churches – just as the “knots” of the Pope, the Episcopacy, and the Presbyterians, in turn, had been untied in his own time.

And so we are reduced to the independency of the primitive Christians to follow Paul, or Cephas, or Apollos, every man as he liketh best; which if it be without contention, and without measuring the doctrine of Christ by our affection to the person of his minister (the fault which the apostle reprehended in the Corinthians), is perhaps the best . . . because there ought to be no power over the consciences of men but of the Word itself, working faith in everyone, not always according to the purpose of them that plant and water, but of God himself that giveth the increase” (*Lev.* 47 [710, 711]).

Thus, Hobbes arrives at a theoretical defense of religious toleration (implicitly extended to non-Christians because the state cannot legislate be-

belief) so long as it does not threaten to disrupt the civil peace, and a practical defense of civil religion for his own times. This means that everyone may define his religion as his conscience – and his fear – dictates to him, but that in his behavior he must obey the state: belief becomes a private matter, but religious practice, worship, is retained within the public realm, and the problem of toleration is made a question of prudential political policy.

Thus, we might infer that for Hobbes prudential policy in the face of extreme conflict *in general* entails the attempt to re-equilibrate, as it were, the public and private realms – on one side, incorporating into the public realm some fundamental but minimal solution to the issues at conflict as state policy, and on the other side, excluding the most controversial aspects of the conflict from public consideration (because they then only lead to disruption), banishing them to the private realm. In this respect, Hobbes's prudence becomes a form of liberalism.

It may be further noted that if Locke is understood to have made a more principled or less prudential argument for toleration, founded on adherence to natural law and to reason as “our last judge and guide in everything” (*Essay Concerning Human Understanding* IV, xix, 14), then his theory does not simply represent an advance of “modernity,” but rather, if anything, a more medieval argument than the one Hobbes makes. However, Kraynak argues that Locke fully accepted Hobbes's prudential arguments and traces Locke's development from an openly Hobbesian position to a more roundabout acceptance of Hobbes. Locke's apparently greater principled defense of tolerance was actually a double application of prudential argumentation, for true believers who felt that their salvation would be endangered by the establishment of false belief had to be shown, not that their religious fears were unjustified (i.e., they could not be persuaded to accept prudent skepticism), but that religious Establishment or tolerance did not in fact endanger them.⁵³ In this respect, Kraynak argues that absolutism (the fundamental decision in the public realm) and toleration (the privatization of the most controversial aspects) are still linked by prudentialism in Locke; the liberal appeal to natural right came later.

Trust: Hobbes's liberalism and the sequence of political development

Thus, Hobbes used a sociological and historical characterization of human nature and a fideist-skeptical theology in constructing his argu-

ments for social peace. He attempted to suppress the dangerous passion of pride as a motivation for political action in the enlarged nation of strangers and to replace it with obedience to the artificial (contractual) sovereign based on a fearful human nature. And where religious fear could not be overcome, he argued for a prudential public policy of religious toleration, privatizing religious belief and publicly establishing a form of worship in order effectively to remove the grounds for religious conflict. And these arguments, which were not entirely original with Hobbes, were newly effective in his historical context: for this reduction of political passion and narrowing of the field of conflict were central desiderata both of other theorists of the period and also of the elites.⁵⁴ However, the question remains whether Hobbes's prudential toleration and his sociological modernism are sufficient for us to call him a liberal or a proto-liberal. The answer turns on the question of trust. For as we saw earlier, once Hobbes had accepted the idea of a large society of strangers and the constant potential for social (especially religious) conflict, he was bound implicitly to accept a new and "artificial" structure of trust to ensure the legitimacy of the new regime and to limit or resolve forms of conflict that could not simply be suppressed by force. This "artificial" structure of trust was necessary to close the gap in the social order left unfilled by force or reason alone. And as we will see, this idea of trust turns out to be one of the central building blocks of procedural or prudential liberal theories.⁵⁵

But trust is not unambiguously central to all liberal theories, especially those which place primary emphasis on irreducible rights and liberties. Before we examine the parallels between procedural or prudential liberalism and Hobbes's theory, it will be well to consider whether Hobbes is actually hostile to these other elements of liberalism. Two initial questions present themselves. First, Hobbes's preference for absolutism seems difficult to reconcile with the idea of popular sovereignty present in many forms of liberalism. But Kraynak has argued that Hobbes's absolutism is (a) a product of popular consent and (b) the arbitrary imposition of established orthodoxy over against extreme conflict⁵⁶ – features that correspond to the "artificial" new order and the prudential toleration outlined above. Moreover, it is possible to interpret Hobbes's absolutism simply in terms of undivided sovereignty rather than irreconcilable opposition to popular rule, for while he preferred monarchy, he admitted that its advantages were the "one thing alone I confess in this whole book not to be demonstrated, but only probably stated" (*De Cive*, preface). Thus, Hobbes's absolutism may not contradict a liberal orientation, as it might seem at first glance to do. On the contrary, it has been

recognized since Hobbes's own times that his arguments were subtly subversive of the social and political foundations of the elites who were ostensibly to benefit from them. The contending elites pursued what they viewed as their conservative interests in reasserting their ancient rights as against a centralizing monarchy and at the same time preventing the spread of participation rights to lower social strata.⁵⁷ But to the extent that they were persuaded by Hobbes's conservative arguments in favor of political order, they were compelled to recognize that the prideful pursuit of aristocratic honor had to be renounced in favor of egalitarian fear, which was now the most effective barrier to the spread of disorder. And here, Hobbes must be seen as one of the first theorists to argue that the reassertion of liberties after the fall of absolutism could not be made on old feudal bases; that absolutism had already leveled much of the old aristocratic social hierarchy. "Even against his will, therefore, Hobbes has forged a revolutionary weapon. If he defended absolutism, it was only on the ground that absolutism is in the general interest; and should this be denied, as his own thought gives us a basis for doing, absolutism disappears, and in its place is substituted the liberal system for which the philosopher's nineteenth-century utilitarian disciples contended."⁵⁸

The second problem is that while liberalism gives a high priority to freedom, Hobbes's theory does not seem to do so.⁵⁹ Hobbes restricts categorical rights, beyond the right to life, to the state of nature, where every one has an additional absolute right to everything necessary for survival (i.e., the means of survival) and felicity. But this freedom is effectively worthless, he argues, because it provides no security in which to enjoy it. The question becomes, therefore, how much freedom citizens in an established political order can have consistent with the survival of that order. But Hobbes does not advocate restriction of liberty as such, although liberty is hardly given the highest priority: it "depend[s] on the silence of the law," and "the use of the laws (which are but rules authorized) is not to bind people from all voluntary actions, but to direct and keep them in such a motion as not to hurt themselves by their own impetuous desires, rashness or indiscretion, as hedges are set up, not to stop travellers, but to keep them in the way" (*Lev.* 30 [388], 21 [271]; see *De Cive* XIII, 15). Thus, while Hobbes continues to take a prudentialist view of liberty, he is clearly not hostile to it.

But liberalism *has* sometimes been defined procedurally or prudentially, without including categorical or natural rights – that is, as a theory that may aim at maximizing freedom and popular sovereignty, but does not assume them. It may be useful to examine such a definition and ask how

near Hobbes's theory comes to it. Dahl has characterized the liberal element of polyarchy (liberal democracy) as contestation, and Dahrendorf has similarly stressed the importance of limited public conflict.⁶⁰ This definition of liberalism entails two primary factors. First, there is no requirement for consensus, and a skeptical epistemology is adopted in order that true arguments can surface⁶¹ and in order to reduce the chances that contenders will be willing to fight physically for their views. That is, public disagreements are recognized as legitimate, are dealt with in the public forum, and are not suppressed in the name of unity. And second, rotation in office is possible and expected, and open opposition to the incumbents is legitimate. That is, one's opponents are tolerated to the extent that this toleration is mutual, and opposition to the liberal system itself is tolerated to the extent that it appears to present no danger of destroying it – tolerance is not an absolute value in this respect.⁶² Thus, rights in conflict and the extremity of conflict are limited by the willingness of the parties in conflict to abide by the procedural rules. If these rules are adhered to, freedom can be very great indeed.⁶³

Perhaps the most important precondition for this sort of liberalism and for the self-limitation of conflict is that opponents trust each other to abide by the procedural rules, especially that the winners not attempt to destroy physically the losers or the system that permits the losers to rise again. In this respect, trust mediates the tension between order and freedom. But such trust presumably depends either on assumptions about the trustworthiness (or at least sociability) of human nature or else on structural conditions that permit trust.

But does Hobbes really rely on trust in developing his arguments? He obviously assumes no such trustworthiness in human nature. And his arguments about structural conditions seem to make trust irrelevant, since trust has no effect on compliance to covenants in the state of nature and is superfluous within a State that can enforce compliance (*Lev.* 14 [196]).⁶⁴ However, since the Leviathan is an artificial creation needed to overcome the mutual fear of strangers in a society in which trust based on “natural” place is no longer possible, Hobbes either has to argue that the State is capable of suppressing all causes for fear and distrust, or else he has to investigate procedures for the further “artificial” creation of structures of trust – that is to say, procedures for the self-limitation of conflict under the rule of the sovereign. And significantly, we recall, his arguments about prudential policy regarding religion imply that he recognized at least one important continuing area of potential conflict *after* the establishment of the social contract: in the legitimation of the

State for those who fear that obedience to the sovereign may endanger their salvation – and perhaps by extension, in the competition of powerful factions for ascendancy *within* the structure of sovereignty. It now seems that Hobbes's strategy of re-equilibrating the balance between the public and the private realms can only have as its intention, and can only function as, the erection of a structure in which mutual trust can grow, since otherwise the State is incapable of suppressing extreme conflict. Each party in conflict must come to believe that its opponents – should they come to ascendancy within the State – will not exercise their ability radically to suppress those out of power (by killing, imprisoning, forcing conversion, and so on). And this belief must become mutual, otherwise, no party will have an incentive to cease its struggle and seek accommodation. In this sense, the growth of trust – which now appears as the reduction or redirection of fear under the social contract – results from the success of the sovereign in (1) assuring security and (2) reducing extreme conflict by a prudential policy of establishing certain minimal practices in the public realm and of banishing the most controversial points from the arena of public decision to the private realm. As trust grows, that is, as the base of procedural guarantees and agreement on fundamental issues becomes more secure, the danger of vigorous opposition among factions or to the policies of the sovereign declines – and more freedom can prudentially be permitted.

This much seems clear in theory. And historically, as Stone notes, the growth of moderation – presumably accompanied by growing trust – was probably the most important factor that permitted the British polity to retain the liberties that were won in the seventeenth century:⁶⁵ passions in political and religious conflict were reduced, and even the victory of Whig policies after 1721 was not accompanied by the physical annihilation of the opposition, as had been the case prior to the Restoration.⁶⁶ Mass political participation (the democratic element) was indeed reduced, but a liberal political culture had taken root that survived both the restriction of the franchise in the eighteenth century and the re-democratization of politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This sequence, on the whole, matches Hobbes's recommendations. Centralization of sovereignty was necessary to prevent the anarchy of the prideful aristocracy on one side, and the disorder of too large a population with political rights on the other side. And the reformulation of established religious orthodoxy with the granting of toleration to dissenters (the re-equilibration between the public and private realms) was

necessary to defuse extreme religious conflict. Aristocratic honor and pride could not again be permitted to play a decisive role in politics, but as sovereignty became stabilized, and as parties in conflict learned that they could trust each other to abide by the procedural rules and that they could rely on the state to enforce these rules, further extensions of the franchise and of religious toleration posed ever decreasing dangers to this structure of procedural liberalism.

Thus, just as Hobbes's "micro" theory of the structural conditions for freedom match those of procedural liberalism, his account also contains an implicit "macro" theory of the *sequence* of development of these structural conditions that corresponds to more recent theories of political development. It has been explicitly recognized by historians and social scientists at least since the nineteenth century that there is a sequence of development most propitious to the emergence of procedural liberalism – or liberal democracy. For instance, Tocqueville argued that if liberty was lost in the process of democratization, it would be much harder to regain,⁶⁷ and Helmut Plessner attributed the lack of such liberal values in Germany prior to 1933 to the "belated" development of national unity until after the construction of a centralized strong-state.⁶⁸ More recently, Robert Dahl has argued that the chances for polyarchy (liberal democracy) are greater if the liberal element of contestation is achieved before the democratic element of inclusion.⁶⁹ And scholars working on the Social Science Research Council's project on political development have suggested that a liberal democratic outcome is more likely if the question of national identity (religion, ethnicity, language, etc.) is established before governmental institutions are legitimated; and this before the franchise is universalized; and this before redistribution and expanded state competence are attempted.⁷⁰

From this latter perspective, the breakdown of English absolutism and the struggle for Parliamentary sovereignty ("the King *in* Parliament") raised the problem of legitimation of an emergent liberal state structure (i.e., which recognizes open competition for office). But this crisis did not arise in isolation, but rather together with the crises of national identity (the questions of religion and of the Celtic periphery) and of participation (the question of citizenship and franchise). These additional crises made it more difficult to legitimate the liberal state: it would have been made easier by a prior resolution of the crisis of national identity and by a postponement of the crisis of participation.

Hobbes's view is similar. Religious conflict (the question of national

identity) must not be permitted to interfere with the establishment of sovereignty (legitimacy): this conflict must be resolved before the sovereign can enjoy secure legitimacy. Hobbes was agnostic about the specific form of sovereignty, as we have seen, but he appears to argue that if the regime was to become democratic, a liberal political culture (a particular attitude toward conflict resolution) had to be legitimated *prior to* the extension of participation rights. This was the only way that order and liberty could coexist: democratization could follow (his agnosticism, not his preference), but if safely, then only on this basis.⁷¹

How close does this bring Hobbes's theory to liberalism? It appears to be quite close to the procedural (and utilitarian and prudentialist) liberalism outlined above – and it contains a recognition of the macrostructural requisites of freedom similar to that of later “sociological” accounts of the development of procedural liberalism. Both Hobbes and the procedural liberals begin from much the same premises and have much the same goals, except that the latter stress the importance of liberty and accept democracy more than Hobbes did – although as we have seen, Hobbes was not against greater liberty as such, nor did he irreconcilably oppose democracy. At least two competing traditions of liberalism could be adduced, however, which do seem to depart in principle from Hobbes's theory: theories of republican virtue⁷² and theories of categorical or natural rights. For in contrast to Hobbes and procedural liberalism, republican virtue liberalism tends to reject the premises of an atomistic methodology and a fearful psychology, because liberty or servitude inhere in the collectivity, but to accept a prudentialist orientation to public policy. And categorical or natural rights liberalism tends to reject prudentialist restrictions of certain basic rights or liberties, but often accepts the atomistic methodology and fearful psychology. On the other hand, neither tradition seems to succeed in characterizing the empirical (sociological and historical) foundations and requirements of liberty as well as Hobbes and procedural liberalism do – nor do they fully intend to, for each takes man and society as empirically given only in order to show how they can be transformed: man to autonomy, and society to virtue.

Hobbes stood at the beginning of the history of the post-absolutist nation state, which has not yet come to an end. If the analysis presented here is correct, he owes much of his continuing relevance to us to his recognition of this new historical situation and to his attempts to solve certain political problems associated with it. I have argued that Hobbes's modernity consisted largely in his recognition of the emergence of a large nation of strangers, of large numbers of citizens with equal rights,

and his analysis of the fear arising from it. And his liberalism, or proto-liberalism, consisted of his attempts to find a way to build “artificial” structures of authority and trust – to replace the vanished “natural” authority and trust of premodern society – partly by a prudential public policy to moderate extreme conflict. Only on this basis was the “silence of the law” possible that permitted freedom.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Daniel Bell, Donald Herzog, George Homans, Talcott Parsons, Michael Walzer, and the *Theory and Society* reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

Notes

1. Most of the themes in this paragraph are touched on in Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1936) and *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); Richard S. Peters, *Hobbes* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956); C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); Quentin Skinner, “Hobbes’s ‘Leviathan’” *Historical Journal* 7 (1964): 321–333, “The Ideological Context of Hobbes’s Political Thought” *Historical Journal* 9 (1966): 286–317, and “Conquest and Consent: Thomas Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy,” in G. E. Aylmer, editor, *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement 1646–1660* (London: Macmillan, 1972); Keith Thomas, “The Social Origins of Hobbes’s Political Thought,” in K. C. Brown, editor, *Hobbes Studies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965); Willis B. Glover, “God and Thomas Hobbes,” in K. C. Brown, editor, *Hobbes Studies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965); J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time* (New York: Atheneum, 1973); Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); and Robert P. Kraynak, “Hobbes’s Behemoth and the Argument for Absolutism” *American Political Science Review* 76 (1982): 837–847, and “Hobbes on Barbarism and Civilization” *Journal of Politics* 45 (1983): 86–109; but they intersect at many points. Further citations of historical literature, as well as more precise citations of Hobbes literature, is given in the body of the article.
2. E.g., J. H. Hexter, “Storm over the Gentry,” in *Reappraisals in History* (London: Longmans, Green, 1961); Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, “The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Religion, The Reformation and Social Change* (London: Macmillan, 1967); Perex Zagorin, *The Court and the Country: The Beginning of the English Revolution* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529–1642* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); The-da Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Jack A. Goldstone, “Capitalist Origins of the English Revolution: Chasing a Chimera,” *Theory and Society* 12 (1983): 143–180; cf. Christopher Hill, “A Bourgeois Revolution?” in J. G. A. Pocock, editor, *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

3. Such an interpretation can, of course, only be sketched here, but I do attempt to satisfy several methodological criteria. I try to avoid the vagueness of a structural-functionalist framework and the improbability of a Marxist view. A promising alternative is a structuralist-developmental (and comparative-historical) framework as used in some current social science historiography. This is not the place for a full characterization of this approach, but it can be traced to Montesquieu, Tocqueville, and, in some respects, Weber; and contemporary examples include Juan J. Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1978); Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Stanley Lieberson, *A Piece of the Pie: Blacks and White Immigrants since 1880* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Seymour Martin Lipset, "Radicalism or Reformism: The Sources of Working-Class Politics," *American Political Science Review* 77 (1983): 1–18; and, appropriately interpreted, the contributors to Raymond Grew, editor, *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).
4. As suggested in the last phrase, I wish to use the term "modernity" to refer, most centrally, to the sociopolitical structure of the post-feudal, post-absolutist nation state and its recognition in theory: thus, modernity is more general than the categories of capitalism/socialism, industrialism and urbanism, liberalism/authoritarianism, etc. "Liberalism," in contrast, is meant to refer mainly to a particular orientation toward conflict resolution, as will be explained in more detail in the last two sections.
5. E.g., Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*; MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*.
6. Keith Thomas, "The Social Origins of Hobbes's Political Thought"; also see Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*; and Neal Wood, "Thomas Hobbes and the crisis of the English aristocracy," *History of Political Thought* 1, 3 (1980): 437–452.
7. See note 2.
8. Quentin Skinner, "The Ideological Context of Hobbes's Political Thought," and "Conquest and Consent."
9. This is, in large part, Leo Strauss's argument in *Political Philosophy: Six Essays by Leo Strauss*, edited by Hilail Gilden (New York: Bobbs-Merrill/Pegasus, 1975); and he argues that Locke, in turn, accepted Hobbes's theory and also tried to disguise it to make it more acceptable, because Hobbes himself had become disreputable by Locke's time. Cf. M. Seliger, *The Liberal Politics of John Locke* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968).
10. J. H. Plumb, "The Growth of the Electorate in England from 1600 to 1715," *Past and Present* 45 (1969): 90–116; Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 19f.
11. See Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, 15f, 13f; Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 190f.
12. Hobbes wrote autobiographically at the age of eighty-four, "fear and I were born twins." Quoted in Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, *Historical Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1957), 233.
13. See Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 182f.
14. See J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli," in *Against the Current* (New York: Viking, 1980); Jeff Weintraub, *Virtue, Community, and the Sociology of Liberty: The Notion of Republican Virtue and its Impact on Modern Western Social*

- Thought* (Berkeley: Dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, 1979).
15. See Trevor-Roper, *Historical Essays*, 61–66, 233–238.
 16. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*.
 17. E.g., Skinner, “The Ideological Context of Hobbes’s Political Thought,” and “Consent and Consent”; Kraynak, “Hobbes’s Behemoth and the Argument for Absolutism.”
 18. Thomas, “The Social Origins of Hobbes’s Political Thought.”
 19. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1968 [1651]); Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive, Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society*, in Bernard Gert, editor, *Man and Citizen* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1972 [1642]). Citations are given in the text to chapters of “*Lev.*” and sections of “*De Cive*,” with page numbers from Macpherson’s edition of the *Leviathan* given in square brackets.
 20. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 178–179, and *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 80–81, 98–99.
 21. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*.
 22. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 19–23, 57–58. The further “growth of consciousness” in Hegel’s theory to the idealistic moral or political Spirit is, of course, not compatible with Hobbes’s materialism.
 23. Also Michael Oakeshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).
 24. The terms have been adapted from Oakeshott’s slightly different usage in *Hobbes on Civil Association*, 87. However, during a discussion with me of an earlier draft of this article, George Homans pointed to a picture of a sailing ship on his wall and remarked that his ancestors, pepper merchants, were *hardly* tame. I would have changed the terminology, in deference, to “great” and “small” men, but I am not certain that would have pleased Mr. Homans more; and the expression “tame” captures willingness to consent to the social compact better than does “small.” Nevertheless, his comment prompted me to attempt to ground the ideal type more firmly in the historical evidence: as I will suggest below, the tameness that derives from fearful nature in theory may contrast historically or sociologically with the self-sufficiency of the militarized aristocracy.
 25. E.g., Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*; C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*.
 26. Keith Thomas, “The Social Origins of Hobbes’s Political Thought.” Neal Wood argues further that Hobbes’s absolutist state was actually intended to rescue aristocratic ascendancy: see “Thomas Hobbes and the crisis of the English aristocracy.”
 27. R. H. Tawney, “The Rise of the Gentry, 1558–1640,” *Economic History Review* 11 (1941): 1–38; Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, “The Gentry, 1540–1640,” *Economic History Review Supplement* 1 (1953) and *Historical Essays*, 195–205.
 28. Zagorin, *The Court and the Country*.
 29. E.g., Hexter, “Storm over the Gentry”; Plumb, “The Growth of the Electorate”; Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution*.
 30. These developments can, in turn, be traced to the sale of monastic lands after the English Reformation and the construction of a comparatively weak form of absolutism with a small army and bureaucracy, among other factors. See Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution*; Trevor-Roper, “The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century”; Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: New Left Books, 1974).

31. Hanna Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1974), characterizes the “macro” scale as naturalistic, as against the distinctively modern “micro” and “tele” scales.
32. Georg Simmel, “Der Fremde,” in Michael Landmann, editor, *Das individuelle Gesetz: Philosophische Exkurse* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968).
33. Lawrence Stone, “Social Mobility in England 1500–1700,” *Past and Present* 33 (1966); Peter Clark, “Migration in England 1660–1730,” *Past and Present* 83 (1979): 57–90.
34. Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution*, 72f.
35. Derek Hirst, *The Representative of the People? Voters and Voting In England under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 105. Lower estimates, based on earlier research, are given by Plumb, “The Growth of the Electorate”; Keith Thomas, “The Levellers and the Franchise,” in G. E. Aylmer, editor, *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement 1646–1660* (London: Macmillan, 1972); Keith Thomas, “The United Kingdom,” in Raymond Grew, editor, *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). Cf. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*; Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (New York: Norton, 1965), 20.
36. Lawrence Stone, “The Results of the English Revolutions of the Seventeenth Century,” in J. G. A. Pocock, editor, *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). This formulation was suggested by a reviewer for *Theory and Society*. I had originally argued that participation declined when the establishment of the Whig “oligarchy” in the 1720s reduced party competition and established effective Parliamentary control over the Crown – without which it was not safe for either party to advocate restriction of the franchise (see Plumb, “The Growth of the Electorate”). The reviewer noted that this argument has been surpassed by recent historiography – although it was not crucial to the argument. Also note that Hirst (*The Representative of the People?*, 192) argues that the turning point came with the Civil War, during which the Parliamentary elites decided that the threat from below had now become greater than the threat from above (i.e., from the King).
37. Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966); Robin Clifton, “Fear of Popery,” in Conrad Russell, editor, *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London: Macmillan, 1973); Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution*, 111f.
38. A revisionist historiography arose a decade ago to challenge the view that the conflict was one of principle or that it involved parties (or proto-parties). See, e.g., Conrad Russell, “Parliamentary History in Perspective, 1604–1629,” *History* 61, 201 (1976): 1–27; and the contributors to the *Journal of Modern History* 50 (1978). However, this revisionism was answered in short order with the retort that although the aristocracy was perhaps not as weakened as earlier historiography had suggested, constitutional principles and party-like alignments were very much in evidence. See J. H. Hexter, “Power Struggle, Parliament and Liberty in Early Stuart England,” *Journal of Modern History* 50, 1 (1978): 1–50; Derek Hirst, “Unanimity in the Commons, Aristocratic Intrigues, and the Origins of the English Civil War,” *Journal of Modern History* 50, 1 (1978): 51–71, and “Revisionism Revisited: The Place of Principle” *Past and Present* 92 (1981): 79–99; and Theodore K. Rabb, “Revisionism Revisited: The Role of the Commons,” *Past and Present* 92 (1981): 55–78.
39. See also Robert A. Dahl and Edward R. Tufte, *Size and Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973).
40. For Aristotle, the polis should be viewable in its entirety from a nearby hillside, and

the citizens should all be able to sit in one amphitheater; and the chain of reciprocal rights and obligations in the feudal hierarchy – together with the organic and familial imagery in theory – and the parliaments of nobles, and the councils of clerics, gave feudal society a similar comprehensibility.

41. See T. H. Marshall, *Class, Citizenship and Social Development* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).
42. Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603–1714* (London: Nelson, 1961), 57.
43. Stone, “The Results of the English Revolutions,” 95–96.
44. Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints*.
45. Quoted in Glover, “God and Thomas Hobbes,” 149.
46. Skinner, “The Ideological Context of Hobbes’s Political Thought,” 316; cf. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 199.
47. Glover, “God and Thomas Hobbes,” 72.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*, 152ff.
50. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, 162, 193–194.
51. See Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, and Glover, “God and Thomas Hobbes,” for a fuller discussion of these points.
52. Glover, “God and Thomas Hobbes,” 162ff; Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, 192–193.
53. Robert P. Kraynak, “John Locke: From Absolutism to Toleration,” *American Political Science Review* 74 (1980): 53–69.
54. Hirschman also points out that arguments for the replacement of passions with interests in political theory were originally made for the purpose of political moderation, not in order to provide a favorable environment for the development of capitalism, although the latter was one of its contingent results. See *The Passions and the Interests*.
55. Allan Silver argues that, until perhaps the middle of the twentieth century, the dominant tendency in social and political theory was to treat trust in the public realm as an extension or parallel to trust in the private realm – with the attendant moral implications. With the rise of functionalist theory, however, trust began to be considered more in terms of a reduction of complexity, a way of facilitating social action in a complex world – with the attendant lack of moral implications. See Silver, “‘Trust’ in Social and Political Theory,” 52–67 in Gerald Suttles and Mayer Zald, editors, *The Challenge of Social Control: Festschrift for Morris Janowitz* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1985); cf. Niklas Luhmann, *Trust and Power* (New York: Free Press, 1979). However, if the analysis presented here is correct, it may be appropriate to combine both notions of trust in Hobbes’s theory. The “artificial” structure of trust should certainly be seen as a response to the growth of complexity in the new world of strangers.
56. Robert P. Kraynak, “Hobbes’s Behemoth and the Argument for Absolutism,” 846.
57. See Robert Ashton, “Tradition and Innovation and the Great Rebellion,” in J. G. A. Pocock, editor, *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Hexter, “Power Struggle, Parliament and Liberty.”
58. Perez Zagorin, *A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954).
59. The concept of freedom (or liberty) in Hobbes is not unproblematical, especially with respect to choice or formation of the will, with respect to threats or necessity, and with respect to the taking on of obligation. See, e.g., J. W. N. Watkins, *Hobbes’s System of Ideas* (London: Hutchinson, 1965), 120–137; J. Roland Pennock, “Hobbes’s Confusing ‘Clarity’ – The Case of ‘Liberty,’” in K. C. Brown, editor, *Hobbes Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965); A. G. Wernham, “Liberty and Obligation in Hobbes,” in

- K. C. Brown, editor, *Hobbes Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965); Wolfgang von Leyden, *Hobbes and Locke: The Politics of Freedom and Obligation* (New York: St. Martin's, 1982). However, the present discussion cannot enter into these questions for reasons of space.
60. Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1965), 29. This liberal element is contrasted to the democratic element of mass popular political participation, the full extension of citizenship and the franchise throughout a given population (e.g., all property-owning males older than 32, all adults over 18) and with respect to the issues defined as in the "public" realm.
 61. John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty" in *Three Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975 [1859]).
 62. See Preston King, "The Problem of Tolerance," *Government and Opposition* 6, 2 (1971): 172–207; Preston King, *Toleration* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976).
 63. Durkheim's insight about the precontractual elements of contract applies here: freedom in procedural liberalism depends on an underlying consensus or conformity. But the breadth and fixity of this consensus are not given: the ability of the liberal system to encompass a broad range of issues-in-conflict and for the underlying consensus to evolve is variable.
 64. Oakeshott here raises the problem of the "first performer"; of which mutually distrustful man in a state of nature will take the first step in agreeing to the social contract. And he solves the problem by observing that trust in the social contract plays a less important role than in ordinary covenants in the state of nature, for while ordinary covenants cannot be enforced, the social contract can be enforced by the new sovereign. Oakeshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association*, 125ff. See also Leyden, *Hobbes and Locke: The Politics of Freedom and Obligation*, 94, 128–129, for a related discussion of the sovereign as "trustee" of the powers of those who entered into the social contract, with a comparison to Locke.
 65. Stone, "The Results of the English Revolutions of the Seventeenth Century," 97–98.
 66. J. H. Plumb, *The Growth of Political Stability in England, 1675–1725* (London: Macmillan, 1967).
 67. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Anchor, 1969 [1835–1840]).
 68. Helmut Plessner, *Die Verspätete Nation: Über die politische Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1969 [1938]).
 69. Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy*.
 70. This is a rather free reinterpretation of the theories contained in Leonard Binder et al., *Crises and Sequences in Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); and Grew, editor, *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United States* – especially the chapter by Keith Thomas, "The United Kingdom." The primary drawback of these writings is that they do not clearly enough specify what the dependent variable is. However, this presents no insurmountable problem for us if we simply impose our own dependent variable – liberal democracy, or procedural liberalism. Also see Lipset, "Radicalism or Reformism," for an analogous sequential theory of working-class radicalism.
 71. The idea of legitimation crisis as an overload of conflicts in civil society addressed to the government has received much attention in current literature: the contemporary problematic can perhaps be traced most clearly to Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1975 [1950]). In this respect, Hobbes's theory may not be conceptually much inferior; but his conception of undivided sovereignty is less satisfactory than a number of contemporary formulations

- of stop-gap arrangements in the face of extreme and intractable conflict: e.g., Giovanni Sartori, "European Political Parties: The Case of Polarized Pluralism," in Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, editors, *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) and *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) on immobile and corrupt coalitions in regimes challenged by well entrenched anti-system parties; Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) on "consociational democracy" in countries experiencing extreme communal conflict; Philippe Schmitter and Gerhard Lehmbruch, editors, *Trends Toward Corporatist Intermediation* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979) on "neo-corporatist" bilateral negotiations between powerful interest groups *outside* of (or only alongside) the legitimated national forum in parliament – but cf. Charles W. Anderson, "Political Design and the Representation of Interests," in Philippe Schmitter and Gerhard Lehmbruch, editors; and Robert Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
72. See, e.g., Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*; Weintraub, *Virtue, Community, and the Sociology of Liberty*. Not everyone would accept the republican virtue tradition as a form of liberalism, but it is at least closely related.