

“When Reason Is Against a Man, a Man Will Be Against Reason”:

Hobbes, Deism, and Politics

Elad Carmel

St Hilda’s College

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
DPhil in Politics in the Department of Politics and International Relations at
the University of Oxford

Trinity Term, June, 2016

Word count: 96,693

“When Reason Is Against a Man, a Man Will Be Against Reason”: Hobbes, Deism, and Politics

Elad Carmel, St Hilda's College

Trinity Term, June, 2016

Thesis submitted for the degree of DPhil in Politics in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford.

Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between Thomas Hobbes and English deism. It seeks to show that Hobbes's work had a significant influence upon subsequent deists, namely, Charles Blount, John Toland, Matthew Tindal, and Anthony Collins. The thesis shows that these deists were influenced by certain distinctively Hobbesian anticlerical ideas, such as his biblical criticism, his materialism and determinism, his scepticism towards present revelation, and more. The deists, who were motivated by a similar form of anticlericalism, found in Hobbes a particularly resourceful ally. Furthermore, this thesis explores how some of Hobbes's political ideas influenced the deists: particularly his concerns regarding the dangerous role that priestly interests played in society and the instability that they generated.

This thesis thus argues that Hobbes can be seen as a major influence upon English deism. Secondly, it offers an examination of Hobbes's concepts of God and reason. It shows that whilst Hobbes's accounts of God and reason were multilayered and at times perhaps underdeveloped, they contained significant elements that anticipated the later positions of the deists. Finally, this thesis argues that, for Hobbes, the rational potential of humankind, implanted by God, could be cultivated and fulfilled once peace and security are guaranteed. Thus, this thesis attempts to recover some of the more utopian aspects of Hobbes's thought. It concludes that both Hobbes and the deists were part of a project of enlightenment, but one which was not aimed against religion as such. They attempted to liberate natural reason from the darkness of corrupt clerics and their false doctrines: this was an *anticlerical enlightenment* that was partly initiated by Hobbes and developed significantly by the deists.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I am grateful to my supervisors, Jon Parkin and Mark Philp, who taught me more than I can express. Their approaches to academic work—and their own work—have been a major source of inspiration and have given me the best intellectual models I could aspire to. Their endless willingness to guide, support, and have enjoyable and fruitful discussions has enabled me not only to complete this DPhil but also to make the most of this process of personal and professional development.

I am also grateful to my examiners, Robin Douglass and David Leopold, for the close attention they have given my work, and for their helpful comments and suggestions for the future. Discussing this work with them has been both challenging and rewarding.

I would like to thank Tamar Meisels, who has encouraged me to pursue this research since the days of my MA studies, and whose support has been truly meaningful to me ever since. I am also grateful to my teachers at Tel Aviv University, who had motivated me to work on the very early seeds of ideas that I developed in this thesis, and especially Golan Lahat, Anat Biletzki, and Menachem Mautner.

During my stay in Oxford, I have been extremely lucky in making close friends, with whom I could share the entire range of feelings that I have experienced, and whose friendship has been long exceeding the time and place of the DPhil: Yuna, Franziska, Amr, Jen, Saliha, Tatiana, Nicole, Shiru, and many others. Dana Landau, who I had first met long before coming to Oxford, has become a friend who is also family, and I am exceptionally grateful for her constant support. Finally, I thank my friends from home for always giving me a place to come back to, as if I had never left. Particularly, I thank Shai Hertz, who accompanied this journey, although mostly virtually, more than anyone else.

Upon moving to Oxford, I have been extremely fortunate to meet Kathryn and Merlin Stone, to whom I am wholeheartedly grateful. They have been so kind to give me a home in a country I did not know I had a home in. They have become my second, English, family: an award I did not expect, and I am most happy to have received.

Finally, this could not have happened without the limitless support of my family, to whom—even from another continent—I have only grown closer over these years: Raphi, Daphna, Lior, Shai, Amit, and Ora. Each in her or his way has found ways to keep me going when I needed that the most, and for that I am forever grateful. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	vi
Introduction	1
1. Hobbes and deism: a short review	4
2. Deism	8
2.1. Herbert of Cherbury	16
2.2. Locke	18
2.3. Spinoza	20
3. Arguments and methods	27
3.1. Context and influence: the case of Hobbes and deism	28
3.2. Reception and esotericism: the case of Hobbes and religion	32
4. Outline	37
Chapter I: Hobbes and Early English Deism	40
1. Introduction	40
2. The deists and Hobbes	42
2.1. The origins of deism	42
2.2. Charles Blount	43
2.3. John Toland	57
2.4. Matthew Tindal	64
2.5. Anthony Collins	68
3. Hobbes	72
4. Conclusions	78
Chapter II: Hobbes's God	79
1. Introduction	79
2. The puzzle of Hobbes's God	80
2.1. The atheist's God?	80
2.2. A designer with no ends?	84
3. The 1640s–50s: rescuing God in a deterministic-mechanistic world	89
3.1. The decree of God and God's prescience	90
3.2. God's general influence and mediated work	93
4. The 1660s: rescuing God in a material world	96
4.1. The corporeal God	97
4.2. God and the plenum	99
4.3. God and anticlericalism	102
5. Deism: the future of Hobbes's God?	105
5.1. The deistic God	105
5.2. The Tolandian step	109
6. Conclusions	113
Chapter III: Reason and Philosophy in Hobbes's Theory	116
1. Introduction	116
2. Different notions of reason?	118
3. Reason in Hobbes's account	121
3.1. Definitions	121
3.2. Reason and the laws of nature	123
3.3. Subtypes of reason?	125
3.4. Reason and cultural transformation	128
4. The developmental operation of reason in Hobbes's account	131
4.1. The first step: natural reason	131
4.2. The second step: philosophy	135
4.3. Natural reason and philosophy: potential and fulfilment	137
5. Reason and anticlericalism: Hobbes and deism	144

6. Conclusions	150
Chapter IV: Deism and Hobbes's Politics	155
1. Introduction	155
2. Hobbesian ideas in radical politics	159
2.1. Hobbes and toleration: 1650–60s	159
2.2. Hobbes and early Whiggism: 1670–80s	163
2.3. Hobbes and deistic ecclesiastical politics: 1680s–1700s	168
2.3.1. Charles Blount	168
2.3.2. Matthew Tindal	174
3. Hobbes's ecclesiastical politics	185
3.1. Hobbes's ecclesiology: removing the power over conscience	185
3.2. Hobbes's politics: freethinking under Leviathan	190
4. Conclusions	196
Conclusion: Deism – Highway to a Hobbesian Enlightenment?	200
1. Hobbes and deism	202
2. Hobbes, enlightenment, and utopia	207
Bibliography	214

Abbreviations

The works by Thomas Hobbes that will be used in the thesis:

Answer: *An Answer to a Book Published by Dr. Bramhall, Late Bishop of Derry, Called the “Catching of the Leviathan”*, in EW, vol. 4.

AW: *Thomas White’s De Mundo Examined*. Translated by Harold W. Jones. London: Bradford University Press in association with Crosby Lockwood Staples, 1976 (“Anti-White”).

Behemoth: *Behemoth, or the Long Parliament*. Edited by Paul Seaward. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Considerations: *Considerations upon the Reputation, Loyalty, Manners and Religion of Thomas Hobbes*, in EW, vol. 4.

CTH: *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*. Edited by Noel Malcolm. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. 2 volumes.

DCo: *Elements of Philosophy. The First Section, Concerning Body (De Corpore)*, in EW, vol. 1. References: by part, chapter, article, and page numbers.

DCv: *On the Citizen (De Cive)*. Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. References: by chapter, article, and page numbers.

DP: *Decameron Physiologicum*, in EW, vol. 7.

DPS: *A Dialogue between a Philosopher and a Student, of The Common Laws of England; Questions Relative to Hereditary Right*. Edited by Alan Cromartie and Quentin Skinner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

EL: *The Elements of Law: Natural and Politic*. Edited with a preface by F. Tönnies. London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co, 1889. References: by part, chapter, article, and page numbers.

EW: *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*. Edited by William Molesworth. London: 1839–45. 11 volumes.

HE: *A True Ecclesiastical History (Historia Ecclesiastica)*. Translated by John Rooke. London: 1722.

HN: *An Historical Narration Concerning Heresie, and the Punishment Thereof*. London: 1680.

Lev: *Leviathan*. Edited by Noel Malcolm. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Including the Latin *Leviathan*. References: by chapter and page numbers.

Six lessons: *Six Lessons to the Professors of the Mathematics* in EW, vol. 7.

Questions: *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance* in EW, vol. 5.

Introduction

The Ecclesiastiques are Spirituall men, and Ghostly Fathers. The Fairies are Spirits, and Ghosts. Fairies and Ghosts inhabite Darknesse, Solitudes, and Graves. The Ecclesiastiques walke in Obscurity of Doctrine, in Monasteries, Churches, and Church-yards.

(Leviathan, 1651)¹

Natural Religion, easie first and Plain;
Tales made it Mystery, Offerings made it gain;
Sacrifices and Feasts were at length prepar'd.
The Priests eat roast Meat, and the People star'd.

(The Deists' Plea, 1692)²

In 1696 Humphrey Prideaux published *A Letter to the Deists*. The future dean of Norwich believed that deism originally meant a belief in the deity, but its meaning was changing: “the Out-cry against Deists is now grown so strong, that no body can suppose it to be wholly without ground”.³ Deism had received a new, narrow, and clearly negative meaning: “That it is thus used, we cannot doubt: Daily Conversation assures us of it”.⁴ According to Prideaux, those who were responsible for the new meaning of deism understood by it “a Denial of the Grounds of Revealed Religion”, and some seemed to “deny the very Principles of Natural Religion also”.⁵ The contemporary deists that Prideaux saw were more dangerous than atheists: “those that retaining the usual Word, endeavour slyly to insinuate a Corrupt sence of it, ought so much the more carefully to be watched, by how much the more their Title and Outside is less apt to give any suspicion of their Design”.⁶ Furthermore, “all their several Schemes do equally lead to Irreligion; And consequently to the utter ruin of Humane Societies”.⁷

Describing the irreligious deists that he had in mind, Prideaux argued that “Some Men, because Mr. Hobbs relished not the sound of Immaterial Substances ... fear not, upon his Authority, to ridicule the Notion of Spirit. These, without trying their Skill upon particulars, resolve in general the Structure of the whole Universe, and of all the Animate Beings which

¹ Lev. XLVII, 1120.

² Charles Gildon, “The Deist's Plea”, in *Miscellany Poems upon Several Occasions: Consisting of Original Poems* (London: 1692), 27.

³ Humphrey Prideaux, *A Letter to the Deists* (London: 1696), 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

replenish it, into the unexplicable Powers of Matter and Motion”.⁸ This development had highly dangerous consequences. Hobbesian materialism in the hands of the deists came to mean that “God (as they would call it) must be liable to all the changes that happen in the Universal Mass of Matter”.⁹ The result was a material God, and once allowed, “we can not avoid to acknowledge him subject to Disturbances, Diseases, Passions, and all manner of Alterations that are incident to Matter, and altogether unsuitable to the Perfections which we must of necessity attribute to the Supream Deity”.¹⁰

The authority that Prideaux attributed to Thomas Hobbes was justified. Hobbes’s materialism was indeed a significant influence upon many of those who held heterodox positions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as were other aspects of his writings: his critical treatment of the Scripture, his scepticism towards supernatural phenomena, or at least towards our ability to believe in their occurrence, his psychological explanation of the origin of religion, and his disdain for “unpleasing priests”¹¹ are a few notable examples. Subsequent deists were similarly known for their anticlericalism and the radical campaign they launched against priestcraft, and for their historical inquiries designed to trace the true and uncorrupted origins of Christianity, finding those mostly in natural, rather than revealed, religion.

Prideaux’s account draws our attention to the striking relationship between Hobbes and deism. This relationship, although alluded to in secondary literature on Hobbes and the deists, has not been dealt with properly and therefore deserves a closer look. This thesis will seek to do so by exploring the following questions: How far do the resemblance between Hobbes and the deists and his influence upon them go, both in terms of their positions and their motives? Would it be accurate to suggest that it was Hobbes’s work that initiated, or allowed, the emergence of English deism, and to what extent? Was Hobbes, in fact, a deist or a proto-deist? And what can this tell us about Hobbes’s own theory, and the way that we should understand it today? Can Hobbes’s relationship to deism shed light on some aspects of his work, or illuminate those aspects whose

⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19–20.

¹¹ Lev. XII, 186.

interpretation remains contested, particularly with regard to religion and its relationship with politics?

As I will argue, the relationship between Hobbes and deism was much closer than is normally assumed. Prideaux was certainly right to identify Hobbes's influence on the deists, and this influence needs to be thoroughly investigated. This thesis will seek to show that we can track the use of distinctively Hobbesian ideas by the English deist writers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century: specifically, Charles Blount, John Toland, Matthew Tindal, and Anthony Collins. This will enable us to establish the precise scope and nature of Hobbes's contribution to English deism. I will argue that Hobbes was a significant source of deist anticlerical ideas.

After exploring the direct debts of early English deism to Hobbes, I will go on to argue that deist writers found Hobbes useful because some of his ideas were provocative enough to provide some important intellectual resources that they could build upon. This analysis will draw our attention to some "enlightened" aspects of Hobbes's theory that are often ignored by commentators, specifically his multilayered approach to the questions of God and reason. Exploring these aspects of Hobbes's work afresh can reveal the extent to which Hobbes did, and did not, anticipate deist arguments. As I will suggest, while it is a mistake to label Hobbes as a deist straightforwardly, a closer look at his various writings will show how and why his philosophy, as well as his political thought, might be closer to the deists than commentators have traditionally thought.

The links between Hobbes and deism can then suggest that in some important sense they were part of the same project, or that they were fighting the same battle. Contrary to Prideaux's account, neither Hobbes nor the deists were in fact prophets of irreligion or atheism. Rather, they all promoted what I suggest that we see as an *anticlerical enlightenment*: an enlightenment which was not aimed against religion as such, but against the misuses, or in fact abuses, of religion by corrupt and manipulative priests. Both Hobbes and the deists presented complex positions in that they subverted religion dramatically but they did not overthrow it entirely. They attempted to expose the darkness in organised religion in order to save what they saw as the light of pure, true, religion. This project had a clear political objective: religion was to be transformed from a source of

political instability to the basis for social stability. For Hobbes, as for the deists, once the harmful influence of the “unpleasing priests” was neutralised, a much brighter future beckoned.

At the same time, I will also stress that while Hobbes and the deists started from a similar point, they did not always reach the same conclusions. On the one hand, they all shared a strong sense of anticlericalism and a conviction that it was the power-hungry and self-interested priests who had corrupted religion and had been responsible for social chaos. This, I will argue, was a central theme throughout all their works. On the other hand, the deists went further than Hobbes had ever been willing to go. While Hobbes only went part-way in questioning revealed religion, the nature of God, or the immortality of soul, for example, the deists did so much more openly, and their conclusions were often much more heterodox. By exploring the links between the positions of Hobbes and the deists and their common motives, deism can show us *one* way in which Hobbes’s legacy could be carried forward after his death. Since, as I will show, the deists had Hobbes in mind when they were working, it is possible to show that they saw themselves in some important respects as his successors. Deism, in this sense, can prove to be one possible highway to a *Hobbesian enlightenment*: an enlightenment that had started with Hobbes, and was developed, advanced, and perhaps “radicalised” by the deists.

In the following review, I will discuss the existing literature on Hobbes and deism, and I will argue that we do not have a sufficient account of the relationship between them. I will clarify the meaning and importance of deism on historical and conceptual levels. Then, I will elaborate on the arguments that this thesis will make with regard to the relationship between Hobbes and deism and the implications for Hobbes’s theory, including some methodological remarks. Finally, I will briefly outline the structure of this thesis.

1. Hobbes and deism: a short review

The resemblance between Hobbes and subsequent deists has been occasionally referred to in the literature, although it is usually only mentioned briefly.¹² Moreover, the association between Hobbes and deism is often automatically dismissed on various grounds. Jeffrey Barnouw, for

¹² See for example Peter Gay, *Deism: An Anthology* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1968), 22–4; Margaret Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 75–7.

example, argues that “In recognizing and exerting the concern of reason with the content of what is to be believed, if not the grounds of belief, and especially in his anti-metaphysical use of historical consciousness, Hobbes contributes to critical tendencies that fed into deism”. But he immediately adds that “if we take “natural religion” to be an essential element of deism, we must recognize that the general bent of Hobbes’s thought is not congenial to deism”.¹³ According to Barnouw, Hobbes belonged to a tradition of separation between reason and faith—emphasising the omnipotent and unintelligible will of God—and he therefore needs to be distinguished from the deists and their natural religion, which included a natural understanding of God. Similarly, Wayne Hudson has argued recently that Hobbes and Spinoza alike “could be regarded as ‘deists’ in the sense of improper theists, but they were not deists in more standard senses”. Hudson, too, claims that unlike the deists, Hobbes “was not committed to a form of theism for which God was bound by the ontological order. Nor was he convinced that the bulk of humanity would ever take reason as their guide”. Finally, Hudson adds that “Hobbes’s personal religious views are far from easy to ascertain” and that “His critics maintained that he rejected the supernatural and explained religion in materialist terms, but this did not necessarily make him heterodox, while his conservative political sympathies meant that he did not encourage public attacks on Christianity, which he conceded could be a serious civil religion”.¹⁴

As Hudson seems to suggest, there are certain ambiguities in Hobbes that might make him look less like a deist, when deism is understood simply as an endorsement of natural religion. Indeed, Hobbes’s religious views have left commentators debating until today whether he was an atheist, even if a covert one,¹⁵ or alternatively, a—more or less traditional—Christian believer.¹⁶

¹³ Jeffrey Barnouw, “The Separation of Reason and Faith in Bacon and Hobbes, and Leibniz’s Theodicy”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42:4 (1981): 618.

¹⁴ Wayne Hudson, *The English Deists: Studies in Early Enlightenment* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009), 76.

¹⁵ The “atheistic reading” of Hobbes can be put in one of the two following ways: (1) God is impossible in Hobbes’s system; or (2) God is unnecessary to Hobbes’s system. The first option suggests that Hobbes’s discussion of God was rather ironical or even insincere, whereas the latter mostly tends to simply ignore or dismiss it. For those who think that God is impossible in Hobbes’s system, see: Edwin Curley, “I Durst Not Write So Boldly’ or, How to Read Hobbes’ Theological-Political Treatise”, in *Hobbes and Spinoza: Science and Politics*, ed. D. Bostrenghi (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1992), 497–593; Douglas M. Jesseph, “Hobbes’s Atheism”, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 26 (2002): 140–66; Patricia Springborg, “Hobbes’s Challenge to Descartes, Bramhall and Boyle: A Corporeal God”, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20:5 (2012): 903–34. For those who think that God is not needed, see David P. Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan: The Moral and Political Theory of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Gregory S. Kavka, *Hobbesian Moral*

Hobbes's views on religion and politics have also been a source for some confusion: his tendency towards heterodoxy might seem to be compromised by his so-called "conservative political sympathies". As I will argue here, such arguments for a distinction between Hobbes and the deists are not necessarily groundless, but a careful reading of Hobbes's works will show that his accounts of God and reason were more complex and perhaps open-ended than these assessments seem to suggest. Thus, even if not properly deistic, some of Hobbes's ideas could inform and inspire the emerging deism.

Indeed, as some have recognised, it can at least be said that Hobbes's work contained elements that were useful for later deists. As Jon Parkin argues, "Hobbes's work clearly provided important critical resources for deconstructing organised religion, revelation and superstition and this was probably his central contribution to the deism formulated by Blount and his colleagues". Thus, Parkin argues that Hobbes can be seen as an influence upon English deism, starting with his follower, Charles Blount. Accordingly, "Hobbes's critical treatment of religion could be added to a deist's conceptual toolkit".¹⁷ It has also been argued that Hobbes's views included elements that could be received as deistic. As Patricia Springborg notes, "eighteenth century Deists were not wrong in their judgment that Hobbes was one of them, if not indeed an atheist". She bases her analysis on some heterodox aspects which she identifies in Hobbes, namely, "1) his equation of God and Nature; 2) his materialist epistemology and atomist ontology; and 3) his theory of representation, in particular his doctrine of the Trinity". This is an illuminating account which

and *Political Theory* (Princeton; Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1986); John Plamenatz, "Mr. Warrender's Hobbes", in *Hobbes Studies*, ed. K. C. Brown (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 73–87. See also Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963) and *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 170–96.

¹⁶ See for example Alan Cromartie, "The God of Thomas Hobbes", *The Historical Journal* 51 (2008): 857–79; Willis B. Glover, "God and Thomas Hobbes", in *Hobbes Studies*, 141–68; Stewart Duncan, "Knowledge of God in *Leviathan*", *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 22:1 (2005): 31–48; Francis C. Hood, *The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); Cees Leijenhorst, "Hobbes's Corporeal Deity", *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 59:1 (2004): 73–95; Aloysius Martinich, *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); A. E. Taylor, "The Ethical Doctrine of Hobbes", *Philosophy* 13:52 (1938): 406–24; Howard Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: His Theory of Obligation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957) and his "Reply to Mr. Plamenatz", in *Hobbes Studies*, 89–100; George Wright, *Religion, Politics and Thomas Hobbes* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006).

¹⁷ Jon Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan: The Reception of the Political and Religious Ideas of Thomas Hobbes in England, 1640–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 405–6. See also Justin A.I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 133–7.

draws our attention to some of Hobbes's radical views, particularly as they are expressed in his "long-neglected *Historia Ecclesiastica*".¹⁸

Nevertheless, this argument raises a few questions. First, as mentioned, Hobbes's position on God was more complex than simply equating Him with nature. Secondly, the caveat "if not indeed an atheist" leaves our question unresolved. Deism in this sense seems to be simply taken as a kind of compromise for Hobbes's ambiguous views, which might not have been entirely and openly atheistic, but nevertheless untraditional. Edwin Curley has remarked similarly that whereas Hobbes was most likely an atheist, he was "at best a deist", in the sense of "someone who believes in a personal God, but rejects divine revelation as a basis for religious belief".¹⁹ Curley explains:

But, it may be said ... even if the thrust and intent of *Leviathan* is to undermine the God of revelation, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, may it not still be the case that Hobbes believes in the God of the philosophers? Perhaps Hobbes, if not quite a sincere Christian, is nevertheless a Deist. He does, after all, regularly present arguments for the existence of God, and sometimes he suggests that these arguments may be demonstrative. Is there a compelling reason not to regard those professions of belief as perfectly sincere?²⁰

Perhaps Hobbes was, in fact, a deist "after all"? This suggestion does deserve examination, and such an examination cannot currently be found in the literature. Even those scholars who have alluded to this possibility do not explore it in depth, usually leaving it as a brief and hesitant aside.²¹ For example, Richard Tuck argues that "Hobbes's idea of a natural religion can fairly be described as deist, and his blend of deism and civil religion was to prove prophetic of much Enlightenment thinking".²² Indeed, my thesis will eventually support this claim, but in order to do so, a serious study on the relationship between Hobbes and deism is required. Furthermore, there

¹⁸ See Patricia Springborg, "Hobbes the Atheist and His Deist Reception", in *I filosofi e la società senza religione*, ed. Marco Geuna and Gianbattista Gori (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 145–63, and especially 150–1.

¹⁹ Edwin Curley, "Calvin and Hobbes, or, Hobbes as an Orthodox Christian", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 34:2 (1996): 257.

²⁰ Curley, "I Durst Not Write So Boldly" or, How to Read Hobbes' Theological-Political Treatise", 572.

²¹ Christopher Hill suggests along these lines that "Hobbes was probably a deist, but it is doubtful if he was a Christian". See Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1972), 314. Hobbes has also been located somewhere *near* deism without being identified with it entirely. For example, Oakeshott argues that Hobbes took the way of civil religion, compatible with civil association, rather than the one of natural religion which led some to "the fairyland of deism". Since Hobbes looked for peace and not for universal truth, what he needed was primarily a civil religion that will be authorised and public, in order to prevent divisions that might cause social disorder. See Michael Oakeshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000), 76.

²² Richard Tuck, *Hobbes: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 91. See also Tuck, "The 'Christian Atheism' of Thomas Hobbes", in *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, ed. Michael Hunter and David Wootton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 128. Tuck believes, however, that by the time of *Leviathan*, Hobbes was closer to atheism.

is clearly a problem with suggesting that Hobbes was straightforwardly a deist, not least because Hobbes never claimed to have been a deist. Hobbes's project was too complex to be summarised under one label: taking him to be a deist would greatly oversimplify his theory – and it is important to stress that Hobbes could have a number of different commitments, some much more traditional than others, whereas the deists were much more clearly and openly heterodox.

To conclude, it is evident that Hobbes's work had a substantial impact upon the deists to various extents and in various forms. On the other hand, Hobbes himself was not simply a deist. Thus, though seemingly acknowledged to a certain extent in the literature, the precise nature and the full extent of the relationship between Hobbes and deism remains a puzzle. In this thesis I will argue that Hobbes believed that religion, that is, true religion, was a necessary result of human nature and a crucial tool in a peaceful commonwealth. At the same time, he attempted to transform the way in which people were thinking about religion and the way in which it was employed by the state. Hobbes's theory was thus designed to permit the reconstruction of traditional Christian beliefs in ways that would allow the clarification of their place in society and in relation to political authority. In this project, Hobbes was followed, almost step by step, by the deists. The deists, too, attempted to maintain basic Christian premises while promoting a fundamental change in religion which would eliminate its more mystical elements. Before proceeding to presenting the arguments of this thesis in full, a full characterisation of deism is thus needed in order to understand its precise meaning and historical value.

2. Deism

Deism is normally understood as a natural and rational form of religion, which consists of a belief in God alongside a rejection of revealed religion.²³ Nevertheless, the topic is not necessarily all that

²³ Deism is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as the “belief in the existence of a Supreme Being as the source of finite existence, with rejection of revelation and the supernatural doctrines of Christianity”. Similarly, Roger Emerson defines deism in the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* as “the belief that by rational methods alone men can know all the true propositions of theology which it is possible, necessary, or desirable for men to know”. See “Deism”, OED Online, accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/49205?redirectedFrom=deism>; Roger L. Emerson, “Deism”, in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Philip P. Wiener, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1973), 646. Another commonplace definition for deism is as the “belief in one supreme being, a reliance on reason and natural religion, a distrust of revelation, a commitment to moral virtue and a repudiation of religion intolerance, dogma and superstition”. See David Hempton, “Deism”, in *The Penguin Dictionary of Eighteenth-*

simple. Deism is a controversial subject and, as a label, it has enjoyed mixed fortunes over the years. As I will describe below, its meaning and significance had been praised—and arguably simplified—by historians, whereas more recently, it has been questioned and has even come to be neglected in the scholarship. I will argue that we need a better understanding of deism which will enable us to see its value as a historical and philosophical category. Such an understanding must take into consideration the complex character of this phenomenon.

The term “deism” started as an insult and only later, in a complex dialectical process, was adopted by those who took it upon themselves to advocate it and respond to critique. As we have seen in Prideaux’s account, it was used to label and attack those who questioned or even mocked revealed religion. What has been termed “the deist controversy” took place in England in the 1690s and reached its peak with the publication of John Toland’s *Christianity Not Mysterious* in 1696, between the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695 and the new Blasphemy Act of 1697. Toland argued that there were no mysteries and nothing above or contrary to reason in religion.²⁴ Toland was not alone: the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries witnessed similar works by Charles Blount, Matthew Tindal, and Anthony Collins, who are widely recognised in modern scholarship as the prominent figures of early English deism.²⁵ In my discussion throughout this thesis, I shall therefore focus on these four figures.²⁶

century History, ed. Jeremy Black and Roy Porter (London: Penguin, 1996), 191; J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 279–89.

²⁴ John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious: Or a Treatise Shewing, That There Is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, Nor Above It: And That No Christian Doctrine Can Be Properly Call’d a Mystery* (London: 1696). In the secondary literature, Toland has received by far the greatest attention of all the English deists. See for example Frederick C. Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason: The Defense of Rationality in the Early English Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 220–65; Justin Champion, *Republican Learning: John Toland and the Crisis of Christian Culture, 1696–1722* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Robert Sullivan, *John Toland and the Deist Controversy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). Toland is also a prominent figure in Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*.

²⁵ See for example Hudson, *The English Deists*; Ernest Mossner, “Deism”, in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), 328. Toland, Tindal, and Collins had some personal connections and it is at least a possibility that they were involved in some of each other’s works. See James O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins: The Man and His Works* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 1–22; Stephen Lalor, *Matthew Tindal, Freethinker* (London: Continuum, 2006), 15–16, 28–9. On Blount’s deism, see J. A. Redwood, “Charles Blount, Deism, and English Free Thought”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35:3 (1974): 490–8; Richard H. Popkin, “The Deist Challenge”, in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, ed. Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 195–215; Noel Malcolm, “Charles Blount”, in CTH, vol. 2, 790–5.

²⁶ Other thinkers often recognised as English deists include Thomas Chubb, Thomas Morgan, Thomas Gordon, John Trenchard, and Peter Annett. Generally speaking, these thinkers worked primarily in the eighteenth century, and belonged to the later stage of deism (that is, the one that was further from Hobbes

Based on their rejection of revealed religion, these deists were long seen as the forerunners of the age of secularisation and enlightenment, whose philosophy had a far-reaching impact both in England and on the continent throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus, in the 1960s Peter Gay argued that the English deists “were acute if not profound thinkers” who “redrew the religious map of Europe”.²⁷ Elsewhere, he suggested that “for most of his recorded history man has been a religious animal. After Deism, and partly because of it, he was so no longer”.²⁸ Similarly, Franco Venturi asserted that the deists could be considered “with a slight risk of exaggeration, as the first group of Enlightened intellectuals and philosophers at grips with the political problems of their age”.²⁹ According to these interpretations, the deists were pioneers of radical religious criticism, which paved the way to the even more radical and arguably atheistic ideas of the eighteenth century.³⁰ This interpretation sees the role of deism mainly in undermining clerical authority as well as the power of the state, especially in governing religious matters. Thus, deism combined religious scepticism—including the promotion of complete materialism and the rejection of providence, revelation, priesthood, and the afterlife—with a radical democratic political philosophy.³¹ This account takes the deists to have been extremely subversive. For Jonathan Israel, it was radical deism and atheism alike that provided the framework for the revolutionary ideas of the “radical enlightenment”, which sought to sweep away the existing institutions and the existing order.³² Others have gone so far as to argue that the deists themselves were actually covert atheists.³³

chronologically). Moreover, they are mentioned in the literature significantly less than Blount, Toland, Tindal, and Collins. These thinkers will therefore not be considered here. They might certainly, however, offer an interesting way to extend this research in the future.

²⁷ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), 374–5.

²⁸ Gay, *Deism*, 10.

²⁹ Franco Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 53.

³⁰ See also Norman Torrey, *Voltaire and the English Deists* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930).

³¹ Justin Champion, “Deism”, in *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy*, ed. Richard H. Popkin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 437.

³² Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11–12 and “Forward”, in *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, ed. Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci, Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), xxiv.

³³ This interpretation had already been voiced by the deists’ contemporary critics, who argued that the deists were trying to conceal their atheism by presenting a more sophisticated position. Among modern scholars, David Berman has argued that the deists were atheists who had no choice but to hide their real message for it to reach their audience. Berman suggests therefore that we should read the works of the deists as such that

However, more recently, the idea of “*the* enlightenment”, and moreover the notion of secularisation, have been substantially challenged in the literature. Consequently, deism and its historical significance have started to appear more marginal than what Gay and Venturi had suggested. Thus, J. G. A. Pocock has argued against the idea of the enlightenment “as a unified phenomenon with a single history and definition”, and has suggested that “we do better to think of a family of Enlightenments, displaying both family resemblances and family quarrels”.³⁴ Particularly in the English context, it has been argued that the enlightenment needs to be understood as a more moderate process that took place within a religious framework, and was led by people who were themselves religious, even clerics.³⁵ The English Enlightenment, unlike the French one, was not revolutionary, and there was no need to overthrow religion itself. Improvement could be, and in fact was, made within the existing establishment. As Roy Porter has suggested, the English Enlightenment was not necessarily secular, but one that thrived within piety.³⁶ Thus, it was a rather conservative enlightenment. Following this account, the role and impact of deism has been questioned. English deism seems to have lost its historical significance as a pioneering movement of radical secularisation. As John Robertson has argued recently, “this label has fallen out of use among historians, a reflection of the greater awareness that natural and revealed religion were complementary, and that the radicals drew on the scholarship devoted to both”.³⁷ Others, including Pocock, have argued that English deists were indeed promoting their radical ideas, but that their significance lay elsewhere, mainly in a continental, rather than English,

attempted to influence their readers at an unconscious level, and that in order to achieve this goal they had to employ what he calls the “art of theological lying”. See David Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain: From Hobbes to Russell* (London: Routledge, 1990), 70–92; Berman, “Deism, Immortality and the Art of Theological Lying”, in *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment*, ed. J. A. Leo Lemay (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), 61–78; Berman, “Disclaimers as Offence Mechanisms in Charles Blount and John Toland”, in *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, 255–72. Berman make essentially the same claim about Hobbes: he argues that Hobbes was a secret atheist, but fearing for his life, the irreligion that was embedded in his writing was camouflaged by orthodox pronouncement. See Berman, *A History of Atheism*, 65. I will deal with the flaws of such an approach in the methodological section.

³⁴ J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion: Volume 1, The Enlightenment of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 9.

³⁵ See J. G. A. Pocock, “Post-Puritan England and the Problem of the Enlightenment”, in *Culture and Politics from Puritanism to the Enlightenment*, ed. Perez Zagorin (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1980), 91–111; B. W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³⁶ Roy Porter, “The Enlightenment in England”, in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 13.

³⁷ John Robertson, *The Enlightenment: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 24.

context.³⁸ Finally, it has been suggested that there is not enough evidence even to support the claim that there was such a thing as a deist movement: it is not only the significance of deism that has become disputed in the literature, but its very existence.³⁹

I will argue that these suggestions are not sufficient to determine that deism is no longer a valuable label – but they do force us to undertake two important tasks: first, we need to identify by a close textual analysis what deism meant to those who wrote about it; and second, we need to modify our understanding of deism to reconcile it to the English Enlightenment as has been recovered in recent scholarship. I will take these two tasks in my work on deism insofar as it is related to its relationship with Hobbes. Furthermore, I will argue that the importance of the deists derives precisely from the *complexity* of their position, that is, the fact that they were radical in some important senses, and yet that they operated within, rather than against, the existing order. When seen this way, the relationship between deism and Hobbes will also become clearer.

Indeed, some have started to rethink deism recently in a way which is more sensitive to these complexities, and this yielded richer accounts which show that deism is a valuable label. Simply stated, a more conservative interpretation would take the deists as Protestant thinkers who took available doctrines and pushed them one step further. They were more radical than contemporary Anglicans and even latitudinarians, but they were Christians nevertheless.⁴⁰ They attempted to promote a naturalistic and moralistic form of religion, an attempt which was not designed to destroy Christianity, but to save it from the critical dangers that they saw. Deism might have given rise to more radical and irreligious thought; but early English deism, at least, needs to be understood as a position grounded in a religious context.⁴¹ This account can thus help

³⁸ Pocock, “Post-Puritan England and the Problem of the Enlightenment”, 106.

³⁹ S. J. Barnett, *The Enlightenment and Religion: The Myths of Modernity* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1–44.

⁴⁰ See Roger L. Emerson, “Latitudinarianism and the English Deists”, in *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment*, 19–48. It is also important to be cautious with the term latitudinarianism. As John Spurr shows, the common association of latitudinarianism with a distinctive view of religious rationalism and toleration might be misleading, as those considered to be latitudinarians were not necessarily in substantial disagreement with the rest of the Anglican church. See John Spurr, “‘Latitudinarianism’ and the Restoration Church”, *The Historical Journal* 31:1 (1988): 61–82.

⁴¹ This claim is not necessarily limited to the case of the English deists. A recent account has suggested, for example, that even the positions of philosophers such as Spinoza and Voltaire were rooted in Christian ethics. See Dominic Erdozain, *The Soul of Doubt: The Religious Roots of Unbelief from Luther to Marx* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

improve our understanding of deism in a way that will revalidate the important role that it played in England of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Taking this approach, Wayne Hudson argues that Toland, Tindal, and Collins in particular were Protestant thinkers and social reformers, for whom disbelief was not the primary motivation.⁴² Similarly, Jeffrey Wigelsworth argues that the deists “did certainly wish to remake the Church of England without the priestly corruption that they believed was flourishing in the institution. This is not the same as wanting its wholesale destruction; nor does it make them subversive radicals bent on destroying existing governmental institutions”.⁴³ He shows *pace* Israel that none of the deists advocated anything like modern democracy, or indeed the removal of the monarchy.⁴⁴ Wigelsworth, too, concludes that the “conception of a ‘clerical Enlightenment’ occurring within a pious nation”, as described above, “needs to be expanded to include our deists, who were not separate sideline critics existing in their own ‘Radical Enlightenment’” but “sought to have their voices heard in a nation that they hoped to make better for having listened”.⁴⁵ Taking a similar approach, Justin Champion has made a significant contribution to the literature on deism. His interpretation stresses the fact that the rationalism of deism and freethinking was directed against corrupt clerics, and not at all against God; that the most significant element in this attack was its anticlericalism rather than irreligion. Thus, the rise of deism and the origin of the enlightenment need to be characterised as the trial of the priests rather than the trial of God.⁴⁶ Champion argues that the civil theologies of the deists were essentially religious enterprises, and that they appealed to classical ideas of civil religion.⁴⁷ They supported the national church and believed that the church could be changed precisely because they thought that religion was man-made and a product of society. We thus need to take seriously the religious opinions of these

⁴² Hudson, *The English Deists*, 79–114.

⁴³ Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, *Deism in Enlightenment England: Theology, Politics, and Newtonian Public Science* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 206.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 207. Frederick Beiser has also attempted to include the deists in this notion of the religious enlightenment. Beiser has argued that the deists were the first ones who made reason to be critical of faith, but even their rationalism was continuous with tendencies inherent to English Protestantism, that can be traced back to the Reformation and particularly to Luther’s principles of Christian liberty and the priesthood of all believers. See Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason*, 17, 229–30, 259.

⁴⁶ See Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, 1–24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 170–222.

“radicals”, whose programme “was not to destroy religion, but to deprive the corrupt Christian priesthood of all independent political power”, since, for them, “to overthrow priestcraft was to purify both religion and society”.⁴⁸ Moreover, Champion suggests that the radical attack on established religion was not only a struggle over theology but was also a struggle over power. Deism, according to Champion, was “not just about the competing epistemological hierarchy of revelation and reason but about who or what institution held the authoritative interpretation of truth”.⁴⁹ The deist controversy was thus “an argument in favour of the competence of human reason” but at the same time, and equally important, it was “an attack upon the perceived injustice of the distribution of authority in society”.⁵⁰

Two crucial points arise from this account. The first is that at the heart of deism was the recruitment of human reason for a cause that was essentially anticlerical. It was not an atheistic or proto-secular project but certainly a particularly radical one. As Champion shows, reason was a primary tool for the deists, though it was not the only one.⁵¹ The second point is that the deists were involved in debates that were not merely about philosophical or theological matters but also, and perhaps most fundamentally, focused upon political power. The deists were thus political actors, operating in the public sphere to expose the corruption of priestcraft, in order to reshape the relationship between the state, the church, and the individual, both as citizens and believers.

The picture that arises from these various accounts is that deism was a more complex phenomenon than originally appreciated. The deists were not atheists, but not devoted Christians either; they were not completely irreligious, but not traditionally religious. The deists were clearly operating within a Christian framework, and at the same time they transformed Christianity dramatically. Even Peter Gay has objected to Leslie Stephen’s famous distinction between

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 11. See also Champion, “Deism”, 441.

⁵¹ Champion focuses on the use of history as a tool in the hands of the radicals. He describes their attempt to reconstruct historical accounts on the corruption of Christianity, which served them to attack the histories of the church with counter-histories of superstition and priestcraft. Robertson also describes the engagement of enlightenment thinkers including “Toland and his associates” with religion and he argues that they “may also be seen as contributing to the longer-term process of secularization. But they did so not by an attack on religion in general, or on Christianity (or Islam) in particular, but by sceptical, historical enquiry, focused on religion here on earth”. See Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, 15–48, especially 47.

constructive and critical deism,⁵² because it “separates the very modes of thinking which, conjoined, gave the deists their strength”.⁵³ The crusade of the deists against priestcraft was undertaken solely for the sake of a pure, natural, Christianity; they destroyed in order to build.⁵⁴

Following this understanding of deism, I will argue that the call for natural religion, as opposed to revealed religion, was part of a fierce campaign against the clergy and particularly against priestcraft, that is, the tactics of the power-hungry priests, which the deists saw as designed to keep the laity ignorant and thus blindly obedient to the church. The deists believed that Christianity should be, and indeed once was, clear and simple, intelligible to all through the use of reason. As Toland argued in 1696, the clergymen had made religion mysterious and obscure, in order to ensure that laypeople would always depend on them for explication. This was the main point of contention between deists and atheists, even though their critics argued that at the end deism led straight to atheism. Deists never denied the existence God; they certainly denied, however, all the elements that they thought had been added to Christianity unnecessarily and maliciously by interested parties. Their answer was to rely on unaided human reason. They insisted on the right of everyone to think rationally and critically, especially in religious matters. Consequently, deism has often been interchangeable with freethinking.

With the complexities of deism properly understood, I will now suggest a typology that summarises the common threads of deism.⁵⁵ It is crucial to note that my typology is merely for the sake of a clear introductory presentation. Broadly speaking, the prominent English deists promoted the following principles: (1) that God has the role of the creator who has not necessarily

⁵² Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder, 1876), 91–277.

⁵³ Gay, *The Enlightenment*, 550.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 375–6.

⁵⁵ Several typologies of deism have been already suggested in the literature. For example, Arthur Lovejoy has suggested the following principles as constituting deism: uniformitarianism; rationalistic individualism; the appeal to the “consensus gentium”; cosmopolitanism; antipathy to “enthusiasm” and originality; intellectual equalitarianism; rationalistic anti-intellectualism; rationalistic primitivism; a negative philosophy of history. See Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The Parallel of Deism and Classicism”, *Modern Philology* 29:3 (1932): 281–99. James Herrick argues for a typology based on the rhetoric of deism, including the following: the plea for rational liberty; the pre-eminence of reason; the rejection of religious privilege; the rejection of revelation; primitive religion and the priestcraft hypothesis; theological speculation and secret societies; rejecting miracles and denigrating testimony. See James A. Herrick, *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists: The Discourse of Skepticism, 1680–1750* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 23–39. See also Emerson, “Deism”, 646.

been active since the creation;⁵⁶ (2) that God has endowed every one of us with reason, through which we are to know all we need in order to live, as well as to assure our salvation, that is, including our religious duties; (3) that our duties are always consistent and intelligible, in accordance with the natural law, and can mainly be reduced to a moral behaviour, that is, doing good to our fellow human beings; (4) that no religious doctrine should be mysterious, or above or contrary to reason, hence the grave suspicion towards any phenomenon claimed to be supernatural, including present miracles, prophecies, and revelation; (5) that the Scripture should be seen as a historical document subject to rational examination, the ability to do so is not a prerogative of the church; (6) that freethinking and religious toleration are crucial for the prosperity of any society, whereas persecution of opinions and beliefs, carried out by the civil or ecclesiastical authorities, is the biggest danger to society.⁵⁷ Clearly, many of these deistic ideas were not necessarily original. In the following sections I will discuss some major philosophers who were crucial for the emergence of English deism, and sometimes were even associated with it themselves. I will focus on three main figures who are often mentioned as particularly influential for English deism: Herbert, Locke, and Spinoza. Finally, I will argue that the fact that these philosophers were highly influential for the English deists does not rule out the important role which Hobbes played in this story, as I will show in my thesis.

2.1. Herbert of Cherbury

The first to be considered is Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1582–1648), sometimes seen as the father of English deism.⁵⁸ In his *De Veritate*, first published in 1624, Herbert presented the five common notions of religion that are rationally, naturally, and universally true. The system of

⁵⁶ This principle in particular is largely disputed in the literature. For example, while Herrick argues that this notion of the deistic God, “though persistent, is no longer tenable”, Wigelsworth argues that “it remains a common assessment” that this is what the deists believed. Elsewhere, however, Wigelsworth makes the case that it was not necessarily common to *all* deists. See Herrick, *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists*, 23–4; Wigelsworth, *Deism in Enlightenment England*, 7–8; Wigelsworth, “‘God always acts suitable to his character, as a wise and good being’: Thomas Chubb and Thomas Morgan on Miracles and Providence”, in *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, 157–72. Finally, some argue that deism can be seen as the belief in God but not in Christ. See for example Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, 24.

⁵⁷ These principles can be found in the main works which arguably constitute the canon of early English deism: John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysteriorious*; Charles Blount, *Oracles of Reason* (London: 1693); Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of Free-Thinking* (London: 1713); Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (London: 1730). As I have argued, these thinkers were at the core of English deism.

⁵⁸ See for example Richard H. Popkin, *History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2003), 135–6.

common notions “has been clearly accepted at all times by every normal person” and therefore “has never erred, nor ever will err”.⁵⁹ The five common notions are that “There is a Supreme God”, that “This Sovereign Deity ought to be Worshipped”, that “The connection of Virtue with Piety ... is and always has been held to be, the most important part of religious practice”, that “The minds of men have always been filled with horror for their wickedness. Their vices and crimes have been obvious to them. They must be expiated by repentance”, and that “There is Reward or Punishment after this life”.⁶⁰

Herbert’s work was clearly innovative.⁶¹ By reducing Christianity to a minimalistic and naturalistic creed, it arguably constituted the birth of deistic rationalism. Indeed, Herbert was interpreted by a leading critic as the first to have formed deism as a system, seeking, through the common notions, “to overturn all revealed, or, as he calls it, particular religion, and to establish that natural and universal religion, the clearness and perfection of which he so much extols, in its room, as that which alone ought to be acknowledged and embraced as true and divine”.⁶² However, as Richard Serjeantson has recently pointed out, the association of Herbert with deism does not match the original reception of *De Veritate*. Serjeantson shows that this work was written and first received as part of logical and metaphysical debates. It offered a philosophical theology in the sense of a search for proofs of the existence of God for example, but at the time that was neither necessarily original nor unorthodox. Thus, it was only later, through Blount’s appropriation of this theory, that Herbert’s common notions became linked to deism and particularly to the rationalistic attack on revealed religion. Serjeantson concludes that Herbert’s common notions were received in various contexts. They were influential *also* for deism, but there is not enough evidence to suggest that they were in themselves deistic.⁶³ It follows that it may not

⁵⁹ Edward Hebert, *De Veritate*, trans. Meyrick H. Carré (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1937), 291.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 291–307.

⁶¹ In June 1636 Hobbes wrote to William Cavendish that he was reading Herbert’s book “Concerning truth”, which was “a high point” for him. See CTH vol. 1, 32.

⁶² John Leland, *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers That Have Appeared in England in the Last and Present Century* (London: 1754), 11. On Leland’s account of deism, see chapter 1 of this thesis.

⁶³ R. W. Serjeantson, “Herbert of Cherbury before Deism: The Early Reception of the *De veritate*”, *The Seventeenth Century* 16:2 (2001): 217–38. As Serjeantson also mentions, Herbert’s treatise was even employed *against* the deists by George Rust, a member of the Cambridge Platonists, in his *Discourse of the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion: Shewing That Christianity Contains Nothing Repugnant to Right Reason; Against Enthusiasts and Deists* (London: 1683).

be accurate to argue that Herbert was the father of deism, but only that his *De Veritate* supplied helpful materials for later thinkers who wanted to take a rationalistic approach in their religious criticism.⁶⁴ It has also been argued that “Herbert claimed to be an independent thinker and, although he was more of a provocative gentleman thinker than a rigorous scholar, he deserves to be respected as such”.⁶⁵ A detailed examination of Herbert’s thought would thus be outside of the scope of this review.

2.2. Locke

John Locke (1632–1704) is often mentioned alongside the English deists. Locke knew Toland, Tindal, and Collins personally, and had a particularly close friendship with the latter.⁶⁶ In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Locke rejected Herbert’s idea of innate common notions,⁶⁷ but presented a theory of knowledge that could be used as a starting point by deists such as Toland. The difference, however, was clear. For Locke, in the distinction between things that are according to, above, and contrary to reason, only the latter were to be rejected for being “inconsistent with, or irreconcilable to our clear and distinct Ideas”.⁶⁸ Toland applied the same judgement also to things above reason. Whereas for Locke this was left for the exclusive domain of faith, for Toland reason was the only judge; and therefore things mysterious, or above reason, were to be categorically rejected as well.⁶⁹

Locke’s rationalism was perceived still to be very close to deism.⁷⁰ In 1695 he published, although anonymously, his *Reasonableness of Christianity*. The title of the work might imply that Locke’s project was similar to that of the deists. Indeed, Locke argued there that the “little Satisfaction and Consistency is to be found in most of the Systems of Divinity I have met with,

⁶⁴ See also Emerson, “Latitudinarianism and the English Deists”, 24.

⁶⁵ David A. Pailin, “Herbert, Edward, First Baron Herbert of Cheshire and First Baron Herbert of Castle Island (1582?–1648)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13020>.

⁶⁶ O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 1–22; John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 454.

⁶⁷ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human[e] Understanding* (London: 1690), 15–26.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁶⁹ Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious*. See also John C. Biddle, “Locke’s Critique of Innate Principles and Toland’s Deism”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37:3 (1976): 411–22; Ian Leask, “The Undivulged Event in Toland’s *Christianity Not Mysterious*”, in *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, 63–80.

⁷⁰ See the introduction to Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. John C. Higgins-Biddle (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), xxvii–xxxvii.

made me betake my self to the sole Reading of the Scripture (to which they all appeal) for the understanding the Christian Religion”.⁷¹ This suggested an anticlerical attitude that led Locke to adopt the Protestant approach to religion relying on the Scripture alone, namely *sola scriptura*.⁷² But unlike the deists, this approach brought Locke to argue that a revelation which is acknowledged to be divine must be accepted even without a rational demonstration. Furthermore, he argued that the belief in Jesus as the Messiah was necessary for salvation.⁷³

Not only was the *Reasonableness* more traditional than the radical deism of the 1690s, but it was in fact aimed precisely against it. As Locke revealed in the *Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity* from 1697, the *Reasonableness* “was chiefly designed for Deists”.⁷⁴ Locke explained that he had hoped that his work would be useful for those “who thought either that there was no need of Revelation at all, or that the Revelation of our Saviour required the Belief of such Articles for Salvation, which the settled Notions and their way of reasoning in some, and want of Understanding in others, made impossible to them”.⁷⁵ Such objections were made by the deists against Christianity, “But against Christianity misunderstood”; Locke reaffirmed that his method had been “to lay plainly before them the Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles, as delivered in the Scriptures, and not as taught by the several Sects of Christians”.⁷⁶

When referring to the deists, Locke might have had Charles Blount in mind, whose notorious *Oracles of Reason* was published two years before Locke’s *Reasonableness*. However, John Higgins-Biddle suggests that it is more likely that Locke was in fact commenting in 1695 on Toland’s *Christianity Not Mystrious*, parts of which he had apparently read before its publication. There is also some evidence that Locke was thinking of the Portuguese Uriel Acosta.⁷⁷ In any case,

⁷¹ Locke, *The Reasonableness*, 3.

⁷² See the introduction to *The Reasonableness*, xix-xxiii.

⁷³ See for example Locke, *The Reasonableness*, 164–71. Locke was accused of Hobbism, since Hobbes also held that the only article of faith necessary for salvation was that Jesus was Christ. Locke denied that, and argued that he had “borrowed it only from the Writers of the Four Gospels, and the Acts; and did not know that those words he quoted out of the Leviathan, were there, or any thing like them”. See Lev. XLIII, 938; Locke, *A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity* (London: 1697), 471; Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 397–402.

⁷⁴ Locke, *A Second Vindication*, 376.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, preface.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Biddle, “Locke’s Critique of Innate Principles and Toland’s Deism”, 417–22. See also his introduction to *The Reasonableness*; Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility*, 407–10.

Locke's refutation of deism has been perceived as a genuine one. As Higgins-Biddle concludes: "True Christianity for Locke, was the plain and intelligible doctrine that Jesus was the Messiah – delivered to the poor, ignorant, and illiterate with the clear, authoritative, divine revelation of man's moral duty. The reasonableness of Christianity lay not so much in its conformity to reason as in its simplicity, intelligibility, and effectiveness".⁷⁸

Other important figures were influential for the deists, and like Herbert and Locke, some were often associated with deism themselves. Hugo Grotius' pioneering theory of natural law that would apply "even if we were to suppose ... that there is no God"⁷⁹ was influential especially for Tindal; James Harrington the republican influenced Toland, who also edited his works;⁸⁰ John Milton was employed by most of the deists in their arguments for freedom of the press;⁸¹ and Isaac Newton, of course, was perceived by some to have laid the scientific infrastructure for the exclusion of God, even though he and his spokesmen denied that vehemently.⁸² These thinkers will be mentioned in the relevant chapters of this thesis. Interestingly however, the person whose influence for English deism has been most stressed in the literature, especially recently, was the Dutch philosopher Benedictus de Spinoza.

2.3. Spinoza

There is no doubt that Spinoza (1632–1677) had a significant contribution to the emergence of deism, first in England and later on the continent. In 1677, Edward Stillingfleet, then Archdeacon of London and future bishop of Worcester, published *A Letter to a Deist*, which was dedicated to "a particular Person, who owned the Being and Providence of God, but expressed a mean Esteem

⁷⁸ Biddle, "Locke's Critique", 422.

⁷⁹ Hugo Grotius, *Rights of War and Peace*, ed. Richard Tuck (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Inc., 2005), 1748 and 89.

⁸⁰ James Harrington, *The Oceana of James Harrington and His Other Works*, ed. John Toland (London: 1700).

⁸¹ See chapter 4 of this thesis. Milton's works were also edited by Toland. See John Milton, *A Complete Collection of the Historical, Political, and Miscellaneous Works of John Milton*, ed. John Toland (Amsterdam [London]: 1698); Toland, *The Life of John Milton* (London: 1699); Toland, *Amyntor, or, a Defence of Milton's Life* (London: 1699). On the association of Milton with deism see Joseph Frank, "John Milton's Movement toward Deism", *Journal of British Studies* 1:1 (1961): 38–51.

⁸² See chapter 2 of this thesis. On a deistic interpretation for Newton, see Richard S. Westfall, "Isaac Newton's *Theologiae Gentilis Origines Philosophicae*", in *The Secular Mind: Transformations of Faith in Modern Europe*, ed. W. Warren Wagar (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 15–34. See also Wigelsworth, *Deism in Enlightenment England*, especially 71–108, 142–66.

of the Scriptures, and the Christian Religion”.⁸³ Although Stillingfleet did not name the person to whom he referred, it was probably Spinoza, whose *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was published anonymously seven years earlier in the Netherlands.⁸⁴ Two centuries later, the English historian Leslie Stephen argued that “the whole essence of the deist position may be found in Spinoza’s ‘Tractatus Theologico-Politicus’”.⁸⁵ Spinoza’s influence on English deism is still greatly emphasised in the literature. Most recently this relationship has been highlighted by Jonathan Israel, as part of his argument about what he sees as the close relationship between Spinozism and the radical enlightenment.⁸⁶

It is true that there were many elements in Spinoza that made him very attractive for the early English deists. Spinoza had famously identified God with nature, and gave rise to a new materialistic approach later named by John Toland as pantheism.⁸⁷ For Spinoza, nature was the totality of all things, and as Jacob argues, from that it followed “that in society reason and not authority per se should guide human action, and that social equality represents the expression of a metaphysical reality”.⁸⁸ It is this spirit of republicanism and democracy that English deists, often radical Whigs, could find appealing.⁸⁹ Spinoza’s attempt to elevate natural reason and to promote the freedom to philosophise was essential to their own work. Furthermore, as Noel Malcolm argues, Spinoza was excommunicated from his synagogue in 1656 precisely because “he had propounded a rationalist, deist theology which demoted the status of the Bible as divine revelation, questioned its historical accuracy, and probably cast doubt on the immortality of the soul”.⁹⁰ Spinoza’s anticlericalism later informed his radical scepticism as to prophecies and miracles in the *Tractatus*, which was useful for the deists. Indeed, it was Charles Blount who brought the *Tractatus* to the English-speaking world, when he used Spinoza’s chapter on miracles

⁸³ Edward Stillingfleet, *A Letter to a Deist* (London: 1677), preface.

⁸⁴ Benedictus de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* (henceforth TTP), ed. Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). See Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 603.

⁸⁵ Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1, 33.

⁸⁶ See Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, especially 599–627. See also Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, 48–53; Rosalie L. Colie, “Spinoza and the Early English Deists”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20:1 (1959): 23–46.

⁸⁷ See for example Toland, *Pantheisticon* (Cosmopoli [London]: 1720).

⁸⁸ Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, 51.

⁸⁹ This is essentially the claim made by Jacob and Israel alike. I will engage with it in the first and fourth chapters.

⁹⁰ Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 46.

for his own *Miracles No Violations of the Laws of Nature*.⁹¹ Richard Popkin has even speculated that it was Blount who later translated the *Tractatus* into English in full.⁹² Later writings of English deists are also known to be directly influenced by Spinoza's writings, and particularly Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious* and Tindal's *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted*,⁹³ all radical anticlerical works. Hence, Spinoza served as an inspiration both on a personal and philosophical level for the English deists and the values that they were trying to put forward.⁹⁴

However, there is an odd tendency in the literature cited here to exaggerate Spinoza's influence so as to make him the main or even sole source for English deism in particular and for the "radical enlightenment" in general. This tendency can be seen in its clearest form in Israel who argues that

Spinoza emerged as the supreme philosophical bogeyman of Early Enlightenment Europe. No one else during the century 1650–1750 remotely rivalled his notoriety as the chief challenger of the fundamentals of revealed religion, received ideas, tradition, morality, and what was everywhere regarded, in absolutist and non-absolutist states alike, as divinely constituted political authority.⁹⁵

This tendency is not unique to Israel. Others also seem to have felt the need to argue that it was Spinoza *alone* who inspired early English deism.⁹⁶ I have suggested that this tendency is odd, and it is important to elaborate on the reasons behind this suggestion because they are crucial for the argument of my thesis. The first reason is methodological. In short, it is unclear why the influence upon a complex phenomenon such as English deism needs to be reduced to one source to which other sources are at best subordinated. It would be much more historically plausible, and indeed more interesting, to see the various influences upon various kinds of deism that emerged in England in the late seventeenth century. In this fabric, Herbert, Locke, Spinoza, and Hobbes all had their respective shares. This will be discussed further in relation to methods that this kind of research should take. I shall thus move to the second reason that makes it peculiar to isolate Spinoza and separate him from Hobbes as the main influence for English deism.

⁹¹ Blount, *Miracles No Violations of the Laws of Nature* (London: 1683).

⁹² Popkin, "The Deist Challenge", 206–7.

⁹³ Matthew Tindal, *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted, Against the Romish, and All Other Priests Who Claim an Independent Power Over It* (London: 1706).

⁹⁴ See also Colie, "Spinoza and the Early English Deists", 46.

⁹⁵ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 159.

⁹⁶ For similar arguments see Leask, "The Undivulged Event in Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious*"; and also Pocock, "Post-Puritan England and the Problem of the Enlightenment", 105.

As even Israel would admit, Hobbes and Spinoza were coupled by supporters and mainly by critics since the seventeenth century. As will be shown in the first chapter of this thesis, this coupling was particularly evident in the case of Charles Blount, arguably the first English deist.⁹⁷ As Richard Popkin argues, for Blount, it was both Hobbes and Spinoza who “provided a theoretical basis for denying any supernatural events, and for interpreting all religious developments as man-made”.⁹⁸ Furthermore, as some have already shown, there were many similarities between Hobbes and Spinoza, and it is even plausible to suggest that Hobbes might have influenced Spinoza.⁹⁹

Even though Hobbes “durst not write so boldly” as Spinoza did,¹⁰⁰ it is arguable that they both naturalised religion in a way that clearly undermined, explicitly or implicitly, traditional faith in miracles and prophecies.¹⁰¹ Even more important was the similarity in their approach to biblical criticism. Both authors cast doubt upon Moses’ authorship of the Pentateuch, and they both suggested that the high priest Ezra was the author of some or all of the Bible. They interpreted several scriptural passages, some of them identical, speculating about their estimated time of writing. By doing so, they treated the Bible as a mere historical document.¹⁰² These were all extremely radical moves that could later serve their followers to argue against the authority of the Scripture and revelation altogether. As Malcolm has shown, the most probable explanation for the parallels between Hobbes and Spinoza, as well as Isaac La Peyrère, is that they were all relying on

⁹⁷ Indeed, Israel recognises this fact himself but then makes his reservation: “Admittedly, in Britain Hobbes and Spinoza were also regularly cobbled together in many minds ... However, those who routinely coupled ‘Hobbes and Spinoza’ as the twin inspirers of English incredulity invariably did so opposing what Whiston called ‘a rigid fatality and necessity’ with Newtonian and physicotheological notions of ‘an intelligent and omniscient being’ governing the universe ... But this very emphasis on the antithesis between fatality and divine will inevitably focused attention increasingly on Spinoza at the expense of Hobbes, for Spinoza was far more consistently and cogently ‘necessitarian’ than the English thinker”. See Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 602–3.

⁹⁸ Popkin, “The Deist Challenge”, 207.

⁹⁹ See Malcolm, “Hobbes and Spinoza”, in *Aspects of Hobbes*, 27–52 and “Hobbes and the European Republic of Letters”, in *Aspects of Hobbes*, 457–545 and especially 470–545; Edwin Curley, “I Durst Not Write So Boldly”, 497–593; Curley, “Hobbes and the Cause of Religious Toleration”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes’s Leviathan*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 309–34 and especially 315–7; Arrigo Pacchi, “Leviathan and Spinoza’s Tractatus on Revelation: Some Elements for a Comparison”, *History of European Ideas* 10:5 (1989): 577–93.

¹⁰⁰ John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. Andrew Clark, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), 357. According to Aubrey, this was Hobbes’s comment when Edmund Waller sent Cavendish the *Tractatus* immediately after its publication in 1670. It can thus be interpreted as a rare acknowledgment of Hobbes that he might have identified in Spinoza things that he himself had thought but could not risk expressing.

¹⁰¹ See for example chapter 32 of *Leviathan* and chapters 1, 2, and 6 of the *Tractatus*.

¹⁰² See for example chapter 33 of *Leviathan* and chapters 8–10 of the *Tractatus*.

shared sources. Thus, while some theories on problematic passages in the Bible had been available for them, the three “set them off in a new direction”: from questioning the Mosaic authorship of those passages they went on to question the authorship of the Bible as a whole.¹⁰³ Malcolm concludes that the influence of the theories of both Hobbes and Spinoza “on that radical tradition was long-lasting and profound; and, of all their theories relating to the Bible, none proved more congenial to radical minds, or more effective in radical hands, than the attribution of the Pentateuch to Ezra”.¹⁰⁴ This is extremely strong evidence against the isolation of one of the two when looking for influences on deism. Indeed, as Popkin has argued, “Hobbes, Spinoza, and the early English deists did most to advance the view” that “involved the gradual transformation of ‘revealed’ truth into natural, secular facts, by treating the scriptures as ordinary human writings, best understood solely in the context of the human authors’ milieu”.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, Malcolm gives us even more reasons for rejecting an account that separates the influence of Hobbes and Spinoza. He discusses evidence that suggests that Spinoza had read Hobbes’s *De Cive*, and that he also might have read *Leviathan* either in Latin, or translated by Abraham van Berkel into Dutch, before finishing the *Tractatus* in 1670.¹⁰⁶ Thus, it is possible to argue that Spinoza himself was influenced by Hobbes. In this case, it would be simply wrong to attribute the intellectual supremacy and originality to Spinoza and not to Hobbes, as Israel attempts to do. Malcolm also writes that from the time that the *Tractatus* was published, critics were “quick to point out that some of the most objectionable features of Spinoza’s theories could be linked to – and were perhaps derived from – Hobbes. The similarities were, after all, unmistakable”.¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, Malcolm shows that in the first recorded reaction to the *Tractatus* Jakob Thomasius compared Spinoza to Hobbes and Herbert, a link which “soon became a

¹⁰³ Malcolm, “Hobbes, Ezra, and the Bible: The History of a Subversive Idea”, in his *Aspects of Hobbes*, 383–431, especially 410–12. Malcolm traces these theories back to Ibn Ezra and his commentators, as well as to other theologians and biblical scholars such as Cornelius à Lapide (Cornelis van den Steen) and Bonfrerius (Jacques Bonfrère).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 430.

¹⁰⁵ Richard H. Popkin and Mark Goldie, “Scepticism, Priestcraft, and Toleration”, in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 83.

¹⁰⁶ Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 46–7; 390–1; 516. See also William Sacksteder, “How Much of Hobbes Might Spinoza Have Read?”, *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 11:2 (1980): 25–39.

¹⁰⁷ Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 480–1.

commonplace of polemical writing”.¹⁰⁸ Spinoza was perceived by many critics, Catholics, Calvinists, and Lutherans alike, as Hobbes’s follower, who said more openly what Hobbes had said covertly. A critical mass of European works made these connections, and the result was striking: “By the first decade of the eighteenth century, an entire canon of unorthodoxy had thus been established” – a tradition of rationalism, naturalism, and anti-scripturalism that “ran from Pomponazzi, the early Socinians, and Vanini, via Herbert, Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza, to Bekker, Locke, and Toland”.¹⁰⁹

Perhaps the best known example was that of *Le Traité des Trois Imposteurs*. This clandestine text had numerous versions published throughout the eighteenth century around Europe. It has been considered radical, deistic, “one of the primary documents of Enlightenment Freethought”.¹¹⁰ It has also been argued that John Toland was involved in the circulation of one of its versions.¹¹¹ The main idea of this work was to present Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed as impostors, and all religions as a human construction, a political device which served priests and rulers to manipulate the ignorant masses. It was largely influenced by Spinoza, and indeed was also known as *L'Esprit de Spinoza*, with another version titled *La Vie et L'Esprit de Mr Benoît de Spinoza*. At the same time, it was clearly also indebted to Hobbes. Numerous references to *Leviathan* were made, echoing for example Hobbes’s psychological analysis of religion and his views of the fear of men which led them to invent demons, false gods, and meaningless spirits, taken for example from chapters 12 and 45 of *Leviathan*.¹¹² This tract has received a substantial attention in recent literature.¹¹³ Here it suffices to see it is as another example showing that it was the combined effect

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 481.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 481–2.

¹¹⁰ Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, 1. See also Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 684–703, and Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 491–3.

¹¹¹ Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, 215–20.

¹¹² See for example *The Treatise of the Three Impostors and the Problem of Enlightenment: A New Translation of the Traité des Trois Imposteurs (1777 Edition)*, trans. Abraham Anderson (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), especially 14, 16, 22.

¹¹³ See for example the collection *Heterodoxy, Spinozism, and Free-Thought in Early-Eighteenth-Century Europe: Studies on the Traité des Trois Imposteurs*, ed. Silvia Berti, Françoise Charles-Daubert and Richard H. Popkin (Kluwer: Dordrecht, 1996). See in particular Champion’s chapter, “Legislators, Impostors, and the Politic Origins of Religion: English Theories of ‘Imposture’ from Stubbe to Toland”, 333–56.

of Hobbes and Spinoza that had the greatest impact on the radicals of the enlightenment; it was most certainly not the influence of one at the expense of the other.¹¹⁴

Israel's argument that Hobbes was not radical enough to have been an influence for the radical enlightenment will be discussed and rejected in my first and fourth chapters. For the comparison with Spinoza, however, it can be concluded that the many similarities between them, in their theories, and in their reception, leave very little room to doubt that they could *both* be extremely influential for the radicals in general and for the deists in particular. The debts of deism to Spinoza have been extensively illuminated by Israel and others; my research will try to complete the picture by describing its debts to Hobbes. Fortunately, however, the mistake that Spinoza alone was radical enough to have been influential has been corrected by Malcolm. Thus, Malcolm argues that "two questionable assumptions seem to be at work here: the idea that a writer who defends state power is somehow disqualified thereby from influencing, in any other area of his thinking, any people who are opposed to the State or suffer from its attentions; and the idea, neatly betrayed by the phrasing of that sentence, that the historian should look for '*the* source and inspiration' of radical thought, rather than a plurality of sources and inspirations".¹¹⁵ Malcolm is right of course, and the assumption on which my work will be based is precisely that Hobbes did exercise a profound influence upon the deists, at least in some areas of their thought, while not excluding many other possible influences and inspirations that were at the background of their work. A methodological discussion of influence is still needed, and I will explore this and related issues in the following section.

¹¹⁴ Here, again, Israel argues that the borrowings from Hobbes and others "are actually used only to illustrate Spinozistic arguments and do not substantially influence the systematically mechanistic, deterministic, materialist, and non-providential principles on which the work is uncompromisingly based ... the fundamental aim of the *Traité* is nothing less than to convince readers 'there are no such things in Nature as either God or Devil or Soul or Heaven or Hell, after the fashion as they are described' and that the 'theologians, that is to say, these men who exhibit and spread about ridiculous Fables for sacred truths divinely revealed are all of them except some few ignorant dunces...people of villaneous principles, who maliciously abuse and impose on the credulous populace.' This was not remotely Hobbes' message (even if he agreed with parts of it privately) ... The Spinozists alone entertained this design". This is of course a severe misunderstanding of Hobbes. As Malcolm has replied to Israel: "The presence of Hobbesian material in this text is in fact more pervasive than any of its modern editors or commentators have realized"; "mechanism, determinism, materialism and non-providentialism were all principles associated with Hobbes too – indeed, materialism was a principle of Hobbes, of radical 'Hobbism', and of some forms of radical 'Spinozism', but it was not a principle of Spinoza's own philosophy". See Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 697–8, and Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 493 and n.130.

¹¹⁵ Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 536.

3. Arguments and methods

My research will explore the relationship between Hobbes and early English deism. I will argue that this relationship is much closer than usually suggested. I will start by arguing that the deists were significantly influenced by Hobbes. I will show that his influence can be demonstrated in multiple cases and various ways, and that in many instances the deists openly acknowledged that they were following Hobbes. I will attempt to show that the deists saw Hobbes as one of their primary authorities. Based on the links that can be found, I will attempt to explore in depth certain issues in Hobbes's thought—focusing on his concepts of God and reason—in order to show that his positions offered materials that could be developed by subsequent deists.

When discussing a relationship between a thinker and a tradition, it is crucial to be cautious. Firstly, it would be anachronistic to identify Hobbes as a deist, nor is there any historical evidence for such a claim. Once it is shown that the main period of deism started in the late 1670s, near the time of Hobbes's death, it becomes clear that the relationship was one of influence: Hobbes came before the deists, and could therefore be seen at best as a proto-deist or one of the fathers of deism, insofar as elements from Hobbes can be shown to have been adopted by the deists. Here we encounter another series of challenges. The first has already been raised in the previous section concerning the use of deism as a category. As was shown, although some guidelines for the definition of deism can be found, it is clear that it was a dynamic concept and that in order for this category to be helpful at all, we must use it with great attention to its historical development. Second, it is important to avoid reductionism: Hobbes's theory, even if proto-deistic, was much more complex than that. Deism too cannot and should not be reduced into one single formula. I will stress therefore that the claims that are made in this research should not be overstated. There are many links to be found between Hobbes and the deists, but nothing to suggest that Hobbes was *only* a proto-deist, nor that deism was the *only* way to elaborate Hobbes's theory. It was nevertheless a very interesting path, which deserves a thorough research. Finally, in order to demonstrate Hobbes's influence on the early English deists, it must be clarified what I mean by influence and what the conditions for showing such an influence should be. In order to address these issues, the methods that will be embraced here are such that emphasise the

complexities of the questions, as well as the crucial role of the context and language in this kind of research. I will follow much of Skinner's approach, although I will reject some of his comments about influence. I will also discuss the risks in reading deism back into Hobbes, focusing mainly on the questions of reception and esotericism.

3.1. Context and influence: the case of Hobbes and deism

Researching the relationship between Hobbes and deism requires some methodological discussion. As I have already argued, this relationship is a complex one. In contrast to the sort of strong claims made by Israel on Spinoza and deism or the radical enlightenment, I will assert that the relationship between Hobbes and deism was significant and interesting, but it was nevertheless part of a more complex story. I will emphasise that Hobbes was one of the main sources on which deism drew, though not the only one, and that deism is only one path among several in which Hobbes's theory was pursued after his lifetime. Deism does not necessarily reveal the "real Hobbes" but draws our attention to some understudied features of his work. The methodological point here is that we need to be careful not to make claims that are too strong, especially when this is simply not necessary. Acknowledging the important impact of Hobbes on the emergence of deism does not need to exclude the impact of other factors. In short, we need to make sure not to fall into reductionism.

Jonathan Israel seems to think that a thinker must be radical in order to have an impact on other radical thinkers and movements. However, as we have seen, it is much more accurate to see both Hobbes and deism as radical in some respects and to several degrees. Radicalism, in other words, is not subject to a binary dichotomy. There is a more general point to make here. As Skinner emphasises, the historical significance of a writer should not be confused with the content of her writings. Locke, for example, is often described as one of the founders of the modern liberal school of political thought, but that does not mean that Locke himself should be taken as a liberal political theorist, because Locke could not have possibly intended to contribute to such a school which admittedly followed his work.¹¹⁶ The risk in this kind of historiography is not only

¹¹⁶ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 74.

that of anachronism, but as Skinner calls it, that of mythologizing the author's doctrines. Accordingly, that Hobbes might have enabled the rise of deism in some ways does not mean that he intended to give rise to a phenomenon named deism.

The risk of mythologizing doctrines is particularly present when dealing with deism. As we have seen, we must acknowledge the complexity of deism and to be particularly cautious when treating it as one unit. As Hudson has suggested recently, we have to demythologize deism in order to make it valuable again: "Deism then is a neglected field of research, a field in which new levels of precision may generate discoveries".¹¹⁷ Hudson argues that deism, like atheism, is an indeterminate category which changed throughout history. He goes so far as to argue that "the term 'deism' has different meanings in different contexts and no one knows a priori what any particular deist believed".¹¹⁸ Instead of looking at deism as a single philosophical outlook that created a new religious identity, this term needs to be historicised and contextualised. Hudson argues therefore for a diversity which "means that individual thinkers might draw on a range of deisms, and the uses they made of these repertoires depended on the contexts in which they operated, the enemies they faced and the personae available to them in different social roles".¹¹⁹

This suggestion seems to rely on a Skinnerian approach that emphasises the importance of context and language in any inquiry of history of ideas. Accordingly, we must remember that every proposition is also an argument, and that arguments always come in response to some other, existing, arguments, in order to defend or attack them and so on. Following J. L. Austin, Skinner suggests that we should see any argument as an act of communication which consists of an intervention in a certain debate. To understand the work of a writer fully we need therefore to ask not only what the writer was writing but also what the writer was doing in writing. Thus, when studying specific texts, we should be able to see them "as contributions to particular discourses, and thereby to recognise the ways in which they followed or challenged or subverted the

¹¹⁷ Hudson, "Atheism and Deism Demythologized", In *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, 22.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

conventional terms of those discourses themselves”, and consequently to return them “to the precise cultural contexts in which they were originally formed”.¹²⁰

This approach has several implications for my research. With both Hobbes and the deists, we need to explore what they were doing, and what their intentions were, in their writings. I will argue that such exploration will also bring out the common ideas of Hobbes and the deists in the clearest form. A good example for that will be demonstrated in the chapter on their concept of God. I will argue that it is precisely because scholars have looked only at what Hobbes was saying that they were led to conclude mistakenly that his materialism simply meant atheism. If we also look at what Hobbes was doing, as did the deists after him, it shall become clear that materialism was meant first and foremost to take away (only) the mysteries maintained by the priests and thereby to stop them once and for all from gaining dangerous political power. Similarly, I will examine the works of the deists through the lens of their goals, even in writing about deism. When seen this way, even the coining of the term “deism” itself may be considered as a speech act. Therefore, my research will focus on what we can associate with deism, looking at its historical emergence in England and exploring it particularly in relation to Hobbes. I will look at the individual thinkers who defined themselves as deists and were considered as such by their contemporaries. I will review the various types of deism as developed by these writers, and accordingly, the various ways in which they were indebted to Hobbes.

The last methodological issue to be discussed in relation to Hobbes and the deists is that of the demonstration of intellectual influence. This issue is important because the discussion of influence between thinkers might be sometimes too loose and when done with no orderly method, it might lead to claims that are implausibly strong and historically inaccurate. Skinner has suggested three conditions that need to be satisfied in order to demonstrate influence – but these, as some have observed, seem to be too demanding. According to Skinner, A can be said to have influenced B (1) if B is known to have studied A’s works; (2) if B could not have found the relevant doctrines in any other writer than A; and (3) if B could not have arrived at the relevant

¹²⁰ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol. 1, 125. See chapters 4–6.

doctrines independently.¹²¹ While direct references of B to A can usually satisfy the first condition, it seems harder to meet the other conditions. Whereas the third condition can be demonstrated in rare cases of strong similarities or even plagiarism, the second one is merely unnecessary. The fact that B could have found the doctrines in A but also in C does not necessarily make A less influential; it simply means that A and C could have been mutually influential, or that it was the interaction between A and C that was influential for B. This seems to be a more accurate account of the multiple influences in the case of early English deism, including Hobbes as well as others such as Herbert, Locke, and Spinoza.¹²²

The solution for this problem in my research will be to rely on cases where there is explicit textual evidence of the deists having engaged with Hobbes. Such method has been employed by Parkin, who has focused in his research of Hobbes's reception on cases where there is an "explicit acknowledgement of a debt or clear evidence that the ideas are in fact Hobbesian".¹²³ I am aware that there is also room to consider further indirect debts of the deists to Hobbes or cases of apparent resemblance. But these, I believe, can serve only to support the clearer cases in which the deists were explicitly referring to Hobbes, thus showing that they were consciously thinking of him when producing their texts. My research will thus start by exploring the links between Hobbes and subsequent deists as the deists perceived them and as they were described by their contemporaries, including their mutual adversaries. I will argue that Hobbes was influential for these deists in several distinct ways and that his influence was at the very centre of the emergence of deism. Showing this can then suggest that the deists saw Hobbes as one of their predecessors. However, this does not necessarily mean that Hobbes was a proto-deist. This point seems to require a separate discussion of the relation between a thinker and his reception, and our (limited) ability to read back into an author according to his reception. This will therefore be the subject of the following subsection.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 75–6.

¹²² Having considered it thoroughly, I will therefore not embrace Skinner's model. I am grateful for the comments that I received from the participants of the workshop "Thomas Hobbes and the politics of religion" (King's College London, April 2015) which made me rethink these conditions. I would also like to thank David Leopold for bringing to my attention that it is fundamentally problematic to establish that "B *could not have* arrived at the relevant doctrines independently" both on logical and historical levels.

¹²³ Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 12.

3.2. Reception and esotericism: the case of Hobbes and religion

It is clear that if a thinker is received by his contemporaries or followers as endorsing a position X, it does not *necessarily* mean that this thinker held the position X. It becomes even clearer if the thinker is also associated with positions Y and Z that are not necessarily compatible with X. The case of Hobbes and religion seems to be a good example for that. In Martinich's words, "if the words of his contemporaries are taken in an uncritical way, then Hobbes was an atheistical papist".¹²⁴ Yet, reception is a useful resource for the understanding of a thinker. In particular, the relatively immediate reception of a thinker might provide us with a better understanding of the historical and intellectual climate in which she was operating and the issues with which she was engaging. In other words, it can help us to recover the cultural context as Skinner has suggested. Arguing against Skinner, Martinich has suggested that one's contemporaries are not necessarily in the best position to understand one's work; the perspective of time and scholarship might produce a better understanding sometimes. Hobbes in particular, argues Martinich, "was often misinterpreted by his contemporaries, sometimes because his readers were unsympathetic to him, often because they were relatively untalented interpreters".¹²⁵ As he rightly observes, people who were close to Hobbes tended sometimes to exaggerate the differences between them, whereas his enemies presented him rather unfairly.

Can the reception of Hobbes still be valuable to the assessment of his own positions then? Hobbes's reception was undoubtedly complex. As Parkin shows, not only did Hobbes's critics in the seventeenth century have an important role in the transmission of Hobbes's ideas but they also absorbed some of his ideas themselves. In fact, more than once Hobbes's critics found themselves being accused of Hobbism.¹²⁶ Politically, Hobbes's arguments were attributed both to Tories and Whigs. Ecclesiastically, Hobbes's anticlericalism was used to support the case for

¹²⁴ Martinich, *The Two Gods*, 21.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 361. See also Martinich, "Law and Self-Preservation in *Leviathan*: On Misinterpreting Hobbes 1650–1700", In *The Persistence of the Sacred*, ed. Chris Firestone and Nathan Jacobs (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 38–65; Parkin, "Straw Men and Political Philosophy: The Case of Hobbes", *Political Studies* 59 (2011): 564–79.

¹²⁶ Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, for example 411–13. See also John Marshall, "The Ecclesiology of the Latitude-Men 1660–1689: Stillingfleet, Tillotson and 'Hobbism'", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36:3 (1985): 407–27.

religious toleration, but at the same time Hobbes's authoritarianism was employed to argue against the freedom of religious expression.¹²⁷ The contradictory interpretations for Hobbes's religious beliefs, which I have mentioned, are another example of the confusion that often surrounds his theory.

The reactions of Hobbes's contemporaries can be indicative nevertheless in the sense that they can teach us something about the character of Hobbes's work: that it was, at times, ambiguous and open-ended; and Hobbes might well have intended for it to be so.¹²⁸ We must therefore recognise these complexities in Hobbes's theory, and we must be extremely careful before deciding unequivocally whether he was an "atheist" or a "Christian", an "absolutist" or a "liberal", a "royalist" or a "Whig", a "radical" or a "conservative". In a sense, he was all of these, and this is precisely what makes him so fascinating even today, more than 300 years after his death. Furthermore, we can benefit from reading him as a writer who was speaking differently to different audiences, and in this sense he was an esoteric writer. It is important to stress here what I mean, and what I do not mean, by that.

It has been argued that Hobbes was an esoteric writer in the sense that he meant to convey his subversive messages in a hidden form for the clever readers who were attentive enough to receive them. This reading of Hobbes is mostly associated with Leo Strauss who argued that Hobbes, as a philosopher who held heterodox views in a time of persecution, was compelled to develop peculiar techniques to deliver his message, namely, writing between the lines.¹²⁹ For Strauss, Hobbes belonged to a group of philosophers in the seventeenth century who published not only in a way that allowed them to avoid persecution, but also *because* they desired to contribute to the abolition of persecution. This certainly might be the case, but the suggestion that Hobbes had some kind of a secret agenda that needs to be decoded is somewhat questionable. Hobbes was clear about his agenda, which can be deduced from the lines of his texts, not from what is supposedly between them. As we have seen, modern commentators still make suggestions

¹²⁷ See for example Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 129–30.

¹²⁸ See also Parkin, "Hobbes and Paradox", in *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, ed. Al P. Martinich and Kinch Hoekstra (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 624–42.

¹²⁹ Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: The university of Chicago Press, 1988), 24.

in a Straussian direction when advocating Hobbes's hidden atheism. Curley for example recognises in Hobbes a technique that he calls "suggestion by disavowal", according to which "to write 'I will not suggest that *p*' is to call the reader's attention to a proposition which might not otherwise have occurred to him".¹³⁰ Berman applies the same approach for the deists to whom he attributes "the art of theological lying", arguing for example that "we really have to be suspicious when a free-thinker denies something in a preface".¹³¹

The problem with such methods is that they tend to read into the texts things that are simply not there. As Berman admits: "It is because scholars agree that Blount is hiding things and has covert, subversive ends, that my interpretation of his denial—as a conscious offence mechanism aimed at influencing the unwary—is likely to be accepted, or at least entertained".¹³² But this is an odd claim, because it is not clear how we would know that Blount had subversive ends if it were not from his writings or from those of his contemporaries; in which case, his message would not be well-hidden. As Adrian Blau has argued against Strauss, this kind of methods tends to lead to simplistic interpretations that are one-sided and made with over-certainty. Blau importantly remarks that we should always consider evidence for *and* against our interpretation, as well as the alternatives, and in the same spirit, that when we read different authors, we need to deal with both the similarities *and* the differences between them.¹³³

I am not, therefore, suggesting that we need an esoteric reading of Hobbes in the strict Straussian sense. I am suggesting, however, that we should read Hobbes as a writer who left some of his thoughts incomplete or undetermined but provided his readers with tools to complete these ideas on their own. It certainly seems to be the case that Hobbes chose consciously not to elaborate on certain topics for several reasons, for example the fear of persecution or alternatively having more urgent topics to discuss. Thus, we need to collect the pieces that he did provide on such topics and to see them as hints that Hobbes left for subsequent readers to work out. Arthur Melzer has recently argued that this kind of esotericism is motivated by educational or pedagogical

¹³⁰ Curley, "I Durst Not Write So Boldly", 518.

¹³¹ Berman, "Disclaimers as Offence Mechanisms", 270.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 265.

¹³³ Adrian Blau, "Anti-Strauss", *The Journal of Politics* 74:1 (2012): 142–55, especially 144–6. See also Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol. 1, 71–2.

goals: “a text that presents hints and riddles instead of answers practices the closest literary approximation to the Socratic method—it forces readers to think and discover for themselves”.¹³⁴

Furthermore, when reading Hobbes’s positions, particularly on religion, we must have in mind that there might be more than one layer to the text. For example, Hobbes engaged with sacred history in depth and accepted some of its key premises but radically subverted parts of it at the very same time.¹³⁵ We need to consider that he might have been talking to different audiences, that is, meeting his readers on their own grounds, which should have been a sufficient reason for him to take religion seriously even if his beliefs were more heterodox than those of his time. Thus, as Kinch Hoekstra suggests, Hobbes had “to produce different arguments for different readers” and thus “we can see that he appeals to a range of premises or assumptions to bring readers from different starting points to the same conclusion or result”.¹³⁶ Similarly, Jeffrey Collins has argued that “The theology of *Leviathan* was intended to be both sufficiently Christian to attract the allegiance of the philosophically unsophisticated, and sufficiently detached from those aspects of Christianity that were irretrievably incompatible with sound civil science. In this sense Hobbes’s mature theological project was to prove fundamentally esoteric in nature”.¹³⁷ Collins too suggests that esotericism in this sense should be seen as a rhetorical strategy meant to address diverse readers. He concludes:

For enlightened readers (particularly sovereigns), Hobbes needed to undercut Christianity in order to expose the true foundations of politics. But his doctrines would only be palatable for general consumption if sweetened with a certain elusiveness on religious questions. The ambiguity of

¹³⁴ Arthur M. Melzer, *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 3–4. Similarly, Ioannis Evrigenis sheds an interesting light of the extensive use that Hobbes made of rhetoric in order to persuade his readers or “win their belief”. He points to the influence of those whose methods Hobbes seems to have admired: “Euclid succeeded in his demonstration by rendering the observer of the proof a witness in the proceedings, just as Thucydides succeeded by giving his reader the sense that he was witnessing the events he was describing. Although very different in other ways, both procedures eliminated the dubious and self-interested middlemen that so frustrated Hobbes”. See Ioannis D. Evrigenis, *Images of Anarchy: The Rhetoric and Science in Hobbes’s State of Nature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 46.

¹³⁵ See for example Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, 36–7.

¹³⁶ Hoekstra claims that philosophy for Hobbes was about promoting human benefit, that is, peace, rather than about truth per se. As such, Hobbes could see fit to conceal some of his (true) views. This is in accordance with the idea of the doctrine of doctrines: that is, that one cannot publish doctrines contrary to those authorised by the sovereign in order to keep peace. Hoekstra thus suggests that Hobbes might have wished to keep some of his views secret and that “nimbleness” of a kind is required to find these. Hoekstra even finds evidence that Hobbes thought that a writer should aim to be “understood on one level by all, and on a deeper level by the wise”. See Kinch Hoekstra, “The End of Philosophy (The Case of Hobbes)”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 106:1 (2006): 25–62, especially 41, 47, 56, 59.

¹³⁷ Jeffrey R. Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 32.

Hobbesian theology was also intended to preserve the utility of Christianity as a civil religion. The task of undermining Christianity while preserving its instrumental value, rather than Hobbes's lack of intellectual courage, explains the esoteric qualities of *Leviathan*.¹³⁸

Methodologically, we need to be aware of the places in which Hobbes might have employed some rhetorical means, irony being one clear example.¹³⁹ Moreover, we need to ask ourselves the following questions: why did Hobbes say what he did, why did he choose not to elaborate at some points, and what can the hints that he left tell us about the ideas which he might have expected from his diverse audiences to reach on their own? This approach encourages us to think of Hobbes's motivation to pursue some issues in full and others only halfway, and to entertain the possibility that Hobbes intended for some of the puzzles that he posed to be resolved by his audience or at least by parts of it. As to his relationship with the deists, I shall examine in what sense they were one such audience, as radicals who received Hobbes's more subversive messages, and how they developed the ideas that Hobbes, for his own reasons, had chosen to leave rather undetermined. The result will help us to recover the radical, or proto-deistic, elements in Hobbes, without arguing that Hobbes himself was a deist or that he was knowingly inaugurating the emergence of deism. Thus, he might have intended to initiate some kind of a paradigm shift and to fundamentally change the way in which his readers were thinking, for example on religious issues. He was not a deist nor he could have intended for deism per se to emerge, but it can be shown that he initiated a dynamic that allowed for the subsequent development of deistic ideas.

I will end this section with an example to clarify this issue. As Malcolm suggests, Hobbes employed a manoeuvre of "epistemological blocking" towards any transmission of divine revelation from one person to another.¹⁴⁰ Accordingly, Hobbes did not go so far as to discredit revelation altogether, and he chose to remain ambiguous about the possibility of its occurrence in present days. Instead, it was mainly important for him to block people from thinking in what he perceived to be a false and dangerous way; in this case, to believe other people, who report that they have had experienced revelation, blindly. Hobbes might have chosen this strategy because he was worried about persecution or simply because he had other and more pressing concerns to deal

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³⁹ See also Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁴⁰ Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 428.

with than assessing the nature of revelation, primarily his attempt to stop the priests from gaining power by deceiving the people. It is arguable that these blocking manoeuvres served Hobbes in other issues as well. That is, his war against priestcraft, one of the main causes of social disorder, led him to concentrate on blocking false ways of thinking, thereby directing his audience towards the right ones, even if he did not reveal precisely the content of the latter. It is also arguable that it was the deists who made the extra step from this premise to question revelation altogether, while, precisely like Hobbes, focusing their campaign against priestcraft, but not necessarily against religion as such. I will demonstrate this approach for Hobbes's account of God. Hobbes confessed that he "durst not write so boldly" as Spinoza did – and indeed he did not. But he did give us the beginning of some of his ideas. Hobbes did not tell us exactly how he thought God should look like because it was not his intention to do so. Rather, he guided those who would want to talk about God to do so rightly. This could suggest that Hobbes had intended for those who think as he did about the dangers of priestcraft to treat such issues according to the conditions which he had set – materialism was clearly a primary condition. The interesting link to the deists will then become clear, only that they did go so far as to suggest what a material God could actually look like. Thus, by using this approach to read Hobbes, my research will try to show that deism was one way to what we can call a Hobbesian enlightenment: this is not to claim, however, that this was the only way, nor that Hobbes could have anticipated it or would have agreed with this iteration of it entirely.

4. Outline

In the first chapter, **Hobbes and Early English Deism**, I will establish the links between Hobbes and the early English deists, starting with the ways in which the deists themselves perceived them. I will argue that the relationship between Hobbes and these deists is much closer than usually understood, and I will show that whereas each of the deists took a slightly different path, their debts to Hobbes can be recognised in many of these paths in various ways. Thus, I will explore the various elements that the deists identified in Hobbes and employed in their own work. I will claim that the deists recognised important components in Hobbes otherwise neglected in the

literature, and that following the deists, we may get a better understanding of the way in which Hobbes could, and perhaps should, be read more radically.

In the second chapter, **Hobbes's God**, I will argue that Hobbes's materialism, often used to make the case for his atheism, should be understood as an inseparable part of his anticlericalism. I will show that Hobbes never meant to deny God's existence, and in fact, he made several serious attempts to defend his version of God. More importantly, I will argue that he never meant to offer an advanced account of the nature of God and was only forced to do so by his critics and by the threat of the atheism and heresy proceedings in Parliament. The result was an account that was not necessarily thoroughly thought through, and was certainly not traditional, but nevertheless was also not at all atheistic. The main point will be that Hobbes did not wish to deny God, but he did wish to deny power to those who behaved as if they were earthly gods, namely the "unpleasing priests". I will show that this was also the case with the deists. But whereas Hobbes had only provided a set of commitments, or conditions, allowing us to imagine how God could look like without fully reaching the explicit result, the deists connected the dots into accounts that were much more coherent, and radical, than Hobbes's.

In the third chapter, **Reason and Philosophy in Hobbes's Theory**, I will argue that Hobbes attributed a rational potential to every man, that should be cultivated in a developmental process, in which the establishment of the commonwealth plays a central role. Thus, at one end of this process we can imagine the horrific state of nature, where there is nevertheless a certain limited use of natural reason, and at the other end we can imagine the mirror image as an ideal, enlightened, society, in which reason reaches its full fulfilment through science and philosophy. I will argue that Hobbes's political theory is based on the belief in natural reason which is God-given and that, for him as for the deists, rationalism was coupled with anticlericalism. Thus, in some important respects it was Hobbes's legacy that the deists carried out and took significantly further when they told their story of liberation and social advancement to which human reason was absolutely crucial.

In the fourth chapter, **Deism and Hobbes's Politics**, I will explore in depth the implications of the relationship between Hobbes and deism to their political theories. I will reject

the argument that Hobbes was too much of an “absolutist” to have been close to the deists politically. I will argue that whereas Hobbes and the deists did not share exactly the same concerns, their visions were in fact quite close, aiming to delegitimise the political power of the church while at the same time leaving room for alternative ecclesiastical forms. Thus, I will show that the deists were closer to Hobbes than is usually regarded, even politically. To support this argument, I will also demonstrate a long-lasting tradition of Whig and tolerationist reception of Hobbes that was available for the deists. Finally, I will engage with Hobbes’s political theory in order to show that it had a potential to eventually allow more freedom than usually argued.

In the conclusion, **Deism: Highway to a Hobbesian Enlightenment?** I will argue that seeing the full extent of the links between Hobbes and the deists allows us a new, better, understanding of Hobbes’s theory, and can thereby enable us to understand Hobbes’s project more broadly. I will suggest that we should look at Hobbes as a proto-enlightenment figure. I will ask to what extent Hobbes’s vision, rather than being pessimistic, was in fact a hopeful one, envisioning a society of enlightened individuals that will reach new levels of knowledge, with no room for unnecessary and dangerous superstition. I will discuss the possibility of conceptualising a Hobbesian utopia, and I will suggest what such a utopia might look like. I will argue that it was the deists who developed these elements in Hobbes’s thought, and I will suggest that we should see them as one possible highway to what may be called a Hobbesian enlightenment.

Chapter I: Hobbes and Early English Deism

1. Introduction

In 1754 the Presbyterian minister John Leland published a book called *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers That Have Appeared in England in the Last and Present Century*. Leland was determined to provide a thorough account of those whom he had considered to be the prominent English deists, their writings, and the controversies in which they were involved. The deists, according to Leland, “reject all revealed religion, and discard all pretences to it as owing to imposture or enthusiasm”.¹ Their aim, therefore, is “to set aside revelation, and to substitute mere natural religion, or ... no religion at all, in its room”.² Leland’s book is often mentioned as one of the first and most extensive accounts ever written of English deism.³

Leland’s list starts with Lord Herbert of Cherbury, “the first remarkable Deist in order of time”.⁴ The second figure on Leland’s list of deistical writers is Thomas Hobbes. Leland explained that “There have been few persons, whose writings have had a more pernicious influence in spreading irreligion and infidelity than his”.⁵ According to Leland, Hobbes took the Scripture as the word and the law of God on the one hand, but ridiculed inspiration and revelation on the other; and he sometimes saw inspiration as a supernatural gift but also described the pretence to it as a sign of madness.⁶ Leland’s attack on Hobbes was not unusual for his time, touching on a range of issues, such as the authority of the Scripture being dependent on the authority of the sovereign, the questioning of aspects in the old and new testaments, the denial of our ability to know any more about God than that He exists, and so on. Leland therefore argued that “Hobbes’s scheme strikes at the foundation of all religion, both natural and revealed” and that “it tendeth not only to subvert the authority of the scripture, but to destroy God’s moral administration”.⁷ Then, Leland concluded that

the manifold absurdities and inconsistency of his scheme, and the pernicious consequences of it to religion, morality and the civil government, have been so well exposed, and set in a clear light, that

¹ Leland, *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers*, 3.

² *Ibid.*, v.

³ See for example Champion, “Deism”, 437.

⁴ Leland, *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers*, 4. For Herbert’s deism, see section 2.1 of the introduction.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

there are not many of our modern Deists that would be thought openly to espouse his system in its full extent. And yet it cannot be denied, that there are not a few things in their writings borrowed from his; and that some of them have chosen rather to follow him than Lord Herbert in several of his principles; and particularly in asserting the materiality and mortality of the human soul, and denying man's free agency.⁸

According to Leland, the deists borrowed much from Hobbes, and in some ways, more than they did from Herbert, who Leland himself considered to be the first English deist. They did so, however, without necessarily declaring they were adopting Hobbes, due to his dubious reputation at the time. Leland also mentioned the aspect in which he thought Hobbes had been most influential, namely his materialism. Here, Leland argued, Hobbes had gone further than Herbert and had subsequently been followed by the “modern deists”.

Leland seems to have rightly acknowledged the complexity of Hobbes's position, holding that “none of his treatises are directly level'd against revealed religion”.⁹ But was Leland also right in recognising that Hobbes was in fact, alongside Herbert, one of the fathers of English deism, at least in some respects? Such a claim is not often found in the modern literature, which usually takes Hobbes to be influential for the English radicals of the late seventeenth century generally speaking, but without placing him within this pantheon.¹⁰ It is arguable that Hobbes inspired them with his anticlericalism, his sceptical and even mocking attitude towards revelation and miracles, and his thorough exegesis of the Scripture including his questioning of its authorship and authority. However, there are several reasons to separate him from the radicals, mainly his alleged pessimism regarding human nature and consequently his absolutist political theory, or alternatively his voluntarist theology. This has led some, most recently and famously Jonathan Israel, to claim that it was Spinoza, rather than Hobbes, who was the main influence on the “radical enlightenment”, English deism included.¹¹

I will argue that English deism was closer to Hobbes than usually suggested. The main goal of this chapter will therefore be to explore the relationship between Hobbes and deism. I will attempt to emphasise that Hobbes was a significant influence for subsequent deists in numerous

⁸ *Ibid.*, 47–8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰ See section 1 of the introduction.

¹¹ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 599–627. See also Colie, “Spinoza and the Early English Deists”; Diego Lucci, *Scripture and Deism: The Biblical Criticism of the Eighteenth-Century British Deists* (Bern; Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), 38–44. See the discussion in section 2.3 of the introduction.

ways and that this can be clearly inferred from many of their texts. I will focus on the core figures of English deism from its early stages in the 1670s until its peak in the early eighteenth century, namely Charles Blount, John Toland, Matthew Tindal, and Anthony Collins. I will also refer to critics who had an interest in making the essence of deism, as well as its links to Hobbes, even more explicit. Finally, I will go back to Hobbes and suggest a reading that traces some hints that he had left in his writings, which the deists could subsequently pick up and work out in their own manner. As Hobbes once confessed, he “could not reveal his thoughts more than half-way” and therefore “he said he imitated people who open the window for a few moments, but then close it again immediately from fear of the storm”.¹² The question is, would Hobbes have ended up being known for a position closer to that of the deists had he left the window open for a few moments more?

2. The deists and Hobbes

2.1. The origins of deism

In its first appearances in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term “deism” was regularly denounced.¹³ In 1564 the Swiss Protestant minister Pierre Viret, an early leader of the Reformation in Switzerland and France, asserted that

There are several who indeed profess to believe that there is some Deity or God, as the Turks and Jews do: but as for Jesus Christ, and all those things which the doctrine of the Evangelists and Apostles testifies concerning him, they take them for fables and dreams ... I hear that some of this band call themselves Deists, a new word in opposition to that of Atheists.¹⁴

Clearly, Viret did not approve. In fact, he was “struck with horror” thinking that “there are such monsters among those who bear the name of Christians”.¹⁵ Viret was the first of many to take this tone with deists. His analysis suggested that deism was a kind of belief in God coupled with the ridicule of all the other elements in religion, especially the supernatural ones. As Viret pointed out,

¹² Cited in Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 542. As Malcolm explains, this was said by Hobbes to Jean-Baptiste Lantin, whom he knew in Paris.

¹³ As we shall see, Charles Blount was the first to establish a deistic doctrine in England between the years of 1683 and 1686. Even after Blount, however, the term “deism” remained in use by critics, who wanted to label the subjects of their attacks significantly more than it was used by individuals who self-consciously wished to subscribe to it. It is important to pay attention to the dialectical nature of this process, as I will attempt to do in this chapter.

¹⁴ Cited in Pierre Bayle, *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr Peter Bayle. The Second Edition, Carefully Collated with the Several Editions of the Original* (London: 1734–8), vol. 5, 482.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* See also in Leland, *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers*, 2–3. Originally published in Pierre Viret, *Instruction Chretienne* (Geneva: 1564), vol. 2, Epistle Dedicatory; see C. J. Betts, *Early Deism in France* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff Publishers, 1984), 6.

the deists took them to be mere fables. He also admitted that the deists differed from one another on various issues, such as the immortality of the soul and divine providence, mentioning that some held that God does not intervene in human affairs. As we shall see, these characteristics were often attributed to deists in the centuries to come.

Also in England, this term was apparently known already in the sixteenth century, a fact that has been entirely overlooked in the literature. In 1595 the church minister Josias Nichols published *An Order of Houshold Instruction*, dedicated to Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex. Nichols attempted to establish an instruction “by which every master of a familie, may easilie and in short space, make his whole houshold understand the principall and chiefe poyntes of Christian religion: without the knowledge whereof no man can be saved”. As part of his instruction, he described the “errors and heresies contrarie to the good doctrine”, and among those he mentioned “all Atheists, Deists, Sophisters, and ignorant brablers, who frame to themselves a God, or salvation, without faith in Christ”.¹⁶ Indeed, this understanding of the deists was similar to the one that Viret had provided. Yet, despite these early observations it took another century for the debate on a phenomenon called deism to gather momentum, first in England and later on the continent.¹⁷ It is from the late 1670s, with the appearance of Charles Blount’s writings, that we can date this development. Blount promoted explicitly deistic views, defending this position and thus effectively becoming the first self-proclaimed public deist. He was also in some ways a follower of Hobbes, whom he openly admired. It seems therefore the right point to start the discussion on early English deism and its debts to Hobbes.

2.2. Charles Blount

Charles Blount (1654–1693) was a political activist and pamphleteer. He was a member of the Green Ribbon Club, a Whig club of public figures who used to meet at the King’s Head Tavern in

¹⁶ Josias Nichols, *An Order of Houshold Instruction* (London: 1595), unnumbered.

¹⁷ During the early seventeenth century, there were only a few references to the deists in England. For example, Robert Burton mentioned in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* the “great Philosophers, and Deists” who “attribute all to naturall causes” and “deny God as much as the rest, hold all religion a fiction, opposite to reason and philosophy, though for feare of magistrates (saith vaninus) they durst not publicly professe it”. See Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy. Vol. 3: Text*, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling, and Rhonda L. Blair (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 400–1. Wayne Hudson and others have taken this reference to the deists from 1621 as the first one in England. See Hudson, *The English Deists*, 37. This is mistaken however, as Josias Nichols had already mentioned the deists in 1595.

London.¹⁸ He was primarily interested in the relationship between politics and religion.¹⁹ From the late 1670s, Blount published a series of works that took a sceptical and critical line towards religion. In 1686 he sent to Thomas Sydenham an essay called “A Summary Account of the Deists Religion”. The author of this essay was not necessarily Blount himself, but he did evidently sign the dedication to Sydenham, in which he wrote: “The last time I had the happiness of your Company, it was your Request that I would help you to a sight of the Deists Arguments, which I told you, I had sometimes by me, but then had lent them out, they are now return’d me again, and according to my promise I have herewith sent them to you”.²⁰ He added what might have been relatively pleasing for his critics: “Whereby, you’ll only find, that human Reason like a Pitcher with two Ears, may be taken on either side; However, undoubtedly in our Travails to the other World the common Road is the safest; and tho Deism is a good manuring of a mans Conscience, yet certainly if sowed with Christianity it will produce the most profitable Crop”.²¹

Deism according to Blount was not against Christianity as such. The “Summary Account” stated the deist’s opinion of God: “Whatsoever is Adorable, Amiable, and Imitable by Mankind, is in one Supreme Infinite and Perfect Being who is only one”.²² The worship of God should not be done by an image nor by sacrifice, but rather by imitating God’s goodness. Blount’s deism was suspicious of mediators or ceremonies, and emphasised the leading of moral lives as the main duty of religion, as well as the obligation to constantly use one’s reason: “If the Deists errs, he errs not like a fool but *secundum verbum* after enquiry”.²³ With regard to the probability of the deist’s salvation, the account stated: “The Morality in Religion is above the mystery in it, and therefore one who is good and acts in harmony with nature, God and one’s friends, is safer than the credulous Christian that believes Orthodoxly, but lives ill”.²⁴

¹⁸ See Dario Pfanner, “Blount, Charles (1654–1693)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2684> and Tim Harris, “Green Ribbon Club (act. c.1674–c.1683)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/92786>.

¹⁹ CTH vol. 2, 792.

²⁰ Charles Blount, *Oracles of Reason*, 87.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 88.

²³ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

Blount was one of the leading critics of revealed religion in the late seventeenth century. Charles Leslie wrote in *A Short and Easy Method with the Deists* that the “execrable” Blount was “not fit to be heard by Christian Ears” and he was worried that he “set himself at the Head of Deists, and after whom they now copy”.²⁵ Leslie was right; Blount was not working alone. One close associate of Blount was Charles Gildon, who followed Blount’s deism and had a central role in the writing, editing, and publishing of Blount’s work. In 1695 Gildon described Blount in his edition of the *Miscellaneous Works* of the latter: “he kept all profane Notions of God at a distance, and prefer’d those writ by the finger of the Almighty Creator in the minds of all mankind, to the Obscure, unintelligible, and impious Doctrines, devis’d by men to serve some turn or particular Faction or Nation”.²⁶ Gildon was also the author of “The Deist’s Plea”:

Natural Religion, easie first and Plain;
Tales made it Mystery, Offerings made it gain;
Sacrifices and Feasts were at length prepar’d.
The Priests eat roast Meat, and the People star’d.²⁷

Interestingly, Gildon himself later converted to Anglicanism, influenced by Leslie’s *Short and Easy Method*. But his poem summarises deism precisely as it was known by the early 1690s: that natural reason is easy and plain, and sufficient; that mystery was added deliberately and unnecessarily to religion; and that priests were enjoying the luxuries of the good life at the expense of the laity. As we shall now turn to see, much of this critique could be traced to a reading of Hobbes.

There is some evidence that from an early stage Blount was drawing on Hobbes in several respects. In 1678 Blount sent Hobbes a copy of his publication *Anima Mundi* in which he explored various ancient views on the immortality of the soul.²⁸ This was Blount’s first significant work, in the writing of which he was assisted by his father, Sir Henri Blount, who was acquainted with Hobbes. Together with this work, Blount sent Hobbes a letter,²⁹ praising the manuscript of his “Treatise of Heresie”,³⁰ which was published posthumously in 1680 as *An Historical Narration*

²⁵ Charles Leslie, *A Short and Easie Method with the Deists* (London: 1699), xii–xvi.

²⁶ Charles Gildon, “An Account of the Life and Death of the Author”, in *The Miscellaneous Works of Charles Blount* (London: 1695).

²⁷ *Miscellany Poems*, 27.

²⁸ Charles Blount, *Anima Mundi, or, an Historical Narration of the Opinions of the Ancients Concerning Man’s Soul After This Life* (London: 1679).

²⁹ CTH vol. 2, 759–66. Also in Blount, *Oracles*, 97–105.

³⁰ CTH vol. 2, 759.

Concerning Heresie. Blount wrote in the letter that Hobbes had provided “a more accurate and faithful Account of the Nicene Council ... than is any where else to be met with”.³¹ To Blount, Hobbes was “the great instructor of the most sensible Part of Mankind in the noble Science of Philosophy”.³²

In his *Historical Narration*, Hobbes went back to the primitive church and the problem of the Trinity, and he gave an account of the events that had led to the council of Nicaea in a way that seemed to be defending the Nicene Creed. Hobbes emphasised the role that Constantine the Great had played as the sovereign in making Christianity public religion and settling the disputes over its creed, first and foremost the one that was provoked by Arius who claimed that Jesus was inferior to God and in fact not divine. The council of Nicaea decided against the Arians.

In his letter, Blount also went back to the primitive church, but he made his own point, further to that of Hobbes. Blount tried to expose the cynical political interests behind the major Christian debates. He argued that Constantine had treated the Arians as Louis XIV treated the Huguenots: he supported them as long as he needed them in order to gain power, but then he went against them to assure that their own power was restricted. Blount concluded his point to Hobbes, writing that “there is as little Trust to be reposed in General councils, who have been Guilty of so much Ignorance and Interest, as well as so frequently contradicting one another”.³³

Blount did not attribute this view to Hobbes, but assuming that this letter was actually sent, he presumably felt comfortable to share it with him, believing that Hobbes would be sympathetic. In one thing Blount clearly followed Hobbes’s position: “You your self have very well observed, when Reason is against a Man, a Man will be against Reason; and therefore ‘tis no wonder to see, from several Interests, so many Opinions and Animosities arise”.³⁴ This quote suggests that human reason can easily be defeated by interests—that is, mainly, the pursuit of

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 763.

³³ *Ibid.*, 762. Jeffery Collins shows that Hobbes was consistently engaged in the genre of sacred, or ecclesiastical, history for political purposes, which prefigured deism, as indicated by the letter that Blount sent to Hobbes. Collins argues that this method served Hobbes in undermining the Council of Nicaea and the coherence of Trinitarianism and that, though emphasising Constantine’s sovereignty, Hobbes’s account also suggested “that the emperor had acted imprudently in deploying his authority on such nonsensical theological minutiae”. See Jeffrey Collins, “Thomas Hobbes’s Ecclesiastical History”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, 520–44.

³⁴ CTH vol. 2, 759. EL, Epistle Dedicatory, xv; Lev. XI, 158. See the discussion on this quote in chapter 4.

power—and that this is a primary cause for conflicts in society. Nevertheless, for Blount, and arguably also for Hobbes, this problem could be resolved. As I will show later on, this Hobbesian quote continued to be used repeatedly by deists as part of their religious and political critique. I will discuss its meaning and its various references in length in following chapters. For now, it suffices to say that following Hobbes, Blount analysed religion according to interests, and priestly interests in particular, a feature which remained prominent throughout his work.

No reply to this letter survived. Hobbes died in the following year. Subsequently, Blount was involved in the production of an elegy for Hobbes, *The Last Sayings, or Dying Legacy of Mr. Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, published in 1680.³⁵ This was a short collection of Hobbes's more critical and radical statements or paraphrases thereof. It had been long assumed, following Aubrey's report,³⁶ that Blount was the author of this publication. Recently however it has been suggested by Malcolm that Blount was not the author but that he was probably connected to the author. Malcolm bases his hypothesis on Blount's copy-book which contains some of the quotations that also appear in *The Last Sayings*. Blount seems to have transcribed these extractions to his copy-book in 1681, a year after the publication of *The Last Sayings*, which according to Malcolm makes him less likely to have been the original author. Malcolm suggests that Blount was copying from a manuscript that was the source both for *The Last Sayings* and another similar work, *Memorable Sayings of Mr Hobbes*.³⁷ The question of the author remains unresolved.

One of the quotes in *The Last Sayings* is: "In matters of Right or Interest, where Reason is against a man, a man will be against Reason".³⁸ Hobbes expressed this position in the *Elements of Law* and again in *Leviathan*, but this version resembles more the phrasing in Blount's letter to Hobbes. Since the letter is dated to 1678, two years before the publication of *The Last Sayings*, it might serve as an evidence for Aubrey's, rather than Malcolm's, account of Blount's authorship of *The Last Sayings*. In any case, even according to the softer hypothesis that Blount was only close to

³⁵ Anon., *The Last Sayings, or Dying Legacy of Mr. Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury* (London: 1680).

³⁶ Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, vol. 1, 356.

³⁷ Anon., *Memorable Sayings of Mr. Hobbes in His Books and at the Table* (London: 1680). See CTH vol. 2, 793–4 and Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 348–50.

³⁸ *The Last Sayings* (unnumbered).

the producer of this publication, it is an important document that shows how Hobbes's ideas were received and circulated in the early days of deism.

The Last Sayings starts with Hobbes's well-known critical assertions on religion: "Fear of Power invisible feign'd by the mind, or imagined from Tales publicly allowed, is Religion; not allowed, is Superstition", and "It is with the Mysteries of Religion, as with wholesom Pills for the Sick, which swallow'd whole, have the vertue to Cure; but chew'd, are for the most part cast up again without effect".³⁹ The broadside continues with the doubts that Hobbes expressed about the probability of revelations, visions, and supernatural inspirations. After some additional sceptical quotes of this kind come more direct accusations: "The Roman Clergy are a Confederacy of Deceivers"⁴⁰ and "Priest-Craft is a sort of Legerdemain, and the Roman Priests are to the rest of mankind, as the Juglers in a Fair to the rest of the People there, and must have mony given them before they will play their Tricks".⁴¹ Hobbes did not use the term "priestcraft" himself, but it is not surprising to find it in such a text which makes the case for the "radical Hobbes". The text thus revealed the great potential in Hobbes's theory for the launching of an unprecedented anticlerical campaign, precisely as Blount attempted to do in the following years.

In the same year (1680), Blount published two more works which presented organised religion in a dubious light. One of those was *Great Is Diana of the Ephesians, or, the Original of Idolatry Together with the Politick Institution of the Gentiles Sacrifices*. There Blount criticised the heathenish practices and especially sacrifices, tracing these to the heathen priests "who were certainly the wickedest and craftiest of men".⁴² Blount argued that the priests had promoted the practice of sacrifices because it conduced to their own profit and because it gave them absolute control – they were the only ones who could manage the ceremony.⁴³ Thus, Blount emphasised the link between priestcraft and the invention of superstition, "the off-spring of too much Honour, and too much

³⁹ *The Last Sayings* (unnumbered). See Lev. VI, 86 and XXXII, 578.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* See Lev. XLIV, 956.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Blount, *Great Is Diana of the Ephesians, or, the Original of Idolatry Together with the Politick Institution of the Gentiles Sacrifices* (London: 1680), 45.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 36.

Fear”,⁴⁴ as the means to delude the vulgar and thereby to gain power over them. Although Blount limited himself at this point to the heathenish religions, this tract could clearly be read as a criticism of religion in general, including Christianity. The second work that Blount published in 1680 had a similar effect. It was his translation of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Philostratus, to which he added his critical notes.⁴⁵ Blount treated the miracles that were performed by Apollonius in a way that could suggest that they were comparable to the miracles of Jesus: “Apollonius is by many accused of Magick, and so was Christ himself by Celsus and others”.⁴⁶

Blount encouraged an impartial inquiry of religion, emphasising that people do not usually see beyond their interests: “self-love is so predominant in mankind” and so “Most men are apt to flatter their own Party, calling that Religion in themselves which in others they term Irreligion or Superstition”.⁴⁷ This line consistently featured in Blount’s work. This thought was primarily Hobbesian, as Blount had already expressed in his letter to Hobbes, focusing on interests as the motivating force behind the major Christian debates. Furthermore, in his notes to the *Life of Apollonius*, Blount followed Hobbes openly in his treatment of religion, pointing particularly to its social and psychological origins.⁴⁸ In fact, he cited passages from *Leviathan* directly. For example, Blount repeated Hobbes’s saying that ignorance to distinguish dreams and fancies from vision and sense gave rise to the belief in fairies, ghosts, goblins, and witches.⁴⁹ Blount followed Hobbes’s naturalisation, or rather humanisation, of religion in order to show how religion had come to be nothing but a human convention:

Mr. Hobbs tells us, that in these four things, opinion of Ghosts, ignorance of second causes, Devotion towards what men fear, and taking of things casual for Prognosticks, consisteth the natural Seed of Religion; which by reason of the different Fancies, Judgments, and Passions of several men, hath grown up into Ceremonies so different, that those which are used by one man, seem ridiculous to another.⁵⁰

It is evident therefore that by 1680 Blount had internalised what he saw as these central tenets of Hobbes’s theory of religion, and was adopting them for his own purposes. Blount aspired to

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁵ Blount, *The Two First Books of Philostratus, Concerning the Life of Apollonius Tyanens Written Originally in Greek, and Now Published in English: Together with Philological Notes upon Each Chapter* (London: 1680).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5–6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 28–9, 32–3, 151–2, 212. See also Redwood, “Charles Blount, Deism, and English Free Thought”, 493.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 28–9. See Lev. II, 34.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 32–3. See Lev. XII, 170.

suggest his solution for the problems that he had identified, and it is at this point that he started to formulate his deism. In 1683 he published *Religio Laici*, a title borrowed from Herbert,⁵¹ in which he republished Herbert's common notions. Blount argued in this work that his desire to reach a universal doctrine of religion was aimed at those sects who used religious causes to generate social and political disorder. The certainty of revealed religion, Blount argued, should not be examined on the basis of the authority of preachers or believers but the goodness of the doctrine, since "Every man, in what Age or Country, that teacheth goodness, speaks the word of God to me".⁵²

Religio Laici corresponded to a text by John Dryden from a year earlier with an identical title. Dryden's work was a defence on revealed religion against those who were trying to diminish it in favour of natural religion, namely the deists. Dryden's *Religio Laici* was thus an explicit attack on deism and the "Principles of Natural Worship".⁵³ It is arguable that this work was aimed against Herbert in particular, and perhaps also against Blount, if Dryden was aware of Blount's plan to republish some of Herbert's work.⁵⁴ In any case, Blount's response to Dryden's attack, while drawing on Herbert, was thus arguably the first public declaration of deism.

The problem with which Blount's *Religio Laici* starts is that various religions and sects claim to own the exclusive truth about salvation and sentence everyone else but their followers to future tortures. Blount was of course sceptical about such claims, arguing, as he had done in previous works, that people simply tend to think of their own truths as right and of everyone else's as wrong. As a solution, he suggested two "Methods of Enquiry into Religion".⁵⁵ The first method, namely an historical and comparative study of all religions, could be practically difficult, and thus Blount turned to the second, that is, rational inquiry based on the five universal principles of religion. In both methods he followed Herbert. Thus, Blount encouraged inquiry and criticised

⁵¹ Herbert, *De Causis Errorum: Una cum Tractatu de Religione Laici, et Appendice ad Sacerdotes* (London: 1645).

⁵² Blount, *Religio Laici: Written in a Letter to John Dryden, Esq.* (London: 1683), 15.

⁵³ "If my supposition be true, then the consequence which I have assum'd in my Poem may be also true; namely, that Deism, or the Principles of Natural Worship, are onely the faint remnants or dying flames of reveal'd Religion in the Posterity of Noah". John Dryden, *Religio Laici, or, a Layman's Faith* (London: 1682), preface.

⁵⁴ For this hypothesis, see Michael B. Prince, "Religio Laici v. Religio Laici: Dryden, Blount, and the Origin of English Deism", *Modern Language Quarterly* 74:1 (2013): 29–66.

⁵⁵ Blount, *Religio Laici*, 2–4.

the clergy for attempting to prevent it, indeed the same criticism that appeared later in the writings of Toland, Tindal, and Collins:

Therefore in the first place, I should demand in a Rational and Judicial way, how I could be assured, that the Priests had received a Revelation, and what was the time, place, and manner thereof? In Answer to which, I conceive the Priests would tell me; That Laicks ought not further to enquire into such Mysteries than becomes them; that if this their Revelation were not accepted as an unquestionable and necessary Truth, there could be no cause thereof, but an obdurate heart, and want of Divine Grace in me; that if the Sacerdotal word might not be taken concerning the Truth of the said Revelation, there was no other way to inform me thereof: It being Gods manner to speak to his beloved Servants, and not to such gross Sinners as I was...⁵⁶

There are loud echoes of Hobbes in Blount's *Religio Laici*. Blount's sceptical argument that miracles can be pretended "by Confederacy, where one helps the other to abuse the People"⁵⁷ is essentially the same one made by Hobbes in *Leviathan*.⁵⁸ Blount discredited supernatural phenomena by comparing them to the conjectures and cunning of Egyptian magicians and pagan priests as well as Jewish biblical traditions such as the Urim and Thummim.⁵⁹ He argued that common reason should judge the truth of doctrines, rather than single witnesses from whom "the greatest Miracles in all Vulgar Superstitions are mostly derived".⁶⁰ He also argued that true prophecies should give precise details, otherwise any prediction could be said to be fulfilled "in some time, place or manner".⁶¹ An informed reader would know to recognise Hobbes's tone here; but the influence became even clearer in the other work that Blount published in 1683, *Miracles No Violations of the Laws of Nature*.

In *Miracles No Violations* Blount conveyed the message that the laws of nature are themselves the decree of God and therefore there is no reason to believe that God would work above or contrary to them, that is, in the form of miracles. Consequently, one should not look for God's dominion or providence in supernatural phenomena, but rather in the immutable and fixed order of nature, that is, the ordinary course of causes and effects. This argument was taken completely from the sixth chapter of Spinoza's *Tractatus*, "Of Miracles",⁶² simply copied by Blount. To that, Blount added other passages from Hobbes, borrowing his extreme scepticism towards the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 18–19.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁸ Lev. XXXVII, 692.

⁵⁹ Blount, *Religio Laici*, 41–2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶² TTP, 81–96.

possibility of the occurrence of present miracles. For example, Blount inserted a passage from chapter 37 of *Leviathan* in which Hobbes argued that admiration is a function of experience, and therefore phenomena like the eclipses of the sun and the moon were considered miracles only until a better knowledge became available.⁶³

Thus, while relying heavily upon Herbert, Spinoza, and Hobbes, Blount structured his deism as natural religion combined with a systematic attack on priestcraft. As Parkin argues, *Miracles No Violations* was the best example for the process in which “Spinoza’s work mapped onto a familiar domestic tradition of sceptical anti-clericalism and the more complex Hobbes read through Spinoza could more easily provide resources for a deist approach to religion”.⁶⁴ But it was ten years later, in 1693, the year of his death, that Blount’s most famous book was published. There, Blount’s admiration for Hobbes became finally public and explicit, as indicated by its full title, namely, *Oracles of Reason ... In Several Letters to Mr. Hobbs and Other Persons of Eminent Quality, and Learning*. The *Oracles* included the letter that Blount had sent to Hobbes, but it is not the only place in the *Oracles* in which Blount paid respect to Hobbes, nor is it the only place where he followed Hobbes’s lead. Another example is found in the first letter in this collection, in which Blount mentioned the “late and great Modern Philosopher of this Nation”, according to whom “It is not an Argument sufficient to prove those Books were written by Moses, because they are call’d the Five Books of Moses”. Blount then fully repeated the arguments and examples given by Hobbes in chapter 33 of *Leviathan* and used them to question Moses’ authorship – for example, the claim that the section on Moses’ sepulchre must have been written after his death. Blount even explained that his use of Hobbes at that point was designed to show “that we may pay a just deference to the Church, and yet at the same time raise scruples for information sake, the better to arm our selves against our Antagonists”.⁶⁵ Hobbes’s “scruples” served Blount’s main goal, which was precisely to free men to make such inquiries on their own. It is for this reason that he believed, as mentioned, that although the deist might err, he would not err like a fool. Finally, in a

⁶³ Blount, *Miracles No Violations*, 2–3. See Lev. XXXVII, 684.

⁶⁴ Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 408.

⁶⁵ Blount, *Oracles*, 16–18. See Lev. XXXIII, 590–2. See also Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 429.

discussion of the human soul, Blount chose to quote the same verses quoted by Hobbes, thereby questioning implicitly the immortality of the soul.⁶⁶

Blount was “perhaps the only open supporter of Hobbes at the time”,⁶⁷ and this was manifest in his deism. Hobbes clearly inspired Blount’s scepticism and anticlericalism, but also his approach to the Scripture, particularly the call to treat the Scripture as an historical document. Using all of these elements, Blount recruited Hobbes for his cause, although Hobbes’s claims were sometimes not as explicit as Blount’s. Hence, Blount took the issues that were raised by Hobbes and others further, developing through them his version of deism. In other instances, Blount did not have to radicalise Hobbes but simply to follow him and Spinoza where they had already been radical enough, as with the case of the Pentateuch. In these instances, Blount was simply a transmitter of ideas, and as his critics could recognise, quite an efficient one.

The *Oracles* became the most famous and notorious deistic tract of the early 1690s, provoking numerous responses, mainly by outraged Anglicans. The critics of the emerging deism did not miss the links to Hobbes. Sometimes they even made extra efforts to emphasise them, in order to discredit deism through association with Hobbes, or alternatively to use deism in order to continue attacking Hobbes.⁶⁸ For example, in *Mr. Blount’s Oracles of Reason, Examined and Answered*, Josiah King published an answer to the *Oracles* aimed at atheism and deism in general.⁶⁹ King identified the explicit and implicit debts to Hobbes and attacked Blount accordingly. With regard to the questioning of the authorship of the Pentateuch, King attributed this tradition which is “now so much valued” first to Ibn Ezra, and then to “Hobbs, Spinoza, and other such Politicians in Mr. Blount’s Commonwealth of Learning”.⁷⁰ It was precisely this commonwealth, represented by Blount, about which the Anglicans were so worried towards the end of the seventeenth century.

Texts against deism in the 1690s mentioned Hobbes as well as Spinoza quite regularly. They seemed to agree on the role that the two had played in the emergence of deism. *An Account of*

⁶⁶ “Then shall the Dust return to Dust” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). See Blount, *Oracles*, 117–19; Lev. XLIV, 986.

⁶⁷ Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 411.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 402–9.

⁶⁹ Josiah King, *Mr. Blount’s Oracles of Reason, Examined and Answered* (London: 1698), preface.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

the Growth of Deism in England, published in 1696, made the case that the deists, “having read Spinoza and Hobbes, and been taught to laugh at the story of Baalam’s Ass, and Sampson’s Locks; they proceed to ridicule the reality of all Miracle and Revelation”.⁷¹ Williams Nicholls expressed a similar concern in *A Conference with a Theist*: “For Atheism and Theism are now got from the Court to the Exchange, they begin to talk them in Shops and Stalls, and Spinoza and Hobbs are grown common, even to the very Rabble”.⁷² The conventional perception of the critics was that the deists were attacking, usually by mocking and ridiculing, anything that was related to revealed religion. Many of the critics thought that most of the deists were in fact atheists who were hiding behind a more sophisticated facade. They therefore wished to expose them, and this led to a combined attack on atheism, deism, and Hobbism.

These links were made perhaps in the clearest manner in the Boyle Lectures, established in 1692 “for proving the Christian Religion against notorious Infidels, viz. Atheists, Deists, Pagans, Jews and Mahometans”⁷³ and in which Hobbes was regularly subjected to attacks. The aim of these lectures, established at the request of Robert Boyle in his will, was to address the increasing attack on Christianity, as it was perceived in the eyes of latitudinarian divines. The lectures were also meant to show that the rationalism of the latter, and to an extent also the new science, could be reconciled with Christianity, rather than undermine it. The inaugural series of lectures was given by the classical scholar Richard Bentley, who was concerned with the public rise of atheism in England. Bentley’s first sermon addressed the “folly of atheism, and (what is now called) deism”, and there he asserted:

There are some Infidels among us, that not only disbelieve the Christian Religion; but impugn the assertion of a Providence, of the Immortality of the Soul, of an Universal Judgment to come, and of any Incorporeal Essence: and yet to avoid the odious name of Atheists, would shelter and skreen themselves under a new one of Deists, which is not quite so obnoxious.⁷⁴

For Bentley, as for most critics, the modern deists were nothing short of atheists. Although the deists did acknowledge the existence of God, they did so merely for practical reasons, namely, “to

⁷¹ William Stephens, *An Account of the Growth of Deism in England* (London: 1696), 5.

⁷² William Nicholls, *A Conference with a Theist* (London: 1696), preface.

⁷³ Richard Bentley, *The Folly of Atheism* (London: 1692).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

decline the publick odium and resentment of the Magistrate”, precisely as Epicurus had done.⁷⁵ Having established the parallels between the deists and the atheists, Bentley then added Hobbes to the equation: “there was hope, that the Doctrine of absolute uncontrollable Power and the formidable name of Leviathan might flatter and bribe the Government into a toleration of Infidelity”.⁷⁶ Not only were Hobbes’s ideas a primary force behind the spreading of these new forms of atheism, but his political theory was meant to make them the rule of the nation.⁷⁷

John Harris’ Boyle Lectures from 1698 presented these links in an even more elaborate manner. He argued that Hobbes, Spinoza, and Blount belonged to the same family of modern atheists, and he too believed that the deists were simply atheists who found a different name for themselves. Harris recognised some parallels between these writers. For example, he observed that all of these thinkers contributed to the view that the notion of God “owes its Original to the foolish Fears and Ignorance of some Men, and to the crafty Designs of others”.⁷⁸ Thus, the purpose of Blount’s *Great Is Diana* was to show “That the first Original of all Religion, was from Craft and Imposture, and that it was cultivated and carried on by the Cunning and Avarice of the Priests”.⁷⁹ Harris found further evidence in *Anima Mundi*, *Life of Apollonius*, and the *Oracles*, to suggest that Blount reduced religion, and consequently the notion of God, to priestcraft and pagan corruption. Spinoza similarly associated religion with superstition and traced it back to human fear, whereas “The Author of the *Leviathan*, speaks yet a little plainer as to this Point”, and for whom “Religion and Superstition differ only in this, that the latter is a Lye and a Cheat standing only on the Authority of Private Men, whereas the former is supported by the Power of the Government”.⁸⁰

Thus, Harris identified a tradition of “gentlemen” who implied that the very notion of God was an invention, but according to him, they simply lacked proof for their theory: had there

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁷ The association of atheism and deism with the long-refuted Epicurean and Hobbesian ideas was a useful strategy for Bentley in his following sermons as well. See for example Bentley, *Matter and Motion Cannot Think* (London: 1692). See also Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 391–6.

⁷⁸ John Harris, *The Notion of a God, Neither from Fear nor Policy* (London: 1698), 3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

not been a God, no inventor would have been able to create such a notion.⁸¹ Moreover, in the case of Hobbes, Harris added an interesting point. Even if it was possible for a man to invent the notion of God for political reasons, it would have been foolish of him to do so; Hobbes's sovereign would have enjoyed even greater power had he been not only the mortal God but also the only one.⁸² In other sermons, Harris identified additional common themes, such as the corporeal notions of God,⁸³ as well as scepticism about the existence of good and evil in nature.⁸⁴ Throughout his lectures, Harris' point was that none of these "gentlemen" was original, and they merely repeated each other's arguments while falsely presenting theirs as unique. In fact, Harris claimed that most of their argument could be found in the writings of the ancient atheists, namely, Epicurus, Lucretius, and Sextus Empiricus. All of them pretended, falsely of course, to "the Glory of first leading Men into the way of Truth, and delivering them out of the dark mazes of Vulgar Errors".⁸⁵

The combined attacks on deism and Hobbes emphasised the influence of the radical aspects of Hobbes's work upon the emergence of deism. The complexity of both Hobbes and deism was reduced in a way that clearly served the rhetorical goal of the lecturers. As Parkin argues, "A work like the *Oracles of reason* was a gift to the clergymen who to a certain extent *wanted* to believe, like Bentley, that Hobbes was *the* major intellectual influence lying behind the new freethinking".⁸⁶ The critics seem to have been successful in dismissing Hobbes and deism together through the association with atheism. But there was one more consequence. The attacks on Hobbes and deism kept the debates on both of them going, providing them with an extensive exposure. This could allow a reader who would want to consider deism seriously to do so, and this

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 23–4.

⁸³ Harris, *The Atheist's Objections, Against the Immaterial Nature of God, and Incorporeal Substances, Refuted* (London: 1698).

⁸⁴ Harris, *A Refutation of the Objections Against Moral Good and Evil* (London: 1698), especially 5–7. As Harris recognised correctly, Blount seems to have agreed with Hobbes on this point in the *Life of Apollonius*, but to have disagreed with Hobbes precisely on that in the "Summary Account of the Deists Religion" (See Blount, *Life of Apollonius*, 151–2 and Blount, *Oracles*, 93). A possible explanation for this contradiction might be that it was someone else—perhaps Charles Gildon—who wrote the "Summary".

⁸⁵ Harris, *Immortality and Pride, the Great Causes of Atheism* (London: 1698), 19.

⁸⁶ Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 408. As Parkin shows, this was also evident in Harris' lectures which took Blount as "the representative target of modern freethinking, whose nominal deism conceals the atheism of Hobbes" (*Ibid.*).

could also allow the deists themselves to engage with new arguments and develop their own theories respectively. It is this process that emphasises the dialectical way in which deism developed, and we shall see the same dynamic taking place in the following decade as well. Hobbes had a central role in this development. The deists were forced by their critics to react to the association between them and Hobbes, which they did in various ways, one of which was simply to embrace Hobbes. Thus, as we shall see next, deism developed in a number of directions into the early eighteenth century, and Hobbes's footprints can be traced in many of them.

2.3. John Toland

In the case of John Toland (1670–1722), deism is at best a partial label for his somewhat eclectic work. His writings dealt largely with the history of Christianity, including the influences of pagan elements and priestcraft. He analysed ancient texts and biblical stories, and combined republicanism with pantheism, anticlericalism with a call for a civil religion.⁸⁷ His most famous text, *Christianity Not Mysteriorious*, published in 1696, sent a clear message to the readers: men must not believe in things they cannot conceive by their own reason, as the gospels, it was stated already in the title, are not contrary to, nor above, reason. In doing so, *Christianity Not Mysteriorious* stated coherently what Blount had suggested earlier and, as such, it was perceived as an escalation of the attack on revealed religion.

There is considerable resemblance between *Christianity Not Mysteriorious* and Hobbes's thought.⁸⁸ Toland's main point was that Christianity in its original and uncorrupted form, as found in Jesus' teachings and the gospels, was simple and plain. Mysteries intruded Christianity only later on from the Jews and the gentiles, and were maintained by the ambition and craft of the priests, with the assistance of philosophers, or "divinity schools". Eventually, Christianity ceased to be intelligible, and degenerated into mere paganism, consisting of ridiculous and foolish rituals and ceremonies.⁸⁹ This argument follows Hobbes's criticism of religion quite closely, and particularly his anticlericalism as found in the fourth part of *Leviathan*, on the kingdom of darkness. Toland

⁸⁷ See for example Champion, *Republican Learning*, 251; Hudson, *The English Deists*, 91.

⁸⁸ This work was also largely influenced by Locke and Spinoza. See the introduction to the thesis, sections 2.2 and 2.3.

⁸⁹ See for example Toland, *Christianity Not Mysteriorious*, 141–2; 151–69.

believed that the clergy were motivated only by their own interest to become a separate political body, thus corrupting Christianity for their own advantage. Like Hobbes, Toland saw their actions as “Usurpations upon Mankind”, and precisely like Hobbes, he believed that it was this political interest that led the clergy to keep for themselves the sole right to interpret the Scripture, and most importantly, to claim infallibility.⁹⁰ It is thus with a rather Hobbesian tone that Toland claimed that this “did strangely affect, stupify, and amaze the Minds of the ignorant People; and made them believe they were in good earnest Mediators between God and Men, that could fix Sanctity to certain Times, Places, Persons, or Actions”.⁹¹ Moreover, Toland accused: “They seem’d almost a different and more divine Species of Creatures, distinguishing themselves from other Men in their Garb, in their manner of living by Tithes and Donations, in their separate Places at Church, and several other ways. By this means the Clergy were able to do any thing”.⁹²

These similarities to Hobbes are notable particularly because Toland himself admitted them elsewhere. In an essay “Concerning the Rise, Progress, and Destruction of Fables and Romances” from 1695, Toland similarly investigated the historical origins of fables “thought necessary to sweeten and allure the minds of men, naturally Superstitious and Credulous”.⁹³ He traced this invention back to the “eastern nations”, the Hebrews and Greek mythology, and from there to the writing of the Holy Scripture, including the Jewish Talmud and Muslim Alcoran. Thus, Toland established again his anticlericalism, arguing as he did in *Christianity Not Mysterious* that “From these fountains the Christian Monks drunk in the art of Lying, and composing of Legends”.⁹⁴ This time, however, he gave Hobbes the credit openly: “To this Essay of Fables and Romances, the History of Daemonology doth properly belong, with all the terrible troops of Spirits and Witches; but I find this Part is so Judiciously and Learnedly Treated of by our Countryman Mr. Hobbs in that Book of his Leviathan, called the Kingdom of Darkness”.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 166. See for example: “I referre also all those Doctrines, that serve them to keep the possession of this spirituall Sovereignty after it is gotten. As first, that the *Pope in his publique capacity cannot erre*. For who is there, that beleaving this to be true, will not readily obey him in whatsoever he commands?” (Lev. XLVII, 1108).

⁹¹ Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious*, 166–7.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 167.

⁹³ L.P. [John Toland], *Two Essays Sent in a Letter from Oxford to a Nobleman in London* (London: 1695), 29.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

The critics were also quick to point to Hobbes's influence upon Toland's deism. An anonymous book titled *Visits from the Shades*, published in 1704, contained a fictional dialogue held between Hobbes and John Asgill, in which the latter tells Hobbes: "had you not writ at all, I question whether the *Oracles of Reason*, or *Christianity not Mystrious*, had ever seen the Light".⁹⁶ Hobbes is described there as admitting that his works "have pull'd down the Christian Religion; but I am convinced", says the fictional Hobbes, "I only lay'd the Foundation, and raised the Scaffolding; for the Structure of Heresie has gone on apace since I left the World".⁹⁷ Then, "Hobbes" elaborated:

Yes, for I invalidated the Miracles of Moses, and all the Major and Minor Prophets of the Old Testament: I made their Inspiration no more than common Dreams, and ordinary Visions: I lessened the stupendious Actions of our blessed Saviour; I levelled the cures of the Dumb, the Leperous and the Blind, as things incident to an ordinary Physician; nor stopp'd I at any thing, but perverted one Text by another, till I shook the Belief of them all.⁹⁸

Hobbes's sceptical approach towards miracles and prophecies and his critical analysis of the Scripture are identified here as the means through which he meant to "overturn all Models of Religions, and Constitutions of all Churches whatsoever".⁹⁹ *Visits from the Shades* is yet another example of the way in which Hobbes was perceived to have laid the foundations for the radical heresies of the late seventeenth century, deism included. It was his radical legacy, as set out in *The Last Sayings*, that the critics could see in texts such as Toland's.

Toland also identified his biblical criticism with Hobbes's. He believed that he witnessed an era of flourishing of natural philosophy: people like Galileo, Descartes, Mersenne, and Gassendi made new discoveries, and yet they were "not esteem'd the worse Christians, because they contradict the Scriptures in Physical or Mathematical Problems".¹⁰⁰ He explained that "the Sacred Writers spoke to a Generation of Men, who were never famous in Arts and Sciences; therefore they adapted all their sayings to the vulgar Idea's of that Time and Nation".¹⁰¹ The Scripture had originally been written in order to establish a theocracy but now it could be revisited. The time has come for the Scripture to be adjusted in order to reach new goals, such as a natural

⁹⁶ Anon., *Visits from the Shades* (London: 1704), 34.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁰⁰ Toland, *Two Essays*, ii.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

understanding of the world. This development, which Toland sought to promote, was still disputed: “The Philosophick History of the Bible, is not always to be embraced; for what an outcry against Mr. Hobs! because he describ’d God Almighty as Corporeal, though Moses and the Scriptures had done so before him”.¹⁰² His explanation for the attacks on Hobbes was no less interesting: “Things are denominated Heresie and Atheism, not by any certain Rules of Truth, or Falshood, but according to the Caprice, or Interests of Sects and Parties”.¹⁰³ Toland’s statement defended Hobbes’s corporeal God based on the Scripture, and at the same time it also repeated the precise view of both Hobbes and Blount on the concept of heresy as being entirely dictated by sectarian interests.

The link that Toland made between biblical criticism and Hobbes’s corporeal God is particularly illuminating. Accordingly, Hobbes’s materialistic position was compatible not only with the rising natural philosophy but also with the Scripture once investigated thoroughly, as Toland intended to do. Thus, Hobbes’s materialism and his biblical criticism, combined together, were a powerful tool that could be employed by subsequent deists. In fact, it was John Harris who argued in one of his Boyle Lectures that “there must be some substantial Reason why Deists and Antiscripturists are always Corporealists”.¹⁰⁴ For Harris, it was clear that Hobbes and Spinoza were the greatest corporealists of all, and deism was the recent manifestation of their approach.

Toland’s formulated his materialism fully in 1704, when he suggested his idea of active matter in the *Letters to Serena*.¹⁰⁵ Toland’s idea was that motion is essential to matter, or, in other words, that matter is self-moving. The implication was clear: the need for God in such a world is reduced significantly. Toland thought of his idea as an addition to Newton’s system. However, for the Newtonians, who wanted to keep God and His providence in the picture, this was one step too far, leading Newton’s laws into an extremely dangerous territory. Samuel Clarke, the theologian and philosopher who was famously associated with Newton, responded to this idea in

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, ii–iii.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, iii.

¹⁰⁴ John Harris, *The Atheist’s Objections ... Refuted* (London: 1698), 50.

¹⁰⁵ John Toland, *Letters to Serena* (London: 1704), especially letters 4–5.

his Boyle Lectures in 1704–5.¹⁰⁶ Clarke attacked Toland's active matter together with the materialism of Hobbes and Spinoza, as well as what was conceived as the deistic belief in a non-providential God. It is both striking and illuminating to see how Clarke made these connections.

Clarke started with those whom he considered to be outright atheists. His main target at this point was Spinoza, “the most celebrated patron of atheism in our time”.¹⁰⁷ To Clarke, as to many others, Spinoza represented the modern atheist who reduced the world to mere matter and necessity. According to Clarke, the material world could not possibly have been the original, self-existing being, and this was therefore the main question at stake with the atheists. According to Clarke, the world and its beauty, order, and well-being had to be caused by an intelligent being with liberty and choice.¹⁰⁸ Not only must there be some other unchangeable cause to all the changeable things in the world, but this cause must also be independent and external. Thus, Clarke attacked Toland for his idea that motion is essential to matter, arguing that such an essential motion could not be directed in a certain way unless it was determined by an external cause; whereas if motion was essential, everything would have moved in every way at once, which is impossible.¹⁰⁹

As part of his attack on the idea of necessity of matter, Clarke criticised Hobbes for explaining the operations of the mind as necessary effects of motion. He rejected the way in which Hobbes explained all sensation and consciousness as phantasms caused by the pressure of objects on organs, arguing that this could explain only how an image occurs but not how it is perceived by the brain. Clarke read Hobbes as explaining perception only in material terms and as asserting, as a necessary though absurd consequence of that, that matter itself is endowed with perception. Clarke linked Hobbes to those who “would make Thinking to be an Affection of Matter”,¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Samuel Clarke, “A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God” and “A Discourse Concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation”, in *The Works of Samuel Clarke*, vol. 2 (London: 1738), 513–733.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 532.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 532–43.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 531.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 561–3.

presumably referring to Locke.¹¹¹ Clarke's goal was to make the contrary point, namely, that willing and thinking are in no way qualities of matter, at least not when matter is defined only in terms of figures and motions. Thus, willing and thinking must be faculties of immaterial substances, which also means that the soul is a distinct substance from the body, and that men can act without being acted upon, hence the existence of free-will.

Thus, Clarke started by refuting atheism, mostly through fighting materialism and necessitarianism which he attributed to Hobbes, Spinoza, "and their followers",¹¹² such as Toland. He went on to attack other and more evasive forms of atheism, and it is at this point that his discussion of deism began. Clarke referred to those deists who believe in God as a supreme intelligent being that made the world, "Though at the same time they agree with the Epicureans in this, that they fancy God does not at all concern himself in the Government of the World, nor has any regard to, or care of, what is done therein".¹¹³ Clarke did not reject the idea that God could theoretically order the world so that necessary causes would regularly produce effects "without the immediate interposition of his Almighty Power upon every particular occasion",¹¹⁴ but he firmly denied the idea that God created a certain quantity of matter and motion and then left the world to be shaped by them with no clear direction.¹¹⁵

Clarke was worried about the deistic view of God's non-intervention in the same way that he was worried about the idea of the active matter, because the implication was the same: Epicurean atheism, according to which the material world running by mere chance is all there is. Moreover, Clarke denied that the seventeenth century's mechanical philosophy, and Newton's in particular, had to lead to such a notion, arguing that recent discoveries had shown that "the very original Laws of Motion themselves cannot continue to take place, but by something Superior to Matter, continually exerting on it a certain Force or Power", which is "entirely different from that

¹¹¹ Locke was often attacked for hinting at the possibility of a thinking matter. See for examples his assertion that "We have the Ideas of Matter and Thinking, but possibly shall never be able to know, whether Matter thinks, or no" in Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human[e] Understanding*, 270.

¹¹² Clarke, *The Works*, 521.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 600.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 601.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

by which Matter acts on Matter”.¹¹⁶ Clarke’s purpose was to reject any talk of the world only in terms of motion and matter, that is, with no continual direction by God. Against the deists, he asserted that God governs the world still and that the world “depends every Moment on some Superior Being, for the Preservation of its Frame”.¹¹⁷ Clarke asserted that denying God’s concern with the world was to deny His being omnipresent, intelligent, and all-powerful, which was to deny His existence altogether. To Clarke, although these deists confessed in words that there was a God, they denied Him in reality.¹¹⁸

It is interesting to see how Clarke created a continuum, starting with the outright materialist Spinoza, through Hobbes and Toland, to the deists: they all posed the same threat of describing a materialistic godless world; they just did it with different degrees of sophistication. This is therefore another powerful example for the perceived connection between Hobbes and the deists. Therefore, Hobbes’s materialism—perhaps combined with Spinozist and even Lockean ideas—was particularly influential for deists like Toland. Furthermore, Clarke’s attack on the deists was an important milestone in the historiography of deism. This kind of attack was a common ground among Anglican critics at the time, but Clarke’s was considerably more elaborate, and his respectable reputation made him especially central to this debate.

Indeed, Clarke’s critique proved to be highly influential. By that point, it was Clarke who provided the clearest definition available for deism and its notions. Hobbes had an important part in this story as Clarke told it. This example shows how the dialectical process continued:

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Clarke mentioned three other types of deists that he identified, as follows: those who believe in God and His providence, but naturally rather than morally, that is, maintain that God is not concerned with men’s good or evil actions; those who do recognise the moral aspects of God’s government, but do not believe in the immortality of the soul, that is, believe that men perish entirely at death; and those who have all the “right notions”, including that God as an intelligent being is the creator, governor, and preserver of the world, that He communicates His goodness and happiness to His creatures and that they are obliged in turn to promote the general good of the world and the happiness of the each other – but though having these notions, these deists claim that everything is discoverable by the light of nature, namely reason, alone, and therefore reject divine revelation. Clarke used similar arguments to show why these categories led straight to atheism, except for the last one, namely, that of the true deists who just had to be taught to accept Christianity properly. Thus, Clarke argued, adherence to the obligations of natural religion and sincere inquiry were not necessarily problematic as such, as long as these were accompanied by a hope for revelation. In fact, he argued that this form of religion had been practiced by Socrates or Cicero. It was the contemporary deists, however, who were characterised by “their trivial and vain Cavils; their mocking and ridiculing, without and before examination and by their loose, vain, and frothy Discourses; and, above all, their vitious and immoral Lives”, hence nothing short of atheists (*Ibid.*, 602–7).

subsequent deists attacked Clarke, but they also accepted some of the premises that Clarke attributed to deism. It was for this reason that in 1730, Matthew Tindal replied to Clarke's discourse in his *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, seeing that "the Dr. got immortal Honour by that Discourse".¹¹⁹ Tindal's book became considered as an extremely important text of English deism. As we shall see, Tindal, too, had significant debts to Hobbes.

2.4. Matthew Tindal

Christianity as Old as the Creation was the main deistic manifesto of Matthew Tindal (1657–1733) and his final work.¹²⁰ His engagement with religious and political matters, however, began as early as the late seventeenth century. Tindal became a fellow at All Souls College, Oxford, in 1678. During the 1680s he converted to Catholicism but later returned to the Church of England. His conversion was perceived as an opportunistic move aimed to secure the Wardenship of All Souls under James II. In the 1690s Tindal frequented the London coffee houses, and became a strong critic of the Church of England's clergy. He was a defender of the 1688 revolution, and he subsequently gained a reputation as a lawyer, loyal to the regime of William III, an allegiance that was reflected in his early political tracts.¹²¹ At All Souls, Tindal "gathered around him a group of secular whig lawyers opposed to the religious requirements made of fellows by the college's statutes". At the same time, his reputation in the college became rather dubious, and he was accused of immoral behaviour, debauchery, and "sensual indulgence, both sexual and at the table".¹²²

This sort of reception can be clearly seen in *The Religious, Rational, and Moral Conduct of Matthew Tindal, L.L.D. ... By a Member of the Same College*, published in 1735. There, the anonymous fellow of All Souls described the wide range of unacceptable behaviour practiced by the late "Doctor" Tindal. The criticism voiced in this work moves quite hastily between personal, social,

¹¹⁹ Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 353.

¹²⁰ Tindal apparently had a plan for another volume for *Christianity as Old as the Creation* which was never published in full for reasons that remained unclear. See for example David Berman and Stephen Lalor, "The Suppression of *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, Vol. II", *Notes and Queries* 31:1 (1984): 3–6.

¹²¹ For Tindal's political theory, see chapter 4 of this thesis.

¹²² B. W. Young, "Tindal, Matthew (bap. 1657, d. 1733)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27462>.

and professional aspects. In the context of this discussion, however, the following passage is striking:

In short, the Seeds of Infidelity, which Mr. Hobbs's Disappointments had caused him to sow, were now growing up into a plentiful Crop; and his Doctrines being become the Fashion among too many of the Nobility and Gentry, who were desirous to be set free from the Restraints and Fetters of Religion, as they esteemed them, the Doctor resolved to be Alamode, and to cultivate and improve what Mr. Hobbs and his Disciples had begun. And therefore he turned downright Atheist; tho' he was desirous, that the Generality of Mankind should imagine he had stopt short at Deism; but he was too reserved and cunning to profess himself a Deist in an explicit and open manner.¹²³

This account contains themes that we have seen in previous critiques. It made the argument that deism was merely a cover for downright atheism and that both were associated with immoral behaviour as they were with false views. It also reflected the anxiety that these new kinds of infidelity had gained a dangerous momentum. Finally, this paragraph found the roots for Tindal so-called deism in one main character: Mr. Hobbes. Clearly, using Hobbes in order to stain one's reputation was not an original trick. Yet, as we shall see, it was not a groundless accusation. Furthermore, like Blount and Toland, Tindal seemed to have realised the connection to Hobbes himself, although he was more cautious in admitting that.

Tindal's most notorious work was *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted, Against the Romish, and All Other Priests Who Claim an Independent Power Over It* from 1706. The non-juror and Tindal's former tutor, George Hickes, described this work as a "Commonplace Book of Atheists and Deists".¹²⁴ Like previous deists, Tindal believed that the clergy had complicated and mystified religion in order to gain an independent power in church matters. He offered an historical investigation to show that this contradicted the original, uncorrupted, spirit of the church. Thus, he argued in *The Rights* that the church should seek legitimacy from its members in a democratic manner, seeing that even God ruled over the Jews only after they gave their consent.¹²⁵ It is only this kind of church that would be conducive to the happiness of human kind, that being the

¹²³ Anon., *The Religious, Rational, and Moral Conduct of Matthew Tindal, L.L.D. Late Fellow of All Souls College in Oxford. In a Letter to a Friend. By a Member of the Same College* (London: 1735), 19–20.

¹²⁴ William Carroll, *Spinoza Reviv'd: Or, A Treatise, Proving the Book, Entitled, The Rights of the Christian Church, &c. (in the Most Notorious Parts of It) to Be the Same with Spinoza's Rights of the Christian Clergy, &c. and That Both of Them Are Grounded upon Downright Atheism. To Which Is Added, a Preliminary Discourse Relating to the Said Books, by the Reverend Dr. George Hicks* (London: 1709). On the comparison between *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted* and *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum*, a text from 1665 that was attributed to Spinoza, though was apparently written by someone else in his circle, perhaps Lodewijk Meyer, see Colie, "Spinoza and the early English deists", 35; Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 45–6; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 607, 620–1. On Spinoza, see section 2.3 of the introduction.

¹²⁵ See for example Tindal, *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted*, 151.

primary design of God.¹²⁶ Tindal also argued that people should judge for themselves according to their own conscience in any matter that is not related to the public interest, including the manner in which they worship God or even the religion they choose. Not only should the magistrate respect that and treat all of his subjects equally, but he actually needs to protect their conscience as a natural right and to forbid any act of persecution, which Tindal considered a severe crime.¹²⁷ The result was an elaborate argument in favour of toleration, indeed a cause that Tindal had sought to promote since the late 1680s.

Tindal's argument against "ecclesiastical tyranny" had another layer: the view that the civil magistrate should have the supreme power in all religious matters that influence the public good. It is here that the link to Hobbes becomes apparent. It is arguable that Tindal reached an Erastian position driven by a strong anticlerical motivation.¹²⁸ In so doing, he followed Hobbes in arguing fiercely against the coexistence of two independent powers in society, namely, magisterial and ecclesiastical – what Hobbes called the danger of "seeing double".¹²⁹ Tindal was aware of the resemblance, and he acknowledged that the superior power that he gave to the sovereign could seem "as great a power as Hobbs complemented him with".¹³⁰ At the same time, he distinguished himself from Hobbes because he wanted to leave a greater room for people to act upon their own judgement. I will discuss this crucial point in detail later on. For now, it suffices to note that Tindal's arguably Hobbesian Erastianism was inseparable from his deism, as the arguments for the superiority of the magistrate and against the independent power of the church were derived precisely from the highly suspicious attitude towards priestcraft. It was for the same reason that Tindal, like Blount and Toland before him, tried to identify the foreign elements that had intruded and corrupted Christianity. Tindal believed that the natural, rational, and simple religion was preferable to the mysterious, revealed, and heathenish one. In the light of his reference to Hobbes,

¹²⁶ See also Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, "God can require nothing of us, but what makes for our Happiness": Matthew Tindal on Toleration", in *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, 139–155.

¹²⁷ Tindal, *The Rights*, 17–20.

¹²⁸ Named after Erastus, Erastianism is the doctrine according to which the church should be entirely subordinated to, and controlled by, the state. For an elaborate discussion on the arguable Erastianism of Hobbes and Tindal, see chapter 4 of this thesis. See also Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, 136–7.

¹²⁹ Lev. XXXIX, 732–4.

¹³⁰ Tindal, *The Rights*, 28.

we can assume that Tindal was familiar enough with his writings, relying on him to an extent while partly departing from him in his conclusions. Hence, this case demonstrates that the complex relationship between deism and Hobbes was carried into the eighteenth century.

In his later *Christianity as Old as the Creation: Or, The Gospel, a Republication of the Religion of Nature* from 1730, Tindal was defending deism against Samuel Clarke, formulating it further, and revealing another association with Hobbes. Against Clarke, Tindal argued that since reason is the supreme obligation, if there is any difference between the reason of things and external revelation, the former must take priority: “If Christianity, as well as Deism, consists in being govern’d by the original Obligation of the moral Fitness of Things, in Conformity to the Nature, and in Imitation of the perfect Will of God, then they both must be the same; but if Christianity consists in being govern’d by any other Rule, or requires any other Things, has not the Dr. himself giv’n the Advantage to Deism?”¹³¹ Tindal’s point against revelation was that it could be redundant at best, or more probably, misleading. The reasoning behind that was the same as that of Blount and Toland. His main target was priestcraft and the later erroneous additions inserted to Christianity by interested parties. Tindal’s deism is therefore the view that reason gives us all the information we need for our mutual happiness and that the law of nature applies universally and consistently without exceptions.

Like Blount, Tindal believed that not only should there be no need for revelation, but that arguing that there is such a need suggests that there is a defect in God’s work, namely, the law of nature. It is those who argued for the need of revelation, and not the deists, who were inconsistent with true Christianity. It is those Christians, and not the deists, who were dangerous to society. Thus, Tindal accused the religious establishment of nothing short of corrupting human nature, morality, and sociability. It is in this context that we should pay close attention to the following passage:

If Man, as our Divines maintain against Hobbs, is a social Creature, who naturally loves his own Species, and is full of Pity, Tenderness, and Benevolence; and if Reason, which is the proper Nature of Man, can never lead Men to any Thing but universal Love and Kindness ... how comes it to pass, that what is taught for Religion in so many Places of Christendom, has transform’d this

¹³¹ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 368.

mild and gentle Creature into fierce and cruel; and made him act with Rage and Fury against those who never did, or intended him the least harm?¹³²

Hobbes was attacked for stripping man of his sociability and putting him in a state of war rather than in a state of mutual love. Tindal's view on these points might have actually been closer to Hobbes's opponents rather than to Hobbes's, but here he interestingly supported Hobbes against his Christian adversaries. It is in the name of religion that men were encouraged to fight and harm each other, not because of Hobbes's doctrine. Attacking Hobbes on the way in which he had described human nature while sending men to religious wars was mere hypocrisy. Here Tindal came to Hobbes's defence against a common enemy, an enemy embodied at the end of *Christianity as Old as the Creation* by Samuel Clarke. Tindal's deism, like Blount's and in some respects Toland's, can thus be seen as carrying on the legacy of Hobbes's anticlericalism, while continuing to fight the battles that Hobbes could no longer have fought.

2.5. Anthony Collins

Finally, another figure central to these debates was Anthony Collins (1676–1729). Collins knew Toland and Tindal personally: he assisted the former financially, and according to some accounts, he helped the latter with the writing of *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted*. He is also known for his close friendship with John Locke.¹³³ Collins's work touched on many of the reviewed topics, and some of his writings were as anticlerical as were those of Toland and Tindal.¹³⁴ His philosophical work included a theory of materialism and determinism which he developed in his famous correspondence with Samuel Clarke¹³⁵ and then in his *Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty*. In the latter, Collins attempted to prove that man is “a necessary agent”, thereby rejecting free-will. He argued for example that God's prescience must suppose the necessity of the existence of all future things and hence could not be reconciled with free-will.¹³⁶ It is clear that this position

¹³² *Ibid.*, 56.

¹³³ See J. Dybikowski, “Collins, Anthony (1676–1729)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5933>.

¹³⁴ See Anthony Collins, *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions* (London: 1707); *Priestcraft in Perfection* (London: 1710); *A Vindication of the Divine Attributes* (London: 1710); *An Historical and Critical Essay, on the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (London: 1724); *A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London: 1724); *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered* (London: 1726).

¹³⁵ Clarke, *The Works*, vol. 3, 719–913.

¹³⁶ Collins, *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty* (London: 1717), 82–4.

was deeply influenced by Hobbes.¹³⁷ Joseph Priestley, who followed Collins in converting to determinism, mentioned in the preface to his edition of the *Philosophical Inquiry* that “Mr. Hobbes ... was the first who, in this, or any other country, rightly understood, and clearly stated, the argument; but he wrote nothing systematical, and consequently nothing that could be of much use to a student. For this purpose this treatise of Collins is excellent”.¹³⁸ Collins’s work was important and influential in turn, known for example to have shaped the views of Voltaire on the subject.¹³⁹ As O’Higgins argues, Collins “was not an originator of ideas, but he did produce a formidable synthesis of the arguments in favour of determinism”.¹⁴⁰ Thus, like Blount, Collins had an important role in formulating and transmitting ideas from Hobbes and others to a more radical audience.

More than a deist, Collins was a freethinker. In *A Discourse of Free-Thinking*, published in 1713, Collins called for freethinking in matters of religion. He argued that everyone is capable of freethinking by their own reason: it is our right and duty to perform such thinking for our own sake as well as for the sake and progress of the whole society. The aim of freethinking is to expose superstitious beliefs that cause dangerous and unnecessary fears. Like the deists and Hobbes before him, Collins thought that superstitious opinions were in fact more dangerous to society than atheism. Furthermore, he followed the deists, and arguably Hobbes as well, in asserting that priests do not necessarily teach the truth as such, but doctrines that serve their own interests, hence the differences between the teachings of the various sects in Christianity, and consequently, the need for free and individual inquiries.¹⁴¹ As may be recalled, Blount had made a very similar point in his letter to Hobbes.

Collins took the deistic criticism on the church and channelled it into a manifesto for freedom of thought and belief and for religious toleration. He sided with the deists against the church, trying to thoroughly justify freethinking: “If any good Christian happens to reason better

¹³⁷ James O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins: The Man and His Works*, 96–107.

¹³⁸ Collins, *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty*, *Republished with a Preface by Joseph Priestley* (Birmingham: 1790), iii–iv.

¹³⁹ O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 219–20.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁴¹ Collins, *A Discourse of Free-Thinking*, 38–61.

than ordinary, they – the priests, that is – presently charge him with Atheism, Deism or Socinianism: as if good Sense and Orthodoxy could not subsist together”.¹⁴² Those who were charged with deism, atheism, or Socinianism, often interchangeable accusations, were simply Christians who thought reasonably enough. This, indeed, was also true for Hobbes. In this discourse, Collins praised Hobbes as “a great instance of Learning, Virtue and Free-Thinking” despite his “several false Opinions, and his High-Church Politicks”.¹⁴³ Moreover, Hobbes was included in Collins’s list of the greatest freethinkers of all times, along with Bacon and Tillotson and ancient figures such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Cicero, and Seneca.¹⁴⁴

It seems that for Collins, Hobbes’s freethinking was closely related to his anticlericalism, and it was on this ground that Collins found Hobbes inspirational. In his later *Discourse Concerning Ridicule and Irony in Writing* he mentioned that the “Clergy have ever treated Mr. Hobbes with the greatest Mockery, Ridicule and Raillery”, as with the case of John Eachards’s satirical dialogues on Hobbes. But Hobbes, as Collins showed, had coped with that using his own wit: “upon its being told him, that the Clergy said Eachard had crucify’d Hobbes”, Hobbes replied: “Why then don’t they fall down and worship me?”¹⁴⁵ Later on in this discourse, Collins went so far as to describe Hobbes as one “of the greatest Droles and Wits that any Age ever produc’d” who surrounded King Charles II during his education. Hobbes was thus “a Philosophical Drole, and had a great deal of Wit of the drolling kind”.¹⁴⁶

Evidently, freethinking was not a common point to attribute to Hobbes, who was perceived even by deists like Tindal as someone who allowed the sovereign a certain degree of control over the subjects’ thoughts. Collins’s case, however, shows that Hobbes’s absolutism aside, the deists and their allies could still relate to him, even in the context of freethinking. Once again, the responses were quick to come. In the *Remarks upon a Late Discourse of Free-Thinking*, Richard

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 170–1.

¹⁴⁴ Another figure on this list was Solomon, which brought Collins to consider the reasons that might have led him to imply the soul’s mortality in the verse “all are of the Dust, and all turn to Dust again”, exactly as Hobbes and Blount had done. See *Ibid.*, 151–2.

¹⁴⁵ Collins, *A Discourse Concerning Ridicule and Irony in Writing* (London: 1729), 13–14. See John Eachard, *Mr. Hobbs’s State of Nature Considered in a Dialogue between Philautus and Timothy* (London: 1672) and *Some Opinions of Mr. Hobbs Considered in a Second Dialogue between Philautus and Timothy by the Same Author* (London: 1673).

¹⁴⁶ Collins, *A Discourse Concerning Ridicule*, 43.

Bentley, who had attacked Hobbes and the deists already in the first Boyle Lecture in 1692, argued against Collins:

O the glorious Nation you would be! If ... Free-thinkers appointed Tutors to your young Nobility and Gentry. How would Arts, Learning, Manners and all Humanity flourish in an Academy under such preceptors? Who instead of your Bible should read Hobbes's *Leviathan*; should instill early the sound doctrines of the Mortality of the soul, and the sole Good of a voluptuous Life.¹⁴⁷

At least in one thing Bentley was certainly right: in the academy of the freethinkers and the deists, *Leviathan* was indeed an obligatory book.

As I have attempted to show, Hobbes was a significant influence for early English deism. The deists were familiar with Hobbes and with particular texts by him. Not only did they follow some of his ideas and methods, but they also made approving references to him despite doing so being clearly discouraged. Together with various other sources, such as Herbert, Locke, and Spinoza, Hobbes's contribution was crucial for the development of deism in the various directions that were described above. Hobbes was influential for early deism in his religious scepticism and anticlericalism; in his careful and arguably subversive reading of the Scripture; in his historical account of Christianity, including the tracing of elements that had been brought into it from the heathens; in his psychological analysis of the origins of religion; in his preference for the natural over the supernatural, and the adherence to natural law; and in his materialism, with its implications to the questions of the role of God, the immortality of the soul, and the existence, or lack thereof, of free-will. Hobbes's Erastianism was also linked to deism, aspiring to undermine the power of the corrupt clergy. Somewhat counter-intuitively, the "absolutist" Hobbes was even employed as a freethinker known for his clear and witty writings. It can also be suggested that the rhetoric that he used in his writings on religious matters influenced the deists no less than their content.¹⁴⁸ The deists seem to have acknowledged these debts to various extents, and so did their critics; the purpose of this chapter has been to emphasise how significant and deep these debts were.

¹⁴⁷ Richard Bentley, *Remarks upon a Late Discourse of Free-Thinking* (London: 1713), 18–19.

¹⁴⁸ On the impact that Hobbes's "heterodox wit" had upon these deists, see Roger D. Lund, *Ridicule, Religion and the Politics of Wit in Augustan England* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 31–60.

3. Hobbes

This chapter has shown that there is enough evidence to suggest that the deists took much from Hobbes knowingly, and in this sense they saw him as one of their predecessors. That by itself, however, does not automatically make Hobbes a deist or a proto-deist. In fact, there are obvious objections to the association of Hobbes with deism in particular, and the “radical enlightenment” in general, as put by Jonathan Israel:

But in the final analysis, Hobbes could not serve as the philosophical underpinning of a broad-based philosophical radicalism opposed to all existing structures of authority and tradition, ecclesiastical power, and the existing social hierarchy, as well as divine-right monarchy, precisely because of his anti-libertarian politics, High Church sympathies, and support for rigorous political and intellectual censorship. Hobbes was an absolutist in politics and a pessimist about human nature, on top of which he admitted (however half-heartedly) miracles and Revelation, and temporized on the immortality of the soul.¹⁴⁹

This argument is, however, misleading. As we have seen, the deists as well as their critics recognised in Hobbes much more scepticism about revelation and miracles, and about the immortality of the soul, than Israel allows. It is true that they also identified the other elements in Hobbes that make him look less like a deist, which are mainly his alleged pessimism, and absolutism or royalism, including his support of censorship. Interestingly, the very same reasons that make Hobbes not “radical” enough for Israel led contemporary Anglicans to attack him as a bold atheist who had denied men’s natural benevolence, sociability, and mutual love, by placing them in a state of war in which the only certain value is that of self-preservation, and then under an all-powerful ruler who is also the supreme authority in religious matters.¹⁵⁰

Do these accounts do justice to Hobbes’s position? Surely his views were more complex than what Israel suggests, or alternatively, than the way in which Hobbes’s contemporaries wished to portray him. As I have argued in the introduction, Hobbes did not simply give an atheistic account, nor an entirely traditional account of religion. Rather, his account was clearly multilayered, leaving some puzzles unresolved. This is precisely what allowed other groups, the

¹⁴⁹ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 602.

¹⁵⁰ Such arguments were made, for example, by Richard Cumberland, who attempted to “tame” Hobbes’s alleged atheistic and Epicurean Leviathan, in Parkin’s words. See Richard Cumberland, *De Legibus Naturae* (London: 1672); Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 272–82; Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1999). For similar arguments see Samuel Parker, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* (London: 1670); Charles Gildon, *The Deist’s Manual* (London: 1705); Clarke, *The Works*, vol. 2, 609, 631–7. See also Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. 3: Hobbes and Civil Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 264–86.

deists being one prominent example, to work out some of these puzzles “for him”, thus taking Hobbes’s ideas further than he would have gone. In this section I will attempt to highlight a number of points in Hobbes that could end up leading to deism. Most notably, these points are derived from Hobbes’s anticlericalism and anti-scripturalism.

Hobbes’s anticlericalism was not hidden at all. As is well-known, it was quite straightforward, as evident for example in the second half of *Leviathan*. Above all, it was closely related to his political argument for the superiority of the civil sovereign. Hobbes made extremely harsh accusations against the clergy for attempting to gain independent political power, but he did not argue against Christianity as such. Rather, quite realistically, Hobbes admitted that religion was inherent to human nature, and so is curiosity which should lead men to rationally derive the existence of God.¹⁵¹ Hobbes’s anticlericalism was certainly radical but not necessarily atheistic: as Sarah Mortimer puts it, Hobbes “did not want to throw the Christian baby out with the clerical bathwater”.¹⁵² Similarly, Hobbes’s notorious arguments about Moses and Jesus as political rulers who also represent the persons of God¹⁵³ were clearly heterodox, but more than anything else, their purpose was to deliver the message that God was, and will be, a sovereign in His own kingdom properly speaking, but He is not at the moment. Presently, God works only through His natural kingdom, governing mankind through the natural dictates of right reason, which in turn, should guide men to obey their earthly sovereign.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, Hobbes notably reduced the faith which is required for salvation into “the only necessary article”, according to which “Jesus is the Christ”.¹⁵⁵ This article is the best one simply because it is easy: “For if an inward assent of the mind to all the Doctrines concerning Christian Faith now taught, (whereof the greatest part are disputed,) were necessary to Salvation, there would be nothing in the world so hard, as to be a Christian”.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, it is in light of this article that every man should examine any prophecy in which he is asked to believe, using his natural reason, to determine whether it is true or false.

¹⁵¹ Lev. XII, 164–6.

¹⁵² Sarah Mortimer, “Christianity and Civil Religion in Hobbes’s *Leviathan*”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, 517.

¹⁵³ Lev. XL–XLI, 736–72.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* XXXI, 556; XLIII, 932.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* XLIII, 938.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* XLIII, 940.

Thus, Hobbes's version of Christian faith was minimalistic and even rationalistic, bringing to mind Herbert's common notions of religion. The main message was about the need to question any pretended prophet, and at the same time, to always obey the civil sovereign.

Even more radical was the last part of *Leviathan* on the kingdom of darkness. This part, ending with the analogy between the papacy and the kingdom of fairies,¹⁵⁷ reveals a great deal of the purpose of Hobbes's project. The main argument there is that the church deliberately maintains erroneous doctrines in order to gain political power, the worst of which is that the kingdom of God is the present church. Hobbes argued that the kingdom of God as started with Moses has ceased and will be only restored with Jesus' second coming; and so the earthly church is certainly not the promised kingdom of God. As the authors of darkness, the ecclesiastics used relics of demonology and vain philosophy to keep such errors from being detected, and attempted to suppress reason and true philosophy. Hobbes's project was aimed precisely at fixing that.

These radical elements in Hobbes were certainly identified and borrowed by the deists, as has been shown in this chapter. However, at this point, objections such as Israel's still stand, as Hobbes's main concern was to ensure obedience to the civil sovereign. The deists were equally critical towards the corrupt clergy and equally sceptical about supernatural phenomena taking place at the present time. But their conclusion was that since God works only through reason and nature, this should make the case for toleration and liberty, based on the belief in the judgement of the individual, rather than in that of the sovereign. Hence, there were still clear differences between Hobbes and the deists, if only because the latter were active, generally speaking, in a later period and in a less violent landscape.¹⁵⁸

Hobbes's magistrate might not be exactly the ideal of freedom, but the picture, again, is more complex. It is true that Hobbes suggested a form of absolutism. He supported censorship

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* XLVII, 1118–24.

¹⁵⁸ It can be argued that whereas at the background of Hobbes's main writings was the English civil war, and its horrific events and results, the deists were writing, generally speaking, in a slightly later period which was characterised by more peaceful developments, particularly the Glorious Revolution. It was also in the second half of the seventeenth century—when deism emerged—that the place of the church in relation to the state was reconsidered in a way that emphasised the liberties of the citizens, as evidenced for example by the Deceleration of Indulgence (1672, 1687) and the Toleration Act (1689).

imposed by the magistrate – although only in matters of peace and defence;¹⁵⁹ and he argued that the magistrate should determine the form of the worship of God – although only in public,¹⁶⁰ and that a citizen should obey even religious dictates from an infidel sovereign – although only in words.¹⁶¹ Hobbes was certainly more concerned with issues of life and death rather than with matters such as freedom of the press that preoccupied some of the subsequent deists. But he also maintained that private thoughts and conscience are not subjected to any civil law;¹⁶² as he later repeated in the context of heresy, arguably in order to save his own skin.¹⁶³ He argued against the clergy that “there ought to be no Power over the Consciences of men, but of the Word it self”,¹⁶⁴ thus supporting the private exercise of reason and the idea that individual inquiries should lead to true religious judgements and beliefs. Whereas Hobbes was not a deist properly speaking, separating him from the deists only on the basis of his absolutism simply overlooks an extremely significant intellectual link.¹⁶⁵

Let us go back to Israel’s precise argument. In fact, it contains three claims: (1) “Hobbes could not serve as the philosophical underpinning of a broad-based philosophical radicalism”; (2) such philosophical radicalism consists of an opposition “to all existing structures of authority and tradition, ecclesiastical power, and the existing social hierarchy, as well as divine-right monarchy”; (3) Hobbes does not belong to this philosophical category “because of his anti-libertarian politics, High Church sympathies, and support for rigorous political and intellectual censorship” and

¹⁵⁹ Lev. XVIII, 270–2.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* XXXI, 570.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* XLII, 784.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* XLVI, 1096.

¹⁶³ In his writings on heresy, Hobbes redefined it historically as “no more than a private Opinion”, and argued that there was no English law against it – a tactic that was presumably meant to defend toleration, but moreover, his own fate. See HN, 3; Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government 1572–1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 335–45. See chapter 4 of this thesis, section 2.3.1.

¹⁶⁴ Lev. XLVII, 1116

¹⁶⁵ Reading Hobbes as leaving room for toleration of a sort, or identifying some proto-liberal elements in Hobbes, is not a new suggestion. Alan Ryan was the first who emphasised that Hobbes’s account could support toleration, even if only for pragmatic reasons, that is “the foolishness of causing needless anxiety and resentment”. See Alan Ryan, “A More Tolerant Hobbes?”, in *Justifying Toleration*, ed. Susan Mendus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 37–59, especially 41. See also Ryan, “Hobbes, Toleration and the Inner Life”, in *The Nature of Political Theory*, ed. David Miller and Larry Siedentop (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 197–218. Also criticising Israel’s interpretation of Hobbes, Curley remarks in a footnote that Israel told him in personal communication that he had modified his reading of Hobbes’s religious views: “He now thinks he was inclined to take Hobbes’s statements about religion too literally when he dismissed him as a radical Enlightenment figure”. See Edwin Curley, “Hobbes and the Cause of Religious Toleration”, 309–34, especially 329, n.23. For an elaborate discussion on this topic, see chapter 4 of this thesis.

because he “was an absolutist in politics and a pessimist about human nature, on top of which he admitted (however half-heartedly) miracles and Revelation, and temporized on the immortality of the soul”.¹⁶⁶ As I will argue, each of these three claims is inaccurate.

Claim (1) is not true because the fact is that Hobbes *did* provide materials which served those who are often called the “radicals” of the seventeenth century, even by Israel himself, namely the English deists. As we have seen, Hobbes’s influence was acknowledged by the deists’ critics, but moreover, by the deists themselves. The deists did not have to embrace Hobbes’s theory in full—indeed, they did not—in order to employ some of his arguments and methods in their attack on the clergy: Hobbes’s materialism and his treatment of the Scripture are two prominent examples, as are some of his claims, repeated word by word by the deists, on the crucial and dangerous role that priestly interests played in the history of religion.

Claim (2) is more complex because it touches on the very definition of Israel’s “radical enlightenment”, a topic which goes beyond the scope of this chapter. In short, it is true that Hobbes did not oppose all “existing structures of authority and tradition”, and indeed in this sense he might not be part of the club of Israel’s “radical enlightenment”. Nevertheless, as I have argued in the introduction, according to this demanding definition, the deists were also not precisely a part of this enlightenment. Nowhere did any of them attempt to destroy *all* of the existing structures, nor, in fact, the most part of them. However, as I have shown, all of these thinkers did very much oppose ecclesiastical power in its current form – that is, the fact that the clergy aspired to gain independent political power was seen by all of them as the main cause for social chaos and the main illness that threatened the safety of the commonwealth. In this sense, there was no better teacher for the deists than Hobbes. They all opposed “existing social hierarchy” and “divine-right monarchy” in the same sense: they denied any structure that would keep exclusive power in the hands of “unpleasing priests” who would use it to promote their own goals. Hobbes and the deists did not object to authority *as such*: they objected to the authority sought by the clergy. Their enlightenment was perhaps not “radical” in Israel’s terms but it was certainly anticlerical.

¹⁶⁶ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 602.

In claim (3) Israel simply seems to misread Hobbes. Even if we accept these aspects in Hobbes's politics to which Israel points, Israel reaches a rushed conclusion. Hobbes did not simply "admit" miracles and revelation, nor did he "temporize" on the immortality of the soul: he expressed his scepticism as radically as possible, but only where he thought that it was needed. In other words, Hobbes did not want to question revealed religion *as such* – but he did want to question the honesty of those who claim exclusive knowledge of it: "though God Almighty can speak to a man, by Dreams, Visions, Voice, and Inspiration; yet he obliges no man to beleieve he hath so done to him that pretends it; who (being a man) may erre, and (which is more) may lie".¹⁶⁷ The deists did go further, until Tindal finally argued that revealed religion could never contradict the religion of nature or reason. But Tindal's motive was identical to Hobbes's: Tindal's attempt to establish a religion of nature and reason alone was an attempt to take precisely the same liars that Hobbes had in mind out of the picture. Thus, Israel's third claim fails to grasp that despite the fact that Hobbes's position was more complex and perhaps less straightforward than the later positions expressed by the "radicals", they all had a strong motive in common: reorganisation of religion, not the elimination thereof.

Finally, despite what Israel asserts, Hobbes was also far from being a pessimist. As I will argue in the following chapters, the concern for the progress of society, particularly through the development of sciences, occupied Hobbes more than usually appreciated. I will base my analysis on a careful reading of Hobbes's theory of reason. For Hobbes, it is human reason that should lead to the establishment of the commonwealth, and it is human reason that can flourish under conditions of leisure and peace assured only within the commonwealth.¹⁶⁸ Most importantly, men's rational potential can be fulfilled where the harmful influence of the "unpleasing priests" is neutralised, that is, once the clergy is kept under control, and there is no room left for unnecessary superstition. Thus, I will suggest that we should read Hobbes's theory as an attempt to liberate natural reason: to enable each and every individual to use his or her reason without interference, and allow those who are capable to advance philosophy and science. Hobbesian society would not

¹⁶⁷ Lev. XXXII, 580.

¹⁶⁸ "Leasure is the mother of Philosophy; and Common-wealth, the mother of peace, and Leasure" (*Ibid.* XLVI, 1054).

only assure self-preservation for its members, but it is meant to reach new levels of knowledge. Hence, I will argue that Hobbes's vision was not only optimistic but almost utopian: just like subsequent deists, Hobbes did not trust the mediators, but he had great hope for human reason.

4. Conclusions

Whereas Hobbes combined traditional and untraditional premises in a complex fashion, the deists' accounts were undoubtedly much more openly heterodox: their criticism was much closer than Hobbes's to undermine revealed religion—or, in fact, the role of the clergy in one's religious life—almost entirely. That said, Hobbes's theory certainly contained various “radical” or “enlightened” elements, and the deists seem to have recognised and developed them. As I have suggested in this chapter, the English deists were not wrong in identifying these elements in Hobbes, and Leland was not wrong at all in asserting that some of the deists chose to follow Hobbes, rather than Lord Herbert, in several principles. In fact, they might have understood him better than some of the interpretations that we find today in the literature.

This reading raises the question of whether Hobbes was in fact some kind of a “closeted” Spinoza. Put another way, would he have gone further if he could? Or in his words, what else would he have told us, had he left the window open for a few moments more?

A central puzzle is Hobbes's account of God. His account was paradoxical and underdeveloped, as he claimed that God was not a valid subject for philosophy.¹⁶⁹ However, in his later writings, being pressed on the issue, he made further suggestions, including that of the corporeal God.¹⁷⁰ As we have seen, many contemporary critics claimed that Hobbes's corporeal God had a direct influence on the deists. It is also arguable that, had Hobbes developed this notion further, in accordance with his plenist theory, he might have reached a position closer to that of Toland or even Spinoza, according to which God actually *is* the plenum. He did not say any of these things explicitly, possibly because he had other, more urgent, concerns. However, a careful analysis can trace the elements which could subsequently lead to the conception, or rather conceptions, of the deistic God. This will be the task of the next chapter.

¹⁶⁹ See for example *Ibid.* XXXI, 566.

¹⁷⁰ See for example *Ibid.*, Appendix III, 1228–9.

Chapter II: Hobbes's God

1. Introduction

In 1705 Samuel Clarke argued in his Boyle Lecture that some deists “pretend to believe the Existence of an Eternal, Infinite, Independent, Intelligent Being; and, to avoid the name of Epicurean Atheists, teach also that this Supreme Being made the World: Though at the same time they agree with the Epicureans in this, that they fancy God does not at all concern himself in the Government of the World, nor has any regard to, or care of, what is done therein”.¹ This was not the first time that the notion of a non-interventionist God was attributed to the deists by their critics. But this time it seemed particularly important to refute those who might use the recently discovered Newtonian laws to argue for a world that is governed solely by matter and motion, that is, without an active and ongoing guidance by God. Thus, Clarke argued that “the very original Laws of Motion themselves cannot continue to take place, but by something Superior to Matter, continually exerting on it a certain Force or Power”, which is “entirely different from that by which Matter acts on Matter. Which is, by the way, an evident demonstration, not only of the World's being made originally by a Supreme Intelligent Cause; but moreover that it depends every Moment on some Superior Being, for the Preservation of its Frame”.² God, Clarke insisted, was still needed.

Clarke persistently rejected the emerging materialistic views that he believed led directly to atheism. Explaining all phenomena in material terms, Clarke feared, would take away the notion of God's providence and consequently God's existence altogether, and also the notions of the immortality of the soul and free-will. Clarke had good reasons to be worried. These principles, which lay at the very heart of Anglicanism, were indeed being challenged in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and, as Clarke recognised, the deists played a significant role in these debates.

The definition that Clarke offered for the deistic God clearly served him in targeting a particular agenda that he wished to attack; whether it fully grasped the views of people such as

¹ Clarke, *The Works*, vol. 2, 600.

² *Ibid.*, 601.

Blount, Toland, Tindal, or Collins is another question. Nevertheless, the non-interventionist God that Clarke attributed to the deists can be seen as a common ground, even if overly simplified, for some of these figures. Moreover, as this chapter will suggest, once understood in more depth, elements of the deistic concept of God can be traced back to another figure who posed an equally serious threat in Clarke's eyes: Thomas Hobbes.

This chapter will explore one aspect of the relationship between Hobbes and the deists, focusing on the concept of God as central to the philosophical, scientific, and political debates in which they participated. As has been suggested at the end of the previous chapter, this case is particularly interesting because Hobbes did not fully develop his account of God. This is not to say, however, that he did not have a consistent concept of God. Rather, there are moments in Hobbes's writings in which he "opened the window" and revealed a little of what he thought about God. Even though he asserted that he did not want to discuss God philosophically,³ the critiques and the objections raised against him forced him to deal with the topic more extensively than he might have wished. These moments can therefore be found in some of Hobbes's later writings, in which he had to explain or even defend himself against the accusations that he faced. This chapter will offer a review of these moments, thus revealing the picture of what we get when we put together all the pieces of information that Hobbes *did* provide. Then, I will suggest that the deists picked up some of these pieces and developed them, for example, to argue for a materialised, or naturalised, God. Their accounts went further than Hobbes's, but their goals were almost identical.

2. The puzzle of Hobbes's God

2.1. The atheist's God?

Hobbes's God has been long discussed in the literature. The tensions in Hobbes's account of God explain why it preoccupies scholars to this day. Hobbes's various comments about God can seem rather contradictory, consisting of a mixture of traditional premises with other very untraditional positions which have led to many strikingly different interpretations. Some argue that Hobbes's

³ Hobbes argued repeatedly that God is incomprehensible and that there is not much we can know about Him, hence He is not a valid subject for philosophy. See for example Lev. XXXI, 566; DCo I.1.8, 10; EL I.11.1–3, 53–4; Questions, 435–6.

insistence on the world as an aggregate of bodies makes it absolutely impossible for God to exist in such a world.⁴ Accordingly, those who read Hobbes this way usually take his statements regarding the existence of God as insincere, ironical, or deliberately paradoxical. On this view, Hobbes could not explicitly say that God did not exist, but he let his readers understand that in the system that he described God did not have a place.⁵ Notably, this reading is as old as Hobbes's works: his contemporaries often attacked what was perceived as his atheistic views – attacks to which Hobbes himself famously replied: “Do you think I can be an atheist and not know it? Or knowing it, durst have offered my atheism to the press?”⁶ But the attacks did not subside, and in fact, they outlived Hobbes.

Another prominent interpretation is exactly the opposite one: not only was Hobbes not an atheist, he was in fact a faithful Christian. On this view, even Hobbes's materialism is reconcilable with Christianity, through his notion of the corporeal God that was shared by some of the ancient fathers of the church, such as Tertullian. Similarly, his denial of free-will was not, as Clarke would argue, an atheistic notion, but was an adoption of the traditional Calvinist principle of predestination.⁷ The defenders of Hobbes's theism are certainly right in that the stated position

⁴ Lev. XXXIV, 610.

⁵ Some scholars claim that Hobbes was an atheist based on the explicit or implicit assertion that he was being insincere in those parts of his writings dealing with theology. Hobbes, according to these scholars, had to protect himself against possible persecution or punishment for being a heretic, and therefore paid lip service to theism in his texts. According to this reading, the unresolved tensions in Hobbes's concept of God suggest that he was never truly serious about the topic. In particular, this interpretation tends to emphasise Hobbes's materialism as a feature of his philosophy that by definition does not allow the existence of God. See for example Curley, “I Durst Not Write So Boldly” and Jesseph, “Hobbes's Atheism”. Discussing Hobbes's mechanics elsewhere, Jesseph goes so far as to argue that Hobbes's failure was a result of his reliance on motion as the cause of everything whereas there is no agent or power that can explain motion, thus even dismissing the causal argument that Hobbes gave for God. See Jesseph, “Hobbesian Mechanics”, in *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, vol. 3, ed. Daniel Garber and Steven Nadler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 119–52.

⁶ *Six Lessons*, 350. As Parkin has shown, by the end of the seventeenth century Hobbism had become synonymous with atheism, and Hobbes was seen as England's “leading domestic atheist”. See Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 395. See also Jeffrey R. Collins, “Thomas Hobbes, ‘Father of Atheists’”, in *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, 25–43; Patricia Springborg, “Hobbes on Religion”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 346–80.

⁷ A prominent defender of Hobbes's Christianity, Aloysius Martinich takes Hobbes to be a fairly orthodox Christian who believed that God exists and has made revelations to various people, and that Jesus was both God and the Messiah. Martinich explains that for Hobbes being orthodox meant adhering “to the propositions expressed by the authoritative Christian creeds of the first four church councils”, the criterion which was endorsed by Queen Elizabeth. Martinich aspires to demonstrate that Hobbes's God is consistent with the Christian tradition. He shows Hobbes's continuity with medieval theology based on resemblances to theologians such as Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas, who shared ideas similar to Hobbes's regarding God's incomprehensibility and the figurative character of the talk about Him. Finally, Martinich

of Hobbes throughout *all* of his writings was that God exists. Moreover, had Hobbes been writing on God, and religion in general, only for apologetic or opportunistic reasons, he surely could have written less, or at least more subtly, about the topic.⁸ Furthermore, it is arguable that although Hobbes's account of God contains tensions, they may be defensible without jumping into the conclusion that this account is a cover for hidden atheism. Thus, some have argued that Hobbes's account of God contains tensions that follow inherent tensions within Christianity; that these tensions are reflected in Hobbes's account merely shows that it was important for him to deal fully with the topic rather than to avoid it.⁹

Thus, it is arguable that Hobbes's God, even if a little unusual, should not be dismissed as impossible, and in fact deserves serious consideration. As Geoffrey Gorham puts it, although not necessarily part of the mainstream of Protestantism, Hobbes's corporeal God comprises a coherent part of his theory, that "however shocking to his contemporary opponents, deserves a place in the seventeenth century pantheon".¹⁰ However, as others have argued, Hobbes's God,

takes Hobbes's position to be particularly compatible with Calvinism. For example, he believes that Hobbes's determinism was not simply part of his mechanical materialism but related to the doctrine of predestination. Martinich concludes that Hobbes was "a stubborn, proud, odd, but orthodox, Christian", that is, a Protestant thinker whose theology was Calvinistic. He claims that Hobbes was in fact a genuine theist, who sought, among other things, to reconcile Christianity as reflected in the Bible with the new science of the seventeenth century; it is because Hobbes failed in accomplishing this task, that scholars have been led to think falsely that he had never been serious about this ambition in the first place. See Martinich, *The Two Gods of Leviathan*, especially 1–2, 185–219; Martinich, *Hobbes* (New York; London: Routledge, 2005), 178. Curley criticises Martinich for setting the first four church councils as a criterion for orthodoxy, since these councils were silent precisely about the metaphysical questions that arguably complicated Hobbes. See Curley, "Calvin and Hobbes", 258.

⁸ For example, Howard Warrender rejects what he calls "the window dressing explanation", criticising those who simply choose to ignore the theological parts in Hobbes's writings: "The unwanted items fall then to be designated as window-dressing inserted, it is supposed, to cover up Hobbes's underlying intention and to save him from the wrath of the Establishment or other of his contemporaries. ... The so-called window-dressing part of Hobbes's work did not save him from hostility, but was largely responsible for it. And Hobbes went doggedly on, enlarging this material, and getting into more and more trouble. If Hobbes did not regard this part of his work as necessary he must have been unaccountably stupid or masochistic so to persist". See Howard Warrender, "Political Theory and Historiography: A Reply to Professor Skinner on Hobbes", *The Historical Journal* 22 (1979): 936. Warrender is one of the prominent scholars who argue that Hobbes was not an atheist but was a proper Christian. Thus, he suggests that we should see Hobbes as a natural law philosopher, and he maintains that the obligation of men to comply with the laws of nature is derived from their being the words of God. A. E. Taylor offers a similar account, focusing on the deontological character of these laws, stating that "a certain kind of theism is absolutely necessary to make the theory work". See Taylor, "The Ethical Doctrine of Hobbes", 420. Hence, what became known as the Taylor-Warrender thesis places God at the centre of Hobbes's theory of obligation, assuming that Hobbes was a sincere theist.

⁹ See Glover, "God and Thomas Hobbes"; Wright, *Religion, Politics and Thomas Hobbes*.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Gorham, "The Theological Foundation of Hobbesian Physics: A Defence of Corporeal God", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 21:2 (2013): 257. As we have seen, some have made stronger claims: that not only is God possible, but He is also needed for Hobbes's theory to work, as the source of

even if conceptually feasible, seems at the very least rather detached from the world.¹¹ Thus, it has been argued for example that Hobbes did not believe in a personal relationship between God and man: “Hobbes preserves a version of familiar Christian belief, but with its spiritual vitality drained away. His God is a *deus absconditus* with a vengeance: Reformation voluntarism stressed God’s ever-present power, Hobbes his omnipotent remoteness”.¹² Put more figuratively, F. S. McNeilly has noted that if the medieval God was “the prime minister of the universe, governing busily from day to day”, Hobbes’s God “was kicked upstairs: not assassinated, but retired into constitutional monarchy”.¹³ Mutually exclusive interpretations of Hobbes’s religious views remain present in today’s literature, although each of the two main interpretations seems to suffer from inherent weaknesses. While Hobbes’s commitments on religion should be taken seriously, we also need to be careful not to make him more traditional than he actually was.

This chapter will therefore attempt to show that there are two ways in which Hobbes’s materialism *can* be reconciled with the existence of God, without imposing on him complete atheism, which he denied, or making him more orthodox than he actually seemed to be. The first way takes God to be mainly the first mover in a world ruled by laws of motion, and the first cause in a world ruled by necessary chains of causes. The second takes God to be something closer to the plenum, that is, the all-pervading ethereal body in a world of bodies. If Hobbes meant God to have one or both of these roles, though he perhaps deliberately avoided fully developing such

commands in a deontological system; or that Hobbes’s God was, in fact, the traditional Judeo-Christian God who works (also) supernaturally and should be perceived by his absolute omnipotence as demonstrated in the Book of Job (see for example Lev. XXXI, 558–60). Some even go so far as to label Hobbes specifically as a Calvinist or Lutheran: as was mentioned, Martinich is the main advocate of Hobbes’s Calvinism; on Hobbes’s Lutheranism see Wright, *Religion*, 283–6; on Hobbes’s “de-clericalised” Anglicanism see Cromartie, “The God of Thomas Hobbes”.

¹¹ “All that we can say is that Hobbes never displayed what we might call a true religious sensibility, that if he did believe in God, it was in a remote, abstract, intellectualized deity who could give little comfort to Hobbes’s contemporaries”. See Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 44.

¹² Leopold Damrosch Jr., “Hobbes as Reformation Theologian: Implications of the Free-Will Controversy”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40:3 (1979): 346.

¹³ McNeilly describes Hobbes’s God thus: “He was held to be the creator of the world; but rather like a clockmaker, who designs and constructs the machine but keeps his finger out of the work once he has set it going. A number of convenient assertions were made. It was assumed that the world had been designed in an intelligible sort of way ... It was assumed that God was not constantly interfering with the works so as to render their operations unpredictable. And it was assumed that human beings had the capacity to understand how the machine worked. Finally, human ambition was limited to the attempt to understand how the machine worked and not to discover why it had been constructed as it was”. See F. S. McNeilly, *The Anatomy of Leviathan* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1968), 22.

notions, he would be much closer to the later views of people like Spinoza, Toland, Collins, or Tindal, rather than being simply an atheist or alternatively a traditional Christian.¹⁴

As I will argue, Hobbes's God could exist, because it was not God that Hobbes was concerned to exclude: rather, it was any claim by the church for independent political power. It was his anticlericalism, not atheism, that was the main reason behind his famous rejection of incorporeal substances.¹⁵ This rejection was not meant to deny the existence of God; rather, as Hobbes explained in the last part of *Leviathan*, it was his answer to what he perceived as the dangerous and empty Aristotelian categories, such as "separated essences", which were abused by the church to confuse and deceive the laity.¹⁶ Furthermore, by arguing in his later writings that God was corporeal Hobbes was not attempting to make an atheistic argument; on the contrary, he assured his audience that God, unlike the many other fables told by the church, was real.¹⁷ Hence, Hobbes's materialism and his resulting account of God were not atheistic, but anticlerical. This chapter will therefore offer a close reading of the moments in which Hobbes "opened the window", and will thus make an argument for what can be seen as a coherent if underdeveloped account of God. I will then argue that we can see elements of this account worked out and presented much more openly, and radically, in the writings of the deists, who shared Hobbes's anticlerical motivation.

2.2. A designer with no ends?

Whereas Hobbes's account of God can be said to contain "pre-deistic hints",¹⁸ there are other elements in it that are much less deistic. I will first describe some of these tensions in order to clarify the problem and to show that even if we can recognise that Hobbes's account could lead to a deistic position, it cannot be said that it was straightforwardly deistic.

¹⁴ Of course, these deists can still be accused of atheism, as Clarke and many others argued at the time, and as some still argue today. For reasons explained in the introduction, my work takes deism to be distinguished from atheism in this context, mainly due to the explicit acknowledgment of God; an acknowledgement, I argue, that can and should be read as genuine.

¹⁵ Lev. IV, 60.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* XLVI, 1076–84.

¹⁷ Keeping God in the picture also served Hobbes in his political theory: God was the author of nature, hence of natural reason and natural law. I will elaborate on this point in the next chapter.

¹⁸ Arrigo Pacchi, "Hobbes and the Problem of God", in *Perspectives on Thomas Hobbes*, ed. G. A. J. Rogers and Alan Ryan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 180.

In his famous discussion of God and religion in chapters 11 and 12 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes described God as a cause and possibly also as a designer. Since in this part of *Leviathan*, “Of Man”, Hobbes focuses on human faculties, his discussion of God and religion in these chapters took human inquisitiveness as the starting point:

Curiosity, or love of the knowledge of causes, draws a man from consideration of the effect, to seek the cause; and again, the cause of that cause; till of necessity he must come to this thought at last, that there is some cause, whereof there is no former cause, but is eternall; which is it men call God. So that it is impossible to make any profound enquiry into naturall causes, without being enclined thereby to believe there is one God Eternall; though they cannot have any Idea of him in their mind, answerable to his nature.¹⁹

The argument famously continues:

For he that from any effect hee seeth come to passe, should reason to the next and immediate cause thereof, and from thence to the cause of that cause, and plunge himselfe profoundly in the pursuit of causes; shall at last come to this, that there must be (as even the Heathen Philosophers confessed) one First Mover; that is, a First, and an Eternall cause of all things; which is that which men mean by the name of God...²⁰

God is the eternal first mover and the first cause of all causes. The existence of such a first cause is a conclusion that men derive rationally through an inquiry of natural causes and effects.²¹ Our inquiry starts with effects, going back through causes all the way to the first cause, which tells us something more about God:

For as a man that is born blind, hearing men talk of warming themselves by the fire, and being brought to warm himself by the same, may easily conceive, and assure himselfe, there is somewhat there, which men call Fire, and is the cause of the heat he feeles; but cannot imagine what it is like; nor have an Idea of it in his mind, such as they have that see it: so also, by the visible things of this world, and their admirable order, a man may conceive there is a cause of them, which men call God; and yet not have an Idea, or Image of him in his mind.²²

Just as the blind, first feeling the warmth of the fire, then concluding that there is such a thing, we too first see the “admirable order” of things in the world, and then proceed to conclude that there is something that has made it so. Therefore, not only is God the first cause of all, but He is also the designer of the world’s admirable order. Thus, these paragraphs consist of both a priori and a posteriori arguments, or, both the casual argument and the argument from design, and hence can be interpreted as providing quite a rational and natural understanding of God.²³

¹⁹ Lev. XI, 160.

²⁰ *Ibid.* XII, 166.

²¹ See also: “God’s existence may be known by natural light” (DCv II.21, 41); “It is agreed between us, that right reason dictates, there is a God” (Answer, 293).

²² Lev. XI, 160.

²³ For such interpretations, see Pacchi and Brown. Pacchi shows that the “philosophical God” is essential to the causal process on which Hobbes’s materialistic, mechanistic, and deterministic system relies. He asserts that Hobbes’s goal is “the bringing of Christianity down to earth” even when discussing religion in the

However, the case is far from being simple. Hobbes argues consistently that God's existence can be rationally known, but, as suggested by the fire analogy, we cannot know anything further about His nature. Our knowledge of God is very limited, and we cannot have any idea or image of Him. We can only know *that* God is, but not *what* He is:

Hee that will attribute to God, nothing but what is warranted by naturall Reason, must either use such Negative Attributes, as Infinite, Eternall, Incomprehensible; or Superlatives, as Most High, most Great, and the like; or Indefinite, as Good, Just, Holy, Creator; and in such sense, as if he meant not to declare what he is, (for that were to circumscribe him within the limits of our Fancy,) but how much wee admire him, and how ready we would be to obey him; which is a signe of Humility, and of a Will to honour him as much as we can...²⁴

God's incompressibility, or ineffability, is a consistent argument throughout Hobbes's writings. The things we say about God are not meant to describe Him but to praise Him, thereby expressing our incompetence to come to a certainty about His nature and, mostly, our willingness to honour Him. In chapter 31 of *Leviathan* Hobbes stated that we ought to attribute existence to God and added that He is the cause of the world, not the world itself nor the soul of the world. It follows that "to say the world was not created" by saying that it is eternal, "is to deny there is a God". Other than that, we cannot say much more. God cannot be said to be finite, as "it is not a signe of the Will to Honour God, to attribute to him lesse than we can; and Finite is lesse than we can; because to Finite, it is easie to adde more". As a result of His infinity, we cannot attribute a figure to God and we cannot attribute parts or totality to Him, nor a place, and consequently we cannot say that He is moved or that He rests, as that would mean that He is in a place or in several places. We should also not ascribe to God any passions or senses as anger or understanding, and if we do, it is only a figurative way of speaking, nothing but anthropomorphism that reflects on our poor understanding rather than on God's nature. At this point, Hobbes also stated importantly that "when we ascribe to God a Will, it is not to be understood, as that of a Man, for a Rationall Appetite; but as the Power, by which he effecteth every thing". Finally, in the same context

biblical context. See Pacchi, "Hobbes and the Problem of God", 185. Brown is the prominent supporter of the teleological reading, arguing that Hobbes understood creation not only as a mere beginning, but "in a fuller sense that also implies intention and design". See K. C. Brown, "Hobbes's Grounds for Belief in a Deity", *Philosophy* 37 (1962): 344. Brown points to additional evidence for Hobbes's use of the argument from design, taken from his *Decameron Physiologicum*: "it is very hard to believe, that to produce male and female, and all that belongs thereto, as also the several and curious organs of sense and memory, could be the work of anything that had not understanding" (DP, 176).

²⁴ Lev. XXXI, 566.

Hobbes asserted that God, unlike humans, “has no ends”.²⁵ Elsewhere Hobbes similarly explained:

when God speaks to men concerning his will and other attributes, he speaks of them as if they were like to those of men, to the end he may be understood. And therefore to the order of his work, the world, wherein one thing follows another so aptly as no man could order it by design, he gives the name of will and purpose. For that which we call design, which is reasoning, and thought after thought, cannot be properly attributed to God, in whose thoughts there is no fore nor after.²⁶

God’s will is clearly beyond human understanding.²⁷ When we mention God’s will or design, we use these terms as we know them, but not because they can be properly attributed to God. Is such a God, who also has no ends, can be properly conceived as a “designer” then? This looks much less like a simple naturalistic-rationalistic interpretation. As some point out, these sceptical arguments led Hobbes in a fideistic direction. In another much-discussed paragraph from Chapter 26 of *De Corpore*, Hobbes even questioned the process of the inquiry that should lead to the first cause as he himself described in *Leviathan*:

And though a man may from some effect proceed to the immediate cause thereof, and from that to a more remote cause, and so ascend continually by right ratiocination from cause to cause; yet he will not be able to proceed eternally, but wearied will at last give over, without knowing whether it were possible for him to proceed to an end or not.²⁸

Hobbes went on to question the ability of philosophers to engage with concepts such as eternity or infinity, of which no one can have any idea since they are not demonstrable, concluding that the question of the beginning of the world is not to be philosophically determined, “but by those that are lawfully authorized to order the worship of God”.²⁹ Accordingly, faith seems to take priority over rational inquiry in matters of religion.

Thus, the process of derivation of causes should lead us to the notion of God’s existence, but it is also clearly limited. On the one hand, we can know that there is a God who is a first cause; on the other hand, we cannot know anything about Him, and we might even get tired before reaching the existence of this eternal first cause in our ratiocination. Likewise, on the one hand, we know that the world has a cause, hence created; on the other hand, we cannot really know anything about the creation nor, surely, about anything prior to it. On the one hand, we have a

²⁵ *Ibid.* XXXI, 564–6.

²⁶ Questions, 14.

²⁷ At this point it seems that Hobbes might have shared Gassendi’s sceptical voluntarism. See Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England*, 146–51.

²⁸ DCo IV.26.1, 412.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

God whom we know according to his design of the admirable order of the world; on the other hand, we cannot really attribute a design to a God who has no ends, and whose acts cannot be really compared to human acts. What are we to make of this? The story is complicated even further when we take into account that God operates in two distinct kingdoms, the natural and the prophetic. In the former, He governs mankind by the natural dictates of right reason, whereas in the latter He had governed the Jews through positive laws given by the mouth of the prophets.³⁰ The prophetic kingdom, although ceased temporarily, shall be restored by Jesus in His second coming. Therefore, that “Jesus is the Christ” is the only article of faith that is required for salvation.³¹

As I have discussed, that Hobbes had various, even conflicting, commitments, has attracted much notice in the literature. Some argue that Hobbes is simply unsuccessful in combining the ingredients he put into the concept of God.³² Notably, Pocock identified two co-existing structures in Hobbes’s thought: the a-historical world of reason and the historical world of faith.³³ Whereas the process of the discovery of God’s existence and His rational dictates can take place in each and every moment, synchronically rather than diachronically, the Judeo-Christian God works through the sacred history of Christian faith that consists mainly of past prophecies and future eschatology. It is this analysis that brings Pocock to conclude that “Hobbes’s religious heterodoxy is of a fideist-sceptical kind, very characteristic of its age, but not to be confused with the deist rationalism of the next century”.³⁴ As shown in this section, the picture is certainly more complex than Hobbes being simply a deist. However, as I will show next, in contrast to Pocock’s conclusion, exploring Hobbes’s account of God further does reveal that he might have been closer to deism than might be thought.

³⁰ Lev. XXXI, 556.

³¹ *Ibid.* XLIII, 938.

³² See for example Ronald Hepburn, “Hobbes on the Knowledge of God”, in *Hobbes and Rousseau: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Maurice Cranston and Richard Peters (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1972), 85–108.

³³ J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (London: Methuen, 1972), 166.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 192. Pocock offers a similar distinction in his account of the enlightenment. He argues that whereas Hobbes employed eschatological and prophetic patterns to establish the supremacy of the political over the clerical, the deist anticlericalism simply abandoned these patterns altogether. See Pocock, “Post-Puritan England and the Problem of the Enlightenment”.

I will therefore explore Hobbes's commitments regarding God as found in his various writings. I will show that an account of God, gradually developed throughout these writings, can in fact be traced and leads to one or both of two notions, namely that of the ethereal corporeal God and that of the first mover and first cause. Such a reading, it will be suggested, can show that Hobbes's account, even if underdeveloped, was not far from that of subsequent deists. In order to do so, I will focus on the texts in which Hobbes provided the most explicit and elaborated statements about the topic, including *Anti-White*, *Leviathan*, *De Corpore*, and the correspondence with Bramhall. Reading these texts chronologically will help to demonstrate why Hobbes revealed what he did in specific points of time, which in turn will show what he was, and was not, trying to do when he wrote about God.

3. The 1640s–50s: rescuing God in a deterministic-mechanistic world

Although not published until 1973, *Anti-White* was composed by Hobbes in 1642–3, and thus one of the earliest writings in which he dealt with God. This work was a refutation of a scientific and theological work written by the catholic philosopher Thomas White,³⁵ and in it Hobbes arguably expressed what was described earlier as his sceptic-fideistic view. Accordingly, he argued that God's nature is unfathomable,³⁶ and that it is impossible to talk philosophically about the creation. The argument here is that God's will lacks a cause, so saying that a certain consideration caused God to create the world (or to create such a world and not another) is absurd: "For acts and deeds are conceivable only if motion be a pre-requisite [to action] ... But this state of affairs is inconceivable [as existing] before the creation of the world. How, then, are the philosophers to be answered? Not by philosophy, but from the teaching of the Christian Faith".³⁷

It was only a couple of years later, in 1645, that Hobbes discussed the question of liberty and necessity with Bishop John Bramhall in Paris – which involved what might certainly look like a philosophical discussion of God. On Hobbes's side, the result of this discussion was his *Of*

³⁵ AW, 1–20; Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 17.

³⁶ AW, 434.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 410. See also *Ibid.*, 304–8, 387, 400–2, 444.

Liberty and Necessity, published without his permission in London in 1654,³⁸ followed by *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance*, published in London in 1656.³⁹ A close look at these treatises reveals some striking assertions that Hobbes made on the topic.

3.1. The decree of God and God's prescience

The notion of God as a first cause, as expressed for example in *Leviathan*, might correlate with an impression of a chain of causes that follow one another, with God being the beginning of the chain. However, in the *Questions*, Hobbes suggested that there is no single chain of causes, but in fact “an innumerable number of chains joined together, not in all parts, but in the first link, God Almighty”.⁴⁰ God, then, is better understood as the first and central link of multiple chains of causes. Thus, Hobbes stated: “This concurrence of causes, whereof every one is determined to be such as it is by a like concurrence of former causes, may well be called (in respect they were all set and ordered by the eternal cause of all things, God Almighty) the decree of God”.⁴¹

God is the eternal cause of all things in the sense that He is the one who *sets* and *orders* all concourses of causes which thereby constitute the decree of God. Since causes are determined, or necessitated, by former causes, we get the notion that the mentioned decree of God is in fact a web of chains, consisting of causes that lead regularly to one another. Thus, it is arguable that God's role is to initiate the course of all causes, and to design the line in which everything must and will follow. Accordingly, Hobbes argues that all things, namely all events that occur, are necessary, otherwise they do not happen. That is, things happen because they are necessary, and they are considered necessary because they happen. God is the origin of all necessities, thus of all causation.

For Hobbes, all necessary things proceed from God's eternal will, and in fact, all things are necessary *because* they proceed from His eternal will. God's will is not to be understood as the human will, but rather as His power. Thus, Hobbes combined voluntarism and determinism; and

³⁸ The fact that this treatise was not meant for publication might explain why Hobbes allowed himself to philosophise about a topic which he himself described as not fit for philosophy. See Hoekstra, “The End of Philosophy (The Case of Hobbes)”, 54–6.

³⁹ *Hobbes & Bramhall on Liberty & Necessity*, ed. Vere Chappell (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), ix–xxvii; Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 18.

⁴⁰ *Questions*, 105.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

his voluntarism was tied to the concept of God's omnipotence.⁴² Moreover, Hobbes argued that everything that happens, happens necessarily, since it has its sufficient causes; whereas "every such cause, and their concurrence, do proceed from the providence, good pleasure, and working of God".⁴³ Hobbes added that all events must have their necessary causes, whether we perceive them or not, "or else they could not possibly be foreknown, as they are by him that foreknoweth all things".⁴⁴ Hence, not only does God start all chains of causes, but He also foreknows what will happen in every part thereof, and in this sense it can all be perceived to be under His providence.

Bramhall argued fiercely against Hobbes's emphasis on necessity, particularly since this came with a restrictive view of liberty, according to which human beings can be said to be free, but their wills never are.⁴⁵ For Hobbes this was not at all subversive: "He therefore, that thinketh that all things proceed from God's eternal will, and consequently are necessary, does he not think God omnipotent? does he not esteem of his power as highly as is possible; which is to honour God as much as can be in his heart?"⁴⁶ Hobbes claimed that "the necessity of events does not of itself draw with it any impiety at all".⁴⁷ Moreover, by arguing that all causes are necessitated as part of the decree of God and are therefore foreknown by Him, determinism has been reconciled with God's supremacy. The concept of free-will, on the other hand, is irreconcilable:

On the other side from this position, that a man is free to will, it followeth that the prescience of God is quite taken away. For how can it be known beforehand what man shall have a will to, if that will of his proceed not from necessary causes, but that he have in his power to will or not will? So also those things which are called future contingents, if they come not to pass with certainty, that is to say, from necessary causes, can never be foreknown; so that God's foreknowing shall sometimes be of things that shall not come to pass, which is as much to say, that his foreknowledge is none; which is a great dishonour to the all-knowing power.⁴⁸

According to Hobbes, it is Bramhall's position that had to be discredited because of God's prescience. If we allow the idea of free-will, or of contingent occurrences, as Bramhall did, it

⁴² See for example: "All-sufficiency signifieth no more, when it is attributed to God, than omnipotence; and omnipotence signifieth no more, than the power to do all things that he will. But to the production of any thing that is produced, the will of God is as requisite as the rest of his power and sufficiency" (*Ibid.*, 427). See also Luc Foisneau, "Omnipotence, Necessity and Sovereignty: Hobbes and the Absolute and Ordinary Powers of God and King", in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes's Leviathan*, 271–90.

⁴³ Questions, 450–1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 451.

⁴⁵ According to Hobbes, one is free when one can act if one wills to act, and liberty is therefore the absence of external impediments; one can be free to act upon one's will when there are no such impediments, but one's will is never free. See *Lev.* XXI, 324–6.

⁴⁶ Questions, 199.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 17–18.

follows that God cannot be the sole origin of all events, as there are things that He could not foreknow and are therefore implicitly beyond His power. To say that would be dishonourable to God. For Hobbes, determinism was actually the proper way to talk about God.

But for Bramhall, Hobbes's position had further dangerous implications, such as the problem of evil. Evidently, this difficulty is not unique to Hobbes's account, and it is arguable that Hobbes too did not provide a good answer. In *Anti-White*, for example, he somewhat typically avoided the question with the ineffability argument.⁴⁹ To Bramhall, however, he gave a more detailed account. Hobbes defended his position by arguing that others, namely, Luther, Calvin, and other "doctors of the Reformed Churches" also held that "God is the cause of all motion and action, or that God is the cause of all laws; and yet they were never forced to say, that God is the cause of sin".⁵⁰ Hobbes's answer to Bramhall shows that he preferred to remain consistent with his determinism even though it meant accepting the inconvenient implications of his view, while holding that there is no other view that could avoid such an implication, especially not Bramhall's. One of the examples that the two used was that of the biblical story of David and Uriah. It is preferable, according to Hobbes, to admit that God had caused David to send Uriah to his death, rather than to say that David got the power to kill Uriah from God but the power to exercise the killing from his own will. Such a position, which Hobbes attributed to Bramhall, is merely absurd.⁵¹

Hobbes relied on the indirect character of God's work to justify his position. While maintaining that God Himself cannot sin "because his doing a thing makes it just", Hobbes admitted that it is not dishonouring to say that God "can so order the world as a sin may be necessarily caused thereby in a man".⁵² David's free-will had nothing to do with the killing of Uriah, but at that moment neither did God; it was yet another link in an endless chain of events. This case helps to demonstrate that Hobbes's God orders the world to operate by necessities and

⁴⁹ AW, 434.

⁵⁰ Questions, 297–9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 142–3.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 117. This position is derived from Hobbes's nominalism and bears an important implication regarding the sovereign, who similarly can do no wrong by definition.

therefore all actions are determined and foreknown by Him, including sins. Nevertheless, He does not seem to be involved actively in each will and act of each individual at the time of occurrence.

In *Leviathan* Hobbes claimed that it is wrong to attribute God with ease as it takes from Him the care of mankind.⁵³ Hence, it is not the case that Hobbes completely and explicitly abandoned the idea of God's active providence. However, Hobbes's statement that there can be no free-will, because otherwise that would mean that God's prescience is not perfect, paved the way to the idea that to suggest that God needs to intervene occasionally in the course of nature would imply that His initial work was somehow imperfect. There are a few remarkable passages, overlooked in the secondary literature, that can shed more light on this position.

3.2. God's general influence and mediated work

When summarising his dispute with Bramhall in the *Questions*, Hobbes stated:

That the will is not free, but subject to change by the operation of external causes. That all external causes depend necessarily on the first eternal cause, God Almighty, who worketh in us both to will and to do, by the mediation of second causes.⁵⁴

Whereas Bramhall's position, put in Hobbes's words, is:

That the will determineth itself, and that external things, when they change the will, do work upon it not naturally, but morally, not by natural motion, but by moral and metaphorical motion. That when the will is determined naturally, it is not by God's general influence, whereon depend all second causes, but by special influence, God concurring and pouring something into the will.⁵⁵

The comparison that Hobbes made is remarkably important for understanding his view, as it is clear that Hobbes defined his own position in opposition to Bramhall. Accordingly, the will is not free, and in contrast to what Bramhall might think, it cannot determine itself. Rather, it is shaped by an accumulation of external causes. These external causes are secondary causes, as they are derived necessarily from the first cause, God. Thus, God works in us, causing us to will and to do, through secondary causes, that is, by mediation. The net of chains that starts with God leads, through innumerable series of second causes, to human wills, that in turn drive people continuously to action.⁵⁶

⁵³ Lev. XXXI, 564.

⁵⁴ Questions, 450.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 451.

⁵⁶ Regarding the tight connection of will and action, see for example: "I conceive, that in all deliberations, that is to say, in all alternate succession of contrary appetites, the last is that which we call the will, and is immediately before the doing of the action, or next before the doing of it become impossible" (*Ibid.*, 360).

Therefore, this process of determination or necessitation of the human will starts with God as its first cause and is carried out by long chains of second causes. A crucial point here is that this process is natural, as these causes consist of natural motions, that is, physical motions of bodies. For this reason, Hobbes rejected the view that such motions can be considered as moral or metaphorical. As a matter of fact, a metaphorical motion would be an empty and meaningless phrase for Hobbes. He also rejected the view according to which this process is such that God “pours something into the will”: there is no direct touch, only mediated.

Hobbes thought that Bramhall’s distinction between “special influence” and “general influence” was nonsensical.⁵⁷ However, by ruling out what he took as Bramhall’s view, consequently finding himself forced to use these terms, Hobbes indirectly asserted that God’s influence on human beings should be understood as general rather than special – remote rather than close. Hobbes’s denial of the distinction between special and general influence and of the concept of special influence in particular is in line with his denial of free-will. God determines and foreknows all the events in the world, which then happen necessarily; after that, there is no room for deviations caused by particular changes of wills, by humans nor by God. This point is well demonstrated even in the most contested context possible, namely that of God as the cause of sin. Thus, Hobbes developed a conception of God as concerned with the regular course of events rather than with singular events. Yet, everything that happens in the world can be traced back to Him. Hobbes’s God works as a first cause, through chains of second causes that can all be foreseen by Him. In short, He works through necessity.

God and necessity are therefore inseparable in Hobbes’s theory: by making all things, God makes them to necessarily be. As Hobbes put it more figuratively, “as if a workman make a garment, the garment must necessarily be”.⁵⁸ This analogy, in which God is compared to a workman, is also of high importance, and it is not the only one we find in Hobbes’s texts. Hobbes’s workman analogies deserve a closer look. As for the one just mentioned, there are a couple of noteworthy implications. First, the garment would not have existed had it not been for

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 141, 447.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

the workman. Moreover, everything about the garment is the way it is precisely because the workman has made it to be so. Secondly, and equally significant, the garment is the product of the workman's work. As such, once the product is done, his work can also be considered done.

Like the workman and the garment, Hobbes also mentioned the potter and the clay. This is a different case that needs to be understood in the context of God's power, as it echoes the verse "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"⁵⁹ Hobbes used this image to argue against Bramhall that "the power of God alone, without other help, is sufficient justification of any action he doth".⁶⁰ Hobbes also used this analogy in *Anti-White*, claiming that "God has an obligation to His creatures no more than the potter to his clay".⁶¹ Except for the message regarding God's absolute omnipotence, this analogy can also teach us something about the way in which Hobbes saw the role of God in the world. Thus, God is analogous to a potter who works with clay, shaping it as he wishes, but then is no longer seen obligated to it. The potter, as the workman, is the sole creator of his product, but once completed, it is not clear that he has any further work to do on it. This might explain why this analogy could be, and has been, interpreted also in the context of the need of a civil authority.⁶²

Thus, Hobbes portrayed God more than once as a workman who has no obligation to repair His work after it is done. These analogies, together with what has been previously said on God's work through necessary causes, brings Hobbes's God closer to the watchmaker. In fact, the analogy which is probably most suggestive in this direction is found in the introduction to *Leviathan*:

NATURE (the Art whereby God hath made and governes the World) is by the Art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an Artificial Animal. For seeing life is but a motion of Limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principall part within; why may we not say, that all Automata (Engines that move themselves by springs and wheels as doth a watch) have an artificiall life? For what is the Heart, but a Spring, and the Nerves, but so many Strings; and the

⁵⁹ Romans 9:21, KJV. See also: "Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?" (Isaiah 45:9, KJV).

⁶⁰ Questions, 115; see also *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶¹ AW, 461.

⁶² See Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England*, 169.

Joynts, but so many Wheelles, giving motion to the whole Body, such as was intended by the Artificer;⁶³

While meant to lead to the idea of the artificial creation of the commonwealth, this paragraph also reveals a significant aspect of Hobbes's account of God. First, nature is defined here by Hobbes as the art of God. God is the artificer who has created nature, including its "most rational work", namely, man. According to Hobbes, human life is reducible to motion of limbs, and the human body is analogous to an automata or an engine such as a watch. The motion of the body starts in a central organ thereof, and then spreads throughout the body through other organs, so that the body, just like a well-oiled machine, ends up moving itself. God sets everything in motion at the beginning, by giving human beings the first motion of the heart, which in turn starts all courses of motions, which are our lives. Thus, the human body is analogous to a machine that works "as doth a watch", which makes God to be analogous to the mechanic. Here, therefore, God is no longer just a workman. He is precisely the watchmaker.

4. The 1660s: rescuing God in a material world

Whereas in the previous decades Hobbes left his notion of God still relatively ambiguous, maintaining that His nature was unintelligible, by the 1660s he was forced to elaborate. The main reason for that was the reception of his materialism, which seemed to his critics irreconcilable with the existence of God. Already in the early 1660s, Hobbes had to defend himself against the attacks from the Oxford mathematicians Seth Ward and John Wallis, who criticised his scientific and mathematical capabilities but also went further to discredit him by accusing him of atheism.⁶⁴ Hobbes became truly worried about the consequences of the increasing attacks aimed at him, hence his multiple replies in this period. In one of these treatises, written as an answer to Wallis in 1662, he took a line of argument regarding God that would serve him in the following years:

There has hitherto appeared in Mr. Hobbes his doctrine, no sign of atheism; and whatsoever can be inferred from the denying of *incorporeal substances*, makes Tertullian, one of the ancientest of the Fathers, and most of the doctors of the Greek Church, as much atheists as he. For Tertullian, in his treatise *De Carne Christi*, says plainly ... *whatsoever is anything, is a body of its kind. Nothing is incorporeal, but that which has no being.*⁶⁵

⁶³ Lev., Introduction, 16.

⁶⁴ See Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 145–53.

⁶⁵ Considerations, 429. See Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, xi; *Anti-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3: Tertullian*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (New York: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885), 531. As Parkin shows, the first who discussed in writing the problems in Hobbes's account of God, particularly in the context of his

The reference to Tertullian was a good strategy for Hobbes to show that his materialism applied to God should not be a problem for Christianity nor was it in any way unprecedented. Appealing to Christian authorities had already served him in another difficult context, namely that of the problem of evil discussed with Bramhall. It was a useful, even if opportunistic, move,⁶⁶ which Hobbes therefore repeated in two other instances, namely the answer to Bramhall's *Catching of Leviathan*⁶⁷ and the appendix to the Latin edition of *Leviathan*, both from 1668.⁶⁸

The second half of the 1660s saw the discussions on the Atheism Bill and Heresy proceedings, and Hobbes knew that he was one of their chief targets.⁶⁹ It is against this background that we should understand his writings from that period, including his further attempt to defend himself against atheism, and consequently, to show that his materialism was indeed reconcilable with the existence of God. The result was that in the answer to Bramhall and in the appendix to *Leviathan* Hobbes provided an account of God that was much more elaborate and detailed than he had provided to date. This account, in short, is that of the corporeal God. Here too, a closer look can reveal that this account is quite coherent, and even if underdeveloped, it laid the foundation of later, perhaps better constructed, accounts.

4.1. The corporeal God

Once again, Bramhall was the most robust adversary Hobbes faced, which makes Hobbes's answer to him a particularly important source. Bramhall's point was put sharply: "They who deny all incorporeal substances, can understand nothing by God, but either nature ... or a fiction of the brain, without real being, cherished for advantage and politic ends, as a profitable error, howsoever dignified with the glorious title of the eternal cause of all things".⁷⁰ For Bramhall, after Hobbes's rejection of incorporeal substances, all that was left for Hobbes's God was either nature,

materialism, was the Scottish schoolmaster Alexander Ross in 1653. Ross also recognised that Hobbes had possibly been following Tertullian, but he argued that the position of the latter had not been accepted by the church. See Alexander Ross, *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook: Or, Animadversions upon Mr. Hobbs His Leviathan* (London: 1653), especially 35–7, and Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 120–8.

⁶⁶ Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 226.

⁶⁷ John Bramhall, *Castigations of Mr. Hobbes with an Appendix Concerning the Catching of Leviathan, Or the Great Whale* (London: 1658).

⁶⁸ See Lev., Appendix III, 1228; Answer 307, 383. The answer to Bramhall was not published until 1682.

⁶⁹ See Parkin, "Baiting the Bear: The Anglican Attack on Hobbes in the Later 1660s", *History of Political Thought* 34:3 (2013): 421–58.

⁷⁰ Answer, 312–13.

or an imaginary being, and he remarked sarcastically that he was not impressed even by the title of the eternal cause of all things. It was precisely this kind of criticism that Hobbes's concept of the corporeal God was meant to overcome.⁷¹

According to Hobbes, any substance is necessarily corporeal, as anything that has a real existence is necessarily a body.⁷² He explicitly denied existence to anything that is not corporeal, but explicitly attributed existence to God. Consequently, Hobbes had to admit that God was corporeal. This is precisely what Hobbes wrote in the third appendix to *Leviathan*, which dealt with "some objections to Leviathan". A, the challenging interlocutor, asks: "Then, near the beginning of Chapter 4 he denies that there are any incorporeal substances. What is this if not to deny that God exists or to assert that God is a body?"⁷³ And B unequivocally replies: "He does indeed assert that God is a body".⁷⁴

But this only complicated the situation. In *De Corpore* Hobbes defined a body as that which has a magnitude or an extension, that by definition fills some space, namely the place of the body.⁷⁵ God, however, clearly cannot be said to have a place due to His infiniteness. This was of course not the only difficulty. Hobbes knew that he also had to refrain from attributing parts—or, in fact, body—to God, in light of the Thirty-Nine Articles.⁷⁶ What kind of a body is God, then? Can such a body that is without a place, without parts—or a whole—even exist within the Hobbesian world? In the correspondence with Bramhall, Hobbes declared: "To his Lordship's

⁷¹ It is worth mentioning that recent discoveries of the content of the letters between Hobbes and Descartes indicate that this might have been Hobbes's view already in the early 1640s. See Agostino Lupoli, "Fluidismo e Corporeal Deity nella filosofia naturale di Thomas Hobbes: A proposito dell'hobbesiano Dio delle Cause", *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 54:4 (1999): 573–609 and also Wright, *Religion, Politics and Thomas Hobbes*, 257–9.

⁷² "For the Universe, being the Aggregate of all Bodies, there is no reall part thereof that is not also Body; nor anything properly a Body, that is not also part of (that aggregate of all Bodies) the Universe" (Lev. XXXIV, 610); "every part of the Universe, is body; and that which is not Body, is no part of the Universe: And because the Universe is All, that which is no part of it, is Nothing, and consequently no where" (*Ibid.* XLVI, 1076).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Appendix III, 1228.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1228–9. The Latin "Deum esse Corpus" should be translated as "God is body" (rather than *a* body), as will be explained below.

⁷⁵ A body is defined in *De Corpore* as "that, which having no dependance upon our thought, is coincident or coextended with some part of space" (DCo II.8.1, 102). Unlike bodies, a space is always an imaginary idea, "for no man calls it space for being already filled, but because it may be filled" (*Ibid.* II.7.2, 93). The space "which is coincident with the magnitude of any body" is the place of the body (*Ibid.* II.8.5, 105).

⁷⁶ According to the first of the Thirty-Nine Article: "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible". See also Lev., Appendix I, 1186.

question here: What I leave God to be? I answer, I leave him to be a most pure, simple, invisible spirit corporeal”.⁷⁷ Hobbes clarified that he took spirit to be a “thin, fluid, transparent, invisible body”,⁷⁸ insisting that the idea of God as a spirit does not make Him a sprite.⁷⁹ That is to say, this account still assures that God is a real entity and not a phantasm. Hobbes maintained that by saying that God was an infinitely corporeal spirit, he did not express an atheistic view, not even by consequence.⁸⁰ Hobbes’s solution was to emphasise that God was a body – but of an exceptional kind: He has indeterminate magnitude rather than determinate; He is “body” rather than “a body”.⁸¹

It took more than that to satisfy his critics. This by itself does not necessarily mean that Hobbes’s attempt to rescue his concept of God was not genuine. It is important to remember that those who opposed him were eager to label him as an atheist at any cost, rather than to work out his account. However, by defining God as a corporeal spirit, Hobbes thought that he was defending his idea of God as a substance that has magnitude albeit not bounded. God is a body, or rather “body”, but so thin and subtle that He is transparent and invisible, and humans cannot sense Him, just like they cannot sense, or at least see, aerial substances. This brings to mind Hobbes’s plenism described in *De Corpore*. I will thus move now to argue that Hobbes’s corporeal God should be understood in the context of his plenist theory and in light of the reasoning behind his rejection of incorporeal substances. Such an understanding will then enable us to reassess Hobbes’s God and to determine whether his concept was actually a mere cover for atheism or something slightly more complex.

4.2. God and the plenum

In chapter 26 Hobbes famously turned to “the taking away of the vacuum”.⁸² Hobbes gave a detailed account of the world’s structure, according to which the world consists of three types of bodies: visible (that is, the earth and the stars), invisible (that is, atoms) and finally “that most fluid

⁷⁷ Answer, 313.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 309. See also spirit as a subtle, fluid, and invisible body in Lev. XXXIV, 612.

⁷⁹ Answer, 313.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 384.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁸² DCo IV.26.2, 414.

ether, which so fills all the rest of the universe, as that it leaves in it no empty place at all”.⁸³ Hobbes’s plenist position in *De Corpore* relied mainly on the idea of the fluid ether. It is believed that whereas until the 1640s Hobbes had not ruled out entirely the possibility of the existence of vacuum, by the late 1640s he came to the conclusion that there was no way to show in certainty that such a thing as vacuum exists in nature.⁸⁴ Importantly, that means that he had already had that in mind when he portrayed the corporeal God in the 1660s.

Hobbes’s explanation is that the pure ethereal air can easily fill all the spaces that otherwise might be mistakenly thought of as completely empty. It is arguable therefore that Hobbes’s plenism is based on this pure element of the air, and that in this respect Hobbes ended up holding a similar view to his rival, that is Descartes’s subtle matter. The ether, then, is thin, subtle, and fluid, the very same characteristics that Hobbes attributed to the corporeal God. God needs to correspond to at least one of the mentioned three types of bodies. He cannot correspond to the visible one, and being the indefinite body that He is, it makes much more sense for Him to assimilate to the ether rather than to the atoms. It can therefore be the case, that as the ether served Hobbes as a solution in the scientific debates, it also served him, even if not explicitly, as a solution to the questioned feasibility of the corporeal God. In other words, Hobbes’s God is not only reconciled with Hobbes’s materialism – He is also reconciled with Hobbes’s plenism and thus with modern science as Hobbes conceived it.

Although Hobbes did not tell us exactly how God works as such an ethereal substance, it can be at least partly deduced from the well-known two waters analogy in the correspondence with Bramhall:

I have seen, and so have many more, two waters, one of the river, the other a mineral water, so like that no man could discern the one from the other by his sight; yet when they have been both put

⁸³ *Ibid.* IV.26.5, 426.

⁸⁴ See Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Malcolm, “Hobbes and Roberval”, in *Aspects of Hobbes*, 156–99. These accounts show that the scientific debate in Paris during the 1640s was crucial in shaping Hobbes’s plenism. Together with Gassendi, Mersenne, Roberval, and others in his close circle, Hobbes took a keen interest in a series of contemporary experiments in pneumatics; presumably, the prominent one was the Torricellian experiment. This experiment, which led to the invention of the barometer, occupied Hobbes greatly. Eventually, he concluded that there was no vacuum inside the barometer, as was later published (DCo IV.26.4, 420). The two accounts differ in that whereas Malcolm attributes Hobbes’s adoption of plenism mainly to the scientific climate, Schaffer and Shapin focus more on political reasons (as will be explained later on in this chapter).

together, the whole substance could not by the eye be distinguished from milk. Yet we know that the one was not mixed with the other, so as every part of the one to be in every part of the other, for that is impossible, unless two bodies can be in the same place. How then could the change be made in every part, but only by the activity of the mineral water, changing it every where to the sense, and yet not being every where, and in every part of the water? If then such gross bodies have so great activity, what shall we think of spirits, whose kinds be as many as there be kinds of liquor, and activity greater? Can it then be doubted, but that God, who is an infinitely fine Spirit, and withal intelligent, can make and change all species and kinds of body as he pleaseth?⁸⁵

There are two different kinds of water that look the same, that is, transparent. Once the mineral water is added to the water of the river, the colour of the new-made liquid changes to white. Like the mineral water, God is the cause of change, i.e. motion. His relation to the world is like that of the mineral water to the river: they are separate bodies, not fully merged, but the one has such a total effect on the other that it is hard to distinguish them from one another. Moreover, God has the power to make changes everywhere without necessarily being everywhere. Since He is also infinite and intelligent, His activity is significantly “greater” than that of the water. Hobbes added his idea of simplicity by using another analogy of liquids that are not entirely mixed when put together:

Pure and simple body, is body of one and the same kind, in every part throughout; and if mingled with body of another kind, though the total be compounded or mixed, the parts nevertheless retain their simplicity, as when water and wine are mixed, the parts of both kinds retain their simplicity. For water and wine can not both be in one and the same place at once.⁸⁶

As a fluid corporeal spirit which is most pure and simple, God should be conceived as an independent and absolutely homogeneous body. This simplicity is indispensable; although apparently God can be “mingled” with other bodies, He is never assimilated into any of them, thus keeping His purity.⁸⁷ God’s fluidity, or rather ethereality, accompanied by attributes such as purity and simplicity, seems therefore to have been Hobbes’s way to establish a notion of God as a real body that is perfectly coherent within his metaphysical system and at the same time enjoys a distinct flexible uniqueness. It also allowed Hobbes to keep God as a separate and distinguished body, thus staying committed to the idea that God is not entirely identical with the world, and nevertheless quite immanent. Despite Bramhall’s accusations, Hobbes’s God, however close to nature, is not precisely identical to it.

⁸⁵ Answer, 309–10.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁸⁷ The choice of water and wine is derived from Hobbes’s theory of hardness in which water and wine operate differently as the former is more fluid, hence less resilient, than the latter. See for example DCo IV.28.7, 474.

In the later *Decameron Physiologicum*, Hobbes asserted explicitly with regard to the creator, “who being infinite, there can be no place empty where He is, nor full where He is not”.⁸⁸ Although Hobbes did not go all the way as to identify God with the ether, it is arguable that he went far enough. At the very least, there is not enough evidence to deny the identification of God and the ether as a valid implication of Hobbes’s account. Moreover, there are good reasons to believe that it is in fact a necessary implication:

So, if God and the ether both existed, they would retain their separate identities, and God could only exist where the ether was not. This would severely restrict God’s infinity. It is bad enough that, if he is a spirit and not the whole universe, he can exist only where there is no solid matter. But if he is jostling for space with the ether, there is very little room for a material God at all. If pressed, Hobbes would have to say that God *was* the all-pervasive ether.⁸⁹

The interesting question is not (only) whether God and the ether are identical. Hobbes simply left this unanswered, because it was not his primary interest to resolve it. The question therefore is what his main interest in these debates actually was, and what these accounts of the corporeal God and the ether were meant to achieve. As will be shown next, Hobbes’s materialism, which led him both to the taking away of the vacuum and to the rejection of incorporeal substances, was mainly set against one target: clerical power.

4.3. God and anticlericalism

It has been shown that Hobbes’s later account of God was meant to rescue God in a material world. It can be concluded that he did that with some partial success. However, we must have in mind that producing a coherent account of God was a secondary goal for Hobbes, who was pressed on the issue by dangerous critics such as Bramhall and targeted in the atheism and heresy proceedings. In this section I will argue that Hobbes’s materialism needs to be understood in the light of his primary goal, that is, to establish a modern science and thereby to undermine clerical authority. Only when understood as such, can we recognise the real reasons behind Hobbes’s insistence on the rejection of incorporeal substances and the vacuum on the one hand, and the resulting accounts of God and the ether on the other. It should thus become clear that Hobbes defended his account of God simply because it was never God that he intended to reject. His decision to rescue a Hobbesian God through the idea of a fluid, subtle, corporeal spirit that

⁸⁸ DP, 89.

⁸⁹ George MacDonald Ross, *Starting with Hobbes* (London: Continuum, 2009), 154.

corresponds to his idea of the ether, hence of the plenum, should be explored not only in respect to the result, that is the less or more coherent account of the corporeal God, but also with respect to Hobbes's motivation. To understand that, we need to go back to what seems to be the most contested assertion that initiated this debate, that is Hobbes's assertion that there are no incorporeal substances.

This argument is made in chapter 4 of *Leviathan*, "Of Speech". In this chapter, Hobbes argues that "in the right Definition of Names, lyes the first use of Speech; which is the Acquisition of Science".⁹⁰ The way towards true knowledge, namely science, goes through right definitions of words. We must examine old definitions given to the terms we use and must not rely on old definitions solely in light of the perceived authority of books or authors. Whereas the former leads to true science, the latter leads to erroneous doctrines (in between lies ignorance).⁹¹ It is in this context that Hobbes warns us away from insignificant words, which are absurd and can therefore lead only to erroneous doctrines, for which the schoolmen are usually to blame. Towards the end of the chapter Hobbes states the danger clearly: "in reasoning, a man must take heed of words; which besides the signification of what we imagine of their nature, have a signification also of the nature, disposition, and interest of the speaker".⁹² This is how we should understand Hobbes's rejection of incorporeal substances: not only does this term stand in the way of true science, but it is in fact dangerous because it is insignificant and can be used deliberately to serve some factional interests. As for those whose interests are promoted by such erroneous doctrines, Hobbes explains more in chapters 46 and 47 of *Leviathan*. In these chapters, Hobbes attacks the false doctrines that should not be part of philosophy nor taught in universities. Among these is Aristotelian metaphysics, which suggests that there are such things as abstract essences separate from bodies. Hobbes contradicts that: unlike "body", "essence" is not a name.⁹³ He explains:

But to what purpose (may some man say) is such subtilty in a work of this nature, where I pretend to nothing but what is necessary to the doctrine of Government and Obedience? It is to this purpose, that men may no longer suffer themselves to be abused, by them, that by this doctrine of

⁹⁰ Lev. IV, 56.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.* IV, 62.

⁹³ For Hobbes, "essence" is derived from the Latin "est" (is), which is just a sign of a consequence: in the sentence "a Man, is, a living Body", the word "is" only means that the consequence is that "If he bee a Man, hee is a living body" (*Ibid.* XLVI, 1080).

Separated Essences, built on the Vain Philosophy of Aristotle, would fright them from Obeying the Laws of their Countrey, with empty names ... For who will endeavour to obey the Laws, if he expect Obedience to be Powred or Blown into him? Or who will not obey a Priest, that can make God, rather than his Sovereign; nay than God himself?⁹⁴

Hobbes's rejection of incorporeal substances must be understood against this background. His materialism, set against the concept of obscure essences, was meant to support the thought that there was no source for obedience other than the sovereign. In particular, it was set against the priests who, using Aristotle's vain philosophy, act as if they "can make God". It was not, however, set against God Himself.

"Vain Philosophy" was "brought into Religion by the Doctors of Schoole-Divinity".⁹⁵ It then served those who "have possessed the People so long in this part of Christendome, with the Doctrines, contrary to the Peaceable Societies of Mankind".⁹⁶ Hobbes's conclusion was unequivocal: the authors of this spiritual darkness were the clergymen who aspired to gain power over people by getting them to believe in erroneous doctrines such as that the present church is the kingdom of God. To maintain such errors and to keep people from detecting them, hence to assure people's blind obedience, the clergymen used, among other tools, the vain philosophy that Hobbes was trying to fix.⁹⁷ Hobbes's redefinition of the concepts of body and spirit, and his consequent account of God, was an attempt to correct Aristotle's metaphysics. It was clearly anticlerical, but not necessarily atheistic.

In the dedication to *De Corpore*, Hobbes similarly stated that his intention was to put clearly the foundations of natural philosophy against the metaphysics of the school divinity and its vain philosophy.⁹⁸ It was for this reason that Hobbes presented there his theory of bodies and his plenist theory. Hobbes simply wanted to establish a world of bodies, and bodies alone, with motion being the only cause for change; a world with no incorporeal substances, separated essences, or other mysterious powers, a world with no obscure and empty categories used by interested parties and mainly by power-hungry ecclesiastics. Arguing along the same lines, Shapin and Schaffer conclude that Hobbes "recommended his materialist monism because it would assist

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* XLVI, 1082.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* XLVI, 1098.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* XLVII, 1104.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* XLVII, 1104–24.

⁹⁸ DCo, Epistle Dedicatory, vii–xii.

in ensuring social order. He condemned dualism and spiritualism because they had in fact been used to subvert order”.⁹⁹

As a result, Hobbes naturalised God, or minimised His role. His materialism left him with untraditional positions, but that does not mean that Hobbes denied God’s existence altogether. Despite Bramhall’s claim, taking away incorporeal substance was not meant to take away God, but to take away the meaningless concepts that only served the church and endangered stability. In his later writings, Hobbes had to portray God in a way that he might have not planned originally, and that he might not have fully worked out until the end. But understanding his real motivation, as he himself stated it, only stresses that materialising God was not a way to exclude Him, but quite the contrary – it was the only possible way for Hobbes to keep God real. It is at this point that the link to the deists might start to seem clearer. The deists’ accounts of God, like Hobbes’s, were motivated by anticlericalism. Where he left his thoughts sometimes incomplete, they could show how some complete versions might look like. I will therefore review briefly the subsequent accounts of the deistic God.

5. Deism: the future of Hobbes’s God?

5.1. The deistic God

The first text in which the deistic opinion of God was stated as such was the “Summary Account of the Deists Religion”, which appeared in Blount’s *Oracles*.¹⁰⁰ It stated: “Whatsoever is Adorable,

⁹⁹ Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, 99.

¹⁰⁰ In Blount’s first deistic work, *Religio Laici* from 1683, he merely copied Herbert’s notions, the first of which was that “there is One only Supreme God”. See Blount, *Religio Laici*, 49. The so-called father of English deism, Herbert, assumed that, as a common notion which is universally true, “There is a Supreme God” and that He was both “the cause of all things, at least in so far as they are good” and “the end to which all things move”. Herbert’s God was eternal, for “what is first is eternal”, good – “since the cause of all good is supremely good”, and wise – hence “The All Wise Cause of the universe”. Herbert’s God was not solely a cause and an end, but “according to His providence” He was also “the means by which all things are produced”. Herbert accepted both the universal, or general, type of providence, which he identified with nature, and the special, or particular, type of providence, which he identified with grace. He took both types to be parts of the common notions, arguing that whereas there was a wider agreement regarding the former, the acknowledgment of the latter was also evident from the character of the “worship of the Divine Power” as “was recognized in every age”. The last point shows that some of Herbert’s universal common notions were more of anthropological or historical observations rather than a priori truths. See Herbert, *De Veritate*, 291–4. The distinction between general and special providence is close to that between the ordained and the absolute powers of God. For a broad review on the history of the terms *potentia dei ordinata* and *potentia dei absoluta*, see Francis Oakley, “The Absolute and Ordained Power of God in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Theology”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59:3 (1998): 437–61 and “The Absolute and Ordained Power of God and King in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Philosophy, Science, Politics, and Law”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59:4 (1998): 669–90.

Amiable, and Imitable by Mankind, is in one Supreme Infinite and Perfect Being”.¹⁰¹ One should worship God simply by adhering to nature and imitating His goodness. God is “the first Good” and “the first Principle of all Beings”, and He “hath but one affection or Property, and that is Love”.¹⁰² By focusing on the sufficiency of doing good, in contrast to various religious ceremonies, this account combined anticlerical elements with stoic concepts, concluding that “God made the world; not for his own good (who was infinitely happy before) but for his Creatures good: So our Religion must necessarily be this, to do good to his Creatures”.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, Blount’s God was not openly heterodox. As he explicitly asserted elsewhere: “as to suppose a hum-drum Deity chewing his own Nature, a droning God sit hugging of himself, and hoarding up his Providence from his Creatures, is an Atheism no less irrational, than to deny the very essence of a Divine Being”.¹⁰⁴

Apart from such statements, Blount did not have a full account of the nature of God. However, subsequent deists dealt with this question more directly, sometimes forced to it by their critics, mainly in the context of the debates on materialism and mechanical philosophy. When Toland suggested his theory of active matter in *Letters to Serena*, he claimed to stay neutral on this question, but it is questionable that he could manage that:

But if I be able to prove from the nature of thing itself ... that action is essential to matter ... then they may quarrel (who have a mind to it) with God or nature, and not with me, who am but their humble interpreter ... such as believe matter created, may as well conceive that God at the beginning endowed it with action as well extension; and those who believe it eternal, may as well believe it eternally active, as eternally divisible; nor can they ever account for any change in nature without admitting this, as I proved before against Spinoza. My only business is to prove matter

¹⁰¹ Blount, *Oracles of Reason*, 88.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 95. The stoicism of this account is particularly evident in this paragraph, opening as follows: “*Antoninus* says, if the question be put to us, what is thy art or profession, our Answer should be, to be good”. This appears to be taken from *The Meditations* of Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, in which he writes: “What art do you profess? To be good”. See Francis Hutcheson, *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Incorporated, 2007), 134. See also the “Maxims of the Stoics” in this edition of *The Meditations*: “Mankind we ought *a* from the heart to love, *b* have a tender care of, *c* and bear with their weakness; *d* abstain from all kind of injury, *e* that being even impiety: *f* do them all the good we can; *g* and not believe, we are born, and to live, for ourselves alone; *h* but let all behold us dedicate ourselves, to the utmost of our strength and abilities, for the public good; *i* and kindly beneficent to all men” (*Ibid.*, 157). As we shall see in the following chapters, the idea that we are only required to be good to one another for our own happiness, as nothing can add to God’s happiness, was a conviction adopted by later deists such as Tindal.

¹⁰⁴ Blount, *Oracles*, 124–5.

necessarily active as well as extended, and thence to explain as much as I can of its affections, but not to meddle in the disputes which others may raise about its original or duration.¹⁰⁵

It was clear that Toland's active matter did not leave room for an active God. At best, as he admitted, it left room either for a prime mover, or for Spinoza's "God, or nature".¹⁰⁶ Mainly, however, it was important for Toland to argue that his version of "God, or nature" was an improvement, given that Spinoza's conception—which identified God with nature completely—lacked an explanation for motion and consequently for change in nature. But for the critics, attributing motion to matter was far from merely being a "humble interpreter".

Clarke was quick to reply on behalf of the Newtonians who feared the implications of Toland's radical materialism. Subsequently, he attacked those deists who believed that "God does not at all concern himself in the Government of the World, nor has any regard to, or care of, what is done therein".¹⁰⁷ The main point in the dispute between the Newtonians and the deists was whether God should still be considered as actively and continuously involved in directing the world, given that it has been proven that the world is ruled by predictable mechanical laws such as gravitation. In the following years, it was Clarke and Collins who debated this issue. While Clarke asserted that "Gravitation is the Effect of the continued and regular Operation of some other Being on Matter", Collins replied that "it does not appear but that Matter gravitates by virtue of Powers originally placed in it by God, and is now left to itself to act by those Original Powers".¹⁰⁸

It is arguable that in these years the deistic concept of God was shaped by people such as Toland and Collins, and equally by their opponents who kept pushing them on this issue, Clarke

¹⁰⁵ Toland, *Letters to Serena*, 127–8.

¹⁰⁶ For Spinoza's "Deus, sive Natura" (God, or Nature), see Benedict De Spinoza, *The Ethics*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (Raleigh: Alex Catalogue, 2001), 101. Spinoza defined God as an infinite and eternal being, and claimed to prove that "Besides God no substance can be granted or conceived", and consequently that "Whatsoever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be, or be conceived" (*Ibid.*, 2, 8–9). More precisely, God is identified with "Natura Naturans", i.e. naturing nature; whereas "Natura Naturata", i.e. natured nature, includes "all that which follows from the necessity of the nature of God, or of any of the attributes of God". For Spinoza, God and nature are one and they operate solely by necessity: "Nothing in the universe is contingent, but all things are conditioned to exist and operate in a particular manner by the necessity of the divine nature" (*Ibid.*, 17–18). Everything is necessitated by God as the first cause and must therefore follow (*Ibid.*, 11). Moreover, everything exists and works by necessity, including "God, or Nature". Not only did Spinoza make God to be nothing short of nature itself, but he also denied that God had any liberty of choice by making Him subjected to natural necessity. Since Spinoza's necessitarianism was so absolute as to be applied to God Himself, it ruled out any teleological thought; God has no ends, and there is no such thing as a final cause (*Ibid.*, 19, 22–6).

¹⁰⁷ Clarke, *The Works*, vol. 2, 600.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 771, 812.

being a prominent example. In other words, rather than simply being a singular deistic position, it was in fact a dialectical process in which the critics played a crucial part. Eventually, it was Newton himself who had to clarify in his *General Scholium* from 1713 that God “rules all things”, hence He is “the lord of all”.¹⁰⁹ Newton stated that “a god without dominion, providence, and final causes is nothing other than fate and nature”.¹¹⁰ The *Scholium* can be understood as aimed at the deists and their like, Spinoza included. When read as such, it is clear that this is how the critics thought of the deistic God at the time, that is, a God without a dominion and providence, hence a remote and impersonal God.¹¹¹ Whereas Spinoza and the deists could imagine different variations of “God, or nature”, their critics saw in their views much more nature than God.

Leibniz later argued in his correspondence with Clarke that “Sir Isaac Newton, and his Followers, have also a very odd Opinion concerning the Work of God. According to their Doctrine, God Almighty wants to wind up his Watch from Time to Time: Otherwise it would cease to move”.¹¹² Leibniz made the analogy of God as the watchmaker to argue that the world operates by a “the beautiful pre-established Order”,¹¹³ which does not need to be repaired from time to time. To suggest otherwise would be to imply that God created an imperfect machine, and that He was an imperfect creator.

Similarly, Tindal argued in his *Christianity as Old as the Creation* that “Inconstancy, as it argues a Defect either of Wisdom or Power, can’t belong to a Being infinitely wise and powerful: What unerring Wisdom has once instituted can have no Defects”.¹¹⁴ This was the ultimate justification for God’s apparent lack of interference in the course of nature: God does not need to change anything in what He “has once instituted”, because, assuming that He is perfectly wise, His creation should have no defects in need of correction. Tindal’s conclusion, arguably the most

¹⁰⁹ Isaac Newton, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Andrew Janiak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 90.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹¹¹ Stephen D. Snobelen, “‘God of Gods, and Lord of Lords’: The Theology of Isaac Newton’s General Scholium to the Principia”, *Osiris* 16 (2001): 176.

¹¹² Clarke, *The Works*, vol. 4, 587–8.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 588.

¹¹⁴ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 20.

explicit one among the deists, was that “God does not act arbitrarily, or interpose unnecessarily”, and thus He does not command “for commanding-sake”.¹¹⁵

Whether the deists’ God was a non-interventionist God or a God who works through the order of nature, it is true that His role seems to have been somewhat minimised by them. At the same time, none of the deists tried to deny that there is one infinite, eternal, good, wise, and even omnipotent God. The deists sought to simplify everything, the nature of God included, not because they aspired to undermine God, but because they attempted to challenge the over-complexity generated by self-interested clerics. This is therefore how we should think of the deistic God: whether He set the world in motion and then left it to run its own course, or operated other consistent mechanisms that do not require further interference, the point was not to deny the existence of God but to deny that He is so unpredictable that we need the clerics to constantly interpret Him and speak on His behalf.

Hobbes’s God was different and less intelligible. Nevertheless, having examined in this chapter more carefully what Hobbes was trying to do and under what pressures he was operating, we can see that he had left quite a few hints that were developed by the deists. Among these hints were his account of chains of necessary causes that start with God and render His work mediated, analogous to that of a workman, or the ethereal characteristics that he attributed to God which render Him to be, in fact, everywhere. The deists’ accounts, and surely Spinoza’s, were much more explicit about the implications of that: by equating God to nature, by making Him practically redundant while seeing matter as self-moving, or by asserting that He just need not interfere in His own perfect creation. Hobbes did not take any of these radical steps, although, as it has been shown, his texts contained passages that were already explicit enough. Deism, in this sense, was a possible future for Hobbes’s account of God, a possible solution for a Hobbesian paradox. In one case this relationship can be seen particularly clearly, as I will demonstrate next.

5.2. The Tolandian step

Hobbes’s account is certainly not free from flaws. Most notably, it is not completely clear how the two main notions, namely, that of a first cause and first mover and that of a fluid ethereal God,

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 115–16.

can fit together. Hobbes's materialistic view is reduced to bodies and motions: bodies are the only things that exist, and motion is the essence of everything that takes place in the world.¹¹⁶ In this picture, God has a role, presumably, only as a first mover, who set the world in motion and let it run ever since according to the laws that He established. Indeed, as we have seen, Hobbes took God to be a first mover.¹¹⁷ He also had his own theory of the laws of motion. According to this theory as it appeared in *De Corpore*, (1) a body that is moved has been moved by another moved body (that had itself been moved, and so on) and (2) will be moved in the same way as long as not hindered by another moved body; and similarly, (3) a body that is in rest will always be in rest, unless some other body moves it. In fact, the whole theory seems to be summarised by Hobbes's rule, that "there can be no cause of motion, except in a body contiguous and moved".¹¹⁸

If God were to fit into this picture, it would mean that He also needs to be moved, but not by another body. Thus, also in *De Corpore*, right in the middle of the famous sceptical paragraph, Hobbes stated – not so sceptically:

Besides, though from this, that nothing can move itself, it may rightly be inferred that there was some first eternal movent; yet it can never be inferred, though some used to make such inference, that that movement was eternally immoveable, but rather eternally moved. For as it is true, that nothing is moved by itself; so it is true also that nothing is moved but by that which is already moved.¹¹⁹

God is eternally moved, that is, moved but not by anything prior to Him. This was Hobbes's way to avoid the infinite regress and at the same time somehow stay within the laws of his theory. Hence, as an eternally moved body, God can correspond to the notion of the first mover of a world in which bodies are left to move one another, whereas a body that is not moved by another moved body will simply stay in rest.

The problem arises, however, in Hobbes's assertion in *De Corpore* "that the parts of the pure aether, as if it were the first matter, have no motion at all but what they receive from bodies

¹¹⁶ "All mutation is motion" (DCo II.9.9, 126). Also well-put by Martinich: "Nothing would happen if nothing moved, and the only things that move are bodies. All reality is built up from the movements of bodies of the smallest size. Life is a kind of motion; reasoning is a kind of motion; and the civil state is generated and preserved by various kinds of motion. In short, the motion of bodies can explain all changes in the world". See A. P. Martinich, *A Hobbes Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 213. For Hobbes's theory of bodies and motions see DCo.II.7–8, 91–119.

¹¹⁷ "there must be (as even the Heathen Philosophers confessed) one First Mover..." (Lev. XII, 166).

¹¹⁸ DCo II.8.19, 115–16; II.9.7, 124–5; III.15.1, 203–6.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* IV.26.1, 412.

which float in them, and are not themselves fluid”.¹²⁰ Now, if God is the fluid ether—something that Hobbes did not say but could nonetheless be inferred, mainly from his later answer to Bramhall combined with his previous commitments in *De Corpore*—and the fluid ether has no intrinsic motion, could God truly be the first mover? This difficulty is pointed out by Lupoli, who argues that according to Hobbes’s atomism and his theory of hardness, fluids are essentially motionless and therefore powerless, and so is the ether. Moreover, once matter is set in motion it loses its fluidity. It is questionable then whether the ether, or the *primum fluidum*, can move, let alone move other bodies, and whether it can exist once hard bodies come into existence. This leads Lupoli to the conclusion that there are some paradoxes in this account that Hobbes deliberately left unresolved.¹²¹ Lupoli remarkably claims that there was one step that Hobbes could have taken to resolve the apparent problem but chose not to:

As to the origin of motion ... Hobbes never offered a metaphysical solution, always dropping the most obvious and convenient hypothesis. *Viz.* the hypothesis that identifies the *primum fluidum* with the Corporeal God and that attributes to a single original matter an autokinetic power – a Toland-type hypothesis ahead of time.¹²²

According to Lupoli, Hobbes’s concept of power is reduced to motion in act. Matter, however, does not possess any power to act on its own. This is well explained by Hobbes’s laws of motion. This is also the reason for which it was crucial for him to have a first mover. Therefore, Lupoli takes Hobbes’s system to be kinetic, not auto-kinetic; or in other words, a-dynamic mechanical physics. Hobbes could have, Lupoli argues, simply identified the first fluid with the first mover and attributed it with an auto-kinetic power, but he did not do that. Equally important, however, is Lupoli’s reminder that this step was subsequently taken by Toland and his theory of active matter. Perhaps if Hobbes had attributed motion to matter and the first fluid matter with the first motion,

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* IV.27.1, 448.

¹²¹ Lupoli, “Fluidismo”. See also Lupoli, “Power (Conatus-Endeavour) in the ‘Kinetic Actualism’ and in the ‘Inertial’ Psychology of Thomas Hobbes”, *Hobbes Studies* 14 (2001): 83–103. In response to Lupoli, Leijenhorst argues that Hobbes’s corporeal God, even if sketchy, is not that paradoxical: there is no good reason to distinguish the *primum fluidum* from the ether; and even if fluids have minimal motion it does not mean that fluids cannot move as a whole or must disappear completely following the appearance of solid bodies. However, Leijenhorst also does not think that Hobbes took the ether to be identical to God, but more likely to have been created by Him, whereas the solid bodies were then created out of it. Leijenhorst makes the case that in *Anti-White* Hobbes took the ether together with other spirits, such as the air and animal spirit, to be *entia* conceivable to human reason, hence finite bodies, which means that it cannot be identical to God who is infinite. See Cees Leijenhorst, “Hobbes’s Corporeal Deity”, especially 92, and AW, 311.

¹²² Lupoli, “Power”, 99. See also Lupoli, “Fluidismo”, 609.

his system would have been more coherent – a world that is ruled systematically by laws of motion and a God whose work is completed after introducing these laws, and at the same time can still consistently operate according to them in His special status as an ethereal being. It would also have made Hobbes's theory possibly more radical than he wanted it to be.

Moreover, there is some evidence that Toland's active matter was directly indebted to Hobbes's plenist materialism. As Stewart Duncan has shown, Leibniz's letter to the Electress Sophia of Hanover from 1702 described Toland's view, prior to his idea of active matter, as

Hobbes's view that there is nothing in nature but shapes and movements. This was also the view of Epicurus and Lucretius, except that they admitted the vacuum and atoms or hard particles, but Hobbes thought that everything is full and fluid, which is also my view. But I think that we ought to look for the origin of action, perception, and order underneath matter, that is, underneath that which is purely passive and indifferent to movement.¹²³

Duncan suggests that Toland's active matter was therefore a response to Leibniz's criticism, which made him modify his view by adding an explanation for the motion in the world. Thus, Toland's active matter was precisely a development of a Hobbesian position. Duncan concludes that Toland did not necessarily deny the existence of a God distinct from the world—an option he indeed kept open in the *Letters to Serena*—and that his active matter was influenced by Hobbes rather than Spinoza.

Deliberately or not, Hobbes's account of the corporeal God certainly left some loose ends. As has been shown, this partially derives from the tension between Hobbes's commitments to atomism and plenism, or arguably to Epicureanism and stoicism.¹²⁴ Hobbes's God is the source of all motion, thus enabling the whole system to work, and at the same time operates within this

¹²³ Stewart Duncan, "Toland, Leibniz, and Active Matter", in *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, vol. VI, eds. Daniel Garber and Donald Rutherford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 249–78, especially 256.

¹²⁴ For an Epicurean interpretation of Hobbes's account on God see Patricia Springborg, "Hobbes's Challenge to Descartes, Bramhall and Boyle: A Corporeal God". For a stoic interpretation, see Geoffrey Gorham, "Mixing Bodily Fluids: Hobbes's Stoic God", *Sophia* 53 (2014): 33–49. The latter interprets the two waters analogy as describing a God who is a catalyst in a sort of cosmic cocktail, comparable to the stoic God who acts as a seed in a seminal fluid. He therefore argues that Hobbes's subtle fluid is inspired by the stoic *pneuma*, "the organizing and animating principle of everything" (*Ibid.*, 37–40). Similar to this reading, Pocock has shown that atheism in the interregnum could take on the shape of enthusiasm (or Hylozoism). Pocock does not take Hobbes to be an enthusiast but he points out that he was not far from the view that God is absorbed in the world. For example, Pocock argues that Hobbes's plenum could have been understood rather enthusiastically, as that God is everywhere or that all things are full of gods. See J. G. A. Pocock, "Thomas Hobbes: Atheist or Enthusiast? His Place in a Restoration Debate", *History of Political Thought* 11:4 (1990): 737–49, especially 747–9. Arguably, Epicurean and stoic elements kept on interacting with one another throughout the developments of the deistic accounts.

very system. He is a remote first mover who introduces the laws of motion, but also something close, or identical, to the fluid ether of the plenum; transcendent and still immanent. Hobbes's God is brought down to be one of the types of bodies of which the world consists; He is naturalised to an extent, but in a way that keeps His particularity, infinity, and imperceptibility. Hobbes simply does not choose one set of commitments over the other, and as a result, his account is arguably incomplete. I have argued that whereas Hobbes's position remains puzzling, we can see some solutions offered in the later debates of the seventeenth century by the deists, who went further, or were forced to do so by their critics. Hobbes's account of God was underdeveloped simply because it was not his primary interest to provide such an account, and he only did so gradually when he felt a real danger approaching him for being an alleged atheist. Rather, he was much more interested in taking away any concept that left room for mysteries and thus could serve the clerics in maintaining their power, such as that of the vacuum or incorporeal substances. Hobbes's hints on God were therefore almost a by-product of his theory. This is not to say, however, that they were not his genuine views. Where he, for his own reasons, had left this account of God at least slightly paradoxical, the deists were able to pick up some of these paradoxes and work them out into much more coherent, and notorious, accounts. As Lupoli and Duncan have suggested, this was precisely what Toland did.

6. Conclusions

Hobbes's God was not simply the non-interventionist nor the non-providential God, as he explicitly rejected attributing ease to God as do those who "take from him the care of Mankind".¹²⁵ Moreover, God's will, which is His power, is that by which He "effecteth every thing".¹²⁶ It can hardly look limited in any way, particularly as we simply cannot know, or say, much about God and the ways in which He works. Hobbes engaged with existing theological paradigms, trying to stay in line with the fathers of the Church and with the Thirty-Nine Articles, even if merely for prudential reasons. Nonetheless, the reading that was suggested here shows that Hobbes's position could at least lead to deism. In this sense, it inaugurated a paradigm shift.

¹²⁵ Lev. XXXI, 564.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* XXXI, 566.

Insofar as God works through chains of necessary causes, He can be described mainly as a first cause, who has left the world to run its own course. In that Hobbes anticipated the deistic views on God's non-interference as demonstrated for example by Tindal. In this sense, Hobbes's position was the same as the one against which Clarke and Newton were fighting fiercely, taking the deists to be their main targets. Hobbes's argument for God's perfect prescience, repeated later by Collins,¹²⁷ could serve to show that no further intervention is needed. As such, it anticipated elements in the deistic position, as well as in the position that Collins and Leibniz defended in their quarrels with Clarke. So did Hobbes's remarks that compared God to a workman or an artificer whose creations move themselves "as doth a watch", as well as the notable passage in which he clearly contradicted Bramhall's view that there could be such a thing as special influence, as if God is directly involved by "pouring something" into human wills.

Hobbes did not go so far as to argue for an identification between God and nature, as did Spinoza or even Toland. As we know, he "durst not write so boldly".¹²⁸ Hobbes's God was the author of nature rather than nature itself. He explicitly rejected seeing God as the soul of the world. That said, portraying God as an ethereal spirit does make him quite close to nature. Like Spinoza, Hobbes saw God as the first cause in endless series of necessary causes which alone consist of His decree. Whether Hobbes was a "closeted" Spinoza or not will remain a matter for speculation.

More important, however, is that Hobbes's motive in producing his account of God was much closer to the motivation of the deists than usually appreciated. I have argued that Hobbes's rejection of incorporeal substances was essentially anticlerical. As he stated explicitly, it was part of his attack on Aristotelian metaphysics and vain philosophy for producing empty words that subsequently served the ecclesiastics in keeping the people confused. These clergymen simply used categories such as immaterial substances, or separated essences, to keep religion obscure, thus ensuring the blind obedience of the laity. Hobbes had to put an end to it, as it was one of the main reasons for chaos, where obedience was divided between the civil sovereign and the church. This

¹²⁷ Collins, *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty*, 82–4.

¹²⁸ Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, vol. 1, 357.

story is crucial for the understanding of Hobbes's God, because this, and not an attempt to deny God's existence, led Hobbes to reject incorporeal substances. It is here that the answer to critics such as Bramhall and Clarke (as well as to some modern commentators) really lies: by arguing that God was corporeal Hobbes did not attempt to make an atheistic argument. On the contrary, he assured his audience that God, unlike the many other fables told by the church, was real. The deists were similarly motivated primarily by anticlericalism, hence their scepticism towards anything considered supernatural. They too blamed the clergymen for borrowing ideas and practices that did not make any sense from the heathens and maintaining them in religion for no good reason except for satisfying their own power-hunger. Just like Hobbes, the deists wanted to minimise the discussion of inexplicable or unreasonable phenomena. It is for this reason that they were all accused for minimising God's role if not denying His existence altogether. But Hobbes never argued against God and neither did the deists. Rather, they argued against those whom they accused of abusing and corrupting the true notions of religion.

In most cases, we have seen that Hobbes and the deists were conceptually close in their accounts of God. In some cases—particularly, Collins's idea of God's prescience as a justification for Hobbesian determinism, and Toland's active matter as a development of Hobbesian plenism—a stronger claim can be made about an influence of specific views of Hobbes upon the deistic accounts of God (combined with other sources such as Spinoza). However, the main claim that this chapter has attempted to make was about the shared motives of Hobbes and the deists: Hobbes and each one of the deists shared a *similar* range of ideas about God. The resemblance is apparent in many of these ideas – but even more important is to see that these ideas were derived from an *identical*, anticlerical, project, in which God had to be rescued—not destroyed—from being a tool of priestcraft. The ways in which it was translated into political projects will be the subject of the following chapters of this thesis.

Chapter III: Reason and Philosophy in Hobbes's Theory

whatsoever shall be the method you will like, I would very fain commend philosophy to you, that is to say, the study of wisdom, for want of which we have all suffered much damage lately ... though for nothing else, yet because the mind of man is no less impatient of empty time than nature is of empty place, to the end you be not forced for want of what to do, to be troublesome to men that have business, or take hurt by falling into idle company, but have somewhat of your own wherewith to fill up your time, I recommend unto you to study philosophy.¹

1. Introduction

In 1748 the Irish clergyman Philip Skelton published his *Ophimaches, or, Deism Revealed*,² a work that was meant to repudiate the teachings of deists such as John Toland. Having considered the work too important to be published in Dublin, Skelton travelled to London to publish it, where he was treated as a minor celebrity.³ The text is designed as a series of dialogues, some of which were between Dechaine the deist and Shepherd the Christian. In one of these dialogues, Dechaine admitted that “Those philosophers who contrived rules and instruments for reasoning, had, I believe, nothing else in view than to reduce the world to such a way of reasoning as might best serve to recommend the systems they had invented, which were often too extraordinary to be approved of, if the disciple was not first artificially trained to a like method of reasoning with that of the philosopher”.⁴ As Dechaine pointed out, the concept of reasoning received a growingly common attention from philosophers at the time; but those, he argued, have presented a rather reductionist version of it.

In response to Dechaine, Shepherd replied that this attention must not necessarily be harmful: “If most men reason wrong, as it is plain they do, and on no subjects more remarkably than those of religion; it were certainly a thing much to be wished, that they were taught to reason better”. Then he went on to review and refute three recent definitions of reason. The first is that from chapter 5 of *Leviathan* in which Hobbes “absurdly gives a most whimsical definition of the mere act, drawn from the etymology of the word. He says, *It is reckoning (that is, adding and*

¹ DCo, Author's epistle to the reader, xiv.

² Philip Skelton, *Ophimaches, or, Deism Revealed* (London: 1748).

³ Neal Garnham, “Skelton, Philip (1707–1787)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25664>.

⁴ Skelton, *Ophimaches*, 87.

subtracting) of the consequences of general names agreed upon for the marking and signifying [of] our thoughts".

"This is", replied Dechaine, "indeed, a most wild definition".⁵

The next definition which is considered is Richard Cumberland's, who "defines right reason to be *affirmation and negation, according to the real nature of things*". This definition, Dechaine believed, "comes nearer to the matter", but Shepherd thought that it was not useful because it "gives us no idea of the extent or power of reason", as the act of reasoning has to be prior to that of affirmation or negation. He then went on to the third definition, that of the deist Matthew Tindal, who "says, *When we attribute any operation to reason, as distinguishing between truth and falsehood, &c. we mean by it the rational faculties*; and by the *rational faculties* he means, the natural ability to apprehend, judge and infer". But this still did not satisfy Shepherd, who thought that it was absurd to include apprehension within reason, "whereas apprehension is that distinct faculty, by which we previously receive the ideas afterwards to be reasoned on".⁶

Thus, for Shepherd, none of the philosophical definitions surveyed captured the essence of reasoning. Not only did they all treat it as a mere act, but they were not even precise as to the particular character of this act in relation to the preceding and subsequent acts in the process. Later on in the dialogue, it becomes clear that all of these definitions are similar in that they lack an element that for Shepherd is crucial – they ignore the operation of the human soul, which is the sole responsible for drawing conclusions from premises.⁷ By concentrating only on the manner of deductions, accounts such as Tindal's were therefore "in the words of our divines, extremely prejudicial to revealed religion".⁸ As the presentation of this dialogue suggests, such "prejudicial" accounts of reasoning could be traced back to Hobbes's "wild" notion.

Did Hobbes's concept of reason pave the way to the later accounts of the deists, as Skelton seems to have suggested? In this chapter I will ask whether, and in which sense, we can associate Hobbes's idea of reason with those later developed by the proponents of deism. As has been shown, the concept of reason was central to the emerging deism and served the deists as a

⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

primary tool in their anticlerical campaign. As Skelton believed, the deists removed this concept from its traditional place in relation to the human soul and hence in relation to God. I will argue that Hobbes gave reason a similar place in his theory. Hobbes made reason to be merely a faculty of calculation, but it was nevertheless significant for his grand programme. Moreover, I will argue that for Hobbes, as for the deists, natural reason was contradicted with “implicit faith”, a blind belief in priests. Hobbes and the deists had different notions of reason, but they were close in that for all of them natural reason consisted of a utopian potential and was the main tool in a project of an enlightenment. For all of them reason was the basis for philosophy and sciences and hence for progress – all of which could be enabled once people would be liberated from their current state of irrationality, which was maintained deliberately by corrupt clergymen. As with the case of God, Hobbes and the deists did initiate a fundamental shift in their approach to human reason – as Skelton recognised, they were concerned to make it more procedural and less mystical; and as with the case of God, their motive to do that was to show that properly understood, natural reason was not what the clerics wanted to it be.

2. Different notions of reason?

Hobbes and the deists had each their own distinctive notion of reason. As I have argued, one of the main tenets of deism was that reason alone is sufficient for one to lead one’s life and to understand one’s duties in the world. They encouraged freethinking precisely because they thought that *everyone* was rational enough and that everyone should use their own reason, which would in turn benefit the whole society – by bringing people closer to truth, and by promoting a better understanding of the world, relying on natural philosophy and sciences rather than on dogma and superstition.

Toland, Tindal, and Collins produced arguments about the power of reason and its sufficiency in the conduct of our lives, in religious, moral, and social contexts. They all adopted similar definitions of reason, and those were mainly influenced by Locke’s theory of knowledge. For Toland, “Every one experiences in himself a Power or Faculty of forming various Ideas or Perceptions of Things: Of affirming or denying, according as he sees them to agree or disagree: And so of loving and desiring what seems good unto him; and of hating and avoiding what he

thinks evil. The right Use of all these Faculties is what we call Common Sense, or *Reason* in general”.⁹ Tindal defined the rational faculty as “the natural Ability a Man has to apprehend, judge and infer”.¹⁰ Collins defined reason as “that faculty of the Mind whereby it perceives the Truth, Falshood, Probability or Improbability of Propositions”.¹¹ Broadly speaking, they all saw reason as part of the formation of knowledge, defined as the perception of agreement or disagreement of ideas. They followed the Lockean distinction between intuitive and demonstrative knowledge, that is, immediate and mediate knowledge. According to this theory, when two ideas seem to agree or disagree in themselves (hence called by some “self-evident”), the knowledge is intuitive; whereas when the agreement or disagreement needs to be assessed through an intermediate idea (“proof”), used as a common measure, the knowledge is demonstrative. This assessment is the work of reasoning.¹²

Hobbes’s concept of reason was, at least on the surface, different. As with Locke and the deists, he emphasised the procedure of reasoning, but for him it consisted of an act of calculation. Most famously, he defined reason in *Leviathan* as “Reckoning (that is, Adding and Substracting) of the Consequences of generall names agreed upon, for the marking and signifying of our thoughts”.¹³ Indeed, this seemed to be his consistent account of reason throughout his writings.¹⁴ It is thus not entirely clear that there was a strong connection between these notions of reason, that is, Hobbes’s and the deists’. Their definitions aside, it is even more questionable that Hobbes’s hope for human reason was comparable to that of the deists; it is well-known that in his account, particularly that of the state of nature, it is not necessarily natural reason that has the upper hand.

⁹ Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious*, 9.

¹⁰ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 180–1.

¹¹ Collins, *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason*, 3.

¹² Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious*, 11–15; Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 180–4; Collins, *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason*; 3–6; Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human[e] Understanding*, 264–8.

¹³ Lev. V, 64.

¹⁴ In the *Elements of Law*, reasoning, or ratiocination, is defined as the “making of syllogisms” from several propositions, and in *De Corpore* Hobbes argued that ratiocination is computation, or logic, and “therefore, is the same with addition and subtraction” (EL I.5.11, 22; DCo I.1.2, 3). The definition in *Leviathan* followed the previous two: although *De Corpore* (1655) was published after *Leviathan* (1651), it had already been in writing when Hobbes started working on the latter, and particularly the first chapters on reasoning. See Jeffrey Barnouw, “Reason as Reckoning: Hobbes’s Natural Law as Right Reason”, *Hobbes Studies* 21 (2008): 43–4.

Hobbes clearly had his worries about human nature – an argument which often relies on the disastrous image of the state of nature “where every man is Enemy to every man”.¹⁵ Ruled by their passions, some also by vainglory, men are doomed to endless conflicts unless they are somehow restricted. This implies that human reason is defective; if men were more rational, they would not have found themselves in such a horrific state and subsequently under a sovereign who takes away their judgement on most things. Moreover, Hobbes made it abundantly clear that he thought of human rationality as rather limited, arguing explicitly that “the most part of men, though they have the use of Reasoning a little way, as in numbering to some degree; yet it serves them to little use in common life”.¹⁶ Can this kind of reason truly lead to a better future – like the one that the deists envisioned, for example?

In this chapter, I will suggest that Hobbes and the deists did share a similar idea of the role of natural reason in leading to an enlightenment, even perhaps to a utopia of a kind. I will argue that we first need a better understanding of reason in Hobbes’s account – an understanding which will be based on a more complex reading of the state of nature and the laws of nature, and of their place in Hobbes’s theory, among other things. Once properly understood, we will be able to see that reason plays a crucial role in Hobbes’s theory and that it consists of a potential awaiting to be fulfilled under the right circumstances. Then, I will discuss the way in which the deistic accounts of reason—while not being influenced directly by Hobbes—were structured in a clear anticlerical context, which arguably made them closer in some important respects to Hobbes, rather than, for example, to Locke. Thus, as with the case of God, the case of reason can show how some of Hobbes’s premises were worked out after his lifetime. This case can also show that Hobbes’s own theory was closer to that of subsequent deists than what might seem, and thus that the path that was developed by deism can shed light on some aspects in Hobbes’s theory that have been misunderstood, or rather neglected, in the scholarship.

¹⁵ Lev. XIII, 192. I will offer a more complex reading of the state of nature later on in this chapter.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* V, 74.

3. Reason in Hobbes's account

3.1. Definitions

We have seen that for Hobbes, reason was the faculty of calculation with words that must first be agreed upon, hence the importance of clear definitions, that is, “apt imposing of Names”.¹⁷ The calculation proceeds from names to assertions and syllogisms, and finally to consequences, whereas “a knowledge of all the Consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand” is science,¹⁸ also called philosophy.¹⁹

Reason is thus part of what Hobbes called acquired wit or discourse in words. It is opposed to prudence, which is part of natural wit or mental discourse. The latter, according to Hobbes, is essentially a train of thoughts, that when guided by a strong desire, and thus having a clear design, can also be referred to as the faculty of seeking.²⁰ A part of mental discourse, prudence is “a presumption of the future, contracted from the experience of time past”.²¹ Prudential thought focuses on a sequence of certain events, that we expect to lead from one to another, according to similar examples we have previously witnessed. As such, it is uncertain, hence a presumption. As a direct function of experience, prudence is based on senses and memory: “by how much one man has more experience of things past, than another; by so much also he is more Prudent”.²² Therefore, Hobbes considered it to be a part of our natural wit, defined by him as “that Wit, which is gotten by Use onely, and Experience, without Method, Culture, or Instruction”.²³

Prudence is not only characteristic of men, but it can be also attributed to beasts. In contrast, men are capable of having a discourse with words, which is unique to them: “For besides Sense, and Thoughts, and the Trayne of thoughts, the mind of man has no other motion; though by the help of Speech, and Method, the same Facultyes may be improved to such a height, as to

¹⁷ *Ibid.* V, 72.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.* IX, 130.

²⁰ *Ibid.* III, 38–42.

²¹ *Ibid.* III, 44. See also: “When the thoughts of a man, that has a designe in hand, running over a multitude of things, observes how they conduce to that designe; or what design they may conduce unto; if his observations be such as are not easie, or usuall, This wit of his is called PRUDENCE; and dependeth on much Experience, and Memory of the like things, and their consequences heretofore” (*Ibid.* VIII, 108).

²² *Ibid.* III, 42.

²³ *Ibid.* VIII, 104.

distinguish men from all other living Creatures”.²⁴ A train of thought is a mere motion of the mind, and as such, it is automatic and mechanic, whereas speech is the key for the transition to the next level: “the general use of Speech, is to transferre our Mentall Discourse, into Verbal; or the Trayne of our Thoughts, into a Trayne of Words”.²⁵ By using speech, we can document our thoughts and communicate them to one another. Were it not for speech, we would have “neither Common-wealth, nor Society, nor Contract, nor Peace, no more than amongst Lyons, Bears, and Wolves”.²⁶ Thus, speech enables men to upgrade their basic animal faculties of thought. This is the core of the shift, and the essential difference, between natural and acquired wit. Unlike the former, the latter is dependent not only on sense and experience, but also on continual instruction starting from the correct use of words. It is at this point that Hobbes’s definition of reason as calculation with words comes in. Reason which leads to science (henceforth “scientific reason”) is a part of acquired wit, as opposed to natural wit that includes prudence. Whereas prudence is not only characteristic of men, and is dependent on experience alone, reason is exclusive to men, and depends also on speech and method, that is, words and definitions, and the correct proceeding towards consequences through adding and subtracting.

Reason is therefore a methodical, logical, almost mathematical process, of finding conclusions, then turning them into rules. Applying these scientific methods involves skills that men should diligently develop, and some might never attain. It follows that science is a complex task and that it may not be accessible to all men: “For as for Science, or certain rules of their actions, they are so farre from it, that they know not what it is”.²⁷

As an enthusiastic advocate of the necessity of definitions, Hobbes did not leave his idea of reason undefined. However, this account remains puzzling: scientific reason seems rather exclusive, but at the same time, a successful use of reason by most, if not all, men is absolutely crucial to Hobbes’s political theory. In fact, Hobbes’s goal of showing how a safe commonwealth can come into existence depends precisely on the ability of men to reason their way out of the

²⁴ *Ibid.* III, 46.

²⁵ *Ibid.* IV, 50.

²⁶ *Ibid.* IV, 48.

²⁷ *Ibid.* V, 74.

state of the nature. This suggests a problem, if reason is indeed flawed, or simply rare. This problem becomes clear if we consider Hobbes's theory of the laws of nature, as I shall now turn to do briefly. It shall then become evident why we need a more sophisticated analysis of Hobbes's account of reason.

3.2. Reason and the laws of nature

A law of nature according to Hobbes is "a Precept, or generall Rule, found out by Reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same; and to omit, that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved".²⁸ Thus, the law of nature is the law that should guide men to assure their self-preservation.²⁹ According to the first three laws of nature, men are instructed to endeavour peace, to lay down their rights as long as everyone else does the same, and to keep their covenants.³⁰ Only if everyone follows these rules, can a commonwealth be established. Considering that these rules are discoverable by reason, it becomes evident that it is reason that shows the way to peace. Therefore, if Hobbes thought that human rationality was somehow limited, it would pose a serious problem to his political theory.

This problem can be put in the following way. The laws of nature are dictates of reason, that is, conclusions or theorems that men can be expected to reach through the use of their own reason. This would appear to be consistent with Hobbes's position that by reasoning, a man "can by words reduce the consequences he finds to generall Rules, called Theoremes, or Aphorismes".³¹ Moreover, the laws of nature consist of the "true Morall Philosophie", that is, "the science of Vertue and Vice".³² Reason is required for the understanding of the laws of nature, which, being

²⁸ *Ibid.* XIV, 198.

²⁹ It is worth noting that the starting point for the realisation of the laws of nature is human passions, whereas reason can then show the way as to how to satisfy them: "The Passions that encline men to Peace, are Feare of Death; Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a Hope by their Industry to obtain them. And Reason suggesteth convenient Articles of Peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement. These Articles, are they, which otherwise are called the Lawes of Nature" (*Ibid.* XIII, 196). This could mean that reason works in the service of the passions, but this is not a necessary implication. It has been recently suggested, for example, that reason should be seen as the "counsellor"—rather than the "slave"—of passions. See Adrian Blau, "Reason, Deliberation, and the Passions", in *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, 195–220.

³⁰ *Ibid.* XIV, 198–200.

³¹ *Ibid.* V, 68.

³² *Ibid.* XV, 242.

rational theorems, are in themselves philosophy, or science, of a kind. However, whereas the laws of nature should be intelligible to all,³³ we have seen that science in Hobbes's account is a complex task which might not be attained by everyone. It is clear that by reasoning correctly, men should grasp the laws of nature, the first ones of which provide the guidance that enables them to release themselves from the state of nature and consequently to avoid a brutal death. That all men can perform this rational process is therefore a crucial assumption that underlies Hobbes's political theory. At the same time, it also seems to be the case that scientific reason is somewhat exclusive, as Hobbes stated that most men, most of the time, are far from achieving it. How then can men be expected to fully grasp the laws of nature?

It is arguable that reason simply functions as an instrumental faculty, of the kind of means-to-ends, leading to the ultimate goal, that is, self-preservation. In this sense, it would be closer to prudence, which is more common in men. However, we have seen that for Hobbes, means-to-ends thinking, controlled by desires, belongs to natural wit, while reason clearly does not. Furthermore, Hobbes distinguished reason from prudence, and he held that deducing the laws of nature is a matter of reason rather than prudence.³⁴ Thus, "the science of virtue and vice" cannot be reduced to a means-to-ends thinking. It is a proper science, and this is precisely what might make it difficult to reach.

A similar problem arises from Hobbes's nominalism. For Hobbes, there is no good in the nature of things: "For these words of Good, Evill, and Contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and Evill, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves".³⁵ Men are supposed to start using their reason so as to understand what the laws of nature require of them when they are in the state of nature, where there is no agreement on the meaning of basic terms. It is questionable, therefore, whether they are capable of reasoning in the sense defined by Hobbes,

³³ *Ibid.* XV, 240.

³⁴ One can suggest that in certain contexts Hobbes mentioned reason while in fact meaning prudence. However, that would be to seriously mistreat the text, especially given the known emphasis of Hobbes on accuracy by giving names and definitions. Hobbes consistently referred to reason, and not to prudence, in his discussion of the laws of nature. In chapters 14 and 15 of *Leviathan*, in which Hobbes fully listed the natural laws, the word reason is mentioned 27 times, while the word prudence is not mentioned even once.

³⁵ *Ibid.* VI, 80–2.

as a process that must start with general names agreed upon. It is, therefore, problematic to claim that men can apply scientific reason and proceed from general names towards general rules while they are in the state of nature. As long as they cannot share clear meanings to the fundamental words of good or evil, it seems rather implausible for them to reach “the science of virtue and vice”.

It is arguable that in Hobbes’s account there are two levels of rationality: the basic, universal, ability of reasoning, which must be employed for the derivation of the laws of nature, and the more advanced, scientific, skill. However, even if this is the case, Hobbes was not explicit about the relationship between these levels. Are they different kinds of reason? Or is it the same faculty operating differently by different people and under different circumstances? Some scholars have dealt with this rather paradoxical account of reason, but while the problem seems to have been well-recognised, the suggested solutions are equally problematic.

3.3. Subtypes of reason?

Scholars have approached this apparent problem in various ways. Some have suggested that it is necessary to distinguish between different senses of reason in Hobbes’s account. Bernard Gert, for example, has argued that whereas in the context of the laws of nature Hobbes meant that we should use our natural reason as a basic element that belongs to human nature, there is also verbal, or deductive, reason in the context of science, and finally instrumental reasoning: “Although natural reason, with its goal of avoiding death and pain, is the fundamental sense, natural reason makes use of instrumental reason and verbal reason to achieve its goals. ... It is only the complete concept of reason in all of its aspects that provides the dictates of reason that Hobbes calls the laws of nature”.³⁶ Martinich accepts that natural reason for Hobbes is not the same as reckoning, and that it “is roughly equal in all people and hence not the kind of reason that allows one to construct a science of politics”.³⁷ However, these suggestions are problematic because, as we have already observed, Hobbes did not distinguish anywhere between different types of reason.

³⁶ Bernard Gert, “Hobbes on Reason”, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 82 (2001): 248–9.

³⁷ A. P. Martinich, “Egoism, Reason and the Social Contract”, *Hobbes Studies* 25 (2012): 216.

Some have tried to reconcile the concept of reason required for the laws of nature with the concept of reason as presented in the early chapters of *Leviathan*, that is, the process that starts with definitions and ends with science. In John Deigh's "definitivist" interpretation, the laws of nature ought to be taken as theorems of a branch of science, and must be found through proper reasoning.³⁸ Deigh argues that since reason starts with definitions, this is also how we should understand the reasoning that leads to the derivation of the laws of nature:

The primary definition from which this process proceeds appears at the outset of Hobbes's exposition. It is his definition of 'law of nature'. On the definitivist interpretation, one derives the laws of nature as consequences of this definition by determining what precepts or general rules fit it. Of course the actual propositions one derives in this way have the form ' Φ is a law of nature,' where Φ is a precept or general rule.³⁹

A certain principle qualifies as a law of nature only when derived correctly from the definition of a law of nature. In other words, a certain rule is regarded as a law of nature not because it assures one's self-preservation, but because it is compatible with the definition of a law of nature. This is a rather limited account. Even if it tells us how to recognise whether Φ qualifies as a law of nature, still it tells us much less, if at all, about Φ itself. As Deigh himself acknowledges, if we are able to derive a theorem according to which Φ is a law of nature, it follows that we do not derive the law itself, but a proposition about the law being a law, while the question of its content is not addressed. Consequently, if one cannot necessarily know what Φ actually means, then deriving the theorem about Φ being a law of nature can hardly have an impact on one's actions. In Hoekstra's words, "the laws of nature are supposed to move people to act in certain ways, not merely to help them recognize the extension of the term 'law of nature'".⁴⁰ Deigh's approach has thus been criticized for describing the derivation of the laws of nature as an overly formal process that renders its outcomes rather meaningless.⁴¹

³⁸ John Deigh, "Reason and Ethics in Hobbes's *Leviathan*", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 34:1 (1996): 33–60.

³⁹ John Deigh, "Reply to Mark Murphy", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41:1 (2003): 102.

⁴⁰ Kinch Hoekstra, "Hobbes on Law, Nature, and Reason", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41:1 (2003): 115.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 111–20. See also Barnouw, "Reason as Reckoning", 54–5, and Mark C. Murphy, "Desire and Ethics in Hobbes's *Leviathan*: A Response to Professor Deigh", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38:2 (2000): 259–68. Another clear disadvantage is that Deigh consciously limits his discussion to *Leviathan*. Deigh is right in that *Leviathan* seems to be the most informative source among Hobbes's writings on this topic. See Deigh, "Reason and Ethics in Hobbes's *Leviathan*", 35; Gert, "Hobbes on Reason", 250. As mentioned above, it seems that the differences between the writings are not crucial and it therefore suffices to demonstrate the theoretical problem by turning to *Leviathan*. In the following sections of this chapter I will focus on *Leviathan*

The apparent gap between natural and scientific reason seems therefore to have been recognised in the literature.⁴² However, the puzzle remains: how, if at all, can this gap be reconciled? And if it cannot, is it even plausible to think that all men would know how to use their reason to grasp the laws of nature? If men are only capable of “numbering to some degree”, do they really have enough reason to infer the laws of nature on their own?

One answer to these questions is given by Hobbes himself. Describing the laws of nature, he explicitly asserted that these eternal laws are easy to be observed, and he repeatedly claimed that the laws of nature should be “intelligible, even to the meanest capacity”, through the easy rule which sums all the laws together, namely the Golden Rule: “Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thy selfe”.⁴³ But that only shows that Hobbes had left certain things unsaid. Put most simply, who is capable of what? If all men are rational, but some at least possess “the meanest capacity”, what can we say about the general degree of rationality of humankind? If there is a basic element of natural reason common to all men, how are we to characterise it and its relation to scientific reason? Does the state have a role in this story?

In the following section, I will argue that the key to the understanding of Hobbes’s concept of reason and its role in Hobbes’s political theory must consist of at least two steps, and respectively, two contexts in which reason functions: reason as needed for the establishment of the commonwealth *and* reason as cultivated in the commonwealth. Such an account must therefore acknowledge both the natural *and* acquired characteristics of human reason. My account will focus on the multilayered character of reason, arguing that we should read Hobbes’s account of reason as developmental. When read carefully, we can find that Hobbes had an implicit optimistic, even somewhat utopian, vision for men and society, a vision that starts and ends with reason. I will conclude that even his so-called pessimistic state of nature, once read through this lens, is in fact a manifesto for the potential of natural reason and for its ultimate fulfilment, i.e. philosophy. I will suggest that the commonwealth plays a significant part in the progress of natural

but I will also deal with other writings that can clearly illuminate what Hobbes wrote in *Leviathan*, primarily *De Corpore*.

⁴² See also Hoekstra, “Hobbes on Law, Nature, and Reason”, 118.

⁴³ Lev. XV, 240.

reason – and vice versa: in this sense Hobbes’s concept of reason was closely related to that of the deists, and like the deists, Hobbes can be seen as a proponent of an English Enlightenment. This suggestion is not, however, entirely unprecedented. Thus, before presenting my account, I will review an account that has contributed greatly to this kind of interpretation, albeit, as I will argue, not accurately enough.

3.4. Reason and cultural transformation

David Johnston’s *The Rhetoric of Leviathan* offers an illuminating analysis of Hobbes’s project. Johnston suggests that Hobbes attempted to initiate a cultural transformation, one that would replace a set of popular beliefs dangerous to political order with another set of ideas that were more rational and enlightened. Johnston identifies as a central theme in *Leviathan* the contrast between ignorance, superstition, and magic on the one hand, and knowledge, reason, and science on the other; in other words, between darkness and light. Hobbes was well aware of the obstacles in the way to the victory of the latter over the former, but believed nevertheless that it “would clear the way for philosophy and enlightenment to flourish together, and for commonwealths to be laid upon new, more rational foundations”.⁴⁴

Reason plays a central role in this account. Johnston argues that whereas in his early works Hobbes had granted reason a certain status of a natural gift, in *Leviathan* he turned to emphasise the acquired and artificial character of reason. The effect of that, Johnston argues, was subversive, as it implied “that many people in fact have very little capacity to reason”, thus putting in question the very premise that they should be capable “of pursuing their own self-interest in a rational manner, as Hobbes’s political theory requires them to do”.⁴⁵

Johnston’s way of dealing with this apparent paradox is striking. He explains that in *Leviathan* Hobbes added the irrational fear of spirits to the rational, and justified, fear of death. Thus, to his model of man as rational and egoistic Hobbes added another, more realistic, model of man as ignorant and superstitious, hence having little understanding of the world and of his own

⁴⁴ David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 128; see also 101–6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

good.⁴⁶ It is the latter model that keeps men further from reason, and Hobbes believed that it should be eradicated in order “to make the foundations of all rationally constructed commonwealths more secure”.⁴⁷ An important implication of this reading is that for Hobbes human behaviour could be changed so as to, eventually, resemble the rational model; people might be presently irrational, but they are not essentially nor permanently so.⁴⁸

It is this ambition that we can find behind what Johnston calls Hobbes’s politics of cultural transformation. *Leviathan* was linked to a historical moment, that is, the opportunity that Hobbes saw to promote a change through philosophy and science: “The practical realization of Hobbes’s political philosophy had become linked to a possible event in the future time: the transformation of human beings into the relatively enlightened, rational creatures that had always been the inhabitants of his vision of political society”.⁴⁹ Therefore, in the theological argumentation of *Leviathan*, Hobbes tried to expose the superstitious and magical elements in Christianity so that they could be expelled.⁵⁰ More than merely “refounding” or “cleansing” Christianity, Hobbes aspired to change the way in which people think by showing them the absurdities that have come to prevail in their interpretation of the world.⁵¹

Johnston’s account is in many ways a ground-breaking one. Indeed, as we have seen with the case of God, Hobbes certainly attempted to change the dangerous ways in which people were thinking. His main strategy was to reject obscure categories such as incorporeal substances which served to maintain a state of confusion and dependence that threatened the human ability to make a progress and to create a safe and prosperous society. In this sense, Hobbes’s project was certainly one that reflected a will to promote the enlightenment of which he thought men were capable once these threats are removed. For that, Hobbes must have assumed that men are, intrinsically and universally, rational, at least to some extent. Johnston’s suggestion that men are potentially rational, even if presently blinded by superstition, is compelling as a reconciliation of

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 112–3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 121–2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 183–4.

Hobbes's somewhat paradoxical account of reason, in which reason is a necessary premise and yet does not seem to be sufficiently accessible at all times.

However, there is an essential problem that jeopardises Johnston's explanation. Johnston seems to think that for Hobbes, enlightenment would help to generate the commonwealth that he prescribed. Hence, once Hobbes directed his readers concerning how to think correctly about the world, eliminating superstitious beliefs in favour of rational ones, they could be expected to institute the commonwealth that Hobbes had in mind. Thus, Johnston argues explicitly that the "rational foundations would have to be created before that commonwealth could be brought into being".⁵² Likewise, in the case of the belief in miracles, he asserts that the

rational commonwealth is possible at all only because miracles have ceased ... And if "miracles" have ceased, it is because mankind has finally become sufficiently enlightened to see through them. Now all that remained to be done was for that process of enlightenment to be brought to completion, an achievement that would lay the groundwork for the kind of commonwealth Hobbes envisaged as a possibility actually to come into being.⁵³

Surely this could not be the right order of things according to Hobbes. First, it seems quite naive to assume that all beliefs in miracles would first be eradicated entirely within a short, foreseeable, period of time, even if, as Hobbes thought, the time of miracles was indeed over. When precisely, then, would the rational commonwealth be instituted? Does it make sense to think that we should wait until mankind is "sufficiently enlightened" and only then create "the kind of commonwealth Hobbes envisaged"? Moreover, Hobbes himself explicitly portrayed the order of things as he saw it: "Leisure is the mother of Philosophy; and Common-wealth, the mother of peace, and Leisure".⁵⁴ In other words, philosophy or science cannot be the conditions for the commonwealth, because the commonwealth is the condition for the improved levels of philosophy or science.

Johnston might be right in that Hobbes's project was meant to transform individuals so that they would become enlightened. However, this cannot be a condition for the institution of the commonwealth because a stable commonwealth *is* the condition for individuals to become fully enlightened. My account, as will be presented in the next section, will thus emphasise the

⁵² *Ibid.*, 213.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁵⁴ Lev. XLVI, 1054.

development of reason as a process that starts *before* the commonwealth, and indeed is a condition for its creation, but also lasts *within* the commonwealth, and only then can lead to the hoped-for enlightenment.⁵⁵ It is for this reason that I will distinguish between natural reason and philosophy as two steps of the same process – the fulfilment of the human rational potential.

4. The developmental operation of reason in Hobbes's account

4.1. The first step: natural reason

Hobbes's consistent position was that all men are rational, at least to some extent. In the opening of *De Cive*, he argued that "The faculties of human nature may be reduced to four kinds: Physical force, Experience, Reason, Passion".⁵⁶ In the *Elements of Law*, he explained that "Reason is no less of the nature of man than passion, and is the same in all men, because all men agree in the will to be directed and governed in the way to that which they desire to attain, namely their own good, which is the work of reason".⁵⁷ In the introduction to *Leviathan*, Hobbes named man as "that Rationall and most excellent worke of Nature"⁵⁸ and later he mentioned that "the names Man and Rationall, are of equall extent, comprehending mutually one another".⁵⁹ Rationality is therefore intrinsic to human nature. Hobbes mentioned those who "have no use of Reason", namely, children, fools, and madmen.⁶⁰ Whereas children are potentially rational, fools and madmen are not. In other words, the opposite of being rational is being mad or a fool. I will come back to this later on, but at this point it suffices to see that these are the exceptions that prove the rule; the fact that Hobbes pointed to their irrationality underlies the rationality of all the others.

That all men are rational is a necessary premise for Hobbes's theory of natural law and hence for his political theory as a whole. Reason is thus a universal faculty, and importantly enough, it is natural and God-given, as is the natural law:

Having spoken of the Right of Gods Sovereignty, as grounded onely on Nature; we are to consider next, what are the Divine Lawes, or Dictates of Naturall Reason; which Lawes concern either the

⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that Macpherson suggests a similar account of a developmental process of rational realisation in Locke before and after the introduction of money, in which only "those who succeed in getting possession of land or materials to work on" can become fully rational. See C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 1962), 238.

⁵⁶ DCv I.1, 21.

⁵⁷ EL I.15.1, 75.

⁵⁸ Lev., Introduction, 16.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* IV, 52.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* XVI, 248.

naturall Duties of one man to another, or the Honour naturally due to our Divine Sovereign. The first are the same Lawes of Nature, of which I have spoken already in the 14. and 15. Chapters of this Treatise; namely, Equity, Justice, Mercy, Humility, and the rest of the Morall Vertues.⁶¹

The dictates of natural reason are the divine laws, because they are given to us by God. They are of two types. The first type, that is the laws of nature, concerns the duties we have towards one another. The second type concerns the duties that we have towards God. God provided men with natural reason and with the dictates thereof – the former is the tool, the latter is its content. Natural reason, therefore, is the ultimate guide for men, and the dictates of natural reason are the guidelines that direct men's behaviour in the world.

It is often argued that reason in Hobbes's account was disconnected from God in the sense that it ceased to be the traditional "divine spark" or "active intellect". Philp Pettit even goes so far as to argue that as a consequence, Hobbes's theory paved the way "to dethrone reason".⁶² Nevertheless, it remains crucial to Hobbes's account that all men share God-given natural reason, with whose help they are to manage themselves in the world, mainly through the laws of nature:

we are not to renounce our Senses, and Experience; nor (that which is the undoubted Word of God) our naturall Reason. For they are the talents which he hath put into our hands to negotiate, till the coming again of our blessed Saviour; and therefore not to be folded up in the Napkin of an Implicite Faith, but employed in the purchase of Justice, Peace, and true Religion.⁶³

Hobbes embraced the doctrine of Jesus' second coming. Until then, however, we have been given tools to "negotiate", namely, our senses and experience, as well as our natural reason, which is God's undoubted word. It is these talents, and primarily natural reason, that should lead men towards justice and peace, that is, the covenant and the commonwealth, and towards true religion, that is, in contrast to implicit faith. Although not a divine intellect per se, natural reason as the undoubted word of God seems to nevertheless lead us towards the necessarily true conclusions.

This can be demonstrated by the case of the Golden Rule. For Hobbes, the law of nature is the only law that can be "agreeable to the reason of all men", and therefore need not be written, "being contained in this one Sentence, approved by all the world, Do not that to another, which

⁶¹ *Ibid.* XXXI, 560.

⁶² Philip Pettit, *Made with Words: Hobbes on Language, Mind, and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 45. See also Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England*, 63.

⁶³ *Lev.* XXXII, 576.

thou thinkest unreasonable to be done by another to thy selfe”.⁶⁴ At the very least, we all have an innate ability to grasp this single rule,⁶⁵ that essentially guides us to do good to others.

These rationalistic elements in Hobbes are often overlooked. As we have seen, his image as a subversive nominalist or subjectivist for whom there is no sense of truth or good and no room for sociability before the institution of the sovereign, managed to dominate the prevailing critiques as well as interpretations of Hobbes. But the account that is offered here can shed a different light. Reason is linked to Hobbes’s concepts of justice and peace, truth and good: natural law shows that there is only one way to reach these, and this way does allow for some kind of sociability even in the state of nature, as the axiomatic Golden Rule demonstrates.

This is precisely the message that Hobbes attempted to deliver in his portrayal of the well-known fool who “hath said in his heart there is no God” and for whom “there is no such thing as Justice”.⁶⁶ As the ultimate irrational atheist, the fool lacks a proper understanding of the world and any fear of God, and he believes that it is worth breaking covenants as long as it serves him to gain power. The fool is wrong though, since his own ends can be promoted only within a society, whereas no society would knowingly accept such a deceiver. The main point is that the fool, insisting on remaining a fool, will stay outside of society, and moreover, is destined to stay outside of God’s natural kingdom. Clearly, Hobbes used the idea of the fool to make the point about reason and justice, and not to suggest that some people might actually end up being without a society. As such, it is meant to lead to a *reductio ad absurdum*. The fool should demonstrate the lesson that keeping covenants is the rationally and normatively right thing to do, and that denying God goes hand in hand with denying reason and its agreement with justice.

This lesson can serve as an answer to some of Hobbes’s critics. Whereas the fool is placed literally nowhere, Hobbes’s God places rational men in the right starting point towards the just society. Whereas the fool acts in complete contrast to natural reason, Hobbes based his political theory precisely on this element. Natural reason is the key element in Hobbes’s political theory,

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* XXVI, 424.

⁶⁵ See also Kavka, *Hobbesian Moral and Political Theory*, 340.

⁶⁶ Lev. XV, 222–4.

since without it there is no understanding of the first laws of nature, and consequently no covenant, no commonwealth, no Leviathan, and no survival.

Natural reason is thus a certain kind of a universal faculty, or ability to make simple calculations that lead to some basic truths. Notably, it is not limited to the political sphere: “For I ground the Civill Right of Sovereigns, and both the Duty and Liberty of Subjects, upon the known naturall Inclinations of Mankind, and upon the Articles of the Law of Nature; of which no man, that pretends but reason enough to govern his private family, ought to be ignorant”.⁶⁷ The reasoning that all men, even those with the “meanest capacity”, are capable of performing includes both the derivation of the laws of nature, or at least the Golden Rule, as well as the governance of one’s private daily life and that of one’s family.⁶⁸ This ability might get nowhere near scientific reason. Nevertheless, whereas one might not always be able to derive all the natural laws as scientific theorems by oneself, one could grasp the easy version thereof. Analogously, whereas one might not always be able to make complicated calculations, one could make the easier accounts required for the running of one’s household.

It is important to stress the natural character of this basic reasoning. As Hoekstra rightly suggests, natural reason is so called because it is the word of God and because it has the desired goal of self-preservation, being a natural necessity, as its proper end. It is arguable that these characteristics give natural reason, in the context of the natural law, not only a motivational, but also obligatory, force,⁶⁹ at least *in foro interno*.⁷⁰ But “natural” has an additional meaning here. As was noted by Martinich, natural reason is so called “to contrast it with faith or some kind of supernatural source”.⁷¹ Natural is simply the opposite of supernatural. It is the latter, as opposed to the former, that is the source for the “implicit faith” that worried Hobbes. Hobbes’s account of natural reason is therefore an epistemological argument about our ability to reach the truth and the

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, A Review, and Conclusion, 1138–9.

⁶⁸ See also *Ibid.* XXVII, 468.

⁶⁹ Hoekstra, “Hobbes on Law, Nature, and Reason”, 119. Barnouw adds: “Natural necessitation, rooted in the nature and needs of man, is the source of the obligatory force of reason in the laws of nature. God’s natural punishments reflect a concatenation of causes, the consequences of actions which men can learn from and use to modify their actions”. See Barnouw, “Reason as Reckoning”, 58. It needs to be noted that reason gives us *theorems about* self-preservation, thus being natural—as prudence is—and yet clearly distinct from prudence.

⁷⁰ Lev. XV, 240.

⁷¹ Martinich, “Egoism”, 216, n.26.

obstacles that stand in our way. As such, it is closely linked to his anticlericalism and to the grave danger that he saw in clerics who attempted to extinguish the light of reason in the laity. His answer to that, as we shall now see, lay in the elevation of reason so as to reach science, or philosophy.

4.2. The second step: philosophy

As we have seen, men must be rational enough to grasp the laws of nature and consequently to establish the commonwealth. However, it is only within the commonwealth, which provides them with terms of peace and leisure, that they can develop their reason so as to reach philosophy. This is the basic justification for distinguishing two steps in the operation of reason in Hobbes's account. Such a distinction is consistent with Hobbes's seemingly contradictory convictions that all men are naturally endowed with reason on the one hand, and on the other, that the development of scientific reason requires diligence, method, and therefore time.

Scientific reason is a process of deriving theorems by calculations with words. Whereas the former operation of reason is practical, scientific reason seems much more theoretical. The theorems should be universally correct, like those of geometry, the science that Hobbes admired the most. Moreover, this is a professional operation of reason. Since this is acquired, and not merely natural, it requires industry. Evidently, not everyone reaches the full knowledge of everything. Rather, it is a matter of specialisation:

For as Arithmeticians teach to adde and substract in numbers; so the Geometricians teach the same in lines, figures (solid and superficial,) angles, proportions, times, degrees of swiftnesse, force, power, and the like; the Logicians teach the same in Consequences of words ... Writers of Politiques, adde together Pactions to find mens duties; and Lawyers, Lawes, and facts, to find what is right and wrong in the actions of private men.⁷²

Hobbes described different areas in which reason can act; in all of them it functions in the same way, by adding and subtracting, but each area has its own units with which reason works. It is arguable that philosophers are the ones who can reach the highest level of reason. As is well-known, Hobbes was very suspicious of other philosophers, and saw himself as a peculiarly

⁷² Lev. V, 64.

successful one: “Natural Philosophy is therefore but young; but Civil Philosophy yet much younger, as being no older ... than my own book *De Cive*”.⁷³

This can be made clearer by looking at Hobbes’s thoughts on absurdity. Absurdity is the outcome of wrong reasoning, that is, reasoning that does not start with clear definitions and is not guided by a well-structured method. Since reason is exclusive to men, so is the privilege of absurdity. However, Hobbes stressed that philosophers are the ones who tend to fall into absurdities the most: “For it is most true that Cicero sayth of them somewhere; that there can be nothing so absurd, but may be found in the books of Philosophers”.⁷⁴ In other words, those who are considered to be potentially the most rational, are the ones who, when not careful enough, might come up with the worst absurdities. The right way to do philosophy is to start with definitions, and this is what Hobbes believed himself to be doing.

That Hobbes considered himself to be a peculiarly successful philosopher is relevant to understanding his concept of reason. I have asked whether it is plausible to think of the laws of nature as theorems that are derived carefully, when it is a given that most men, especially in the state of nature, are not capable of and/or available for such a scientific way of reasoning. We have seen that they can at least understand a very simple form of these laws by their basic natural reason. If so, who is able to derive these theorems and put them as general rules? Who is capable of scientific reason in its full extent? This case reveals the answer: this is the job of the philosopher. This is Hobbes’s job.

Hobbes believed that he derived and formulated the laws of nature, and thus provided the true scientific doctrine thereof, namely, the science of virtue and vice. Employing the method of geometry, Hobbes could thus establish science that previous schools had not established, as for previous philosophers such as Aristotle moral philosophy was “but a description of their own Passions”, the “Rules of Good, and Bad” were determined “by their own Liking, and Disliking”, and logic was “nothing else but Captions of Words, and Inventions how to puzzle such as should

⁷³ DCo, Epistle Dedicatory, ix.

⁷⁴ Lev. V, 68.

goe about to pose them”.⁷⁵ Unlike Hobbes however, most men in the state of nature, applying reason only on a basic and practical level, can understand what is required from them by the laws of nature, rather than formulate their science. Thus, the story of the laws of nature shows the existence of a certain range of rationality. The question then remains: what is the relationship between these two steps in which reason operates, or, between natural reason and philosophy (i.e. science)?

4.3. Natural reason and philosophy: potential and fulfilment

If we imagine a transition between natural reason and philosophy taking place once the commonwealth is instituted, we can assume that within civilised society there will be a variety of rational levels. Whereas in the state of nature everyone is rational only in basic terms, once entering the commonwealth, the application of rationality among individuals might turn into some kind of a continuum. Thus, each individual would be positioned upon this continuum according to her personal skills and capacities. This will be likely to result in professionalization and specialisation, and potentially also competition, if not inequality. As Hobbes did not address this question directly, such an interpretation will remain a matter for speculation. Nevertheless, it can be shown that for Hobbes, not only should the habit of reasoning become entirely unhindered in times of peace, but also that there is hope for mankind *as a whole* to develop it and benefit from it greatly.

Hobbes did not spell out such a vision completely. He concentrated on the disadvantages of the state of war rather than on the advantages of the state of peace. The remarkable part on the state of nature and the “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short”⁷⁶ kind of life in this state has usually attracted the readers’ attention and helped to build Hobbes’s reputation as the greatest pessimist of the seventeenth century.⁷⁷ But there is another way to read Hobbes, and his description of the state of nature in particular, in order to understand the positive and even optimistic, if not utopian, side of this vision. As I will try to show now, these places in Hobbes’s

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* XLVI, 1058–60.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* XIII, 192.

⁷⁷ This impression can be traced back to Hobbes’s contemporaries, as Parkin argues: “If Hobbes is now infamous as a dour pessimist with a taste for totalitarian authority, this reading has its origins in seventeenth-century critiques”. See Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 1.

writings to which we should pay attention are those in which he referred to reason in its most advanced application, namely, philosophy.

Let us first look at the following part from chapter 46 of *Leviathan*, which starts by the definition of philosophy as “the Knowledge acquired by Reasoning ... to the end to bee able to produce, as far as matter, and humane force permit, such Effects, as humane life requireth”.⁷⁸ As has been argued previously, philosophy, broadly understood, clearly had for Hobbes a practical value of promoting human benefit.⁷⁹ He opposed philosophy to prudence, false doctrines, supernatural revelation, and the authority of books; such forms are to be identified with vain philosophy, that had started with Aristotelian obscure metaphysics, later employed by clergymen to maintain the kingdom of darkness. We then find the following paragraph, “Of the beginning and progress of philosophy”, cited here in full for its high significance:

The faculty of Reasoning being consequent to the use of Speech, it was not possible, but that there should have been some generall Truthes found out by Reasoning, as ancient almost as Language it selfe. The savages of America, are not without some good Morall Sentences; also they have a little Arithmetick, to adde, and divide in Numbers not too great: but they are not therefore Philosophers. For as there were Plants of Corn and Wine in small quantity dispersed in the Fields and Woods, before men knew their vertue, or made use of them for their nourishment, or planted them apart in Fields, and Vineyards; in which time they fed on Akorns, and drank Water: so also there have been divers true, generall, and profitable Speculations from the beginning; as being the naturall plants of humane Reason: But they were at first but few in number; men lived upon grosse Experience; there was no Method; that is to say, no Sowing, nor Planting of Knowledge by it self, apart from the Weeds, and common Plants of Errour and conjecture: And the cause of it being the want of leasure from procuring the necessities of life, and defending themselves against their neighbors, it was impossible, till the erecting of great Common-wealths, it should be otherwise. Leasure is the mother of Philosophy; and Common-wealth, the mother of peace, and Leasure.⁸⁰

The savages of America are mentioned in chapter 13 of *Leviathan* as an analogy to men in the state of nature.⁸¹ They have “a little arithmetic” and “some good moral sentences”, precisely like men who are capable of “numbering to some degree” and understanding the Golden Rule. However, as Hobbes stressed, that does not make them philosophers. Their reasoning was capable of reaching only a few “general truths” that were “profitable”, guiding them in “procuring the necessities of life”. In this sense, their level of reason is the basic and practical one. It is also natural: noting the “plants of human reason” is also to imply that reason was implanted in men, that is, by God. What we can also learn from this paragraph is that natural reason is nothing but a potential; under the

⁷⁸ Lev. XLVI, 1052.

⁷⁹ Hoekstra, “The End of Philosophy”, 25–62.

⁸⁰ Lev. XLVI, 1054.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* XIII, 194.

right conditions, namely under conditions of peace, there is a ground for it to come to fruition, namely, philosophy.

Hobbes drew an unambiguous image of potentiality. The natural plants of human reason are compared to plants of corn and wine before they are properly planted in fields and vineyards, that is, before they are fully cultivated. We can be certain that under the right process they will bear the desired fruits. Natural reason is thus first a raw material, or untapped potential, and as such it is limited only to partial knowledge, mixed with less advanced faculties such as experience, hence contaminated often by errors. The perfecting of the technique should lead to the valuable outcome, that is, the pure “knowledge by itself”, i.e. science. Since the savages do not have methods, philosophy is inaccessible to them. However, it is clearly conditional. Once they have the adequate leisure, they should be able to develop the methods and start moving from the few general truths they hold towards real philosophy. Science, or philosophy, can be developed in times of quiet and peace, hence, in a well-functioning commonwealth.

Why is this important? First of all, because it means that the change between levels of rationality is not qualitative but only quantitative. In other words, reason works similarly in all levels, whereas the level is determined mainly by contextual conditions. Where people constantly fear for their lives, they are not likely to attain a truly philosophical level in their thinking; but where they are free from such paralysing fears, they should be able to do so. Thus, the most important implication of this interpretation is that all human beings are indeed rational, and eventually might even be rational enough to become philosophers, once they are secure. This thesis is confirmed in the parallel chapter in *De Corpore*, namely the first chapter, “Of Philosophy”, starting with exactly the same metaphor:

PHILOSOPHY seems to me to be amongst men now, in the same manner as corn and wine are said to have been in the world in ancient time. For from the beginning there were vines and ears of corn growing here and there in the fields; but no care was taken for the planting and sowing of them. Men lived therefore upon acorns; or if any were so bold as to venture upon the eating of those unknown and doubtful fruits, they did it with danger of their health. In like manner, every man brought Philosophy, that is, Natural Reason, into the world with him; for all men can reason to some degree, and concerning some things: but where there is need of a long series of reasons, there most men wander out of the way, and fall into error for want of method, as it were for want of sowing and planting, that is, of improving their reason.⁸²

⁸² DCo I.1.1, 1–2.

This is not about the savages anymore, but about “men now”. While the metaphor of the corn and wine before planting and sowing is precisely the same as in *Leviathan*, here we can clearly see the rational potential of *all* men. Philosophy, Hobbes argued, is nothing but natural reason, which *every* man brings with him into the world. Hobbes repeated his view that “all men can reason to some degree, and concerning some things”. Nevertheless, he added that all that stands between them and the more complicated degrees of reason is the sowing and planting, that is, the acquiring of methods. Hence, by virtue of their natural reason, when properly nurtured, everyone should be able to do philosophy. In fact, Hobbes stated that even more explicitly already in the epistle to the reader of *De Corpore*:

THINK not, Courteous Reader, that the philosophy, the elements whereof I am going to set in order, is that which makes philosophers’ stones, nor that which is found in the metaphysic codes; but that it is the natural reason of man, busily flying up and down among the creatures, and bringing back a true report of their order, causes and effects. Philosophy, therefore, the child of the world and your own mind, is within yourself; perhaps not fashioned yet, but like the world its father, as it was in the beginning, a thing confused.⁸³

Unlike *Leviathan*, *De Corpore* deals much more straightforwardly with philosophy as such and the basic elements thereof. Thus, Hobbes might have thought that his readers would be abler to begin with, or perhaps he sought to present a system of philosophy that should be clear enough to all. In any case, here we find most explicitly his notion of philosophy as being within all of his readers, even if only “a thing confused”. Under the right terms, natural reason can be equal to philosophy, and thus the upgrade of reason is only a quantitative matter, not a qualitative one. Hobbes did not tell us what kind of a rational continuum he envisioned eventually in the society. But there is enough evidence to suggest that he thought that the rational levels that can be reached *in general* are very high. Later on in the first chapter of *De Corpore*, Hobbes argued that the utility of philosophy should be conceived by considering “the chief commodities of which mankind is capable, and by comparing the manner of life of such as enjoy them, with that of others which want the same”.⁸⁴ The rest of this paragraph is most telling, and as I will argue, here lies the key for the proper understanding of Hobbes’s description of the state of nature in *Leviathan*:

Now, the greatest commodities of mankind are the arts; namely, of measuring matter and motion; of moving ponderous bodies; of architecture; of navigation; of making instruments for all uses; of

⁸³ *Ibid.*, Author’s epistle to the reader, xiii.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* I.1.7, 7.

calculating the celestial motions, the aspects of the stars, and the parts of time; of geography, &c. By which sciences, how great benefits men receive is more easily understood than expressed. These benefits are enjoyed by almost all the people of Europe, by most of those of Asia, and by some of Africa: but the Americans, and they that live near the Poles, do totally want them. But why? Have they sharper wits than these? Have not all men one kind of soul, and the same faculties of mind? What, then, makes this difference, except philosophy? Philosophy, therefore, is the cause of all these benefits. But the utility of moral and civil philosophy is to be estimated, not so much by the commodities we have by knowing these sciences, as by the calamities we receive from not knowing them. Now, all such calamities as may be avoided by human industry, arise from war, but chiefly from civil war; for from this proceed slaughter, solitude, and the want of all things.⁸⁵

Let us imagine what would have happened if this paragraph, and not chapter 13 of *Leviathan*, had become the most famous text ever written by Hobbes. His reputation would have been, perhaps, that of a great advocate of arts, sciences, and above all philosophy; of a faithful believer in the equal capabilities and wits of mankind; and mainly, of a philosopher for whom the main goal is to prevent future civil wars and thereby to improve human industry. Alas, Hobbes is better known for his dreadful state of nature and for his pessimistic view of human nature, as if this were his ultimate vision. But if we look at these two texts side by side, we can see that exactly the same idea is expressed in both. As Hobbes stated, he merely compared those who are able to enjoy these various commodities of life with those who are not; the description of the state of nature is simply the other side of this coin.

As is well-known, in the state of nature “there is no place for Industry ... 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”.⁸⁶ This list is almost identical to the one put, rather positively, in the cited paragraph from *De Corpore*. It is crucial to remember that Hobbes produced this list to remind us of the many advantages of peace, and that for him, it is natural reason that shows, through the laws of nature, the way to peace. Only then, can the rational potential of mankind be wholly fulfilled, and philosophy can be developed and further promote the lives of the individuals within the society and the commodities they can enjoy. The story of reason and philosophy is the true story of the Hobbesian commonwealth – a story that is not only optimistic, but almost utopian.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

⁸⁶ Lev. XIII, 192.

It is plausible that Hobbes's project was meant to lead, if executed correctly, to a transformation, or even an upgrade, of the general level of mankind. Thus, once the state of nature is over, human beings will act more kindly and mercifully to one another, with some of their harmful passions simply eliminated. Arguably, they will also be more rational, and will possess a better understanding of the world. In this nearly utopian society, when order and peace are established, all branches of science can be finally properly developed. People shall live in a state opposite to the state of nature, in which there *is* a place for industry, culture of the earth, navigation, use of commodities, commodious building, knowledge of the face of the earth, account of time, arts, letters, and society. They have the potential; they are rational and even sociable enough already in the state of nature so as to follow at least the Golden Rule, and this potential can be fully fulfilled once they enter the commonwealth. The Hobbesian society will thus not only assure the self-preservation of its members, but will also enable them to reach new levels of knowledge and thus to assure better lives for themselves.⁸⁷

In such an ideal society Hobbes's *Leviathan* would be taught in universities,⁸⁸ as Hobbes recommended his writings to serve both rulers and subjects of the hoped-for state and thus to be publicly taught. But in the 1660s he went even further, writing in reply to John Wallis:

How would you have exclaimed, if, instead of recommending my *Leviathan* to be taught in the Universities, I had recommended the erecting of a new and lay-university, wherein lay-men should have the reading of physics, mathematics, moral philosophy, and politics, as the clergy have now the sole teaching of divinity? Yet the thing would be profitable, and tend much to the polishing of man's nature, without much public charge.⁸⁹

As Tuck argues, this passage suggests that Hobbes envisioned a university of “independent people pursuing their inquiries”.⁹⁰ Notably, that would “polish” human nature. Moreover, this passage clarifies the fact that for Hobbes, the cultivation of natural reason, hence education in general, had to be saved from the clergy. His criticism of universities such as Oxford that taught nonsensical Aristotelian metaphysics, and his suggestion that his own science should be taught instead, must

⁸⁷ This way of thinking on Hobbes's theory has been previously suggested by Richard Tuck. See Tuck, “The Utopianism of *Leviathan*”, in *Leviathan After 350 Years*, ed. Tom Sorell and Luc Foisneau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 125–38. I will deal more broadly with the possibility of utopianism in Hobbes in the conclusion of this thesis.

⁸⁸ Lev. XXXI, 574; *Ibid.*, A Review, and Conclusion, 1140.

⁸⁹ Six Lessons, 345.

⁹⁰ Richard Tuck, “Hobbes on Education”, in *Philosophers on Education: New Historical Perspectives*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (London: Routledge, 1998), 154.

be seen in their anticlerical context. Indeed, the dispute between Hobbes and Wallis was not merely mathematical or even academic. Whereas Wallis saw Hobbes as a downright atheist, Hobbes took Wallis to be a Presbyterian who represented the kingdom of darkness. The reform that Hobbes hoped to see in the universities was aimed precisely at seeing natural reason liberated from the clerical darkness that threatened to suppress it.

Going back to the questions with which I started, it can now be concluded that Hobbes believed in the ability of the general public to develop their reasoning so as to study various disciplines and consequently to achieve proper outcomes. Perhaps, then, Hobbes actually was not imagining a rational spectrum, but in fact a society of professionals, who reach the top level of politics, geography, literature, history, and so on. Perhaps, this was the real intention behind Hobbes's project: to create a society that would be able to reach the most advanced form of knowledge.

This is as far as this interpretation can go, because Hobbes did not tell us much more about this vision. He hinted at what a rational and prosperous commonwealth might look like, but he never fully elaborated this account. Only when compared to the chapters on philosophy in both *Leviathan* and *De Corpore* can we thus understand how important is the role of natural reason and philosophy in this theory, and how much hope actually lies behind the horror of the state of nature. Especially when writing *Leviathan*, Hobbes was mostly concerned with issues of life and death, but this is not to deny the crucial place that he granted human reason and the development of sciences. In fact, these were all closely related for him.

We can see now that Hobbes's theory relied on natural reason, much more than usually appreciated. Furthermore, his belief in philosophy and science and his attempt to promote these, both on his own and in his readers, reflect that in many ways his project was, indeed, that of a cultural transformation, or an enlightenment. At this point, the connection to deism can be more clearly shown.

Whereas for Hobbes human rationality remained in the shape of a potential awaiting to be fulfilled, the deists were more explicit about the significance of our rational capabilities. They started with similar assumptions about the universal, natural, God-given reason that we share.

They also saw the clergy as the most dangerous obstacle standing in the way to the use of natural reason, as did Hobbes. From this starting point the deists developed their own views about the true and simple requirements of natural law, about the reasonableness and morality of religion, and eventually about the importance of freethinking. It is to these routes, and their debts to Hobbes, that I shall now turn.

5. Reason and anticlericalism: Hobbes and deism

As we have seen, reason played a central role in Hobbes's theory, and particularly with regard to the intersection between politics and religion. As with his account of God, Hobbes's account of reason must be understood in an anticlerical context. This connection is expressed perhaps most explicitly in chapter 47 of *Leviathan*, where Hobbes argued that "it is unreasonable in them, who teach there is such danger in every little Errour, to require of a man endued with Reason of his own, to follow the Reason of any other man, or of the most voices of many other men".⁹¹ Furthermore, in the comparison between the papacy and the kingdom of fairies, Hobbes put it rather bluntly:

The Ecclesiastiques take from young men, the use of Reason, by certain Charms compounded of Metaphysiques, and Miracles, and Traditions, and Abused Scripture, whereby they are good for nothing else, but to execute what they command them. The Fairies likewise are said to take young Children out of their Cradles, and to change them into Naturall Fools, which Common people do therefore call Elves, and are apt to mischief.⁹²

It is against this background that we need to understand Hobbes's insistence that "we are not to renounce" our natural reason, "which is the undoubted Word of God", as a talent that "he hath put into our hands" to purchase not only justice and peace, but also true religion.⁹³ Here we find the idea that it is our own reason, as given to us by God and nature, that we must follow, and that must be protected from the clergy who attempt to take it away in order to make us "natural fools". It would not be an exaggeration to say that this precise conviction lay at the heart of English deist ideas. Moreover, the deist principle according to which individual inquiries should lead to true religious judgements and beliefs can already be found in Hobbes's statement that "there ought to

⁹¹ Lev. XLVII, 1116.

⁹² *Ibid.* XLVII, 1120.

⁹³ *Ibid.* XXXII, 576.

be no Power over the Consciences of men, but of the Word it self”.⁹⁴ The word of God, namely natural reason, was the medicine against the most dangerous illness that threatened the safety of society, that is, the power-hungry clerical establishment. In that the deists were Hobbes’s immediate successors.

It is true that Hobbes supported the idea of private exercise of reason only within the limits of his theory, that is, limits imposed by an absolutist sovereign. The deists, by contrast, embraced this principle to a greater extent in their call for freedom of thought and freedom of the press, for example. It is arguable, therefore, that the deistic accounts of reason were indebted to some of Hobbes’s premises, and yet not necessarily to all of his conclusions. At the same time, the potential of natural reason was nevertheless rooted deeply in Hobbes’s theory. As I have shown, his call for his readers to use their natural reason so as to engage with philosophy clearly demonstrates that Hobbes was far from allowing individuals to neglect their own reason at any point. It is this Hobbes that freethinkers such as Anthony Collins read and found as a model of freethinking. Furthermore, it can also be argued that the restrictions that Hobbesian sovereignty poses on private judgements might be reduced once the obstacles to the cultivation of reason are removed.⁹⁵ As suggested above, these obstacles consisted of metaphysics, miracles, traditions, and abused scripture. Here, too, the deists were in full agreement with Hobbes.

Some examples suffice to demonstrate the deistic debts to Hobbes in this regard – focusing on the anticlerical context in which the concept of natural reason was grounded. Charles Blount’s *Religio Laici* from 1683, arguably the first open defence of deism, expressed the view according to which human reason is alone sufficient to infer one’s duties in the world, and is necessary to evaluate all the principles of religion, both natural and revealed. Accordingly, one should always base one’s belief on “common reason”:

I should not give the Priests over so, but at least tell them, I could have wished they had proceeded more clearly with me; since the more they debased my Understanding in Divine Mysteries, the more was I obliged to stand to my Common Reason, until they had made all things manifest or intelligible to me, without going about to convince me of Infidelity, because I believed not more than I understood: or when a further Belief were required, I hoped they would not charge me to

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* XLVII, 1116.

⁹⁵ This point will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

believe it any otherwise than as a thing possible, or at most but likely, since this was all I could do, when God had given me no sufficient Revelation for the confirming of theirs.⁹⁶

Against the priests, Blount argued that one cannot be forced to believe in anything that is not in line with one's reason. As I have already suggested, his scepticism at this point was Hobbesian in tone, and resembled particularly chapter 32 of *Leviathan*. Here we can see that his view followed Hobbes's well-known position that

if a man pretend to me, that God hath spoken to him supernaturally, and immediately, and I make doubt of it, I cannot easily perceive what argument he can produce, to oblige me to beleieve it. It is true, that if he be my Sovereign, he may oblige me to obedience ... *but not to think any otherwise then my reason perswades me*. But if one that hath not such authority over me, shall pretend the same, there is nothing that exacteth either beleefe, or obedience.⁹⁷

In the same manner, argued Blount, when asked to believe in an alleged vision of another man, "I should not depart from my Common Reason, whatsoever he should pretend to teach upon those Grounds".⁹⁸ Arguably, his explanation for the need to be cautious was also rather Hobbesian: "The Nature of Men being for the most part prone always to entertain such Beliefs as turn to their own Benefit".⁹⁹

In Blount's view, our beliefs need to be subjected to a suspicious and critical approach in order to not be deceived, and our only trustworthy tool for that is our own reason.¹⁰⁰ To that Hobbes would only add: unless we are obliged by our lawful sovereign to express any belief in words, in which case we must abide. The main difference between Blount and Hobbes was thus that Blount did not include this qualification. It is not clear that Blount disagreed with this idea, but only that he did not share Hobbes's interest in establishing sovereignty so as to refer to the possibility of such a case.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Blount, *Religio Laici*, 27–8.

⁹⁷ Lev. XXXII, 578. My emphasis.

⁹⁸ Blount, *Religio Laici*, 32.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁰⁰ Blount's text ends with the following quote: "For all those who lived, or do now live, according to the Rule of Reason, are Christians, and in an assured quiet condition" (*Ibid.*, 95). See the original line by Justin Martyr: "those who have lived reasonably, and still do, are Christians, and are fearless and untroubled". Justin Martyr, *The First Apology, The Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, Exhortation to the Greeks, Discourse to the Greeks, The Monarchy or the Rule of God* (Baltimore: Catholic University of America Press, 1965), 83–4.

¹⁰¹ Blount expressed a similar position in his final deistic tract, *Oracles of Reason*. See for example: "Reason is the Light, that brings Day to those Things, that will contribute to, or oppose our Happiness; without which we should in vain grope in the Dark; and we should owe entirely to Chance what we obtain'd" (Blount, *Oracles*, preface); "Reason being the first relation of God, is first to be believed, not depending on doubtful fact without us, but full of its own light shining always in us" (*Ibid.*, 92–3).

Subsequent deists similarly relied on reason to construct their anticlerical arguments, which owed much to Hobbes. Take, for example, Tindal's discussion in *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, perhaps the most elaborated defence of deism. Tindal sought to promote a society that would be primarily rational. He was a natural law theorist who maintained that God governs the rational mankind through the law of nature, which is true at any time and any place. In that, he followed Grotius.¹⁰² Accordingly, Tindal argued that God has given mankind human reason as the sufficient means through which they are to know all that He requires of them.¹⁰³ This does not mean "that All shou'd have equal Knowledge; but that All shou'd have what is sufficient for the Circumstances they are in".¹⁰⁴ Natural religion is thus the original and universal religion, that is, "the Belief of the Existence of a God, and the Sense and Practice of those Duties, which result from the Knowledge, we, by our Reason, have of him, and his Perfections; and of ourselves, and our own Imperfections; and of the Relation we stand in to him, and to our Fellow-Creatures".¹⁰⁵ Since God is infinitely happy in himself, there is nothing that His creatures can add to His happiness, and therefore all we are required is to promote our own happiness and common interest, including imitating God by loving our fellow-creatures.¹⁰⁶

Such position was not new in the eighteenth century. However, Tindal's account was distinct because it had another layer, directed at Samuel Clarke and the rest of the opponents of deism, who insisted on the special status of revelation. Tindal's main argument was that "'tis impossible to have Rules laid down by any *External* Revelation for every particular Case; and therefore, there must be some standing Rule, discoverable by the *Light of Nature*, to direct us in all such Cases".¹⁰⁷ Not only must the rule of reason take priority over that of revelation, but it must be the only rule, since "there can't be Two Independent Rules for the Government of human

¹⁰² Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 13–14. See the definition for the law of nature in Grotius: "the Rule and Dictate of Right Reason, shewing the Moral Deformity or Moral Necessity there is in any Act, according to its Suitableness or Unsuitableness to a reasonable Nature, and consequently, that such an Act is either forbid or commended by GOD, the Author of Nature". See Grotius, *Rights of War and Peace*, 150–1.

¹⁰³ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 1–12.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

Actions”.¹⁰⁸ The idea of one rule, namely, that of reason rather than revelation, was parallel to Tindal’s idea in *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted* of one political power, magisterial and not ecclesiastical, an idea that was arguably indebted to Hobbes.

Tindal’s account of reason was therefore set against those “who, on Pretence of magnifying Tradition, endeavour to weaken the Force of Reason; (tho’ to be sure they always except their own;) and thereby foolishly sap the Foundation, to support the Superstructure; but as long as Reason is against Men, they will be against Reason”.¹⁰⁹ The last line is Hobbesian, previously cited by Blount.¹¹⁰ The idea behind this passage is also distinctly Hobbesian. Reason is weakened in the name of tradition or revelation, whereas in fact, it is interests and manipulations that make people act unreasonably. People, and priests in particular, tend to think that their own opinions are true, simply because they are their own and they serve their own good. If they manage to convince the laity in that, then true religion is in a real danger. This danger can be avoided, however, once priestcraft is uncovered, and people follow only their own natural reason, also to examine the truth of revelation: “give me Leave to add, that I shall not be surpris’d, if for so laudable an Attempt, as reconciling Reason and Revelation ... I shou’d be censur’d as a *Free-Thinker*; a Title, that, however invidious it may seem, I am far from being ashamed of”.¹¹¹ Tindal’s message was openly anticlerical, leading from a Hobbesian premise to the call for freethinking. Like Hobbes, Tindal acknowledged the vulnerability of reason, but also its power: human rationality was threatened, and precisely because of that, the need to use it was more urgent than ever.

Thus, this account of reason and natural law served Tindal to launch his attack against priestcraft and those who make people believe in unreasonable stories which only serve their own interests. This led him to emphasise that we cannot attribute inconsistency to God, and that since

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹¹⁰ See EL, Epistle Dedicatory, xv; Lev. XI, 158. For the citation of this line in Blount’s letter to Hobbes and in *The Last Sayings*, see chapter 1, section 2.2. On the meaning of this phrase and its use in political contexts, see the following chapter.

¹¹¹ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 180.

our duty is discoverable by reason, “we may be sure it will always be the same”.¹¹² That is, there is no room for later additions, of which Tindal was most suspicious. Tindal defended the deistic position against Clarke, arguing that the deist merely believes that reason was given by “the common Parent of Mankind” to “all his Children, even those of the lowest Capacities, and at all Times”.¹¹³ That is, since reason is common to everyone, no one can claim to have an exclusive knowledge in matters of religion. Moreover, everyone is equally capable of measuring the truth of any religious principle. Thus, “For having critically examin’d those Doctrines by that Reason, which God has giv’n them to distinguish Religion from Superstition”, the deists “are sure not to run into any Errors of Moment; notwithstanding the confess’d Obscurity of the Scripture; and those many Mistakes that have crept into the Text, whether by Accident, or Design”.¹¹⁴

Tindal’s account of reason might be simplistic compared to that of Hobbes as I have reconstructed it. It was clearly not indebted solely to Hobbes. Furthermore, there are clear differences between them. Tindal’s argument that our reason can give us knowledge of God and His will, for example, seems to be in complete contradiction to Hobbes’s scepticism on this issue. On the other hand, the ideas of natural reason as common to everyone, and of natural law as plain and intelligible to everyone at all times and places, at least to the degree that is sufficient for men to conduct their lives—indeed, ideas that were common to many natural law theorists—can be found also in Hobbes, with whose texts Tindal was clearly familiar. More importantly, both Hobbes and Tindal relied on human reason to combat social chaos, largely caused by a religious establishment challenging the political authority while using claims for special knowledge of revelation.

It is crucial to see that both philosophers granted reason a central place in their theories and made claims for its sufficiency in a notable anticlerical context. They both saw natural reason as an answer to the deliberate obscurity of the traditions and the Scripture, and like Blount and Toland, they wished to eliminate the concepts of mysteries or supernatural phenomena that served the interests of the clergy. Thus, they all encouraged free inquiry and examination of religious

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 20.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 362–3.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 371.

doctrines and of the Scripture itself. As with the case of God, the case of reason shows that the deists reached accounts that had much in common with Hobbes, but also, that they had a central goal in common. With that in mind, it is interesting to see that the result was sometimes almost identical. Let us look for example at Tindal's argument regarding our knowledge of our duties in the world, compared to the paragraph previously cited from *Leviathan*:

Those we shall discern, if we look into ourselves, and consider our own Natures, and those Circumstances God has plac'd us in with Relation to our Fellow-Creatures; and see what conduces to our mutual Happiness: Of This, our Senses, our Reason, the Experience of Others as well as our own, can't fail to give us sufficient Information.¹¹⁵

we are not to renounce our Senses, and Experience; nor (that which is the undoubted Word of God) our naturall Reason. For they are the talents which he hath put into our hands to negotiate, till the coming again of our blessed Saviour; and therefore not to be folded up in the Napkin of an Implicite Faith, but employed in the purchase of Justice, Peace, and true Religion.¹¹⁶

Hobbes and Tindal named precisely the same tools that are required for us to know everything we need to know about the world, and according to both, human reason was certainly our main tool to manage our lives. Whereas Tindal went so far as to argue, based on that, that God does not need to “interpose unnecessarily” in the world,¹¹⁷ Hobbes maintained that God has care of the world, and mainly that God was incomprehensible to us.¹¹⁸ Arguably, Tindal also expressed his scepticism about revelation more radically than Hobbes did. At the same time, it is not entirely clear that even for Hobbes God has to use His power constantly and actively, given that nature has its own course, and that men have their natural reason to regulate their actions. Clearly, deism reached conclusions that Hobbes had not been willing to express. Yet, this should not distract us from seeing how much they had in common.

6. Conclusions

This chapter had two main objectives. The first was to offer a new interpretation of Hobbes's account of reason that stresses the central role that reason plays in his theory. The second objective was to show that his concept of reason shared important characteristics with the deistic concept, by emphasising the anticlerical context in which Hobbes and the deists structured their accounts. Thus, Hobbes and the deists shared a sentiment of hostility towards the clergy who

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹¹⁶ Lev. XXXII, 576.

¹¹⁷ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 115.

¹¹⁸ See for example Lev. XXXI, 564–6.

pretended to have had knowledge that surpasses the faculty of human rationality – their projects, in response to this threat, were aimed at the liberation and fulfilment of natural reason, seeing it as the primary tool for the realisation of the future that they hoped for.

Judging by Hobbes's identification of reason with science on the one hand, and his view of the exclusivity of science on the other, his own assumption that human beings are universally rational is jeopardised, and so is his political theory: if scientific reason requires time, method, and diligence, how rational is the average individual? Is it really plausible to expect this individual to be rational enough to discover the laws of nature, namely the science of virtue and vice? And if not, how would the state of nature ever come to an end? As I have suggested, we need therefore to distinguish between different applications of human rationality. One is the basic, universal, natural ability to make simple calculations or derivations. It precedes the covenant and allows the transition into the commonwealth. The second, as the developed version of the former, or the fulfilment of the potential, is attained by virtue of a linguistic and methodical order, hence, within an established commonwealth. While the latter is required in order to reach a scientific knowledge, the former is required simply in order to live. While the former is sufficient to reach the Golden Rule which should lead men towards peace initially, the latter would allow philosophers (such as Hobbes) to formulate the science of the laws of nature in full. Reason is always a faculty of calculation, whereas its various operations vary according to the different contexts and hence produce various outcomes.

Hobbes's account of reason is puzzling or rather multilayered, but even if reason operates on various levels, it is always essentially the same faculty, shared by all human beings. The differences derive only from different degrees of "sowing" and "planting", that is, the development of the method. This, in turn, depends on outer circumstances, and mostly on whether the state is that of war or peace. Thus, when reading Hobbes carefully, and especially his writings on philosophy, we can see that he truly believed in the ability of everyone, given the right conditions, to fulfil their rational potential. I have also suggested that Hobbes's vision for the society or even for mankind was optimistic precisely because of his belief in the power of human reason and philosophy. This is also the message of chapter 13 of *Leviathan*. Whereas this chapter is

usually read rather pessimistically, I argue that we can identify in it elements of a nearly utopian society, in which knowledge is advanced in various areas and life is consequently ever-improving.

Natural reason was not only a theoretical tool for Hobbes to show how a commonwealth can be established by humans. It was not only a means, but an end. The light of natural reason was threatened to be extinguished by the darkness of the church and its erroneous doctrines, and it was this light that Hobbes sought to rescue. He took it upon himself to detect the erroneous doctrines of the church, and to fix some of the absurd terms of Aristotelian metaphysics and “vain philosophy”. In this sense his project was that of liberation from falsehood and from the groups that manipulate falsehood for their own ends, as Malcolm puts it.¹¹⁹ But Hobbes’s project was about more than that: it was about assuring that each and every individual would be able to use her reason without irrational interference, and that the society as a whole would reach human reason in its most advanced, hence beneficial, form, i.e. philosophy and science.

It is in this context that Johnston’s thesis of cultural transformation contributes significantly to our understanding of Hobbes’s project. The development of rational skills was not meant to be a by-product of Hobbes’s theory; it was at the very heart of it. The main problem with Johnston’s account is that he does not identify that this process has to be developmental and even dialectical: the commonwealth must be built upon rational elements, and at the same time, it is clear that rationality cannot be fully attained prior to the commonwealth, as peace is a prerequisite for philosophy. Nevertheless, Johnston is certainly right in pointing out that according to Hobbes reason was the key for an enlightenment that should once and for all eradicate superstition and ignorance, and free men from the superfluous fears that were implanted in them by interested parties.

Here it should become clearer that Hobbes and the deists had much in common in their approaches to reason, even if Hobbes chose, as he admitted, to focus on “the calamities we receive from not knowing” sciences rather than on “the commodities we have by knowing these”. Hobbes and the subsequent deists stressed the importance and the power of reason to improve the political creation and to overcome the disorder caused by the clergy and its claim for

¹¹⁹ Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 544.

supernatural knowledge. Their positions were close in that they stressed the utopian potential of reason. Whereas the deists are better known for this fact, and are often seen accordingly as proponents of an English Enlightenment, Hobbes's position is usually being separated from such notions of Enlightenment because of his allegedly pessimistic views, as we have seen in the analysis of Jonathan Israel.¹²⁰ In this chapter I have attempted to correct this portrayal of Hobbes. I have offered some evidence that Hobbes, just like the subsequent deist, had great hope for human reason: his view about the Golden Rule being written in everyone's hearts; his assertion that reason, as the undoubted word of God, is the tool that we have been given to "negotiate" (until the second coming of the saviour), and which, as such, needs to be employed for the purchase of justice, peace, and true religion; and his insistence that no one can require a man, endowed with his own reason, to neglect it and follow another's. Finally, his call for his readers to see that philosophy is within them and to pursue it was part of the same story. Indeed, Hobbes's statement that "every man brought Philosophy", which is the cause of all benefits, "into the world with him", sounds just as if it was taken from *A Discourse of Free-Thinking* written by Anthony Collins. Indeed, in the light of this analysis, it is perhaps less surprising that Collins saw Hobbes as "a great instance of Learning, Virtue and Free-Thinking".¹²¹

The accounts of the deists were arguably simpler than Hobbes's and in many ways they departed from his. Their focus on the rational knowledge of human happiness as God's only requirement from us, for example, sounds quite foreign to Hobbes's terminology. Furthermore, as we have seen, the accounts of Toland, Tindal, and Collins were indebted much more directly to Locke's theory of knowledge, rather than to Hobbes's thoughts of reason as calculation. At the same time, Hobbes and the deists reached concepts of reason which were closely related in that they had the same functional role. They were structured in a clear anticlerical context, and they were designed to point to the theoretical application of reason which would promote a better, scientific, understanding of the world. The deistic accounts were not necessarily influenced directly or solely by Hobbes; but their accounts had nevertheless strong structural similarities, a fact that,

¹²⁰ See chapter 1 of this thesis, section 3.

¹²¹ Collins, *A Discourse of Free-Thinking*, 151–2.

as we have seen, was recognised by their critics. Thus, Hobbes and the deists shared a strong motive in asserting that we must only trust human rationality. For all of them, not only is natural reason sufficient for us to cope with the world, but we are also required to use it to lead moral lives, as well as to evaluate the religious teachings in which we are asked to believe, rather than to follow them blindly. They thought that natural reason was opposed to supernatural sources, including revelation; since they had no trust in the transmission of the latter, natural reason was rendered superior epistemologically.

The resemblance between Hobbes's and the deists' accounts of reason brings to mind the resemblance between their accounts of God. The results could be more or less similar, but the goal was identical – to take away the power from the clergy and to undermine any irrational basis for belief that could be misused by them. Furthermore, the same misunderstanding applies to both Hobbes's accounts of God and reason. As Hobbes did not mean to undermine God but the misuse of this concept, he did precisely the same with reason. Even if on Hobbes's account reason lost its status as a divine spark, he did not entirely dethrone reason, in the sense that it remained a crucial element, perhaps the most important of all, in his theory. Moreover, by making it a faculty of calculation he merely made it human, because this way it could be potentially acquired by all, unlike questionable inspirations of certain people. This is also what the deists did. As Philip Skelton pointed out in his refutation, the novelty of Hobbes and the deists was that they explained reason as a logical procedure that seemed disconnected from the operation of the human soul, thereby producing accounts that were arguably “prejudicial to revealed religion”.

As with the case of God, Hobbes and the deists chose to emphasise the correspondence of reason with nature. Thus, Hobbes's political theory was based on these three elements: natural reason, natural law, and the author of nature, God. It is precisely these elements that served Hobbes to establish a political authority that will be safely “pure, both from the Venime of Heathen Politicians, and from the Incantation of Deceiving Spirits”.¹²² Alongside his radical anticlericalism, Hobbes's sophisticated concept of natural reason is thus a good start for the case to include him, together with the deists, as a key member of an English Enlightenment.

¹²² Lev., A Review, and Conclusion, 1140.

Chapter IV: Deism and Hobbes's Politics

1. Introduction

In previous chapters I have argued that Hobbes was a significant influence upon the English deists, and that his accounts of God and reason in particular shared some important elements with the subsequent accounts of the deists. The question with which this chapter will deal is whether the relationship between Hobbes and the deists had implications for their political theories, and particularly, for their politics of religion, or ecclesiastical politics.

As I have suggested, Hobbes's anticlericalism led him to positions that were close to the positions of the deists against priestcraft. Broadly speaking, there were two main ways in which such anticlerical positions could be translated into the political realm. The first was the subordination of all religious matters to the sovereign, in order to neutralise the harmful influence of the "unpleasing priests" who attempted to claim an illegitimate political power. This was the authoritarian, also known as Erastian, solution.¹ The other solution was to establish religious freedom, which allows all individuals or congregations to hold their own beliefs and practices, so long as they do not affect the stability of the society or challenge the sovereign power. This route was taken by the supporters of toleration, or independence. It is arguable that Hobbes held the former, authoritarian, view, whereas the deists and freethinkers promoted the latter, tolerationist, view. Consequently, the argument that Hobbes and the deists could share some political, or ecclesiastical, ideas encounters a serious difficulty.

Some go so far as to dismiss the connection between Hobbes and the deists altogether on the grounds of Hobbes's politics, and particularly his alleged royalism or absolutism. As we have seen, Jonathan Israel is a prominent advocate of this view. Israel insists on separating Hobbes from those whom he includes in the "radical enlightenment", such as Spinoza and the English deists. For Israel, the positions that Spinoza and the deists took on ecclesiastical matters were meant, first and foremost, to achieve "freedom of thought and expression, including the

¹ Erastianism is the doctrine that the church should be entirely subordinated to, and controlled by, the state. It is arguable however that there is room to distinguish between this doctrine and the precise views of Erastus, to whom it is indebted. See for example J. N. Figgis, "Erastus and Erastianism", *Journal of Theological Studies* 2 (1900): 66–101.

expression of ideas incompatible with the core tenets of revealed religion upheld by the Churches”.² Unlike Locke, who developed a notion of toleration to defend freedom of worship and thereby the salvation of believers, the radicals arrived at a theory of toleration which was “essentially philosophical, republican, and explicitly anti-theological”.³ Practically, the goal of this theory was “to erode and discredit ecclesiastical authority and as far as possible merge it into the political sovereign”.⁴ Even if this aim could be common to these thinkers and Hobbes, Israel does not think of Hobbes as a member of the “radical enlightenment”. For him, Hobbes clearly differed from the radicals and from Spinoza in particular on the central “question of freedom to publish views no matter how unpalatable to some, or most, segments of society”.⁵ In other words, Hobbes did not care as much for the individual liberties that these radicals placed at the centre of their ecclesiastical thought. As may be recalled, Israel also argues that unlike Spinoza, “Hobbes could not serve as the philosophical underpinning of a broad-based philosophical radicalism” based on his so-called “anti-libertarian politics, High Church sympathies, and support for rigorous political and intellectual censorship”.⁶

Similarly, Dmitri Levitin has recently rejected the association of Matthew Tindal’s ecclesiology with that of Hobbes.⁷ According to Levitin, Tindal reached a theory of religious toleration which relied on Locke, combined with “limited Erastianism”.⁸ Tindal sought to give ecclesiastical power to the parliament but only in order to allow freedom of worship. His position was therefore different from the “republican civil religion”, which was arguably the joint legacy of Hobbes and Harrington. As Levitin concludes: “That Hobbes was anticlerical and a doctrinal minimalist – aspects of his work that could well have (indirectly) informed later anticlericalists like

² Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 265.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 602.

⁷ Dmitri Levitin, “Matthew Tindal’s Rights of the Christian Church (1706) and the Church-State Relationship”, *The Historical Journal* 54:3 (2011): 717–40.

⁸ Levitin argues that Tindal’s Erastianism should be distinguished from the Hobbesian view, and should be understood instead in a legal framework inspired by Christopher St Germain and in the historical context of the convocation controversy.

Tindal – in no way means that he was also a source for tolerationist arguments, nor, more importantly, that tolerationists adopted his Erastian model”.⁹

It seems that Levitin’s account comes down to the following assertion: “Like almost every good whig, Tindal saw Hobbes as an absolutist (both in politics and ecclesiology) of the most brutish kind. The road to peace lay not in uniformity but in free expression”.¹⁰ This is also Israel’s argument. The logic here seems to be that Hobbes’s political theory was different from that of the deists and that consequently there is no room *at all* to understand the connection between their views in general and their ecclesiology in particular. This is a problematic position in two ways. First, reducing Hobbes’s political theory to brutish absolutism is clearly to oversimplify it and its reception. Secondly, even if this was indeed his political vision, it certainly does not automatically mean that there could not be any relationship between him and any thinker who was not a devoted absolutist.

There are therefore two ways to challenge arguments such as those put forward by Israel and Levitin. The first is to argue that absolutism aside, Hobbes’s views on the relationship between the church and the state paved the way to the development of various models including those of the deists, who could at least in part borrow from his ideas. Moreover, as Hobbes’s reception may show, he had been associated with tolerationist positions, by supporters and critics alike, even before the deists’ time. The second way to argue for a theoretical political alliance between Hobbes and the deists is to suggest a better understanding for Hobbes’s political theory itself, an understanding which places Hobbes’s anticlericalism at the heart of his theory. Hobbes’s absolutism would then play a different role in the interpretation. Thus, it can be argued that Hobbes’s theory preserved and even defended some rather “enlightened” ideas, including individual liberties such as freedom of thought and conscience, and that even his call for “intellectual censorship” needs to be qualified.

In this chapter, I will argue that both Hobbes and the deists were primarily concerned to remove the clerical threat to the stability of society and that we should read their ecclesiastical

⁹ *Ibid.*, 733.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

politics accordingly. I will suggest that although their theories differed in many points and for various reasons, they had much more in common than currently acknowledged. The intention here is not to argue that Hobbes and the deists had exactly the same views, but to show that they shared some key ideas and that Hobbes had an important impact on the deists also in the ecclesiastical and even political sense. Seeing this can allow us to reach us a better understanding of Hobbes's theory, which will ultimately demonstrate why the thought that he was a "brutish" absolutist is so misleading.

This chapter will consist of two main parts. In the first part, I will demonstrate that some of Hobbes's radical ideas, and mainly his anticlericalism, were used in various political contexts, prior to the deists and then by the deists themselves. I will divide the discussion to three sections: Hobbes and toleration (1650–60s), Hobbes and early Whiggism (1670–80s), and finally, Hobbes and deistic ecclesiastical politics (1680s–1700s). Thus, I will attempt to show that Hobbes was associated with tolerationist and Whiggish ideas from his early reception, and that the deists could subsequently use his ideas in similar ways for their political theories. Whereas the first two sections should serve as a necessary background, in the third section I will explore in depth what the deists could, and did, take from Hobbes, and where their paths diverged. I will argue, for example, that despite Hobbes's view on the sovereign's right of censorship, the deists could use the Hobbesian arguments regarding heresy in order to produce manifestos for toleration and even freedom of the press.

In the second part of the chapter, I will look more closely at Hobbes's political theory. I will argue that Hobbes's anticlericalism, combined with his account of the role and potential of natural reason, has important political implications. I will suggest a more complex understanding of Hobbes's political theory that recognises its authoritarian elements, but also the elements that were closer to the later Whiggish and deistic politics. Understood as such, Hobbes's theory might be best described as open-ended: in a better and peaceful future, there might be a room for various ecclesiastical and perhaps even political models which will keep the fundamental anticlerical premise and yet might also allow greater liberty than is usually associated with a Hobbesian society.

2. Hobbesian ideas in radical politics

2.1. Hobbes and toleration: 1650–60s

In 1651 a tract titled *The Christian Moderator: Or, Persecution for Religion Condemned* made the case for toleration for Catholics in England. Interestingly, this was the first reference ever made in print to *Leviathan*. The author, John Austin, quoted Hobbes's claim "that to worship God in some peculiar place, or turning a mans face towards an Image, is not to worship the place or Image, but to acknowledge them holy", in order to argue that "learned Protestant absolutely clear the Papists of idolatry".¹¹ In a later part of the *Christian Moderator* from 1653, Austin quoted Hobbes's claim that it is wrong "to extend the power of the Law ... to the bare thoughts and Consciences of men", in order to argue against the obligation to take the Oath of Abjuration.¹² Admittedly, it is rather ironic that Austin used Hobbes to support Catholics who would not take the oath, given Hobbes's anti-Catholic sentiment. This was not the only sense in which Austin misrepresented Hobbes's positions. Hobbes's defence of freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, such as it was, did not make the case for external profession, such as oaths. These, Hobbes would argue, should remain totally subjected to the orders of the sovereign. The case of Austin shows, however, that *Leviathan* could be, and indeed was, from the very beginning, a source for pro-toleration positions, even if some necessary modifications had to be made.¹³

As this example demonstrates, right from Hobbes's earliest reception, commentators linked his views with toleration. These links are noteworthy, because they form the background for the connection between Hobbes and the politics of Whiggism and deism. In fact, as we shall see, at times the deists picked up on the very same parts in Hobbes's theory that had already been deployed to make the case for religious freedom. This is not to say, however, that tolerationist views should be reduced only to the idea of religious freedom. As we shall also see, the deists, like

¹¹ William Birchley [John Austin], *The Christian Moderator: Or, Persecution for Religion Condemned, by the Light of Nature. Law of God. Evidence of Our Own Principles* (London: 1651), 12. See Lev. XLV, 1034.

¹² Birchley, *The Christian Moderator. Third Part. Or, the Oath of Abjuration Arraign'd by the Common Law and Common Sense, Ancient and Modern Acts of Parl. Declarations of the Army, Law of God and Consent of Reformed Divines* (London: 1653), 21. See Lev. XLVI, 1096.

¹³ See also Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 101–2, 129–30; Mark Goldie, "The Reception of Hobbes", in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, eds. J. H. Burns with Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 613; Anne Davenport, "Reading Hobbes before Leviathan: The case of Philip Scot", *Hobbes Studies* 27 (2014): 105–25.

Hobbes, gave the sovereign a significant power in regulating the public religious matters of the commonwealth.

Throughout the 1650s it was Independency, rather than toleration, with which Hobbes was associated.¹⁴ The return of the toleration debates took place in the late 1660s, when Hobbesian arguments were used to support the idea of toleration for dissenters.¹⁵ Interestingly, the association of Hobbes with this cause was made both to defend and attack toleration. On 4 March 1668, Parliament discussed some “Abuses committed by several persons, in interrupting and disturbing of Ministers in their Churches, and holding Meetings of their own”.¹⁶ The debate was on the question of dissent, and it started with the Anglican Edmund Wyndham calling “to enforce these assembling people, of all sorts and sects, to be quiet”.¹⁷ In response, Edward Seymour mentioned “the strictness of the institution of the Spanish Inquisition, one of the greatest causes of the decay of that Monarchy”, and added: “Mr Hobbes says, That when reason is against a man, a man is against reason – Why should we proceed in a way, that answers not our end?”¹⁸ Seymour continued to speak against the persecution of dissenters in a rather Hobbesian

¹⁴ On the differences between toleration and Independency, see Avihu Zakai, “Religious Toleration and Its Enemies: The Independent Divines and the Issue of Toleration during the English Civil War”, *A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 21:1 (1989): 1–33. More often than not, the association between Hobbes and Independency was based on the famous paragraph from chapter 47 of *Leviathan*, in which Hobbes argued that “we are reduced to the Independency of the Primitive Christians to follow Paul, or Cephas, or Apollos, every man as he liketh best” (Lev. XLVII, 1114–6). I will discuss this paragraph in detail in the second part of this chapter. As Jeffery Collins has argued, in this endorsement of Independency, Hobbes “effectively condemned ... the political calculations of all of the royalist factions” and aligned himself with Cromwell instead. See Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, 128–30. This was indeed the view of some of Hobbes’s contemporaries. See for example Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *A Brief View and Survey of the Dangerous and Pernicious Errors to Church and State, in Mr. Hobbes’s Book, Entitled Leviathan* (Oxford: 1676), 308–9. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that Hobbes had indirect connections with the Independents, particularly in Oxford, with whom he shared mutual enemies. See James R. Jacob, *Henry Stubbe: Radical Protestantism and the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 8–24.

¹⁵ Whereas the latitudinarians promoted comprehension, that is, the broadening of the church limits, the Cabal regime was in favour of a settlement of toleration for dissenters. Richard Tuck argues that Hobbes himself gave the ministers an advice “to not pursue comprehension within a framework in which other more obviously heretical opinions were persecuted” and that this made him nothing short of “a radical tolerationist, a fact recognized by contemporaries”. See Richard Tuck, “Hobbes and Locke on Toleration”, in *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory*, ed. Mary G. Dietz (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 167. This might be a slight exaggeration, but as we shall see, it is certainly true that some ideas of Hobbes were understood as potentially endorsing toleration.

¹⁶ Anchitell Grey, *Debates of the House of Commons from the Year 1667 to the Year 1694* (London: 1763), vol. 1, 103.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 103–4.

tone: “’tis said, that they are outrageous against Churchmen; if they have offended against law, let them be punished by law”.¹⁹

The quote that Seymour used appears twice in Hobbes’s writings. In the epistle dedicatory to the *Elements of Law* Hobbes wrote that “as oft as reason is against a man, so oft will a man be against reason”.²⁰ Hobbes thought that writings on politics, unlike mathematics, tended to be so full of disputes and contradictions, because when it came to issues concerning their interests, people took a flexible attitude towards the truth. This sentence appears once again in *Leviathan*, where he argued similarly that men “appeale from custome to reason, and from reason to custome, as it serves their turn; receding from custome when their interest requires it, and setting themselves against reason, as oft as reason is against them”.²¹ Again, Hobbes made the comparison with mathematics, whose rules are less controversial: “For I doubt not, but if it had been a thing contrary to any mans right of dominion, or to the interest of men that have dominion, That the three Angles of a Triangle, should be equall to two Angles of a Square; that doctrine should have been, if not disputed, yet by the burning of all books of Geometry, suppressed, as farre as he whom it concerned was able”.²²

Hobbes thought that the truth might be in danger once some interests are at stake. In these cases, men might turn against their reason, or might be manipulated to do so by others. Hobbes was therefore concerned with the suppression of the truth, including the burning of books whose true doctrines upset some interested parties. Clearly, the suppression of reason and truth was caused to a great extent by tyrannical priests. As we shall see, Hobbes had Galileo in mind as the ultimate manifestation of that. Thus, it is easy to understand how Seymour could use this Hobbesian idea for his argument against persecution of dissenters, while comparing the conduct of the church to the Inquisition. As Parkin argues, “it was, of course, entirely appropriate for Hobbes’s barbs about irrational behaviour to be aimed at the Church, but this can only have reinforced the developing thought in the minds of some Anglican observers that Hobbes’s ideas

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 104. See also Parkin, “Baiting the Bear”, 445; Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 243; Tuck, “Hobbes and Locke on Toleration”, 159.

²⁰ EL, Epistle Dedicatory, xv.

²¹ Lev. XI, 158.

²² *Ibid.*

could be associated with the pro-toleration agenda now supported by the Court”.²³ As we shall see, Seymour’s use of this phrase was certainly not the last one in this context.²⁴

At the same time, Hobbes was also associated with pro-toleration arguments by some critics. A good example is Samuel Parker’s *Discourse of Ecclesiastical Polity*.²⁵ Parker, future Bishop of Oxford, was working at the time for Gilbert Sheldon, the archbishop of Canterbury, as a domestic chaplain.²⁶ He produced an anti-toleration tract, seeing how Hobbes’s theory could serve the opposite cause. The fifth chapter of his work was “A Confutation of the Consequences that some men draw from Mr. Hobs’s Principles in behalf of Liberty of Conscience”.²⁷ Parker argued there that the “Belief of the indifferency, or rather Imposture of all Religion, is now made the most effectual (not to say most fashionable) Argument for Liberty of Conscience”.²⁸ By stating that, he attributed to Hobbes the view that reduced religion to some minimal principles, rendering the rest of it unnecessary and the result of imposture. Parker argued that Hobbes had taken away the obliging power of religion, making it “nothing but Cheats and Impostures, and at best but so many Tales of Imaginary and Invisible Powers, Publickly allowed and encouraged, to awe the Common People to Obedience”.²⁹ If this is the case, religion is entirely undermined, and no religion is better than another. This paved the way, according to Parker, to granting a dangerously unrestricted liberty of conscience to the individual.

Thus, already in the 1660s, Hobbes’s views on reason and interests, and on religion as man-made, with the underlying anticlerical motivation behind them, were associated with ecclesiastical policies that sought to take power away from the church. This association, as we have seen, was made both positively and negatively, that is, both by those who defended and attacked toleration. The result was a certain impression that Hobbes supported toleration. At the same

²³ Parkin, “Baiting the Bear”, 445.

²⁴ I have already mentioned here that this phrase appeared in *The Last Sayings* of Hobbes, in the letter that Blount sent to Hobbes, and in Tindal’s *Christianity as Old as the Creation*. I will elaborate on the way in which this idea served the deists’ political arguments later on in this chapter.

²⁵ Samuel Parker, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie Wherein the Authority of the Civil Magistrate Over the Consciences of Subjects in Matters of External Religion Is Asserted: The Mischiefs and Inconveniences of Toleration Are Represented, and All Pretenses Pleaded in Behalf of Liberty of Conscience Are Fully Answered* (London: 1670).

²⁶ See Jon Parkin, “Parker, Samuel (1640–1688)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21336>.

²⁷ Parker, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*, 135.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 137.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

time, Hobbes could also be associated with the latitudinarian idea that the magistrate should determine all religious matters, including the indifferent or non-essential ones (*adiaphora*). Ironically, even someone like Parker, who believed that toleration would endanger the social stability, ended up with an absolutist position and was consequently accused himself of Hobbism.³⁰ At this point, it suffices to see that Hobbes's theory could simply go both ways on the question of toleration. As we shall see later on, it is precisely this complexity with which subsequent thinkers, including the deists, had to deal a few decades later.

2.2. Hobbes and early Whiggism: 1670–80s

We have seen that Hobbes's reception shows that he was sometimes associated with the idea of religious toleration, even if he did not fully make the case for that himself. Another, closely related and perhaps equally surprising, alliance can be found between some Hobbesian ideas and those of early Whigs. This link, too, is crucial for the discussion of Hobbes and deistic politics, because the deists were often identified as Whigs. This fact is used by some simply to dismiss the similarities between Hobbes (the "absolutist" or "royalist") and the deists. However, as I shall now briefly show, Hobbes was not necessarily at odds with the ideas that were the basis of Whiggism, and consequently, with some of the main political views of the deists.

The case for the association between Hobbes and the spirit of Whiggism is made most convincingly by Mark Goldie.³¹ Goldie has shown that Whiggism emerged not only from doctrines of constitutionalism and the right of revolution, but also and perhaps mainly from anticlericalism. He suggests that we should think of Whiggism in terms of ecclesiology, as the struggle of temporal and spiritual.³² When seen as such, we can also see that "fundamental to the animus of early Whiggism, was, in Hobbes's phrase, the 'unpleasing' of priests".³³ Goldie therefore focuses on the polemic against priestcraft as the defining feature of early Whiggism. He shows that the term was coined by Harrington,³⁴ who was subsequently accused of being a follower of

³⁰ See for example *Ibid.*, 162–3. See also Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 242–4, 256–7.

³¹ Mark Goldie, "Priestcraft and the Birth of Whiggism", in *Political Discourses in Early Modern Britain*, eds. Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 209–31.

³² *Ibid.*, 214.

³³ *Ibid.*, 212.

³⁴ James Harrington and Henry Ferne, *Pian Piano* (London: 1656), 8.

Hobbes in this respect.³⁵ In the 1690s, when the term became a commonplace, it served Whigs and deists including Blount, Toland, and Tindal.³⁶ Hobbes, therefore, had a central place in the history of Whiggism when told as a story of radical anticlericalism. Goldie even goes so far as to suggest that “it does not require much foreshortening of historical explanation to say of Hobbes that, ecclesiologically, he was a Whig; nor of theoretical explanation to say that the Erastian defence of the Christian laity transcended differences over civil constitutions”.³⁷

To this illuminating account, a further support can be added. Hobbes could be recruited to support the early Whiggism for his anticlericalism, but this was not his only contribution. In fact, the last political topic on which Hobbes ever commented was the early debate on the Exclusion Bill, arguably the moment of the birth of political Whiggism. The fact that Hobbes commented on the Exclusion Controversy is generally overlooked by commentators. This is surprising especially because the question that was raised in this crisis forced Hobbes’s theory to face a particularly difficult dilemma between two elements which were central to his ecclesiastical and political views, namely his support for the king or the de facto authority and for an orderly transfer of power, alongside his deep hostility to Catholicism and its pursuit of power. Hobbes’s comment on this episode, and the way in which it was used in Parliament, can therefore tell us something significant about the possible implications of Hobbes’s theory for the new situation in the politics of religion. Moreover, as we shall see, a closer look at this episode can shed light on some more Hobbesian elements which someone like Blount—a Whig and a deist—could subsequently find useful for his own goals.

The relevant text is a manuscript on hereditary right, dated to the early summer of 1679. It consists of Hobbes’s answer to William Cavendish, the son of the third earl of Devonshire, who later became the fourth earl and the Duke of Devonshire. Cavendish was then a member of the

³⁵ As Goldie explains, Hobbes never used the word “priestcraft” himself, but it did appear in the English translation of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. See Goldie, “Priestcraft and the Birth of Whiggism”, 216–8; HE, 77, 93, 127.

³⁶ Goldie, “Priestcraft and the Birth of Whiggism”, 219–20, n.30–1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 217. Indeed, some of the leading figures behind early Whiggism clearly shared Hobbes’s anticlericalism as a key concept in their theory, as can be shown for example in the case of Andrew Marvell. See Jon Parkin, “Liberty Transpos’d: Andrew Marvell and Samuel Parker”, in *Marvell and Liberty*, ed. Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 269–89; Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 299–301.

House of Commons. He was involved in the investigation of the Popish Plot and he was subsequently active in the debates on the proposal to exclude the heir presumptive James Duke of York, the brother of Charles II, who was a known Catholic.³⁸ After the first readings of the Exclusion Bill in May 1679 and the consequent dissolution of Parliament, Cavendish consulted Hobbes:

If you allow that a king does not hold his title by divine Institution, as indeed 'tis absurd to say he does, then I suppose you will admitt that his title to Governe arises from his protecting those that are govern'd. My next Question therefore is this, If a Successour to a Crown, be for Some reason or other which is notorious, incapable to protect the people, if the Government should devolve upon him, is not the Prince in possession oblig'd to putt him by, upon the request of his subjects?³⁹

Hobbes's answer to Cavendish was written some six months prior to his death in December 1679. In his answer, Hobbes affirmed his basic position about the conditional relationship between protection and obedience: "I confesse that as the King ought to protect his people so the people ought to obey the King".⁴⁰ Nevertheless, he added, there could be cases of "notorious incapacity to protect" the people. If such "notorious incapacity" is a result of "want of money", Hobbes did not believe that disinheritance would be justified. "But if it proceed from want of naturall reason the King in possession may do it, but is not obliged thereunto. Therefore I will speake of that subject no more till we have such a weak King".⁴¹ That is, when an heir lacks natural reason, rather than financial means, he or she may be excluded.⁴² It is more than plausible that in these words Hobbes was hinting at a Catholic heir, since for him natural reason contradicted much of the content of Catholicism, as he went through much trouble to demonstrate in his writings. Furthermore, natural reason itself was for Hobbes an anticlerical concept, as I have shown in the previous chapter. This, then, posed a particularly difficult question. Would Hobbes's uncompromising theory of sovereignty make an exception for the one case in which there was a danger of Catholicism gaining established political power again?

³⁸ DPS, 155–6, 159–61.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁴² Hobbes discussed one more scenario of "notorious incapacity" to protect: "in case the King in possession may lawfully disinherit his diseased Heir and will not; you have not yet answered me to the question, Who shall force him for I suppose the sound King living cannot be lawfully deposed by any person or persons that are his Subjects; because the King dying is ipso facto dissolved" (*Ibid.*). Thus, out of the three cases that Hobbes chose, only the one regarding the want of natural reason seems to leave open the possibility of disinheritance.

On the face of it, Hobbes was not willing to say that. That is, it seems that Hobbes would have accepted the consequence of a Catholic king, because a ruling king by definition can never be obliged to do anything, including the exclusion of his heir. But, he *may*. Hobbes's answer was importantly vague. Furthermore, Hobbes's assertion that he shall "speake of that subject no more till we have such a weak King" is clearly evasive, and as Skinner comments, "it may also embody a humorous allusion—of a kind that Hobbes liked to make—to his own extreme old age. To say (at the age of ninety-one) that he will not speak about the subject until a weak king comes to power is perhaps a rueful way of saying that he will never speak about it at all".⁴³

Thus, it has been suggested that Hobbes was merely cautious and conscious here.⁴⁴ Another option is that this dilemma really touched on two strong commitments between which Hobbes was genuinely undecided. Therefore, this sentence might be more suggestive than has been appreciated. As Cavendish recognised, Hobbes's position could be used to advocate the Exclusion Bill. In the following years, Cavendish spoke unequivocally for the exclusion, and in 1681 he published anonymously *Reasons for His Majesties Passing the Bill of Exclusion in a Letter to a Friend*. There Cavendish mentioned that "according to Mr. Hobbes, that Monarchical Government is form'd by an Agreement of a Society of Men, to devolve all their power and interest upon one Man, and to make him Judge of all Differences that shall arise among them; 'tis plain, that this can be for no other end, than the Security and protection of those that enter into such a Contract".⁴⁵ Cavendish went from there to argue that "the Succession of Princes in Hereditary Monarchies, cannot be binding, nor ought to be admitted, where it proves manifestly inconsistent with those ends".⁴⁶

Skinner argues that "Cavendish's conclusion is diametrically opposed to that of Hobbes in *Leviathan*" and that "Cavendish's argument not only shows that by this time he had become a Whig (albeit an extremely cautious one) but that he was quixotic enough to believe that Hobbes's

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* See also Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 337, 367.

⁴⁵ William Cavendish, *Reasons for His Majesties Passing the Bill of Exclusion in a Letter to a Friend* (London: 1681), 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

authority could be recruited in support of the Whig cause”.⁴⁷ “If Hobbes had not died a year earlier”, Skinner concludes, “this would surely have been enough to kill him off”.⁴⁸ Is this such a clear-cut case?

Surely, Hobbes would not have wanted to limit hereditary rights, nor any other right, of the king in power. At the same time, his answer as to the case in which the heir lacks natural reason is at least hesitant, if not indeed provoking a second thought. Moreover, Skinner ignores the reasoning of Cavendish later on in his tract. Cavendish referred specifically to the supposed incapacity of the heir in this case: “his being of a different Religion from that which is generally own’d by the People”.⁴⁹ His following argument addressed the political role of religion:

Religion, consider’d only in a Politick Sense, is one of the chief Supports of Civil Government; for the fear of corporal Punishments, nay of Death itself, would often prove insufficient to deter men from refusing Obedience to their Superiours, or from breaking their Laws, without those stronger ties of Hope of Reward, and Fear of Punishment in another Life. ... But this very Religion, that is the Bond of Union between a Prince and his People, when both profess the same, must of necessity produce the contrary Effects, and be the seed of the most fatal Disorders, nay of the Dissolution of Governments, where they differ. The same Conscience that ties the Peoples Affections fastest to the Prince in the first case, dissolves all manner of Trust, all bonds of Obedience, in the second.⁵⁰

This argument was a description of religion as a tool in the hand of the magistrate, that can serve both to bring people to obey the government, or alternatively, when the religious differences are too extreme, might bring governments down. Cavendish thus justified his support for exclusion by arguing that there should be a unity of religion within the commonwealth for the sake of its stability. This is clearly also something that he could take from *Leviathan*, and it is for this reason that his conclusion is not necessarily as opposed to Hobbes’s thought as Skinner takes it to be. Hobbes did appreciate the power of religion in politics and this appreciation shaped his theory of the politics of religion; Cavendish’s argument here shows precisely the same appreciation.

This example is extremely important as it demonstrates that the separation between Hobbes and the Whig cause was not as clear as some might want to argue. At the end, the question was whether Catholicism could be against people’s interest in protection and whether this quality was a “notorious incapacity” in a future heir. It is true that Hobbes did not fully answer,

⁴⁷ DPS, 176.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Cavendish, *Reasons*, 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

but it can be argued that his careful comment that disinheritance *may* be justified in the case of a want of natural reason was suggestive even if—or perhaps precisely because—he chose not to elaborate. This question remains open, but there is another, more certain, lesson to take from this episode. Even if we accept the claim that Cavendish used Hobbes in a way that would have “been enough to kill him off”, this case shows another way in which Hobbes was enlisted for Whig purposes, in addition to his anticlerical contribution as shown by Goldie. Hobbes did not have to be a Whig – but this does not mean that some Whigs could not build on Hobbes in their arguments. Finally, this case is particularly interesting because the period of the Exclusion Crisis was also that in which Charles Blount, the young deist, became politically involved.

2.3. Hobbes and deistic ecclesiastical politics: 1680s–1700s

2.3.1. Charles Blount

Blount became a political activist in 1678, when he joined the Whig Green Ribbon Club. His political writings from that period expressed hard-line anticlericalism and anti-Catholicism. Like Cavendish, and indeed like Hobbes, he recognised the disastrous and destabilising impact of quarrels between religious sects. They also seem to have shared similar thoughts regarding the groups and interests behind such quarrels. In 1679 Blount published *An Appeal from the Country to the City, for the Preservation of His Majesties Person, Liberty, Property, and the Protestant Religion* in which he warned his readers of a catastrophe of another Popish Plot:

Imagine you see the whole Town in a flame, occasioned this second time, by the same Popish malice which set it on fire before. At the same instant fancy, that amongst the distracted Crowd, you behold Troops of Papists, ravishing your Wives and your Daughters, dashing your little Childrens brains out against the walls, plundering your Houses, and cutting your own throats, by the Name of Heretick Dogs...⁵¹

Blount argued that “there is some coherence between the beginning of the late Civil Wars, and this our present Age; for as well then, as now, the ambitious Popish and French Faction were the chief, nay the only Incendiaries which set us all in a Flame”.⁵² In the same year, he contributed to the debate on the Licensing Act, when he argued against its renewal and for freedom of the press in *A Just Vindication of Learning*. There, Blount followed Milton in arguing that “You had almost as

⁵¹ Charles Blount, *An Appeal from the Country to the City, for the Preservation of His Majesties Person, Liberty, Property, and the Protestant Religion* (London: 1679), 2.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.

good kill a Man, as a good Book; for he that kills a Man, kills but a Reasonable Creature, Gods Image: Whereas he that destroys a good Book, kills Reason it self, which is as it were the very Eye of God”.⁵³ Thus, Blount’s politics was consistently Whiggish. He was an Exclusionist, and he subsequently supported the revolution. In his later *King William and Queen Mary, Conquerors*, he justified the right of William and Mary to the Crown.⁵⁴ Notably, he defended the conquest by arguing that “the conquered Prince is no longer able to maintain his own *Regalia*, and protect his Subjects”.⁵⁵

We can thus see that Blount continued a Whiggish tradition that took two things from Hobbes: his anticlericalism and his idea of the mutual relationship between protection and obedience. In other parts, he seems less indebted to Hobbes. His defence of freedom of the press might indicate some disagreement between his ideas and Hobbes’s approach to censorship by the sovereign. However, a closer look at Blount’s motives and Hobbes’s influence might suggest a more complex interaction.

As we have seen, Blount had been an open admirer of Hobbes since at least 1678, as he made clear in his letter from that year.⁵⁶ The letter provides an evidence that Blount was deeply impressed with Hobbes’s *Historical Narration Concerning Heresie*.⁵⁷ This was one of the texts in which Hobbes put forward the claim that there is no law against heresy, and as some argue, also the implicit claim that there should be no such law.⁵⁸ Hobbes presented this argument historically, starting with the primitive church until his own days. Thus, heresy meant originally “no more than a private Opinion, without reference to truth or falsehood”.⁵⁹ Hobbes reviewed the establishment of the High Commission that received the ecclesiastical power from Queen Elizabeth, and could judge as heresy only doctrines that were in contradiction with the first four councils:

⁵³ Blount, *A Just Vindication of Learning, or, an Humble Address to the High Court of Parliament in Behalf of the Liberty of the Press by Philopatris* (London: 1679), 3. See John Milton, *Areopagitica* (London: 1644), 4. See also Blount, *Reasons Humbly Offered for the Liberty of Unlicens’d Printing* (London: 1693).

⁵⁴ Blount, *King William and Queen Mary, Conquerors, or, a Discourse Endeavouring to Prove That Their Majesties Have on Their Side, Against the Late King, the Principal Reasons That Make Conquest a Good Title* (London: 1693).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵⁶ See chapter 1, section 2.2.

⁵⁷ See Blount, *Oracles*, 97.

⁵⁸ Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 335–45.

⁵⁹ HN, 3.

but I never heard that any such Declaration was made either by Proclamation, or by Recording it in Churches, or by publick Printing, as in penal Laws is necessary; the breaches of it are excused by ignorance: besides, if Heresie had been made Capital, or otherwise civilly punishable, either the Four General Councils themselves, or at least the Points condemned in them ought to have been Printed or put into Parish-Churches in English, because without it, no man could know how to beware of offending against them.⁶⁰

The High Commission was abolished in the reign of Charles I, and during the Rump Parliament there was no “humane Laws left in force to restrain any man from Preaching or Writing any Doctrine concerning Religion that he pleased ... And in this time it was, that a Book called *Leviathan*, was written in defence of the Kings Power, Temporal and Spiritual, without any word against Episcopacy, or against any Bishop, or against the publick Doctrine of the Church”.⁶¹ It seems that Hobbes was mainly concerned with his own reputation or even fate here,⁶² but the point about heresy had broader implications. The model of the High Commission was acceptable because it was authorised by the Queen, and because it relied on one criterion only, namely the compatibility of doctrines with those of the first councils. Indeed, as we have seen, this was the argument that Hobbes used in order to defend his disputed account of the corporeal God. Furthermore, he argued that this criterion had to be made public for the judging of doctrines as heretical to be binding by law. The last implication was therefore that even heretical doctrines had to be published, simply because people had to know them in order to avoid them.

Blount seems to have identified precisely this implication in Hobbes. Hobbes was not Milton, but he might not have been as far from some of Milton’s positions as is usually assumed. His position on heresy could be read as allowing some kind of toleration, if not a call for freedom of expression in religious matters. Blount, who “had the Happiness to peruse” Hobbes’s “incomparable Treatise of Heresie in Manuscript” before 1679, wrote in his *Just Vindication* that “Faction and Heresie were things unknown in the World, till the increase of Interest, and abatement of Christian Simplicity”⁶³, and added:

Why should I hate men because their Understandings have not been brought up like mine, have not had the same Masters, have not met with the same the Books, nor the same Company, or have not the same Interest, or are not so Wise, or are much Wiser, and therefore do not determine their School-questions to the sense of my Sect or Interest? I think they are in an Error, but they believe

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶² See also Patricia Springborg, “Hobbes, Heresy, and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55:4 (1994): 553–71 and Hoekstra, “The End of Philosophy”.

⁶³ Blount, *A Just Vindication*, 15.

me to be in the wrong; If they Erre, they do it not through Obstinacy, but Ignorance; and if God affords them his Patience, why should we not lend them ours?⁶⁴

The idea that the declaration of a doctrine as heresy is purely the machinations of clerical interest groups was clearly taken from Hobbes. Blount acknowledged this in the letter to Hobbes: “You your self have very well observed, when Reason is against a Man, a Man will be against Reason; and therefore ‘tis no wonder to see, from several Interests, so many Opinions and Animosities arise”.⁶⁵ This idea, which had been employed for the pro-toleration position a decade earlier, had a deep influence on Blount. In another letter that he sent in the same year, and which later appeared in his deistic *Oracles of Reason*, he stated “that a Temporal Interest was the great Machine upon which all human Actions moved; and that the common and general pretence of Piety and Religion, was but like Grace before a Meal”.⁶⁶ Earthly interests were the only cause behind all changes and revolutions in the world, and could alone explain “all Mutations, as well Ecclesiastical, as Civil”.⁶⁷ Thus, Blount had reached this radical conclusion already in 1678, clearly inspired by Hobbes and his views on heresy.⁶⁸

The same ideas were reflected in Hobbes’s *Last Sayings*, a text whose author was apparently close to Blount’s circle.⁶⁹ This text consisted of Hobbes’s radical legacy, and was received, if perhaps not intended, in a clear anticlerical context.⁷⁰ It should not be surprising, therefore, to find there, too, the line that “In matters of Right or Interest, where Reason is against a man, a man will be against Reason”.⁷¹ Moreover, *The Last Sayings* presented Hobbes as a genuine advocate of a free search after the truth: “Fear and Hope arising from Ignorance of the Causes of

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

⁶⁵ Blount, *Oracles*, 97–8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ In both letters from 1678, Blount also used (if not plagiarised) parts of *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism*. This text, which had not yet been published at the time, contained an anticlerical history of religion that emphasised its natural and human character, so as to include Islam. Its writer was the radical Independent and Hobbes’s disciple, Henry Stubbe. In the late 1650s Stubbe and Hobbes were corresponding, first with regard to Stubbe’s attempt to translate *Leviathan* into Latin, and then concerning his attempt to “build bridges” between Hobbes and the Independents in Oxford. Stubbe is thus yet another link between Hobbes and Blount; Blount followed Hobbes and Stubbe and employed their accounts to produce his radical arguments on religion and politics, as he expressed in these letters. See Henry Stubbe, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism* (London: Luzac, 1911); Jacob, *Henry Stubbe: Radical Protestantism and the Early Enlightenment*, 8–24, 139–43; Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 171–5.

⁶⁹ According to some accounts, Blount himself was the author of *The Last Sayings*. See chapter 1 of this thesis, section 2.2.

⁷⁰ See Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 348–51.

⁷¹ *The Last Sayings* (unnumbered).

Things, are for the most part groundless and violent, and in all matters, touching which a man hath great Hope, or great Fear, he is easily deceived; which is the Reason that the Planters of false Religions, do so industriously keep all true Science from them they intend to impose upon”.⁷² The suspicious attitude towards the church turned into a questioning of the idea of heresy, and arguably to a defence of liberty of belief and conscience: “There is no Doctrine which tendeth to the advancement of the Power Ecclesiastical, or to the reverence, or profit of the Clergy, but the contradiction thereof is by the Church of Rome made Heresie, and punished with Death”.⁷³ *The Last Sayings* showed more clearly than ever before how attractive Hobbes could be for anyone who wished to promote reform within the church. The bottom line was that priests were so self-interested and their influence was so destructive, that they had to be kept as far as possible from any political power. Truth and science were in danger and had to be saved from the claws of a church who suppressed any doctrine that could threaten its position. The outcome was an unequivocal position against persecution and hence implicitly, possibly, for toleration. Although this last step was not taken by the authors, it is notable that they wished to downplay other authoritarian aspects of Hobbes’s politics. As Parkin argues, “this may be an attempt to depoliticise a thinker who is primarily portrayed as the champion of rational religion and the opponent of priestcraft in a way that could appeal to like-minded individuals across the political spectrum”.⁷⁴ Even if the political implications remained ambiguous, the ecclesiastical line was suggestive enough.

These ideas informed Blount’s deism directly. In his deistic *Religio Laici* from 1683, Blount’s aim was “to assert an Vniversal Doctrine, such as no ways opposeth the Religion Established among us” which would bring about “the Reconciliation of those Dissenters now in England, who have of late so disturbed the Quiet of this Realm, and who, under the Pretence of Religion, would exclude all Governours but themselves”.⁷⁵ At the heart of deism from its very beginning lay an arguably distinctive Hobbesian concern about the danger of religious sectarianism

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 347–8.

⁷⁵ Blount, *Religio Laici* (London: 1683), preface.

and the harsh accusation of those who use religion as a tool to gain illegitimate political power. Furthermore, in a manner similar to Hobbes, Blount's radical observations did not necessarily translate in practice into particularly radical politics. He explicitly stated that his goal was not to discredit the existing order:

for my part, as in Civil Politicks, I would not, in this so Ancient and so Lineal a Monarchy, abandon the Beams of so fair a Sun, for the dreadful Expectation of a divided Company of Stars; so neither, in Ecclesiasticks, do I covet to be without the Pale of the Church: since, though I will not Dogmatically affirm, (as some do) That Episcopacy is Jure Divino; yet (with the Lord Bacon) I say, and think ex Anim, That it is the nearest to Apostolical Truth, and the most coherent with Monarchy...⁷⁶

Blount accused the modern priests for turning "Religion into Faction, striving to render all others of different Perswasions (though in the least matters) odious" and for being "Incendiaries, and Persecutors of one another even unto Death, for Religion and Conscience sake".⁷⁷ By advocating a minimal, rational, and moral type of religion, reduced to the practice of good and repentance, Blount hoped that there would be less occasion for disagreement and hence less violence between the various sects.⁷⁸ Following Hobbes, Blount thought that religion was a political tool and could therefore be extremely dangerous if it fell into the wrong hands, and that the persecution of so-called heresies was merely a form of battle between conflicting interests. These ideas served Blount and other Whigs like Cavendish to argue not only for the exclusion of the Catholic heir, but also for tolerationist policies and freedom of the press, indeed the ideas that Israel associates with the ecclesiastical politics of the "radical enlightenment". As Champion argues, Blount continued later to make the point that "most religion (beyond the rational injunctions of natural religion) was a heuristic device either for civic measures, or twisted to deviant purposes by a corrupt and self-interested priesthood".⁷⁹ Arguably, this also led him to portray Moses in the *Oracles* as a political legislator, as Toland did later.⁸⁰ This all was Hobbes's legacy; as Blount acknowledged elsewhere, it was Hobbes who made "Religion to be Tales publicly allow'd".⁸¹

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 25–6.

⁷⁸ See also Blount, *Oracles*, 88–96.

⁷⁹ Champion, *Republican Learning*, 185.

⁸⁰ Blount, *Oracles*, 126–34.

⁸¹ Blount, *The Two First Books of Philostratus*, 32; Lev. VI, 86.

Blount was an extremely significant writer precisely because he described religion so eloquently in earthly terms of self-interest and pursuit of power. In his numerous tracts, both Whiggish and deistic, he exposed the cynical abuses of religion that serve political goals and warned his readers about the dangers that corrupted forms of religion could pose to society. Throughout his writings, he consistently advanced a radical anticlericalism and hence an alarming call for a deep social change. Yet, nowhere did Blount suggest an alternative model, ecclesiastical or political, which would be more stable or peaceful than the existing one. This work was done, however, by subsequent deists. Whereas Toland turned in the republican direction, following Harrington, Milton, Spinoza, and arguably also Hobbes, Tindal took a more complex path, a path that also was not all that far from Hobbes's.⁸²

2.3.2. Matthew Tindal

In the 1690s, Tindal produced a series of essays that contained a systematic political theory.⁸³ Tindal appeared as a natural law thinker influenced by Grotius, as a champion of religious

⁸² I have chosen to focus on the case of Tindal because I believe that it presents us with the full complexity of the issue, that is, the deistic position which is both distinguished from, and yet indebted to, some Hobbesian ideas. Furthermore, the following analysis will provide an elaborate answer to the objection of Israel and Levitin to the association of the deists in general and Tindal in particular with Hobbes. One of the most prominent English deists, Tindal is a good study case to show what I take to be a deep connection between the ecclesiastical politics of deism and that of Hobbes. At the same time, my general argument here could also be demonstrated with regard to other deists. The case for Hobbes's political influence on Toland, for example, is made convincingly by Champion: "The most pernicious agent of tyranny in post-revolutionary England was the Church. Erastian defences of regal supremacy became (ironically) a fundamental weapon in the war against priestcraft. This was why, for example, Thomas Hobbes's writings, despite their perceived absolutist tendencies, persisted in being so popular amongst freethinking circles. Liberty could only be built on public reason rather than superstitious prejudice. Following Hobbes and Spinoza, Toland argued that the vulgar were incapable of rational conduct because they had been led astray by the corrupting influence of the Church. Since priestcraft made people ignorant, the attack upon it became a key part of a practical political agenda. A consequence of this was that Parliament and nobility, as bearers of reason and virtue, were the best agencies of republican reform". See Champion, *Republican Learning*, 248–9.

⁸³ Matthew Tindal, *An Essay Concerning Obedience to the Supreme Powers, and the Duty of Subjects in All Revolutions with Some Considerations Touching the Present Juncture of Affairs* (London: 1694); Tindal, *An Essay Concerning the Laws of Nations, and the Rights of Sovereigns with an Account of What Was Said at the Council-Board by the Civilians upon the Question, Whether Their Majesties Subjects Taken at Sea Acting by the Late King's Commission, Might Not Be Looked on as Pirates?* (London: 1694); Tindal, *An Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate, and the Rights of Mankind, in Matters of Religion. With Some Reasons in Particular for the Dissenters Not Being Obligated to Take the Sacramental Test But in Their Own Churches; and for a General Naturalization* (London: 1697); Tindal, *A Letter to a Member of Parliament, Shewing, That a Restraint on the Press Is Inconsistent with the Protestant Religion, and Dangerous to the Liberties of the Nation* (London: 1698). See these essays collected in Tindal, *Four Discourses on the Following Subjects: Viz. I. Of Obedience to the Supreme Powers, and the Duty of Subjects in All Revolutions. II. Of the Laws of Nations, and the Rights of Sovereigns. III. Of the Power of the Magistrate, and the Rights of Mankind, in Matters of Religion. IV. Of the Liberty of the Press* (London: 1709). See also Tindal, *Reasons Against Restraining the Press* (London: 1704).

toleration following Locke, and as an advocate of freedom of the press inspired by Milton.⁸⁴ Tindal's sentiment towards the priesthood was very similar to that of Hobbes and Blount. As we shall see, although these essays had been published long before Tindal wrote publicly on deism, they were closely related to his later deistic positions. Particularly illuminating is Tindal's essay from 1697, titled *An Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate, and the Rights of Mankind, in Matters of Religion. With Some Reasons in Particular for the Dissenters Not Being Obliged to Take the Sacramental Test But in Their Own Churches*. In this essay, Tindal aspired "to encourage impartial Liberty and mutual Toleration; which instead of ruining, is the only way to preserve both Church and State".⁸⁵ Tindal thought that it was necessary to deal with the power of the magistrate in religious matters in order to write about ecclesiastical power, and therefore, this was his starting point.

Tindal argued "That Government is from the People, who had a right to invest the Magistrate with a Power in those Matters of Religion which have an Influence on Humane Societies, but not in others that are merely Religious, or have no such Influence".⁸⁶ He structured this argument as follows. Men must have constituted a government by consent, in accordance with the law of self-preservation, in order to avoid the dangers of the state of nature. They then could give powers to the magistrate, but only those that they had originally possessed. The magistrate is thus responsible for determining right and wrong and for everything that concerns the welfare of society, which includes matters of religion insofar as they influence the life in society. The magistrate has the right to impose on his subjects the acknowledgment of the existence of God, which is needed for the life in a state of peace and quiet, where people keep their promises. On this basis, atheists should not be tolerated, because they could be recognised even in the state of nature as the enemies of mankind. The sovereign's power reaches its limit in those things that are "merely religious", such as the way in which people choose to worship God. One can be punished only when causing an injury to another, but this is not the case when one worships God as one sees fit, even if others think it to be wrong. In fact, the opposite is true: forcing one to join a

⁸⁴ See for example Hudson, *The English Deists*, 109–10; Stephen Lalor, *Matthew Tindal, Freethinker*, 44–8; Popkin, "The Deist Challenge", 210.

⁸⁵ Tindal, *An Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate*, 2.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

religion in which one does not believe is indeed an injury, while the preventing of that is one of the ends of society. Toleration is therefore just another form of protection of people from others who may try to invade their purely private concerns.⁸⁷ Finally, persecution rather than toleration is simply destructive for society, particularly for the happiness of the people, the preservation of which is the main aim of the magistrate. Up to this point, Tindal's theory is profoundly Lockean, as he himself acknowledged.⁸⁸ Tindal concluded:

those *Opinions* that are meerly Speculative, or Practices that are purely Ceremonial, as having no relation at all to the true Foundation of Government, ought to be tolerated; for nothing can be evidently more unjust, than for the Representative of the Civil Society (as the Magistrate is) to deprive any of the Rights of the Society, who has done nothing against its Interest: nor can any thing be more ridiculous, than to suppose a Man's Rights to the enjoyment of this Life, ought to depend upon his thinking just as the Magistrate does about Things relating to the next.⁸⁹

Tindal emphasised that God has endowed men with reason, which should serve them as the only guide to understand His laws. We are obliged to use our own reason to judge what is true and false in religious matters, so in matters that are merely religious the individual is equal to the magistrate.⁹⁰ Tindal derived the natural right to worship God according to one's conscience and conviction, "which is antecedent to all Government, and can never be subject to it".⁹¹ He explained that the magistrate could have had the right to use force in matters of mere religion either from God's positive law or from the laws of nature: "But that he has no such Power by God's positive Law, is evident from this one Consideration, that all Mankind (except the Jews whose Laws were not obligatory to other Nations) were under no Law but that of Nature, until the coming of Christ", whereas "If the Magistrate claims such a Right by the Law of Nature, that

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 3–10.

⁸⁸ Tindal stated at the beginning of his essay that he attempted to promote the subject of toleration even though it was "wholly exhausted by the three incomparable Letters concerning Toleration". See Tindal, *An Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate*, 2. Tindal also wrote to Locke in a letter from January 1697: "I should be very ungrateful, considering I have got more true and useful knowledge by your writings than by all the books I ever read besides, if I did not take this opportunity of giving you my sincere acknowledgements; and as a token of that great respect I have for you, I have sent you this Essay, in which I can not pretend to say anything new on the subject of Toleration: For I am very sensible its as impossible to add to what the Author of the letters concerning that subject has said on it, as it is to defend Persecution". See *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. 5, ed. E. S. De Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 749–50.

⁸⁹ Tindal, *An Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate*, 16.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18–20.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 23–4.

Right ought fully to be made appear, because there is no part of that Law but what is most clear and evident".⁹²

Thus, reason and natural law stood at the basis of Tindal's political theory, and they later served him to establish his deism in *Christianity as Old as the Creation*. This was not merely a rationalistic theory, but also an extremely anticlerical one, a combination that we find consistently in the deistic writers. This can be seen clearly in the part of the *Essay* in which Tindal rejected the argument that it is the right of the magistrate to use force in order to stop erroneous opinions from spreading. Tindal's answer to this argument was the typical deistic one. God gave men reason so that they can use it in examining various opinions and judging whether they are true or false. Religion is easy and plain, and should not be unintelligible nor obscure. Everyone should therefore think in religious matters for themselves.⁹³ Furthermore, it is persecution that tends to keep people ignorant and superstitious, while serving the interests of the priests who promote doctrines that advance their power at the expense of true religion:

In a word; It has been the Pride, Ambition, and Covetousness of the Priests, and the Force and Violence that by their Means and Instigation the persecuting Magistrates have used on the People to make them pay a blind Submission to the Decrees of the Clergy, that has been the Cause, not only of all the Mischief and Miseries that upon the account of Religion have happened in Christendom, but of the great Corruption of Religion; which being a thing so plain and easy in it self, and suited to the Capacity of the People, would never have been so much and so universally depraved, had there been an entire Liberty of Conscience...⁹⁴

Religion was corrupted by heathen philosophers who brought absurd metaphysical notions into the church, so thereby vain philosophy intruded Christianity:

And they that succeeded them, made it their Business to render Religion more and more mysterious and unintelligible, that the Laity should admire them for their profound Knowledge in things past their own understanding, and be wholly governed by them in Matters of Religion, as being above their Apprehensions; and so get their Consciences, and consequently their Estates in their disposal. Which Design succeeded accordingly, for we find that it was wholly left to them to make what Creeds, impose what Opinions they thought fit on the Laity; who, whenever they asserted their Natural Right of judging for themselves, and acting according to that Judgment, were by the Magistrate's Sword (always ready) forc'd to a Compliance. Thus it was that Priest-craft began, and Persecution completed the Ruin of Religion. And if this was the Method the Clergy took in the most early Times, what reason is there to suspect, that in these latter Times they are less in love with Power and Dominion?⁹⁵

Tindal's account of the emergence of priestcraft and the corruption of religion by vain philosophy resembles that of Hobbes in the fourth part of *Leviathan* as well as that of Toland's *Christianity Not*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 24–5.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 103–7.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 110–11.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 112–13.

Mysterious.⁹⁶ Tindal used this account to preach for liberty of conscience and, unlike Hobbes, also for the liberty of the press.⁹⁷ But Tindal's tolerationist political theory had another dimension which focused on the powers of the magistrate. It is here that the relationship with Hobbes is perhaps the clearest. As we have seen in the *Essay*, Tindal's discussion of the state of nature and the right of self-preservation already had a somewhat Hobbesian resonance, as did his main assertion that the civil magistrate should have the authority in all religious matters that influence society. Tindal was more explicit about that in his much more notorious work of 1706, *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted*. Indeed, it is this work that raised for some contemporaries the suspicion about Tindal's Hobbesian ecclesiology, which is at the centre of this discussion.

The Rights took the same line as the *Essay* on the corruption of Christianity and the destructive consequences of persecution. Tindal repeated his view from the *Essay*, almost word by word, that the magistrate should punish a subject who, by denying the existence and providence of God, injures the whole society. At the same time, he made it clear that the power of the magistrate does not extend to indifferent things, including the manner of the worship of God.⁹⁸ However, the magistrate does have the

Right, when the Good of the Society requires it, to cut off any one, whether Lay or Clergy, from all Church Communion, by Banishment, Imprisonment, or Death. And by virtue of this Power he can oblige any of his Subjects to serve his Country, tho that Service confine him to Places which have no Christian Church, or none he can communicate with; nay, to fight for the Safety of his Country against Men of his own Church and Religion: which shows that the Good of the Society is the supreme Law, and that all Church Considerations, as well as everything else, must give place to it; and that no Person, on any Church pretence whatever, can be exempt from the Magistrate's Jurisdiction, and consequently that there cannot be two Independent Powers in the same Society...⁹⁹

The Rights focused on the highly dangerous doctrine (in Tindal's eyes) that there can be two independent powers in the same society, namely civil and ecclesiastical. In refuting this doctrine, Tindal sought to establish the unequivocal supremacy of the civil magistrate in all things that relate to public good, including the relevant religious matters such as those described above. According to Tindal, the magistrate should instruct the church to promote only principles conducive to the

⁹⁶ For some textual examples, see chapter 1 of this thesis, sections 2.3 and 3.

⁹⁷ See also in Tindal, *A Letter to a Member of Parliament* (London: 1698).

⁹⁸ Tindal, *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted*, 13–20.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

public good, and “see that all Doctrines which make for it are to the utmost inculcated”.¹⁰⁰ The magistrate has the right to authorise ministers to speak publicly for these doctrines and to silence them when he thinks they do not so do. Finally, when “Ministers have acquir’d greater Riches, than ‘tis the Interest of the Commonwealth they should have”, then the magistrate “has a Right to rectify this Abuse”.¹⁰¹ Tindal’s anticlericalism led him to give the civil sovereign authority over the church, including what seems to be some kind of censorship. This came so close to the infamous Leviathan, that Tindal had to distinguish himself:

What’s premis’d concerning the Natural Rights of Mankind, was but necessary; lest when I show that there cannot be two Independent Powers in the same Society, and that the Magistrate has all the Power relating to Religion that Man is capable of, I might seem to give him as great a Power as Hobbs complemented him with; between whom and those who claim an Independent Power in Church matters, how much soever they may rail at him, there’s no other difference, than that he will have the Magistrate to judge for the People as well as himself, but they wou’d have both blindly follow them.¹⁰²

The great difference between Tindal and Hobbes, as Tindal perceived it, was that he preserved natural rights that Hobbes supposedly gave to the sovereign. Mainly, this was the right of everyone to judge for themselves and to follow their conscience, for example in the worship of God. This was not a negligible difference. Moreover, it brings to mind Spinoza’s assertion that the difference between him and Hobbes was “that I ever preserve the natural right intact, so that the Supreme Power in a State has no more right over a subject than is proportionate to the power by which it is superior to the subject”.¹⁰³ Thus, it is arguable that at least on this point Tindal was more of a Spinozist than a Hobbiist, in accordance with Israel’s analysis.¹⁰⁴

However, one must wonder why Tindal mentioned this difference here, whereas up to that point in the text he had not referred to any other previous writer on the matter. It is possible that Tindal genuinely disagreed with Hobbes on this issue. At the same time, it is also possible that he could see, as he admitted, that he had arrived at a result that was in some senses rather Hobbesian. Both Tindal and Hobbes despised the political aspirations of the clergy and as a

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰³ Cited in Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 50. See Spinoza, *The Correspondence*, ed. and trans. A. Wolf (London: Allen & Unwin, 1928), 269.

¹⁰⁴ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 619–22. Israel’s judgement on Tindal’s Spinozism is based largely on his contemporary critics, such as George Hickes. As we shall see, Hickes made equally strong accusations of Tindal’s Hobbism.

solution made the civil magistrate the superior authority also in the religious matters that they perceived as relevant for the public good. The only disagreement was on what constituted the public good and particularly whether the worship of God was part of it.

It seems safe to assume that Tindal knew—and perhaps so did Spinoza—that he was likely to be attacked on the basis of his resemblance to Hobbes and that this concern motivated him to distinguish himself from the latter. If this is the case, then this paragraph illuminates not only the difference between Tindal and Hobbes, but also the common ground between them which should not be overlooked. One kind of evidence for this assumption is previous cases of accusations of Hobbism, of which Tindal was evidently aware. One such case was Samuel Parker, whose attack on Hobbes ended with him being accused of advocating Hobbesian absolutism. Tindal shared some of Parker's ideas, including the adoption of the latitudinarian idea of indifferent matters in religion, but one can guess that he did not want to share Parker's fate. Indeed, in another work from 1709, *New High-Church Turn'd Old Presbyterian*, Tindal referred to Parker, who "gives our Kings as great a Power, as ever Hobbs did; for he say's, in Disputes of a publick concern, private Men are not to be directed by their own judgment, but by the Commands and Determinations of the publick Conscience".¹⁰⁵

Tindal clearly went further than Hobbes or Parker ever intended to go in a pro-toleration direction. But just as Hobbes and Parker did, Tindal gave the sovereign full discretion in all public matters. It is important to note here that this includes the determination of what actually counts as public. Tindal's references show that he was extremely aware of this similarity. Moreover, his main goal was to show that the clergy should not have an independent power in society, given the grave danger of priestcraft. In this there was no difference between him and Hobbes.

When Tindal did quote Hobbes favourably, he did so without giving him the credit: "as long as Reason is against Men, they will be against Reason. We must not, therefore, be surpris'd, to see some endeavour to reason Men out of their Reason; tho' the very Attempt to destroy Reason

¹⁰⁵ Tindal, *New High-Church Turn'd Old Presbyterian* (London: 1709), 5. See Parker, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*, 308.

by Reason, is a Demonstration Men have nothing but Reason to trust to”.¹⁰⁶ As Blount had done before him,¹⁰⁷ Tindal used this famous Hobbesian quote in 1730 to argue against those who tried to suppress human reason as well as freethinking: “not despairing, but that the Time may come again, when the Laity shall stifle every Thought rising in their Minds, tho’ with ever so much Appearance of Truth, as a Suggestion of Satan, if it clashes with the real, or pretended Opinions of their Priests”.¹⁰⁸ Tindal on the other hand embraced freethinking openly while drawing on Hobbes, some 17 years after his friend Collins called Hobbes “a great instance of Learning, Virtue and Free-Thinking”, despite his “several false Opinions”.¹⁰⁹ Even though the deists disagreed with substantial parts of Hobbes’s political theory, it seems clear that they knew that in their urgent campaign to undermine the power of priests, they had in Hobbes a most resourceful ally.

These links were recognised by contemporaries; Tindal did not manage to escape the association with Hobbes.¹¹⁰ The non-juror George Hickes in particular made this connection explicit. In the late 1680s and 1690s Hickes identified latitudinarians like Tillotson with Hobbes.¹¹¹ Following *The History of Passive Obedience*, he identified Hobbes with Milton and with de facto ideas that could support the revolution.¹¹² As we shall see, his reaction to *The Rights* was another demonstration of the way in which Whiggism, deism, and Hobbism alike were attributed to Tindal by his critics.

Hickes published his *Two Treatises, One of the Christian Priesthood, the Other of the Dignity of the Episcopal Order* as a response to the publication of *The Rights*. He urged the then anonymous author of *The Rights* to reveal his identity, presenting himself as belonging to the High Church and professing priestcraft, thus ironically borrowing Tindal’s terms. Hickes condemned the attack

¹⁰⁶ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 179.

¹⁰⁷ Others who used this Hobbesian phrase were James Harrington and Thomas Gordon. See James Harrington, *The Oceana of James Harrington and His Other Works*, 46; John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato’s Letters*, vol. 2 (London: 1723–4), 290.

¹⁰⁸ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 180.

¹⁰⁹ Collins, *A Discourse of Free-Thinking*, 170–1.

¹¹⁰ Goldie, “The Reception of Hobbes”, 612–13.

¹¹¹ George Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson* (London: 1695), 48. See also Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 390; John Marshall, “The Ecclesiology of the Latitude-Men 1660–1689: Stillingfleet, Tillotson and ‘Hobbism’”, 423–4.

¹¹² Hickes, *A Letter to the Author of a Late Paper, Entitled, A Vindication of the Divines of the Church of England, &c. in Defence of the History of Passive Obedience* (London: 1689), 5–6. See Abednego Seller, *The History of Passive Obedience Since the Reformation* (Amsterdam: 1689), preface; Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 380–1.

made by *The Rights* on the church and argued that its writer “hath licked up the Venom of Hobbes, Selden, and Marvel, and disgorged it upon the Church”.¹¹³ He stated harshly that “The Deists, and Atheists of late, by this and other such writers, have exalted their Voices against the Lord, and his Church” and that “It concerns all good Christians to distinguish themselves from them, and to resist them as they would the Devil”, because “if they can once persuade Men, that Church Government, and Discipline is nothing but Invention, and Craft of Priests, they will soon persuade them, that the Christian Doctrines are so too”.¹¹⁴ According to Hickes, these men, following their “dear Fathers”, namely Hobbes, Selden, and Spinoza,¹¹⁵ simply hated the Scripture as well as the priesthood. But their views were only table talks. In publishing them, they took liberty that “would not be suffered in any other Christian Countrey”.¹¹⁶

Hickes clearly associated Tindal’s political theory with Hobbes’s. The idea of the state of nature is a “wild Notion” that “hath been so many times unanswerably confuted by the Writers against Hobbs”.¹¹⁷ The part in which Tindal argued that the clergy had mischievously made the sovereign depend on them in ecclesiastical matters was also modelled after Hobbes in describing this “set of men” who were trying to enslave all the rest.¹¹⁸ Tindal’s twofold ambition of “defending the Natural Rights of Mankind” and “striking at the Root of Antichristian Priestcraft” would have made “Hobbs, and Blunt, and many other Sons of Belial, brag”.¹¹⁹ Finally, doctrines that promoted the power of the civil rather than ecclesiastical government were likely to result in “something like that of Erastus, or perhaps of the Super-Erastians, Hobbes, Selden, and other such Writers, who have endeavour’d to destroy the Being, and Constitution of the Church, as a Society”.¹²⁰ This was precisely what Hickes thought that Tindal had tried to do.

This is a clear evidence that Tindal and his deism were indeed associated with Hobbes, also in political terms. As Goldie argues, Tindal borrowed Hobbes’s work to construct a Whig civil

¹¹³ Hickes, *Two Treatises, One of the Christian Priesthood, the Other of the Dignity of the Episcopal Order* (London: 1707), ix.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii. See also William Carroll, *Spinoza Reviv’d ... To Which Is Added, a Preliminary Discourse Relating to the Said Books, by the Reverend Dr. George Hicks.*

¹¹⁶ Hickes, *Two Treatises*, xix.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, cv.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, clxxxviii. See Tindal, *The Rights*, 247.

¹¹⁹ Hickes, *Two Treatises*, ccxxx. See Tindal, *The Rights*, 413–14.

¹²⁰ Hickes, *Two Treatises*, 268–9.

religion that relied on “the vanquishing of priestcraft as the recovery of true religion from the sway of the scholastic ‘Antichrist’”.¹²¹ Accordingly, some Tories associated Hobbes with the “low-church Whigs”, and “Hobbism was identified with tolerant indifference, within the boundaries of sober Christian essentials, free of fanatical ‘enthusiasm’, atheism, and Romish idolatry – the marks of Enlightenment liberal Protestantism”.¹²² Along the same lines, Champion argues that as “the anticlerical deconstructor of priestly fraud”, Hobbes was used by Tindal and others “in the development of a radical history of religion that laid the foundation for the Enlightenment”.¹²³

Clearly, Tindal’s attack on the priests and his so-called Erastianism had much in common with Hobbes. Blount and his natural religion were another important link in this project, that was meant to expose the dangers of the priestcraft and reveal the errors that the clergy attempted to preserve. Hobbes, Blount, and Tindal mostly sought to remove the priests from power, so Hickes might have been right to an extent in his assessment that they simply hated the priests. But more than mere hatred, they all shared similar ideas on the uses and abuses of religion when it met politics. It is therefore not at all wrong to assume that at least on issues of ecclesiastical politics Hobbes and the deists could have agreed.

In the light of this evidence, it seems particularly odd to insist that we must distinguish between Hobbes and deists such as Tindal simply because the latter were Whigs whereas Hobbes was an absolutist, as Levitin claims. First of all, we have seen that as early as the 1650s Hobbes was associated with pro-toleration positions, and that as early as the 1680s he was even associated with some Whig causes, such as the conditional relationship between the obedience to sovereigns and their capacity to protect their subjects. We have seen that Hobbes’s idea on the influence of interests on reason was adopted repeatedly to support anticlerical and pro-toleration agendas. So were his thoughts on the relative, or rather biased, ways to define heresy, which could easily be used by anyone who wanted to oppose the persecution of opinions, indeed one of the main goals of Whigs and deists in the late seventeenth century.

¹²¹ Goldie, “The Reception of Hobbes”, 615.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 612–13.

¹²³ Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, 134. See also Hudson, *The English Deists*, 111.

Levitin's argument that there could be no direct connection between Tindal the Whig and Hobbes the absolutist unnecessarily oversimplifies this story. One does not have to go all the way to assert that Hobbes could be some kind of a Whig himself to see that Hobbes's position and his relationship with the subsequent deists are too complex to be dismissed. Moreover, when we look carefully at Tindal's political theory we can see, as could Hickee and others at the time, many links to Hobbes's politics. Not only did Tindal use the method of the state of nature and the idea of natural rights, which he extended beyond those that Hobbes identified, but he also accepted some of Hobbes's so-called absolutism. In particular, the infamous right of censorship that Hobbes gave the sovereign, making him unworthy of Israel's "radical enlightenment", was given by Tindal to the magistrate in religious matters: a necessary implication of both their theories was that the civil authority had to stop priests who were spreading doctrines that endangered the safety of the commonwealth—camouflaged with false mysteries and vain philosophy—from voicing these doctrines in public. Thus, even Tindal recognised that a certain degree of absolutism could be a useful tool in the fight against priestcraft. It is true that Tindal argued separately for freedom of the press, which Hobbes did not do, but to conclude from that they belong to two different categories of thought is simply mistaken.

We have seen that Hobbes's work was available as a resource for various political positions, and that he was associated with different views and for different purposes. He continued to prove resourceful towards the end of the century. His ideas and reception were used to support various political possibilities, some of which Hobbes might have not supported himself – but this may nevertheless show that his theory was construed in such an open-ended manner that it allowed its development in numerous directions after his lifetime. It also means that his absolutism can be interpreted in more than one way, both politically and ecclesiastically. In particular, the question of the liberties that the Hobbesian subjects get to keep and the extent of toleration that they get to enjoy remains open. The next section will go back to read Hobbes and his ecclesiastical politics in order to explore what exactly it had to offer on this question. I will suggest that through understanding Hobbes's anticlerical motivation on the one hand and his belief in human rationality on the other, we can properly see what he had in common with the

later deists and why his ecclesiology and even his politics were closer to theirs than is usually appreciated.

3. Hobbes's ecclesiastical politics

I have suggested that Hobbes's ecclesiastical politics contained elements that were deployed by deists such as Blount and Tindal regardless of his absolutism. We need therefore a better understanding of Hobbes's ecclesiology which will help us to understand why he could be attractive for the radicals of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. This section will attempt to offer such an account. Finally, I will address the issue of Hobbes's politics directly, suggesting that there might be a better story to tell about his so-called absolutism, which remains the main objection to the association between him and the English radicals.

3.1. Hobbes's ecclesiology: removing the power over conscience

As we have seen, Hobbes's ecclesiology is often associated with Erastianism, that is, the idea that the church is controlled fully by the civil sovereign.¹²⁴ The evidence for that is easily found. In chapter 39 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes defined a church as “A company of men professing Christian Religion, united in the person of one Sovereign; at whose command they ought to assemble, and without whose authority they ought not to assemble”.¹²⁵ Hobbes identified the church with the civil state entirely, arguing that “Temporall and Spirituall Government, are but two words brought into the world, to make men see double, and mistake their Lawfull Sovereign”.¹²⁶ In chapter 42, he showed at length that from the days of the Apostles, ecclesiastical power consisted only in the power to teach, to be distinguished from the coercive power, that is, to give counsels but never commands, or laws.¹²⁷ That clearly took the power away from the church and placed it in the hands of the sovereign. At the same time, it is also arguable that some of the power in religious matters remained with the subjects. Indeed, many have found some evidence for this possibility in the famous passage from chapter 47, in which Hobbes described a process which he saw happening:

¹²⁴ See for example, Martinich, *A Hobbes Dictionary*, 37; Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, 11–57. As I have mentioned earlier, this common use of the term might differ from the historical theory of Erastus.

¹²⁵ Lev. XXXIX, 732.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* XXXIX, 732–4.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* XLII, 778–80.

First, the Power of the Popes was dissolved totally by Queen Elizabeth; and the Bishops, who before exercised their Functions in Right of the Pope, did afterwards exercise the same in Right of the Queen and her Successours; though by retaining the phrase of *Jure Divino*, they were thought to demand it by immediate Right from God: And so was untied the first knot. After this, the Presbyterians lately in England obtained the putting down of Episcopacy: And so was the second knot dissolved: And almost at the same time, the Power was taken also from the Presbyterians: 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...¹²⁸

Hobbes described the untying of the three knots that restricted the liberty of men. The initial knot was tied by the Presbyters, who forced people to believe in their doctrine, or else they would face excommunication on the grounds of disobedience. An additional knot was tied when Bishops became superior to the rest of the Presbyters. The last one was tied when the Bishop of Rome became superior to the rest of the Bishops. Hobbes found hope in the contemporary Church of England, where a series of reforms denied power first from the Pope, then from the episcopacy, and lastly from the Presbyterians.¹²⁹ Consequently, people could be free again and return “to the Independency of the Primitive Christians”. It is at this point that Hobbes’s arguably Erastian ecclesiology seems to have taken a surprising turn.

This passage, omitted from the Latin *Leviathan*, has been discussed at length in the literature. Tuck has argued that it “contains the essence of Hobbes’s new ecclesiology” in *Leviathan*,¹³⁰ and that it consists of “the most passionate defense of toleration to be found in the book”.¹³¹ Curley remarks that we need a “a more nuanced verdict” in light of Hobbes’s emphasis on “the need for the sovereign to have the authority to control people’s utterances and actions, and to try to control their opinions”, but he, too, agrees: “At moments like this Hobbes does indeed sound like a saint of liberalism”.¹³² Rather than toleration, Collins sees this passage as an endorsement of Independency, that can practically look like the Congregationalist model: “only gathered, voluntary congregations exerted church authority in the absence of an alternative

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* XLVII, 1114–16.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* Malcolm identifies these changes as the Act of Supremacy (1559), the abolition of episcopacy by an ordinance of parliament (1646), and the repealing of the Act of Uniformity in the Act for the Repeal of Several Clauses in Statutes imposing Penalties for not Coming to Church (1650).

¹³⁰ Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 334.

¹³¹ Tuck, “Hobbes and Locke on Toleration”, 163.

¹³² Curley, “Hobbes and the Cause of Religious Toleration”, 325–6.

ecclesiastical authority mandated by the sovereign”.¹³³ However, others have been more cautious about the implications of this passage. As it has recently been pointed out, the conditionals at the end might show that Hobbes was still mainly concerned with the dangerous consequences that can arise from disagreement and sectarianism: “*if* it be without contention, and without measuring the Doctrine of Christ, by our affection to the Person of his minister ... is *perhaps* the best”.¹³⁴

Clearly, it is hard to conclude on the basis of this passage alone precisely which kind of ecclesiastical politics Hobbes might have been interested in. It does seem to suggest that Hobbes envisioned a society which would leave significant room for individuals to pursue their own beliefs and perhaps even for groups to perform certain practices within themselves. If so, Hobbes’s position potentially left considerable freedom in matters of religion, in anything that is not ruled by the sovereign, for individuals or congregations. And, if we assume that the Hobbesian sovereign need only worry about the survival of the subjects, it follows that they might enjoy a significant degree of autonomy in the private sphere.¹³⁵ At the same time, as Jon Parkin has argued, “it is worth noting that while Hobbes was prepared to countenance extensive prudential toleration, this was only with the precondition that the beliefs so permitted are absolutely consistent with the persistence of the state” – and this would also have an implication for the kind of beliefs that had to be tolerated: “Hobbes’ society might be appropriate for him, but in fact it is a state designed only for Hobbists, and to that extent Hobbes’ antipathy to the pluralist sectarian model is maintained”.¹³⁶

¹³³ Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, 125.

¹³⁴ My emphasis. Teresa Bejan suggests that it was “civil silence” that Hobbes attempted to promote, such that would allow differences to be contained only as long as they are not expressed, certainly not in an offensive manner. She argues that for the same reason, it was important for Hobbes to make “contumely” a violation of a law of nature. See Teresa M. Bejan, “Difference without Disagreement: Rethinking Hobbes on “Independency” and Toleration”, *The Review of Politics* 78 (2016): 1–25. For another critique of the tolerationist reading of this passage, see Martinich, *Hobbes*, 230–1.

¹³⁵ It has been recently suggested that the distinction between the private and the public spheres is better understood as a distinction between that which is visible (but not representative) and that which is representative (that is, done in the name of the commonwealth). The latter distinction does seem to be more apt in the case that “private” religious practices are performed in congregations. See Arash Abizadeh, “Publicity, Privacy and Religious Toleration in Hobbes’s *Leviathan*”, *Modern Intellectual History* 10:2 (2003): 261–91; Jeremy Waldron, “Hobbes on Public Worship”, in *Toleration and Its Limits*, eds. Melissa S. Williams and Jeremy Waldron (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 46.

¹³⁶ Jon Parkin, “Toleration”, in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Peter R. Anstey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 620–1.

Toleration, therefore, is a *possible* implication of Hobbes's theory.¹³⁷ However, it is not its main focus. Hobbes's main concern, which guided him in his ecclesiology, was his anticlericalism. Furthermore, it is arguable that this was the main force behind his politics as well. Let us look at the lines that follow the "Independency passage":

First, because there ought to be no Power over the Consciences of men, but of the Word it selfe, working Faith in every one, not alwayes according to the purpose of them that Plant and Water, but of God himself, that giveth the Increase: and secondly, because it is unreasonable in them, who teach there is such danger in every little Errour, to require of a man endued with Reason of his own, to follow the Reason of any other man, or of the most voices of many other men; Which is little better, then to venture his Salvation at crosse and pile.¹³⁸

It is here that the key for the understanding of the "Independency passage" and perhaps of Hobbes's ecclesiastical politics as a whole truly lies. Hobbes's ecclesiology was meant above all to remove the illegitimate power that the clergy claimed, even over people's minds. According to Hobbes, "whatsoever Power Ecclesiastiques take upon themselves (in any place where they are subject to the State) in their own Right, though they call it Gods Right, is but Usurpation".¹³⁹ Taking this power away from the clergy was Hobbes's primary concern; the kingdom of darkness had to be exposed before new ecclesiology could arise. Hobbes's ecclesiastical politics need to be understood in light of this goal, whereas the models that can fulfil it might vary.

Hobbes also emphasised that when it comes to one's salvation, it is only one's reason that one should follow, while being guided only by the minimalist formula that the one article of faith necessary for salvation is that "Jesus is the Christ".¹⁴⁰ Here we see that Hobbes's anticlericalism was inseparable from his hope for rationality. As we have already seen, natural reason was central

¹³⁷ This is, of course, not a new claim. The first proponent of the place that Hobbes's theory leaves for toleration was Alan Ryan. See Ryan, "A More Tolerant Hobbes?" and "Hobbes, Toleration and the Inner Life". As mentioned, Tuck has consistently supported this idea, arguing that "*Leviathan* was a book that sought to persuade its readers of two things: First, that there was no source of moral or religious judgment in a commonwealth independent of the sovereign; and second, that the very lack of such a source implied toleration". See Tuck, "Hobbes and Locke on Toleration", 169. See also Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 333–4; Tuck, "The Civil Religion of Thomas Hobbes", in *Political Discourses in Early Modern Britain*, 128; Tuck, "Hobbes, Conscience, and Christianity", in *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, 481–500. Similarly, Malcolm suggests that "Hobbes's theory allowed for a greater degree of religious toleration" as long as "the Church did not claim independent rights of action, and provided that the doctrine it taught was not subversive to the peace of the State". See Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 39. For similar accounts, see Curley, "Hobbes and the Cause of Religious Toleration", 309–34; Justin Champion, "Private Is in Secret Free: Hobbes and Locke on the Limits of Toleration, Atheism and Heterodoxy", in *Les fondements philosophiques de la tolerance*, eds. Justin Champion et al. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002), 221–53; Johann P. Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 149–56. See also Leslie Stephen, *Hobbes* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1904), 232–4.

¹³⁸ Lev. XLVII, 1116.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* XLVI, 1102.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* XLIII, 938.

to Hobbes's thought: it was a safe ground for true religion, distinguished from the false and dangerous doctrines of the schoolmen and the clergy. At the end of *Leviathan* was a call to disregard these so-called teachers whose doctrines were aimed at the "suppression of the Naturall Sciences, and of the Morality of Naturall Reason".¹⁴¹ *Leviathan* was therefore an attempt to rescue precisely these from the darkness of the "unpleasing priests". Freeing natural reason is not only necessary in order to guarantee one's salvation; it would also have far-reaching implications for the progress of the whole society:

And every day it appeareth more and more, that Years, and Dayes are determined by Motions of the Earth. Neverthelesse, men that have in their Writings but supposed such Doctrine, as an occasion to lay open the reasons for, and against it, have been punished for it by Authority Ecclesiasticall. But what reason is there for it? Is it because such opinions are contrary to true Religion? that cannot be, if they be true. Let therefore the truth be first examined by competent Judges, or confuted by them that pretend to know the contrary. Is it because they be contrary to the Religion established? Let them be silenced by the Laws of those, to whom the Teachers of them are subject; that is, by the Laws Civill: For disobedience may lawfully be punished in them, that against the Laws teach even true Philosophy.¹⁴²

At the basis of Hobbes's ecclesiology was an unequivocal position against any independent power claimed by the church. There was also an equally significant position against persecution. The civil sovereign has the right to suppress even true philosophy or science if he finds it harmful, but the church does not have the right to suppress anything. Science should be freely practiced as long as it contributes to the common good. In the Hobbesian commonwealth, Galileo would have been allowed to work without hindrance.

Hobbes's ecclesiology relied therefore on his anticlericalism but also on his hope for natural reason. The problem was that at the time Hobbes was writing, he believed that too many errors were rooted too deeply. For this reason, a powerful state or sovereign had to be the immediate safeguard from the self-interested clergy, hence Hobbes's so-called Erastianism. This, however, might have been only the first step towards a future that holds a freer vision – a vision of a better, well-functioning, society that relies on the uninterrupted rationality of its members. Once the obstacle for the use of natural reason is completely removed, some kind of toleration would be feasible and maybe even desirable. Hobbes did not commit to one ecclesiastical model or another, because this was not his urgent goal, perhaps because he knew that any such model

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* XLVII, 1116.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* XLVI, 1100–2.

would have to depend on the historical and social contexts. Hobbes's anticlericalism led him to focus on what he thought was the most effective way to neutralise the disruptive power of religion. His thoughts on natural reason make it evident that he was nevertheless optimistic as to the future. The conditional phrasing at the end of the "Independency passage" did not only express Hobbes's reluctance but also his hope – a hope that one day, it *might* "be without contention, and without measuring the Doctrine of Christ, by our affection to the Person of his minister". Then, Independency would *perhaps* be the best.

This was by no mean a story of secularisation. The problem was not religion but only the corrupted form thereof. Throughout history, civil religion has been conducive to the stability of the state, and has allowed for anything that was not contrary to it. The natural seeds of religion were nurtured "with a purpose to make those men that relyed on them, the more apt to Obedience, Lawes, Peace, Charity, and civill Society".¹⁴³ The church of Rome started to decline only when the priests revealed "their uncleannesse, avarice, and juggling between Princes",¹⁴⁴ and its self-interestedness became apparent.¹⁴⁵ In the corrupted model of religion, the selfish and greedy clergy had control over the kings, rather than being controlled by them. This model stood opposite to that of civil religion, in which religion was merely a tool in the hands of the civil sovereigns. It is clear which of the two Hobbes favoured. It was therefore radical anticlericalism, but certainly not irreligiosity, that stood at the heart of Hobbes's ecclesiology, possibly connecting him with the tradition of civil religion.

3.2. Hobbes's politics: freethinking under Leviathan

If Hobbes's ecclesiology was essentially anticlerical, one can make even a bigger claim and say that his political theory was, too. That is, the main reason that Hobbes promoted what can be seen as an absolutist regime was to avoid the danger of "seeing double". As Parkin argues for example: "It was not the precise expression of sovereignty which was at issue. The important feature of Hobbesian political theory is that the roots of that sovereignty are properly identified, that the

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* XII, 170.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* XII, 184.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* XII, 186.

truths of nature are distinguished from the false significations of priestcraft”.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, that was what Hobbes himself explained right before the “Independency” passage: “I blame those, that in the beginning, when their power was entire, by suffering such Doctrines to be forged in the Universities of their own Dominions, have holden the Stirrop to all the succeeding Popes, whilst they mounted into the Thrones of all Christian Sovereigns, to ride, and tire, both them, and their people, at their pleasure”.¹⁴⁷ Thus, even Hobbes’s infamous idea of censorship—that “it is annexed to the Sovereignty, to be Judge of what Opinions and Doctrines are averse, and what conducing to Peace”¹⁴⁸—was derived from Hobbes’s genuine concern that such dangerous doctrines were being disseminated. Hobbes might have been naive in his conviction that unlike the clergy, the sovereign would *only* be concerned with the “the procurement of the safety of the people”.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, we must at least acknowledge that this was his logic. The bigger he thought the danger of abused religion to society was, the more power he was willing to entrust to the sovereign. Hobbes’s absolutism should not be put aside while discussing his anticlericalism; it should be seen as necessitated by it.

What does Hobbes’s absolutism mean precisely? Does it truly mean, as Tindal and Spinoza seem to have thought, that the subjects are forced to give up on all of their natural rights? Does it mean, as some still insist, that Hobbes’s theory was essentially a doctrine of tyranny?¹⁵⁰

These questions deserve separate discussion. My aim in the rest of this chapter will not necessarily be to “liberalise” Hobbes – although an attempt to do so is worthwhile, as some have demonstrated.¹⁵¹ My purpose here will merely be to correct some common mistakes about Hobbes’s theory that are, at times, as old as his texts – insofar as those might serve as an objection to the association of Hobbes with later strands of thought which were arguably more “liberal” than him. One such objection, as we have seen, can be that for Hobbes the subjects of the

¹⁴⁶ Parkin, “Liberty Transpos’d”, 282.

¹⁴⁷ Lev. XLVII, 1114.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* XVIII, 272.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* XXX, 520.

¹⁵⁰ For a recent representation of this position see Charles D. Tarlton, “The Despotical Doctrine of Hobbes”, *History of Political Thought* 22:4 (2001): 587–618 and 23:1 (2002): 61–89.

¹⁵¹ See for example David Van Mill, “Civil Liberty in Hobbes’s Commonwealth”, *Australian Journal of Political Science* 37:1 (2002): 21–38; Van Mill, *Liberty, Rationality, and Agency in Hobbes’s Leviathan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

commonwealth have to give up *entirely* on their rights and liberties, on their judgement and even perhaps on some of their thoughts, and submit themselves to the sovereign and his approved doctrines unconditionally. But one does not have to go all the way to make a Hobbes a “saint of liberalism” to see that this description is far from being accurate. In particular, as it has been established, the theory of authorisation that Hobbes introduced in *Leviathan* was much more subtle than that.¹⁵²

Leviathan is made by a covenant, which is “as if every man should say to every man, I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my selfe, to this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner”.¹⁵³ The result of the covenant is that a new unity arises, which is the “artificial person” of the commonwealth. The sovereign is merely the bearer of this person, the representative of the united multitude which is now the state, or as Hobbes clarified in the epistle dedicatory, “the Seat of Power”.¹⁵⁴ The sovereign, therefore, is not to be thought of as an agent who acts in his own name. His actions and judgement are *truly* the actions and the judgements of his subjects who authorised him, with their only end being the “Peace and Common Defence” of the subjects.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, precisely because the covenant is meant to guarantee peace and defence, there are rights that can never be transferred. In these things the subjects always retain their liberties. Most important is the right to self-preservation, or self-defence, which allows subjects to refuse to hurt themselves, to confess in interrogations, and under some circumstances, to refuse to go to war.¹⁵⁶ In all of these cases, the sovereign on his part also has the right to punish the subject for the refusal. The fact remains, however, that Hobbes thought, at least from *Leviathan* onward, that in some cases the subjects simply *cannot* renounce their natural rights.¹⁵⁷ More relevant to my discussion are the liberties that Hobbes preserved, which “depend on the Silence of the Law”.¹⁵⁸ It

¹⁵² See Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol. 3, 177–208.

¹⁵³ Lev. XVII, 260.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Epistle Dedicatory, 4.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* XVII, 262.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* XXI, 336–40.

¹⁵⁷ On the evolution of this position in Hobbes, see Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 119–42.

¹⁵⁸ Lev. XXI, 340.

is perhaps here that we might find a more convincing answer to the critiques concerning Hobbes's absolutism.

The idea of the silence of the law is particularly clear when it comes to the liberties of inward expression. Hobbes argued that the law simply cannot bind anything but the actions of the subject, thus preserving the liberties of thought, belief, and conscience. The most thorough defence of these liberties is not found in the chapter of the liberty of subjects, but in the last part of *Leviathan*, "Of the Kingdom of Darkness". Thus, it was in an anticlerical context that he called it an error "to extend the power of the Law, which is the Rule of Actions onely, to the very Thoughts, and Consciences of men, by Examination, and *Inquisition* of what they Hold, notwithstanding the Conformity of their Speech and Actions", because "to force him to accuse himselfe of Opinions, when his Actions are not by Law forbidden, is against the Law of Nature; and especially in them, who teach, that a man shall bee damned to Eternall and extream torments, if he die in a false opinion concerning an Article of the Christian Faith".¹⁵⁹ Hobbes's concept of the liberty of conscience was perfectly consistent with his definition of liberty as the absence of external impediments:¹⁶⁰ it was, in fact, the liberty *from* the illegitimate clerical power.

Hobbes's theory might not have contained a developed theory of toleration, but it certainly contained a defence of what would later be called freethinking, which also emerged from anticlericalism: "A private man has alwaies the liberty, (because thought is free,) to beleieve, or not beleieve in his heart, those acts that have been given out for Miracles, according as he shall see, what benefit can accrew by mens belief, to those that pretend, or countenance them, and thereby conjecture, whether they be Miracles, or Lies".¹⁶¹ However, there was another part to this sentence, which is precisely the kind of statement that makes Hobbes seem less like the later freethinkers: "But when it comes to confession of that faith, the Private Reason must submit to the Publique; that is to say, to Gods Lieutenant".¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* XLVI, 1096.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* XXI, 324–6.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* XXXVII, 696.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

In expression, private reason must submit to the public. That said, we have already seen that this is not the case when it comes to personal salvation, where one must follow only one's reason. We have also seen that Hobbes argued that "we are not to renounce our Senses, and Experience; nor (that which is the undoubted Word of God) our naturall Reason", which should serve us for "the purchase of Justice, Peace, and true Religion".¹⁶³ At no point along the way does Hobbes think that one must neglect one's own reason. As I have argued, it is one's reason that guides one to follow the natural law and to make the covenant, the result of which is that "public reason". Even after the institution of the commonwealth, the sovereign is always bound to observe the laws of nature.¹⁶⁴ Consequently, the "Subjects owe to Sovereigns, simple Obedience, in all things, wherein their obedience is not repugnant to the Lawes of God".¹⁶⁵ The subjects must follow the rational dictates of the natural law and judge even the actions of the sovereign accordingly. They must never depart from their own reason. They must submit to the public reason simply because they "are destitute of those prospective glasses, (namely Morall and Civill Science,) to see a farre off the miseries that hang over them".¹⁶⁶ Finally, their total submission to the sovereign's judgement, just like Tindal argues, is saved for public matters, that is, matters that concern the peace and safety of the commonwealth.

Still, some would argue, there was no need for Hobbes to include the expression of faith in the category of things that concern the peace in the commonwealth. Surely, one can suggest that the idea that public worship must be coordinated by the sovereign is unnecessary if the function of the state is only to keep peace.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Hobbes's premises, which clearly served later thinkers such as Tindal, were no less important than the conclusions that Hobbes drew from them and with which Tindal might have disagreed.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, as I have suggested, there is good reason to think that with time we might need fewer restrictions upon our liberties.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* XXXII, 576.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* XXI, 330.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* XXXI, 554.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* XVIII, 282.

¹⁶⁷ As Waldron argues, "there is something just irreducibly weird and offensive" about Hobbes's doctrine of public worship. See Waldron, "Hobbes on Public Worship", 48.

¹⁶⁸ Martinich argues, for example, that "Hobbes's conclusions in religion are conservative, but he used liberal arguments". He clarifies that by "conservative" and "liberal", he means "traditional" and "innovative". See Martinich, *Two Gods*, 34.

Hobbes clearly thought that the level of restriction of liberty is contextual: “In cases where the Sovereign has prescribed no rule, there the Subject hath the Liberty to do, or forbear, according to his own discretion. And therefore such Liberty is in some places more, and in some lesse; and in some times more, in other times lesse, according as they that have the Sovereignty shall think most convenient”.¹⁶⁹ Not only do the subjects not give up on all of their rights but they might, especially in peaceful situation, enjoy a great many of them.¹⁷⁰

Malcolm argues along similar lines that “the range of things which might be forbidden by the State is almost unlimited; but Hobbes’s theory supplies no reason for the State to use this power except for the preservation of peace and prosperity. It is in the sovereign’s interest to allow individuals to pursue their own interests because this produces a more contented and prosperous population”.¹⁷¹ This was Hobbes’s consistent position from the *Elements of Law*¹⁷² until *Behemoth*: “Suppression of doctrins does but unite and exasperate, that is, increase both the malice and power of them that have already beleevd them”.¹⁷³ Unnecessary censorship is simply not beneficial. Arguing that Hobbes supported some kind of “intellectual censorship”, as Israel does, is simply mistaken. On this point Spinoza was quite close to Hobbes: “Only the preaching of seditious doctrines must be proscribed; all opinions which do not disturb the peace of the State are to be allowed”.¹⁷⁴ Spinoza, Malcolm concludes, “seems possibly to have arrived at a liberal, pluralistic theory of the State which matches the liberal elements of Hobbes’s theory”.¹⁷⁵

“Liberalising” Hobbes further remains a subject for another discussion. For my purpose here, suffice to say that Hobbes’s story was rather open-ended. There is a good reason to believe that ultimately, in a more pacified situation, when the individuals are more rational, we might need a sovereign who is less authoritarian, and who does not need to exercise his or her right of censorship very often. In any case, Hobbes was not as “brutish” an absolutist as some try to make

¹⁶⁹ Lev. XXI, 340.

¹⁷⁰ On the association of rights with liberties, see: “RIGHT, consisteth in liberty to do, or to forbear; Whereas LAW, determineth, and bindeth to one of them: so that Law, and Right, differ as much, as Obligation, and Liberty” (*Ibid.* XIV, 198).

¹⁷¹ Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 38.

¹⁷² “That to leave man as much liberty as may be ... is a duty of a sovereign by the law of nature” (EL II.9.4, 178, 180–1).

¹⁷³ *Behemoth*, 188.

¹⁷⁴ Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 50.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

him. It is true that Hobbes did not have as developed a theory of toleration as Tindal later had. It is also true that he wrote in order to achieve peace and stability rather than freedom of worship and expression. However, his defence of liberty of conscience, thinking, and belief must not be taken lightly. It was no less fierce than Tindal's and Collins's subsequent call for freethinking. For all of these thinkers, the basis for this position was a deep sense of anticlericalism, and an attempt to elevate human reason as an answer to the superstitions that were maintained by priestcraft. This was also the motive for all of them, Hobbes included, to take an extremely strong position against persecution. Hobbes believed that truth was being suppressed, but he was not without hope for the future. The knots on liberty had been untied, and religion could be brought back to take a stabilising, rather than destabilising, role in the commonwealth. The deists, often politically Whigs, carried this legacy into the eighteenth century and developed it much further. They promoted an enlightenment that undoubtedly had some of its origins in the work of Hobbes.

4. Conclusions

Richard Popkin argues that the deistic view, which helped greatly to promote toleration, was that "there was a natural knowable basis for human belief and action, a natural good way for people to live, that was being hidden and suppressed by censorship and by the unfortunate benighted powers of the clergy, and their oppressive state supporters. Mankind was being stifled by censorship and intolerance, and the potentially unlimited progress of the human spirit was being held back".¹⁷⁶ In this chapter I have tried to show that Hobbes's position often was, and indeed sometimes should be, interpreted in a similar way. As we have seen, he expressed a clear position against persecution in the closing chapters of *Leviathan*. In several other places he gave a critical assessment of heresy as a concept that is determined by the interests of those who define it.

Israel argues that Hobbes's absolutism and particularly the right of censorship that he gave the sovereign are incompatible with the spirit of "radical enlightenment". Such an assessment clearly misses an essential part of Hobbes's work. Hobbes's so-called absolutism was meant only to assure peace. In religious matters the greatest obstacle to peace was the clergy. The solution was twofold: an arguably authoritarian, or Erastian, civil power that would oversee all church matters

¹⁷⁶ Popkin, "The Deist Challenge", 210.

that have an influence on the safety of the commonwealth, combined with liberty in all other things where the law is silent, which clearly include thoughts and beliefs and might also include certain practices which are not public, that is, non-representative of the state. Especially regarding our salvation, we should follow our own reason, or else we might as well gamble on it with cross and pile.

This combination of Erastian and tolerationist elements was the essence of Tindal's political theory, which was also an important part of his deism. For him, as for Hobbes, natural reason was the answer to the dangers of priestcraft. The battle was the same battle: that of light against darkness. Tindal believed that Hobbes was wrong to take away the natural right of judgement from the individual. Even if we take into account that "Tindal specifically and deliberately differentiated his Erastianism from that of Hobbes" as Levitin reminds us,¹⁷⁷ there are a few points that are no less significant. First, Tindal had to defend himself against accusations of Hobbism, which he anticipated and which indeed were not slow to come. Second, even if Tindal was genuine, he was not completely right. Tindal insisted throughout his writings that the sovereign had the exclusive power to determine all matters that concern the public good; indeed, this was Hobbes's view. Hobbes never argued that the judgement of the individual should be taken away when the security of the commonwealth is not at stake.

The intention here is not to say that Tindal and Hobbes had the same ideas. Of course, this was not the case. It suffices to look at their views on public worship to see that. That said, this alone should not disqualify any association between them. We have seen that there are many political ideas that they did have in common. Perhaps most important, however, is the fact that they also shared common goals. As Waller commented about Hobbes, "what was chiefly to be taken notice of in his elogie was that he, being but one, and a private person, pulled-downe all the churches, dispelled the mists of ignorance, and layd-open their priest-craft".¹⁷⁸ Both Blount and Tindal, perhaps the two most important representatives of early deism, followed Hobbes precisely in this task.

¹⁷⁷ Levitin, "Matthew Tindal's Rights", 733.

¹⁷⁸ Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, vol. 1, 358.

One answer to the objection regarding the politics of Hobbes and the deists is that the deists could pick and choose what they took from Hobbes, ignoring his absolutism and taking other aspects from his writings that were more compelling to them.¹⁷⁹ This is true, but I have tried to show that there is more to this relationship than that. In particular, I have argued that politics would not necessarily have been a point of contention between Hobbes and the subsequent deists. Hobbes's anticlericalism motivated him also, and perhaps particularly, in his political theory, and we can therefore see that his absolutism was only a part of a more complex story which was meant to deal with the problem of religion gone out of control. Thus, first, subsequent deists and Tindal in particular also reached absolutist positions insofar as it served their purpose to subordinate the church to the civil magistrate. Second, Hobbes's theory could arguably also lead eventually to the more "liberal" or "enlightened" political positions of the deists regarding religious toleration and freethinking, once natural reason is free from suppression by clerics, and thus the primary obstacle to peace and stability is removed. Apart from the hints in Hobbes's writings regarding such a future, we can see as an historical evidence, that already between the 1650s and 1680s Hobbes had already been recruited, among other things, as a source for tolerationist and even Whig causes, mainly because of his powerful anticlericalism. Hobbes's theory was open-ended enough to allow such a reception, and his absolutism, contrary to the common view in the literature, was not necessarily incompatible with many of the premises of the radicals, including their freethinking.

A final question is how politically "radical" the "radicals", including the deists, actually were. As I have argued throughout this thesis, the deists did not challenge authority in the way that is often attributed to them. Blount, as we have seen, asserted explicitly that he accepted both the monarchy and the Church of England. Both Hobbes and the English deists wanted to promote a reform, not necessarily a revolution. Jonathan Israel supports the view that atheism and deism alike led to the "rejection of monarchy and all ecclesiastical authority as well as of aristocracy" – that is, "the advancement of democratic republicanism".¹⁸⁰ With early deism, however, this is not what we have seen. The deists certainly rejected ecclesiastical authority insofar as it was

¹⁷⁹ Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, 133–7; Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, 75–7.

¹⁸⁰ Israel, "Forward", in *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, xxiii.

independent. Tindal also argued for some democratic principles *within* the church. But the deists' positions were not aimed against the monarchy, nor against religion as such. It is not clear that such "democratic republicanism", if indeed it existed, applied to people like Blount, Toland, Tindal, or Collins.

It seems much more plausible to associate the deists instead with the tradition of republican civil religion. Then, again, their link to Hobbes will become clear. Like Hobbes, the deists' attack on priestcraft was not an attack on religion (and surely not on the monarchy). They all admitted that religion was an indispensable part of society and that whereas a state of sectarianism was extremely destabilising, a harmonious civil religion could have an important stabilising role in society.¹⁸¹ Whereas Blount used this idea for his deism, Cavendish used it to argue for the Exclusion of the Catholic heir in the early days of Whiggism. Both Blount and Cavendish nevertheless emphasised one important characteristic of state religion, which was clearly derived from Hobbes: unity. They did not have any problem with religion until the point in which it became a source for division and conflict in society. Thus, they did not seek to eliminate religion – rather, they sought to unify it.

The tradition of civil religion reached its culmination with Rousseau, according to whom "the philosopher Hobbes alone has seen the evil and how to remedy it, and has dared to propose the reunion of the two heads of the eagle, and the restoration throughout of political unity, without which no State or government will ever be rightly constituted".¹⁸² If it was the case that this tradition was indebted to Hobbes's ideas on the relationship between politics and religion, then the deists played a crucial role in it. In this light, Hobbes's place in the tradition of republican civil religion needs to be re-evaluated, and the deistic adaptation of Hobbes is a good place to start. The deists initiated an enlightenment which was not necessarily "radical" – but it was an enlightenment that had certainly some distinctive Hobbesian features. This enlightenment will be examined in the following conclusion.

¹⁸¹ For a similar suggestion, see Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, 277–8; and Champion, *The Pillars*.

¹⁸² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract; and, Discourses*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (London: Dent, 1973), 302. See also Goldie, "The Reception of Hobbes", 614.

Conclusion: Deism – Highway to a Hobbesian Enlightenment?

The Deist's Manual was published in London in 1705. Its author was Charles Gildon, the versatile writer, former deist and friend of Charles Blount. Gildon had a central role in the publication of the *Oracles of Reason* and subsequently of Blount's works after the latter's suicide. Following Charles Leslie's *Method with the Deists* from 1698, Gildon converted to Anglicanism.¹ The *Manual*, Gildon explained, was written after finding out his past errors, in order to fix the erroneous views, which he saw spreading.² Reconsidering his deistic past, Gildon stated that he aimed to defeat these "Hobbists of all times", to whom he attributed atheism in speculation.³

A chapter of the *Manual* concerning natural law offers a thorough discussion of Hobbes. The discourse is structured as a dialogue. Gildon's character, Christophil, is critical towards Hobbes. Another interlocutor, Pleonexus, who is on the side of the deists, claims to have the books of Hobbes and Spinoza. He clearly thinks highly of Hobbes; he wonders how the others can "think so little of a Man, the whole English World so loudly applauds"⁴ and maintains that he "can find nothing but Magnificent Expressions of the Deity in him".⁵ The image of Hobbes as represented in the *Manual* was thus multilayered. A close look at the discourse seems to suggest that Gildon recognised that Hobbes's account of natural law was rather complex, containing agreeable elements with others that were more difficult to swallow.

Following the mainstream Anglican criticism on Hobbes, Gildon argued that his state of nature was absolutely impossible in reality as well as in theory and that God Himself would not have allowed such a state to ever exist. Second, he argued, "Mr. Hobbs and his Followers, shou'd not suppose, that all Men are so fond of Fighting".⁶ Reason is given to us by God to reach happiness, so it must teach us the laws of nature, which consist of our duties to ourselves, to our

¹ See James Sambrook, "Gildon, Charles (c.1665–1724)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10720>.

² Gildon, *The Deist's Manual*, Epistle Dedicatory.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 192–3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 197.

neighbours, and to God. These duties include self-love and self-preservation, and consequently moral virtues, such as sobriety and prudence, as well as justice and benevolence.⁷

While refuting Hobbes, Gildon's account was not necessarily substantially different. In the words of Pleonexus, it is possible that "Mr. Hobbs's System of the State of War, wou'd do the Business every jot as well" given that it should lead men to choose peace.⁸ Pleonexus has a good point. Gildon claimed that men could not have been at any time irrational, but he did not argue that Hobbes's account could not work once they are rational. Hobbes's problem, therefore, is mainly that it is just not clear how men had at some point obtained reason.⁹ Moreover, Gildon admitted that the laws of nature are discoverable "by a more Divine, tho' equally rational and natural Rule of Doing as you wou'd be done by, which ev'n Mr. Hobbs allows to be the Test of all the Laws of Nature".¹⁰ Unlike Hobbes, Gildon saw society as a product of the divine design, hence a divine institution.¹¹ However, Gildon did recognise what others might have overlooked: that in Hobbes's account, too, it is human reason that should lead men to establish peace and society; and that the essence of Hobbes's natural law has a moral value, represented in the formula of the Golden Rule. Once converted, Gildon opposed Hobbes and Hobbism almost entirely. Nevertheless, when read carefully, his answer reveals a more complex attitude towards Hobbes, arguably even a mild respect where he thought that Hobbes deserved it.¹²

It is perhaps Gildon's background that makes this example a particularly illuminating demonstration of the relationship between Hobbes and deism. The positions of Hobbes and the deists, seen here as rather close to each other, were complex in that they subverted religion but did not overthrow it entirely. Their views on reason and natural law were rather conventional; their concepts of God made their views tricky, but neither Hobbes nor the deists ever denied the existence of God. Gildon was probably aware of these nuances. His *Manual* reflected a complex reception of a complex set of positions. Nevertheless, such an ambivalence was not unique to

⁷ *Ibid*, 210–30.

⁸ *Ibid*, 218.

⁹ *Ibid*, 219.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 224.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 220–8.

¹² See also Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 406–7.

Gildon. At the time, Hobbes was the admired villain, almost a symbol that must be attacked as it served the interest of the writer. The deists, it seems, were to become the next generation of villains.

1. Hobbes and deism

The main argument of this thesis has been that the relationship between Hobbes and the deists was closer than usually appreciated. I have taken deism to be a distinctive historical tradition with a definable philosophical content, while paying close attention to the complexities of this concept and its different versions for different thinkers. Broadly speaking, deists advocated natural—rather than revealed—religion. They believed that the clergy deliberately kept religion mysterious in order to deceive the laity and thereby gain political power. The deists attempted to demystify religion and promoted a rational approach to religion, religious toleration, and freethinking. Arguably, this has made them plausible originators of an enlightenment project. Their views also attracted numerous attacks from critics who accused the deists of being covert atheists like Hobbes. I have argued that Hobbes and the deists shared similar political goals and that their philosophy and theology were much more sophisticated than their contemporaries suggested.

Once seen in their full complexity, the positions of Hobbes and deism prove to be close in many respects. All discredited as atheists, none of these thinkers was, in fact, an atheist – at least not from what we can read in their texts. Arguably, they did something that many of their contemporaries either could not understand or simply refused to understand. Hobbes cast serious doubt on our ability to believe in revelation which takes place in present times. Anyone who pretends to have had a revelation might lie – and people *would* lie as it serves their interests. The deists continued this line of thought and radicalised it. The very fact of present revelation became questionable. Moreover, it became redundant. Revelation could only confirm what natural reason tells us. If there is a contradiction, reason should always take priority. This argument was much more explicitly heterodox than Hobbes's. The motive however was precisely the same. The fairy-tales of revelation were part of priestcraft and as such, they were used by the corrupt clergy who endlessly sought to gain and maintain an independent power. The deists' war against priestcraft was Hobbes's war against the kingdom of darkness taken one step further.

It has been established that Hobbes provided some important tools for the deists, who combined his ideas with other helpful available sources, including those of the other main villain of the seventeenth century, Spinoza. The inquiry into the Scripture, the historical questioning of its authorship and authority, and the derivation of various political conclusions from biblical stories, are good examples of the methods that people like Blount and Toland took from Hobbes and Spinoza. Hobbes's materialism and determinism have also informed the views of writers like Anthony Collins on the questionable immortality of the soul and free-will. In this work, I have tried to show that there are many more, often unnoticed, ways, in which Hobbes influenced the subsequent deists.

In order to show that, I started by arguing in the first chapter that the deists were relying on Hobbes consciously and consistently. I have shown that there are multiple cases in which the deists expressed positions that were distinctively Hobbesian, and even some favourable views on Hobbes, in a period when doing so was highly discouraged. The case of Blount is perhaps the clearest. Blount started producing his writings in Hobbes's own lifetime. His attempt to make contact with Hobbes provides us with an evidence not only for his admiration, but also for the particular themes in Hobbes with which Blount sympathised. Among other things, Blount took from Hobbes the idea that the evolution of religion needed to be examined in light of human interests. As we have seen, this idea shaped Blount's views—including the political, Whiggish, ones—in the years to come. Furthermore, Since Blount's style of writing often included copying passages from his sources (at times acknowledged, and at others less so), it is relatively easy to see that he borrowed some of Hobbes's ideas in full. This is not at all to say that Hobbes was Blount's only source. Indeed, he was not. As we have seen, Herbert, Spinoza, and Stubbe are just a few examples of other thinkers who played an equally significant role in shaping Blount's views. As I have suggested, it is plausible that Blount's great contribution was in the synthesis of various ideas.

The case of Hobbes and Blount transcends the relationship between a philosopher and his somewhat eclectic disciple. Although often dismissed in the literature as a marginal character, Blount was a key figure in early English deism. In fact, he became the first public deist in his reply to Dryden in 1683. Moreover, what is often referred to as the deist controversy of the 1690s had

its roots in Blount's *Oracles*, published three years before Toland's more famous *Christianity Not Mystrious*. Therefore, Hobbes's unmistakeable impact on Blount signalled his contribution to deism as it emerged from that point onward.

Indeed, as we have seen, the subsequent deists—especially Toland, Tindal, and Collins—were indebted to Hobbes in various ways and were repeatedly associated with Hobbes by their critics. Above all, they were united against a mutual enemy. For all of them, anticlericalism stood at the very heart of their views on religion and politics. By the time that they were writing, however, Hobbism had become a rather explosive territory, often standing for downright atheism. The deists, who faced exactly the same charge, evidently associated themselves with Hobbes in some respects but had to distance themselves from him at the same time. We can see this twofold dynamic with each member of this trio. Toland did not mention Hobbes in his *Christianity Not Mystrious*, but he did defend him in his anonymous *Two Essays*¹³ which were written at a similar time and expressed similar positions. Tindal arrived at a Hobbesian position against the existence of two independent powers in society, but immediately went out of his way to distinguish himself from Hobbes in a manner which at least raises some suspicion. Collins, who saw in Hobbes an exceptional model of wit and writing, could not compliment Hobbes for his freethinking without mentioning his “several false opinions”. As I have suggested, it is certainly plausible that the deists had substantial disagreements with Hobbes, but it is also crucial to remember that they already went far enough in following a thinker whose reputation was even worse than theirs.

On some topics, Hobbes's positions were more subtle than those of subsequent deists. At times, he chose not to elaborate, or “durst not write so boldly”. Yet, even in some of these cases, a closer look can reveal that he went quite a long way towards radical positions, and that the deists can be seen as developing hints that he had provided. Such was the case of Hobbes's God, which I explored in the second chapter. I have shown that in his early writings, Hobbes discussed God only insofar as it served his arguments. It is not coincidental, therefore, that he dealt with the topic at an exceptional depth in a discussion with Bishop Bramhall that was not supposed to be published. Hobbes's side of this correspondence was a serious philosophical defence of a

¹³ *Two Essays Sent in a Letter from Oxford to a Nobleman in London*.

determinist position that objected to free-will, among other reasons, for being inconsistent with God's prescience. Until the 1650s, Hobbes's God was therefore a first cause in endless chains of necessary causes, a workman, even a watchmaker. In the 1660s, Hobbes was forced to elaborate on his idea of God and to try to reconcile it with his denial of incorporeal substances. Again, Hobbes's attempt was serious. He argued that God could be a body, but surely not an ordinary one. The result of this account, which at times seems unintended or at least not quite thought through, was the corporeal, and arguably ethereal, God, who is a kind of spirit. In the hands of the radicals of the late seventeenth centuries, these deterministic, mechanistic, and materialistic ideas, were highly useful. Toland simply went one step further in making matter to be in motion, thus possibly solving the problem of Hobbes who made God the first mover but also an eternally moved matter. Later on, such positions were associated with the deists by the anxious Newtonians who saw how the newly discovered physical laws were going to serve the view of the non-providential God. There are two interesting points about these debates: first, that for people like Samuel Clarke, there was very little difference between Hobbes, Spinoza, Toland, and the rest of the non-interventionist deists; and second, that the very accusations made by Clarke and others are precisely what pushed deists like Collins to defend the feasibility of these non-interventionist ideas.

Most importantly, I have argued that what Hobbes and the deists were doing was similar in one central way. None of them was trying to deny the existence of God, nor, in fact, His providence. Their goal was one: to disprove any story about God that could benefit only the storyteller. Hobbes denied the linguistically absurd idea of incorporeal substances, while the deists contradicted the mysteries in religion, because these had been brought into religion from the schoolmen, together with some pagan ideas and demonology, by the clerics who corrupted Christianity. It was this precise position that led Tindal to attribute God's work with consistency in 1730. Like Hobbes, Tindal did not want to say anything that would diminish God. Nevertheless, he knew that the idea that God commands just for commanding-sake, in his words, would profit only those who usurped the means to interpret God's commands.

Nevertheless, it was not at all surprising that their positions were followed by particularly heated responses. Hobbes and the English deists alike used an exceptionally critical kind of

rhetoric. As James Herrick argues, the deists' method was aimed to reach and persuade a popular, literate though not necessarily especially well-educated, audience. It was due to this that their assault on revelation and miracles was so exceptionally outright.¹⁴ Hobbes's writings were clearly also meant to be read (also) by public audience. As I will discuss below, they were arguably designed to enlighten the readers. As Malcolm shows, Hobbes, too, "wanted to disabuse the general public, not just to share his superior insight with the like-minded".¹⁵ It was also Hobbes's bold rhetoric, addressed to the common people, and not only the content of his views, that was repeated by the deists.

In the third and fourth chapters, I have argued that the common anticlerical motive of Hobbes and the deists led them to similar positions regarding human reason and even regarding some aspects of politics. I have shown that Hobbes and the deists emphasised natural reason as the main tool in the hands of the laity, and indeed as their own tool to expose and destroy priestcraft. For Hobbes, natural reason was the word of God, and had to be employed to reach justice, peace, and true religion. As such, it laid the foundation for his entire political theory. Particularly when it came to their salvation, men had to trust only their own reason, while their faith could be reduced to the minimal, easily understood, article, that Jesus is the Christ. Any further complication is unnecessary for true religion and would only serve interested parties. For the deists, too, this was the case. Since Blount's writings, their idea was that religion had to be simple and reasonable. True religion required an easy understanding; it required asking questions, and not following others blindly. Above all, it required leading a moral life. Following Hobbes's anticlericalism, while borrowing from Locke's theory of knowledge, the deists shifted the concept of natural reason. It was certainly God-given, but it was no longer a divine spark. It was more of a simple procedure—a calculation in Hobbes's terms—that *everyone* could perform at a basic level and to a sufficient degree in order to live. In short, it became purely human. No longer could (false) prophets claim a better knowledge than the rest of mankind. Emphasised by Hobbes and warmly adopted by the deists, the concept of natural reason helped, in Hoekstra's words, to

¹⁴ Herrick, *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists*, 43–9.

¹⁵ Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 543.

disarm the prophets.¹⁶ As I have shown in the fourth chapter, politically, this idea was translated at times by the deists into theories of toleration, and surely into the theory of freethinking. Hobbes, clearly, did not fully share these theories. However, if we read Hobbes's political theory as primarily anticlerical, we can see that for him as for the deists it was mainly a story of *liberation* from oppressive powers. We can thus see how Hobbes's theory was meant to lead to a better future, a future that could *possibly* entertain some of the deist visions.

2. Hobbes, enlightenment, and utopia

The difference between the political visions of Hobbes and the deists was not necessarily that the former prescribed monarchy and the others promoted a republic. Hobbes himself certainly argued that monarchy was better than other forms of government, namely aristocracy and democracy, but he admitted that this was a matter of preference rather than proof.¹⁷ As we have seen, the deists were also, to some extent, on the fence. As Roger Emerson puts it, they “were alleged to be republicans but the republic most approved by them was ruled by William, Anne, and George”.¹⁸ The main political difference between Hobbes and the deists was in their estimation of the readiness of people for self-governance; in Hobbes's view, a longer process of rational development was due.

Deists like Tindal and Collins believed that the time for toleration and freethinking had come. In their writings, they were primarily promoting liberties: freedom of expression and freedom of the press; freedom of worship and freedom of religion (that is, to choose a religion). In this sense, they seemed to be following Milton, Locke, and Spinoza, much more than Hobbes. Whereas Hobbes's main concern was to ensure total obedience to the civil sovereign, the deists advocated a more limited form of sovereign power. Nevertheless, their projects were two sides of the same coin. They all aspired to liberate human rationality and to provide it with the ultimate environment in which it could flourish. The difference was that in Hobbes's account this process

¹⁶ Kinch Hoekstra, “Disarming the Prophets: Thomas Hobbes and Predictive Power”, *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 21:1 (2004): 97–153.

¹⁷ See for example in *De Cive*: “For though I have deployed some arguments ... to press the point that Monarchy has more advantages than other forms of commonwealth (the only thing in this book which I admit is not demonstrated but put with probability), I say everywhere explicitly that every commonwealth must be allowed supreme and equal power” (DCv, Preface to the readers, 14).

¹⁸ Emerson, “Latitudinarianism and the English Deists”, 44.

had to go through the urgent establishment of an all-powerful sovereign who would first secure peace. Even under such sovereign, subjects can enjoy the liberties of thought, belief, and conscience; and once stable peace is finally achieved, further liberties can surely be granted. As we have seen, Hobbes admitted that the subjects' liberties depend on the silence of the law, the scope of which was to be determined according to the circumstances – that is, depending on how pacified the situation is.

It is often overlooked that promoting an absolutist regime was not the only task that Hobbes undertook. Perhaps it was not even his primary task. Although it has been long thought that the first two books of *Leviathan* are enough to learn Hobbes's political theory in full, it is arguable that the rationale behind Hobbes's project is explained in the fourth and perhaps most important book of *Leviathan*, "Of the Kingdom of Darkness". In this book, Hobbes tackled what for him was the main cause for social instability, that is, the false and dangerous doctrines that brought people to disobey their lawful sovereigns. He corrected the long-lasting errors of vain philosophy and argued against the suppression of true philosophy. More explicitly than anywhere else in his writings, he blamed the Catholics and Presbyterians for being the authors of darkness, arguing that the ecclesiastics, just like the fairies, deprive people of their natural reason. Nonetheless, he also laid the foundations for true philosophy to thrive, that is, under the commonwealth, in terms of peace and leisure. Hobbes's attempt to promote philosophy, to which he was devoted himself, was not a by-product of his theory; it was his main goal, namely, nothing short of the victory of light over darkness. As he argued in his epistle dedicatory to *De Corpore*, in which he presented natural philosophy to his readers:

It is like that *Empusa* in the Athenian comic poet, which was taken in Athens for a ghost that changed shapes, having one brazen leg, but the other was the leg of an ass, and was sent, as was believed, by Hecate, as a sign of some approaching evil fortune ... I intend now, by putting into a clear method the true foundations of natural philosophy, to fright and drive away this metaphysical *Empusa*; not by skirmish, but by letting in the light upon her.¹⁹

Hobbes's project, as he himself described it, was therefore a project of enlightenment. He did not stop at providing a recipe for absolutist regimes. He offered a deeper, much more far-reaching, programme. As Johnston has suggested, it was a programme of cultural transformation, aimed to

¹⁹ DCo, Epistle Dedicatory, x–xi.

expel the magical and superstitious elements in Christianity and therefore to eliminate the irrational beliefs and fears that had come to possess the multitude. However, I have argued that this was not a straightforward process of enlightenment, but a developmental one. Natural reason is implanted in all men, but at first it is gross and limited. Clearly, however, it is sufficient to enable men to grasp the law of nature that requires them to establish the commonwealth. Only then, can the conditions for the cultivation of natural reason be fulfilled, and the cultural transformation completed.

What happens once this vision is realised? Here, again, Hobbes seems to have provided only hints rather than a fully worked out account. Hobbes simply chose to focus on preventing a catastrophe rather than entertaining speculations about the future. However, this fact must not distract us from seeing that Hobbes thought that he was about to change the course of history. As he argued in his epistle dedicatory to *De Cive*, it was the turn of philosophers to follow the geometers, because then

I do not know what greater contribution human industry could have made to human happiness. For if the patterns of human action were known with the same certainty as the relations of magnitude in figures, ambition and greed, whose power rests on the false opinions of the common people about right and wrong, would be disarmed, and the human race would enjoy such secure peace that (apart from conflicts over space as the population grew) it seems unlikely that it would ever have to fight again.²⁰

Once “ambition and greed”—qualities that for Hobbes were chiefly priestly—are eliminated, a much better future is awaiting, perhaps even in the international arena.²¹ Reason and philosophy are the keys to achieve peace; stable peace is the key for the continual development of reason and philosophy. Once survival is assured and harmful persecution, driven only by interests, has stopped, human kind is capable of achieving and enjoying many more benefits.

This can be the beginning of a utopian vision. As Richard Tuck argues, “we have every reason to suppose that Hobbes did believe that a proper understanding of his political principles would lead to something very different from the government of a Louis XIV or a Charles II”.²² But what was it precisely that Hobbes might have envisioned? Tuck’s account seems to suggest that Hobbes’s utopian vision consisted of men leading a life free from passions and fears, having

²⁰ DCv, Epistle Dedicatory, 5.

²¹ See also Malcolm, “Hobbes’s Theory of International Relations”, in *Aspects of Hobbes*, 432–56.

²² Tuck, “The Utopianism of Leviathan”, 129.

renounced their judgement to the sovereign and followed only the law of nature. It is not clear, however, that this was indeed Hobbes's idea. As Malcolm claims, it might also be the case that passions will forever remain and so will the need for law and punishment, but these would rather be used to invoke only fears that are justified by reason.²³ Moreover, although Tuck points out to Hobbes's possible Baconian utopianism, he does not explain what exactly he means by a utopia. A theory of Hobbesian utopianism needs therefore a stronger theoretical basis.

We can turn to David Leopold's recent suggestion to understand utopia as "a detailed description of an (as yet) unrealized ideal society", and utopianism as "the activity of providing or promoting such descriptions".²⁴ An ideal society, Leopold argues, can mean "the institutions and ethos that are "the best we can imagine," "the best that are feasible," or "the best that can be reached from where we are currently situated"". ²⁵ Now, Hobbes clearly did not provide a detailed description, but he did provide some ideas as to how his "(yet) unrealized ideal society" would look like. It would clearly be a society in which individuals are less superstitious and more rational; and consequently, philosophy and sciences are advanced, inventions are made, and industry is improved. The "men" in Hobbes's utopia would stop worrying about staying alive and would be able to enjoy a good quality of life. As I have argued, Hobbes revealed in *De Corpore* precisely the image of such a society, which is the exact opposite of the state of nature: a society in which individuals enjoy all of the things that they lacked in the state of continual war, that is, "the greatest commodities of mankind". They would, therefore, gain "the arts; namely, of measuring matter and motion; of moving ponderous bodies; of architecture; of navigation; of making instruments for all uses; of calculating the celestial motions, the aspects of the stars, and the parts of time; of geography".²⁶

Hobbes did not prescribe an ecclesiastical or political model to supplement this utopia (perhaps, in Leopold's term, he was in fact a utopophobe). However, if we follow his primarily

²³ Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 544. Malcolm makes a similar case also with regard to sexual desires in Hobbes's theory: the desires will never disappear, but the resulting behaviour might be transformed and civilised in society. See Malcolm, "Hobbes and Sexual Desire", *Hobbes Studies* 28 (2015): 77–102.

²⁴ David Leopold, "On Marxian Utopophobia", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 54:1 (2016): 113.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁶ DCo I.1.7, 7.

anticlerical premises we might be able to think of some ideal principles. Hobbes's ultimate society would be a society in which religion is maintained under the rule of the civil sovereign, a society with civil religion that fulfils a uniting and stabilising role. *Leviathan* would be taught in universities alongside geometry, and the students would learn to think of the world in the "right" way (materially, for example). Subsequently, it would be a society that allows intellectual freedom and freethinking, because these will be subjected to the methodical, uninterrupted, operation of human reason; it would be a society with minimal persecution, that enjoys a continual progress of sciences. Furthermore, subjects would not see double anymore and understand better what is conducive to and what is disruptive of the commonwealth. Reason would no longer be against men, and so men would no longer turn against their reason. Subsequently, they *might* not have to renounce their judgements entirely, because those would come near to that of the sovereign; further liberties, such as freedom of expression, *might* follow; peaceful toleration *might* be enabled; and religious independency *might* be "perhaps the best" model (which, for Leopold, can constitute a utopia). It *might* lead, in other words, to a future that matches the deist story quite closely.

The story of the Hobbesian future is open-ended. My main argument is that it is a story of a process, indeed, a story of enlightenment. It is somewhat of an injustice that Hobbes was made to seem so pessimistic. He was seriously worried about what he saw around him, but he was clearly optimistic at the same time, believing that there was much hope for humankind once it is set on the right track. This was Hobbes's historic role, as he perceived it. He simply had to be hopeful. Thus, confident and reluctant at the same time, he also expressed his "hope, that *one time or other*, this writing of mine, *may* fall into the hands of a Sovereign, who will ... convert this Truth of Speculation, into the Utility of Practice".²⁷ The complex ways in which hope is expressed in Hobbes's theory may prove an interesting subject for separate research.

Jonathan Israel has argued that Hobbes's pessimism disqualifies him as a member of the "radical enlightenment". I have shown that Hobbes was not a pessimist and that his theory contained distinctive elements of enlightenment. Indeed, Hobbes might not have been part of the "radical enlightenment" which for Israel "rejected all compromise with the past and sought to

²⁷ Lev. XXXI, 574. My emphasis.

sweep away existing structures entirely”.²⁸ However, neither were the English deists members of this club when defined as such. Deism needs to be distinguished from atheism precisely because deists did not *simply* reject the past. They engaged with this past and tried to offer an account of religion which would do justice to the pure, original, and simple spirit of Christianity. Their creed was universal, minimal, rational, and moral, hence the essence of *true* religion. They realised how powerful religion was and indeed how resourceful it was. Their writings included comparative accounts of various religions and thorough analyses of the history of the church and the biblical stories. They all thoroughly engaged with the sacred at the very same time that they were making their radical arguments against revealed religion and in favour of the absolute rule of human reason. As I have argued, their political accounts were also rather complex. As best demonstrated in the case of Tindal, this was not an account that merely swept away existing structures. He advocated toleration but retained traditional authority, be it the monarch or the parliament.

Based on the motives of the deists and the historical context in which they were operating, we can conclude that they were not completely irreligious, but not traditionally religious either. They were operating within a Christian framework, and at the same time they transformed Christianity dramatically. It is precisely this complexity that makes the deists so interesting and historically valuable. The deists generated a paradigm shift and initiated the transition from traditional to radical world views – an argument that can be extended so as to include Hobbes. Hobbes and the deists initiated an enlightenment, perhaps an early enlightenment. It was an enlightenment that combined traditional with radical premises. It was not Israel’s “radical enlightenment”, but clearly also not exactly a “clerical enlightenment”. Theirs was an *anticlerical enlightenment*: an enlightenment that was aimed against the self-interested priests, but against them alone.

Common to all of them was the idea that the clergy posed the most pressing threat to the stability of society. Their various views derived primarily from this premise. Within their views, there were of course considerable differences. Particularly, it would not be accurate to argue that Hobbes and the deists expressed identical positions. Hobbes was not himself a deist, and unlike

²⁸ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 11.

these subsequent thinkers, he was relatively careful and arguably more faithful in his theological discussions. As I have argued, his politics *could* lead *eventually* to a deist future of freedom and toleration, but that was not his main concern. Yet, as it was claimed in the anonymous *Visits from the Shades*, had Hobbes not written at all, the deistic texts of the 1690s might have never seen the light. Hobbes could not know with any certainty who would benefit from his doctrine, but he did know that it was innovative. The deists identified everything that was, indeed, innovative in Hobbes. He was their resource and ally in the historic battle against priestcraft. Together with others, and primarily Spinoza, Hobbes was *one* of the fathers of deism; and deism was *one* possible highway to what can be seen as a multifaceted Hobbesian enlightenment.

Bibliography

Primary works

- Anon. *The Last Sayings, or Dying Legacy of Mr. Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*. London: 1680.
- Anon. *Memorable Sayings of Mr. Hobbes in His Books and at the Table*. London: 1680.
- Anon. *Visits from the Shades*. London: 1704.
- Anon. *The Religious, Rational, and Moral Conduct of Matthew Tindal, L.L.D. Late Fellow of All Souls College in Oxford. In a Letter to a Friend. By a Member of the Same College*. London: 1735.
- Anderson, Abraham. *The Treatise of the Three Impostors and the Problem of Enlightenment: A New Translation of the Traité des Trois Imposteurs* (1777 Edition). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997.
- Aubrey, John. *Brief Lives*. Edited by Andrew Clark, vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898.
- Aurelius, Marcus. *Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*. Translated by Francis Hutcheson and James Moor. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Incorporated, 2007.
- Bayle, Pierre. *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr Peter Bayle. The Second Edition, Carefully Collated with the Several Editions of the Original*. London: 1734–8.
- Bentley, Richard. *The Folly of Atheism*. London: 1692.
- Bentley, Richard. *Matter and Motion Cannot Think*. London: 1692.
- Bentley, Richard. *Remarks upon a Late Discourse of Free-Thinking*. London: 1713.
- Birchley, William [John Austin]. *The Christian Moderator: Or, Persecution for Religion Condemned, by the Light of Nature. Law of God. Evidence of Our Own Principles*. London: 1651.
- Birchley, William [John Austin]. *The Christian Moderator. Third Part. Or, the Oath of Abjuration Arraign'd by the Common Law and Common Sence, Ancient and Modern Acts of Parl. Declarations of the Army, Law of God and Consent of Reformed Divines*. London: 1653.
- Blount, Charles. *Anima Mundi, or, an Historical Narration of the Opinions of the Ancients Concerning Man's Soul After This Life*. London: 1679.
- Blount, Charles. *An Appeal from the Country to the City, for the Preservation of His Majesties Person, Liberty, Property, and the Protestant Religion*. London: 1679.
- Blount, Charles. *A Just Vindication of Learning, or, an Humble Address to the High Court of Parliament in Behalf of the Liberty of the Press by Philopatris*. London: 1679.
- Blount, Charles. *Great Is Diana of the Ephesians, or, the Original of Idolatry Together with the Politick Institution of the Gentiles Sacrifices*. London: 1680.
- Blount, Charles. *The Two First Books of Philostratus, Concerning the Life of Apollonius Tyaneus Written Originally in Greek, and Now Published in English: Together with Philological Notes upon Each Chapter*. London: 1680.
- Blount, Charles. *Miracles No Violations of the Laws of Nature*. London: 1683.

- Blount, Charles. *Religio Laici Written in a Letter to John Dryden, Esq.* London: 1683.
- Blount, Charles. *Oracles of Reason ... In Several Letters to Mr. Hobbs and Other Persons of Eminent Quality, and Learning.* London: 1693.
- Blount, Charles. *Reasons Humbly Offered for the Liberty of Unlicens'd Printing.* London: 1693.
- Blount, Charles. *King William and Queen Mary, Conquerors, or, a Discourse Endeavouring to Prove That Their Majesties Have on Their Side, Against the Late King, the Principal Reasons That Make Conquest a Good Title.* London: 1693.
- Blount, Charles. *The Miscellaneous Works of Charles Blount.* Edited by Charles Gildon. London: 1695.
- Bramhall, John. *Castigations of Mr. Hobbes with an Appendix Concerning the Catching of Leviathan, or the Great Whale.* London: 1658.
- Burton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy. Vol. 3: Text.* Edited by Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling and Rhonda L. Blair. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Cavendish, William. *Reasons for His Majesties Passing the Bill of Exclusion in a Letter to a Friend.* London: 1681.
- Carroll, William. *Spinoza Reviv'd: Or, a Treatise, Proving the Book, Entitled, The Rights of the Christian Church, &C. (in the Most Notorious Parts of It) to Be the Same with Spinoza's Rights of the Christian Clergy, &C. and That Both of Them Are Grounded upon Downright Atheism. To Which Is Added, a Preliminary Discourse Relating to the Said Books, by the Reverend Dr. George Hicks.* London: 1709.
- Collins, Anthony. *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions.* London: 1707.
- Collins, Anthony. *Priestcraft in Perfection.* London: 1710.
- Collins, Anthony. *A Vindication of the Divine Attributes.* London: 1710.
- Collins, Anthony. *A Discourse of Free-Thinking.* London: 1713.
- Collins, Anthony. *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty.* London: 1717.
- Collins, Anthony. *An Historical and Critical Essay, on the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.* London: 1724.
- Collins, Anthony. *A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion.* London: 1724.
- Collins, Anthony. *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered.* London: 1726.
- Collins, Anthony. *A Discourse Concerning Ridicule and Irony in Writing.* London: 1729.
- Collins, Anthony. *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty, Republished with a Preface by Joseph Priestley.* Birmingham: 1790.
- Clarke, Samuel. *The Works of Samuel Clarke*, vol. 2–4. London: 1738.
- Cumberland, Richard. *De Legibus Naturae.* London: 1672.
- Dryden, John. *Religio Laici, or, a Layman's Faith.* London: 1682.

- Eachard, John. *Mr. Hobbs's State of Nature Considered in a Dialogue between Philautus and Timothy*. London: 1672.
- Eachard, John. *Some Opinions of Mr. Hobbs Considered in a Second Dialogue between Philautus and Timothy by the Same Author*. London: 1673.
- Gildon, Charles. "The Deist's Plea". In *Miscellany Poems upon Several Occasions Consisting of Original Poems*. London: 1692.
- Gildon, Charles. *The Deist's Manual*. London: 1705.
- Grey, Anchitell. *Debates of the House of Commons from the Year 1667 to the Year 1694*. London: 1763.
- Grotius, Hugo. *Rights of War and Peace*. Edited by Richard Tuck. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Inc., 2005.
- Harrington, James and Henry Ferne. *Pian Piano*. London: 1656.
- Harrington, James. *The Oceana of James Harrington and His Other Works*. Edited by John Toland. London: 1700.
- Harris, John. *The Notion of a God, Neither from Fear nor Policy*. London: 1698.
- Harris, John. *The Atheist's Objections, Against the Immaterial Nature of God, and Incorporeal Substances, Refuted*. London: 1698.
- Harris, John. *A Refutation of the Objections Against Moral Good and Evil*. London: 1698.
- Harris, John. *Immortality and Pride, the Great Causes of Atheism*. London: 1698.
- Herbert, Edward. *De Causis Errorum: Una cum Tractatu de Religione Laici, et Appendice ad Sacerdotes*. London: 1645.
- Hebert, Edward. *De Veritate*. Translated by Meyrick H. Carré. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1937.
- Hickes, George. *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*. London: 1695.
- Hickes, George. *A Letter to the Author of a Late Paper, Entituled, A Vindication of the Divines of the Church of England, &c. in Defence of the History of Passive Obedience*. London: 1689.
- Hickes, George. *Two Treatises, One of the Christian Priesthood, the Other of the Dignity of the Episcopal Order*. London: 1707.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *An Historical Narration Concerning Heresie, and the Punishment Thereof*. London: 1680.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *A True Ecclesiastical History*. Translated by John Rooke. London: 1722.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*. Edited by William Molesworth. London: 1839–45. 11 volumes.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *The Elements of Law: Natural and Politic*. Edited with a preface by F. Tönnies. London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co, 1889.

- Hobbes, Thomas. *Thomas White's De Mundo Examined*. Translated by Harold W. Jones. London: Bradford University Press in association with Crosby Lockwood Staples, 1976.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*. Edited by Noel Malcolm. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. 2 volumes.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *On the Citizen*. Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Hobbes, Thomas and John Bramhall. *Hobbes & Bramhall on Liberty & Necessity*. Edited by Vere Chappell. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *A Dialogue between a Philosopher and a Student, of the Common Laws of England; Questions Relative to Hereditary Right*. Edited by Alan Cromartie and Quentin Skinner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Behemoth, or The Long Parliament*. Edited by Paul Seaward. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edited by Noel Malcolm. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Hyde, Edward. *A Brief View and Survey of the Dangerous and Pernicious Errors to Church and State, in Mr. Hobbes's Book, Entitled Leviathan*. Oxford: 1676.
- King, Josiah. *Mr. Blount's Oracles of Reason, Examined and Answered*. London: 1698.
- Leslie, Charles. *A Short and Easie Method with the Deists*. London: 1699.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human[e] Understanding*. London: 1690.
- Locke, John. *A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity*. London: 1697.
- Locke, John. *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. 5. Edited by E. S. De Beer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Locke, John. *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Edited by John C. Higgins-Biddle. Oxford: Clarendon, 1999.
- Leland, John. *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers That Have Appeared in England in the Last and Present Century*. London: 1754–5.
- Martyr, Justin. *The First Apology, The Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, Exhortation to the Greeks, Discourse to the Greeks, The Monarchy or the Rule of God*. Translated by Thomas B. Falls. Baltimore: Catholic University of America Press, 1965.
- Milton, John. *Areopagitica*. London: 1644.
- Milton, John. *A Complete Collection of the Historical, Political, and Miscellaneous Works of John Milton*. Edited by John Toland. Amsterdam [London]: 1698.
- Newton, Isaac. *Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Andrew Janiak. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Nicholls, William. *A Conference with a Theist*. London: 1696.

- Nichols, Josias. *An Order of Household Instruction*. London: 1595.
- Parker, Samuel. *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*. London: 1670.
- Prideaux, Humphrey. *A Letter to the Deists*. London: 1696.
- Ross, Alexander. *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook: Or, Animadversions upon Mr. Hobbs His Leviathan*. London: 1653.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract; and, Discourses*. Translated by G. D. H. Cole. London: Dent, 1973.
- Rust, George. *Discourse of the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion: Shewing That Christianity Contains Nothing Repugnant to Right Reason; Against Enthusiasts and Deists*. London: 1683.
- Seller, Abednego. *The History of Passive Obedience Since the Reformation*. Amsterdam: 1689.
- Skelton, Philip. *Ophimaches, or, Deism Revealed*. London: 1748.
- Spinoza, Benedict de. *The Correspondence*. Edited and translated by A. Wolf. London: Allen & Unwin, 1928.
- Spinoza, Benedict de. *The Ethics*. Translated by R. H. M. Elwes. Raleigh: Alex Catalogue, 2001.
- Spinoza, Benedict de. *Theological-Political Treatise*. Edited by Jonathan Israel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Stephens, William. *An Account of the Growth of Deism in England*. London: 1696.
- Stillingfleet, Edward. *A Letter to a Deist*. London: 1677.
- Stubbe, Henry. *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism*. London: Luzac, 1911.
- Tertullian. *Anti-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3: Tertullian*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. New York: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885.
- Tindal, Matthew. *An Essay Concerning Obedience to the Supreme Powers, and the Duty of Subjects in All Revolutions with Some Considerations Touching the Present Juncture of Affairs*. London: 1694.
- Tindal, Matthew. *An Essay Concerning the Laws of Nations, and the Rights of Sovereigns with an Account of What Was Said at the Council-Board by the Civilians upon the Question, Whether Their Majesties Subjects Taken at Sea Acting by the Late King's Commission, Might Not Be Looked on as Pirates?* London: 1694.
- Tindal, Matthew. *An Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate, and the Rights of Mankind, in Matters of Religion. With Some Reasons in Particular for the Dissenters Not Being Obligated to Take the Sacramental Test But in Their Own Churches; and for a General Naturalization*. London: 1697.
- Tindal, Matthew. *A Letter to a Member of Parliament, Shewing, That a Restraint on the Press Is Inconsistent with the Protestant Religion, and Dangerous to the Liberties of the Nation*. London: 1698.
- Tindal, Matthew. *Reasons Against Restraining the Press*. London: 1704.
- Tindal, Matthew. *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted, Against the Romish, and All Other Priests Who Claim an Independent Power over It*. London: 1706.

Tindal, Matthew. *Four Discourses on the Following Subjects: Viz. I. Of Obedience to the Supreme Powers, and the Duty of Subjects in All Revolutions. II. Of the Laws of Nations, and the Rights of Sovereigns. III. Of the Power of the Magistrate, and the Rights of Mankind, in Matters of Religion. IV. Of the Liberty of the Press.* London: 1709.

Tindal, Matthew. *New High-Church Turn'd Old Presbyterian.* London: 1709.

Tindal, Matthew. *Christianity as Old as the Creation: Or, The Gospel, a Republication of the Religion of Nature.* London: 1730.

L.P. [Toland, John]. *Two Essays Sent in a Letter from Oxford to a Nobleman in London.* London: 1695.

Toland, John. *Christianity Not Mysterious: Or a Treatise Shewing, That There Is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, Nor Above It: And That No Christian Doctrine Can Be Properly Call'd a Mystery.* London: 1696.

Toland, John. *The Life of John Milton.* London: 1699.

Toland, John. *Amyntor, or, a Defence of Milton's Life.* London: 1699.

Toland, John. *Letters to Serena.* London: 1704.

Toland, John. *Pantheisticon.* Cosmopoli [London]: 1720.

Trenchard, John and Thomas Gordon. *Cato's Letters*, vol. 2. London: 1723–4.

Viret, Pierre. *Instruction Chretienne*, vol. 2. Geneva: 1564.

Secondary Works

OED Online. "Deism". Accessed 24 June 2016,
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/49205?redirectedFrom=deism>.

Abizadeh, Arash. "Publicity, Privacy and Religious Toleration in Hobbes's Leviathan". *Modern Intellectual History* 10:2 (2003): 261–91.

Barnett, S. J. *The Enlightenment and Religion: The Myths of Modernity.* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003.

Barnouw, Jeffrey. "The Separation of Reason and Faith in Bacon and Hobbes, and Leibniz's Theodicy". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42:4 (1981): 607–28.

Barnouw, Jeffrey. "Reason as Reckoning: Hobbes's Natural Law as Right Reason". *Hobbes Studies* 21 (2008): 38–62.

Beiser, Frederick C. *The Sovereignty of Reason: The Defense of Rationality in the Early English Enlightenment.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Bejan, Teresa M. "Difference without Disagreement: Rethinking Hobbes on "Independency" and Toleration". *The Review of Politics* 78 (2016): 1–25.

Berman, David and Stephen Lalor. "The Suppression of *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, Vol. II". *Notes and Queries* 31:1 (1984): 3–6.

- Berman, David. "Deism, Immortality and the Art of Theological Lying". In *Deism, Masonry and the Enlightenment*, edited by J. A. Leo Lemay, 61–78. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987.
- Berman, David. *A History of Atheism in Britain: From Hobbes to Russell*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Berman, David. "Disclaimers as Offence Mechanisms in Charles Blount and John Toland". In *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, edited by Michael Hunter and David Wootton, 255–72. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Betts, C. J. *Early Deism in France*. The Hague: M. Nijhoff Publishers, 1984.
- Biddle, John C. "Locke's Critique of Innate Principles and Toland's Deism". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37:3 (1976): 411–22.
- Blau, Adrian. "Anti-Strauss". *The Journal of Politics* 74:1 (2012): 142–55.
- Blau, Adrian. "Reason, Deliberation, and the Passions". In *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, edited by Al P. Martinich and Kinch Hoekstra, 195–220. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Brown, K. C. "Hobbes's Grounds for Belief in a Deity". *Philosophy* 37 (1962): 336–44.
- Champion, Justin A. I. "Legislators, Impostors, and the Politic Origins of Religion: English Theories of 'Imposture' from Stubbe to Toland". In *Heterodoxy, Spinozism, and Free-Thought in Early-Eighteenth-Century Europe: Studies on the Traité des Trois Imposteurs*, edited by Silvia Berti, Françoise Charles-Daubert, and Richard H. Popkin, 333–56. Kluwer: Dordrecht, 1996.
- Champion, Justin A. I. "Deism". In *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy*, edited by Richard H. Popkin, 437–45. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Champion, Justin A. I. "'Private Is in Secret Free': Hobbes and Locke on the Limits of Toleration, Atheism and Heterodoxy". In *Les fondements philosophiques de la tolerance*, edited by Justin Champion et al., 221–53. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002.
- Champion, Justin A. I. *Republican Learning: John Toland and the Crisis of Christian Culture, 1696–1722*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.
- Champion, Justin A. I. *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. First published 1992.
- Clark, J. C. D. *English Society 1688–1832*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Colie, Rosalie L. "Spinoza and the Early English Deists". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20:1 (1959): 23–46.
- Collins, Jeffrey. *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Collins, Jeffrey. "Thomas Hobbes, 'Father of Atheists'". In *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, edited by Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci, Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, 25–43. Burlington: Ashgate, 2014.
- Collins, Jeffrey. "Thomas Hobbes's Ecclesiastical History". In *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, edited by Al P. Martinich and Kinch Hoekstra, 520–544. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

- Cromartie, Alan. "The God of Thomas Hobbes". *The Historical Journal* 51 (2008): 857–79.
- Curley, Edwin. "‘I Durst Not Write So Boldly’ or, How to Read Hobbes’ Theological-Political Treatise". In *Hobbes and Spinoza: Science and Politics*, edited by D. Bostrenghi, 497–593. Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1992.
- Curley, Edwin. "Calvin and Hobbes, or, Hobbes as an Orthodox Christian". *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 34:2 (1996): 257–71.
- Curley, Edwin. "Hobbes and the Cause of Religious Toleration". In *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes’s Leviathan*, edited by Patricia Springborg, 309–34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Damrosch Jr., Leopold. "Hobbes as Reformation Theologian: Implications of the Free-Will Controversy". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40:3 (1979): 339–52.
- Davenport, Anne. "Reading Hobbes before Leviathan: The case of Philip Scot". *Hobbes Studies* 27 (2014): 105–25.
- Deigh, John. "Reason and Ethics in Hobbes’s Leviathan". *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 34:1 (1996): 33–60.
- Deigh, John. "Reply to Mark Murphy". *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41:1 (2003): 97–109.
- Duncan, Stewart. "Knowledge of God in Leviathan". *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 22:1 (2005): 31–48.
- Duncan, Stewart. "Toland, Leibniz, and Active Matter". in *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, vol. VI, edited by Daniel Garber and Donald Rutherford, 249–78. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Dybikowski, J. "Collins, Anthony (1676–1729)". In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5933>.
- Emerson, Roger L. "Deism". In *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, edited by Philip P. Wiener, vol. 1., 646–52. New York: Charles Scribner’s sons, 1973.
- Emerson, Roger L. "Latitudinarianism and the English Deists". In *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment*, edited by J. A. Leo Lemay, 19–48. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987.
- Erdozain, Dominic. *The Soul of Doubt: The Religious Roots of Unbelief from Luther to Marx*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Evrigenis, Ioannis D. *Images of Anarchy: The Rhetoric and Science in Hobbes’s State of Nature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Figgis, J. N. "Erastus and Erastianism". *Journal of Theological Studies* 2 (1900): 66–101.
- Frank, Joseph. "John Milton’s Movement toward Deism". *Journal of British Studies* 1:1 (1961): 38–51.
- Foisneau, Luc. "Omnipotence, Necessity and Sovereignty: Hobbes and the Absolute and Ordinary

- Powers of God and King”. In *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes’s Leviathan*, edited by Patricia Springborg, 271–90. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Garnham, Neal. “Skelton, Philip (1707–1787)”. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25664>.
- Gauthier, David P. *The Logic of Leviathan: The Moral and Political Theory of Thomas Hobbes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Gay, Peter. *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967.
- Gay, Peter. *Deism: An Anthology*. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1968.
- Gert, Bernard. “Hobbes on Reason”. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 82 (2001): 243–57.
- Glover, Willis B. “God and Thomas Hobbes”. In *Hobbes Studies*, edited by K. C. Brow, 141–68. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965.
- Goldie, Mark. “The Reception of Hobbes”. In *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, edited by J. H. Burns with Mark Goldie, 589–615. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Goldie, Mark. “Priestcraft and the Birth of Whiggism”. In *Political Discourses in Early Modern Britain*, edited by Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner, 209–31. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Gorham, Geoffrey. “The Theological Foundation of Hobbesian Physics: A Defence of Corporeal God”. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 21:2 (2013): 240–61.
- Gorham, Geoffrey. “Mixing Bodily Fluids: Hobbes’s Stoic God”. *Sophia* 53 (2014): 33–49.
- Harris, Tim. “Green Ribbon Club (act. c.1674–c.1683)”. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/92786>.
- Hempton, David. “Deism”. In *The Penguin Dictionary of Eighteenth Century History*, edited by Jeremy Black and Roy Porter, 191. London: Penguin, 1996.
- Herrick, James A. *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists: The Discourse of Skepticism, 1680–1750*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997.
- Hepburn, Ronald. “Hobbes on the Knowledge of God”. In *Hobbes and Rousseau: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Maurice Cranston and Richard Peters, 85–108. Garden City: Anchor Books, 1972.
- Hill, Christopher. *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*. London: Temple Smith, 1972.
- Hoekstra, Kinch. “Hobbes on Law, Nature, and Reason”. *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41:1 (2003): 111–20.
- Hoekstra, Kinch. “Disarming the Prophets: Thomas Hobbes and Predictive Power”. *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 21:1 (2004): 97–153.

- Hoekstra, Kinch. "The End of Philosophy (The Case of Hobbes)". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 106:1 (2006): 25–62.
- Hood, Francis C. *The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.
- Hudson, Wayne. *The English Deists: Studies in Early Enlightenment*. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009.
- Hudson, Wayne. "Atheism and Deism Demythologized". In *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, edited by Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci, Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, 13–23. Burlington: Ashgate, 2014.
- Israel, Jonathan I. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Israel, Jonathan I. "Forward". In *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, edited by Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci, Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, xi–xxiv. Burlington: Ashgate, 2014.
- Jacob, James R. *Henry Stubbe: Radical Protestantism and the Early Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Jacob, Margaret. *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1981.
- Jesseph, Douglas. "Hobbes's Atheism". *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 26 (2002): 140–66.
- Jesseph, Douglas. "Hobbesian Mechanics". In *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, vol. 3, edited by Daniel Garber and Steven Nadler, 119–52. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006.
- Johnston, David. *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Kavka, Gregory S. *Hobbesian Moral and Political Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Lalor, Stephen. *Matthew Tindal, Freethinker*. London: Continuum, 2006.
- Leask, Ian. "The Undivulged Event in Toland's Christianity Not Mysterious". In *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, edited by Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci, Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, 63–80. Burlington: Ashgate, 2014.
- Leijenhorst, Cees. "Hobbes's Corporeal Deity". *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 59:1 (2004): 73–95.
- Leopold, David. "On Marxian Utopophobia". *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 54:1 (2016): 111–34.
- Levitin, Dmitri. "Matthew Tindal's Rights of the Christian Church (1706) and the Church-State Relationship". *The Historical Journal* 54:3 (2011): 717–40.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. "The Parallel of Deism and Classicism". *Modern Philology* 29:3 (1932): 281–99.
- Lucci, Diego. *Scripture and Deism: The Biblical Criticism of the Eighteenth-Century British Deists*. Bern; Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008.
- Lund, Roger D. *Ridicule, Religion and the Politics of Wit in Augustan England*. Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2012.

- Lupoli, Agostino. "Fluidismo e Corporeal Deity nella filosofia naturale di Thomas Hobbes: A proposito dell'hobbesiano Dio delle Cause". *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 54:4 (1999): 573–609.
- Lupoli, Agostino. "Power (Conatus-Endeavour) in the 'Kinetic Actualism' and in the 'Inertial' Psychology of Thomas Hobbes". *Hobbes Studies* 14 (2001): 83–103.
- Macpherson, C. B. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Malcolm, Noel. *Aspects of Hobbes*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002.
- Malcolm, Noel. "Hobbes and Sexual Desire". *Hobbes Studies* 28 (2015): 77–102.
- Marshall, John. "The Ecclesiology of the Latitude-Men 1660–1689: Stillingfleet, Tillotson and 'Hobbism'". *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36:3 (1985): 407–27.
- Marshall, John. *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Martinich, A. P. *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Martinich, A. P. *A Hobbes Dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.
- Martinich, A. P. *Hobbes*. New York; London: Routledge, 2005.
- Martinich, A. P. "Egoism, Reason and the Social Contract". *Hobbes Studies* 25 (2012): 209–22.
- Martinich, A. P. "Law and Self-Preservation in *Leviathan*: On Misinterpreting Hobbes 1650–1700". In *The Persistence of the Sacred*, edited by Chris Firestone and Nathan Jacobs, 38–65. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013.
- McNeilly, F. S. *The Anatomy of Leviathan*. London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968.
- Melzer, Arthur M. *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Mintz, Samuel I. *The Hunting of Leviathan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962.
- Mortimer, Sarah. "Christianity and Civil Religion in Hobbes's *Leviathan*". In *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, edited by Al P. Martinich and Kinch Hoekstra, 501–19. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Mossner, Ernest. "Deism". In *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards, vol. 2, 326–36. New York: Macmillan and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1967.
- Murphy, Mark C. "Desire and Ethics in Hobbes's *Leviathan*: A Response to Professor Deigh". *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38:2 (2000): 259–68.
- O'Higgins, James. *Anthony Collins: The Man and His Works*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970.
- Oakeshott, Michael. *Hobbes on Civil Association*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000.
- Oakley, Francis. "The Absolute and Ordained Power of God in Sixteenth and Seventeenth

- Century Theology". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59:3 (1998): 437–61.
- Oakley, Francis. "The Absolute and Ordained Power of God and King in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Philosophy, Science, Politics, and Law". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59:4 (1998): 669–90.
- Pacchi, Arrigo. "Hobbes and the Problem of God". In *Perspectives on Thomas Hobbes*, edited by G. A. J. Rogers and Alan Ryan, 171–87. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Pacchi, Arrigo. "Leviathan and Spinoza's Tractatus on Revelation: Some Elements for a Comparison". *History of European Ideas* 10:5 (1989): 577–93.
- Pailin, David A. "Herbert, Edward, First Baron Herbert of Cherbury and First Baron Herbert of Castle Island (1582?–1648)". In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13020>.
- Parkin, Jon. "Liberty Transpros'd: Andrew Marvell and Samuel Parker". In *Marvell and Liberty*, edited by Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis, 269–89. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999.
- Parkin, Jon. *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England*. London: Royal Historical Society, 1999.
- Parkin, Jon. "Parker, Samuel (1640–1688)". In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21336>.
- Parkin, Jon. *Taming the Leviathan: The Reception of the Political and Religious Ideas of Thomas Hobbes in England, 1640–1700*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Parkin, Jon. "Baiting the Bear: The Anglican Attack on Hobbes in the Later 1660s". *History of Political Thought* 34:3 (2013): 421–58.
- Parkin, Jon. "Straw Men and Political Philosophy: The Case of Hobbes". *Political Studies* 59 (2011): 564–79.
- Parkin, Jon. "Toleration". In *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Peter R. Anstey, 609–25. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Parkin, Jon. "Hobbes and Paradox". In *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, edited by Al P. Martinich and Kinch Hoekstra, 624–42. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Pettit, Philip. *Made with Words: Hobbes on Language, Mind, and Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Pfanner, Dario. "Blount, Charles (1654–1693)". In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2684>.
- Plamenatz, John. "Mr. Warrender's Hobbes". In *Hobbes Studies*, edited by K. C. Brow, 73–87. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965.
- Pocock, J. G. A. *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History*. London: Methuen, 1972.

- Pocock, J. G. A. "Post-Puritan England and the Problem of the Enlightenment". In *Culture and Politics from Puritanism to the Enlightenment*, edited by Perez Zagorin, 91–111. Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1980.
- Pocock, J. G. A. "Thomas Hobbes: Atheist or Enthusiast? His Place in a Restoration Debate". *History of Political Thought* 11:4 (1990): 737–49.
- Pocock, J. G. A. *Barbarism and Religion: Volume 1, The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Popkin, Richard H. "The Deist Challenge". In *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, edited by Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke, 195–215. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Popkin, Richard H. *History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*. Cary: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Popkin, Richard H. and Goldie, Mark. "Scepticism, Priestcraft, and Toleration". In *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, edited by Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, 79–109. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Porter, Roy. "The Enlightenment in England". In *The Enlightenment in National Context*, edited by Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich, 1–18. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Prince, Michael B. "Religio Laici v. Religio Laici: Dryden, Blount, and the Origin of English Deism". *Modern Language Quarterly* 74:1 (2013): 29–66.
- Redwood, J. A. "Charles Blount, Deism, and English Free Thought". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35:3 (1974): 490–8.
- Robertson, John. *The Enlightenment: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Ross, George MacDonald. *Starting with Hobbes*. London: Continuum, 2009.
- Ryan, Alan. "Hobbes, Toleration and the Inner Life". In *The Nature of Political Theory*, edited by David Miller and Larry Siedentop, 197–218. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.
- Ryan, Alan. "A More Tolerant Hobbes?". In *Justifying Toleration*, edited by Susan Mendus, 37–59. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Sacksteder, William. "How Much of Hobbes Might Spinoza Have Read?". *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 11:2 (1980): 25–39.
- Sambrook, James. "Gildon, Charles (c.1665–1724)". In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10720>.
- Serjeantson, R. W. "Herbert of Cherbury before Deism: The Early Reception of the De veritate". *The Seventeenth Century* 16:2 (2001): 217–38.
- Shapin, Steven and Simon Schaffer. *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- Skinner, Quentin. *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University

- Press, 1996.
- Skinner, Quentin. *Visions of Politics, Vol. 1: Regarding Method*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Skinner, Quentin. *Visions of Politics, Vol. 3: Hobbes and Civil Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Snobelen, Stephen D. “‘God of Gods, and Lord of Lords’: The Theology of Isaac Newton’s General Scholium to the Principia”. *Osiris* 16 (2001): 169–208.
- Sommerville, Johann P. *Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992.
- Springborg, Patricia. “Hobbes, Heresy, and the Historia Ecclesiastica”. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55:4 (1994): 553–71.
- Springborg, Patricia. “Hobbes on Religion”, In *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, edited by Tom Sorell, 346–80. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Springborg, Patricia. “Hobbes the Atheist and His Deist Reception”. In *I filosofi e la società senza religione*, edited by Marco Geuna and Gianbattista Gori, 145–63. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011.
- Springborg, Patricia. “Hobbes’s Challenge to Descartes, Bramhall and Boyle: A Corporeal God”, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20:5 (2012): 903–34.
- Spurr, John. “‘Latitudinarianism’ and the Restoration Church”. *The Historical Journal* 31:1 (1988): 61–82.
- Stephen, Leslie. *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1. London: Smith, Elder, 1876.
- Stephen, Leslie. *Hobbes*. New York and London: Macmillan, 1904.
- Strauss, Leo. *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- Strauss, Leo. *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. Chicago: The university of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Strauss, Leo. *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Sullivan, Robert. *John Toland and the Deist Controversy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Tarlton, Charles D. “The Despotical Doctrine of Hobbes”. *History of Political Thought* 22:4 (2001): 587–618 and 23:1 (2002): 61–89.
- Taylor, A. E. “The Ethical Doctrine of Hobbes”. *Philosophy* 13:52 (1938): 406–24.
- Torrey, Norman. *Voltaire and the English Deists*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930.
- Tuck, Richard. *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

- Tuck, Richard. "Hobbes and Locke on Toleration". In *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory*, edited by Mary G. Dietz, 153–71. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990.
- Tuck, Richard. "The 'Christian Atheism' of Thomas Hobbes". In *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, edited by Michael Hunter and David Wootton, 111–30. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Tuck, Richard. "The Civil Religion of Thomas Hobbes". In *Political Discourses in Early Modern Britain*, edited by Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner, 120–38. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Tuck, Richard. *Philosophy and Government 1572–1651*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Tuck, Richard. "Hobbes on Education". In *Philosophers on Education: New Historical Perspectives*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, 147–55. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Tuck, Richard. *Hobbes: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Tuck, Richard. "The Utopianism of Leviathan". In *Leviathan After 350 Years*, edited by Tom Sorell and Luc Foisneau, 125–38. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Tuck, Richard. "Hobbes, Conscience, and Christianity". In *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, edited by Al P. Martinich and Kinch Hoekstra, 481–500. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Van Mill, David. *Liberty, Rationality, and Agency in Hobbes's Leviathan*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Van Mill, David. "Civil Liberty in Hobbes's Commonwealth". *Australian Journal of Political Science* 37:1 (2002): 21–38.
- Venturi, Franco. *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.
- Waldron, Jeremy. "Hobbes on Public Worship". In *Toleration and Its Limits*, edited by Melissa S. Williams and Jeremy Waldron, 31–53. New York: NYU Press, 2008.
- Warrender, Howard. *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: His Theory of Obligation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.
- Warrender, Howard. "A Reply to Mr. Plamenatz". In *Hobbes Studies*, edited by K. C. Brow, 89–100. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965.
- Warrender, Howard. "Political Theory and Historiography: A Reply to Professor Skinner on Hobbes". *The Historical Journal* 22 (1979): 931–40.
- Westfall, Richard S. "Isaac Newton's *Theologiae Gentilis Origines Philosophicae*". In *The Secular Mind: Transformations of Faith in Modern Europe*, edited by W. Warren Wagar, 15–34. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982.
- Wigelsworth, Jeffrey R. *Deism in Enlightenment England: Theology, Politics, and Newtonian Public Science*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009.
- Wigelsworth, Jeffrey R. "God can require nothing of us, but what makes for our Happiness":

- Matthew Tindal on Toleration". In *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, edited by Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci, Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, 139–55. Burlington: Ashgate, 2014.
- Wigelsworth, Jeffrey R. "“God always acts suitable to his character, as a wise and good being’: Thomas Chubb and Thomas Morgan on Miracles and Providence”. In *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, edited by Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci, Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, 157–72. Burlington: Ashgate, 2014.
- Wright, George. *Religion, Politics and Thomas Hobbes*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2006.
- Young, B. W. *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Young, B. W. "Tindal, Matthew (*bap.* 1657, *d.* 1733)". In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Accessed 24 June 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27462>.
- Zakai, Avihu. "Religious Toleration and Its Enemies: The Independent Divines and the Issue of Toleration during the English Civil War". *A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 21:1 (1989): 1–33.