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Introduction

Thomas Hobbes was born in 1588, and John Locke died in 1704. Together they lived longer than the Stuart dynasty ruled England. Contemporaries for nearly half a century, they were virtual neighbours for several years in the 1660s and 1670s, while domiciled in the town houses of their titled patrons on the Strand.[1] Their political theories, moreover, contain striking structural similarities. Rejection of natural or divine political hierarchies; the state of nature device; a modernized account of natural rights; individualism; a theory of social contract: these traits mark both Hobbes and Locke as participants in the new natural rights thinking of the seventeenth century.

It is, therefore, a surprising truth that the influence of Thomas Hobbes over John Locke has been studied only sporadically. This is true even though – or, in fact, because – Hobbes and Locke are habitually juxtaposed in textbooks and on university syllabi. Despite their regular geographic proximity, there is no direct evidence that Hobbes and Locke ever met or that the older man knew even the name of the younger. Late in life Locke disavowed Hobbes's influence (albeit in a particular context). His most famous political work, the *Two Treatises of Government*, barely mentions *Leviathan*. Locke certainly owned and read works by Hobbes, but his voluminous manuscripts contain no sustained commentary. Throughout the Interregnum and Restoration, Hobbes and Locke navigated the same political waters and developed common interests. The standard source material, however, rarely keeps them in the frame together.

Furthermore, the predominant methods of intellectual history have cast suspicion on the question of Hobbes's influence over Locke. The so-called Cambridge school contextualism dominant for generations has had a great deal to say about Hobbes and Locke individually. Both have been subject to prodigious research production. Yet interpretive fashion has long kept

[1] Rogers, 'The Intellectual Relationship between Hobbes and Locke – A Reappraisal', 61.

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the two figures at arm's length from one another. It has been a mainstay of Cambridge contextualization to disavow canon-formation and to deny that 'great minds' necessarily developed their ideas in dialogue. From this perspective the individual fame and influence of Hobbes and Locke militate against any effort to study them jointly. The savvy contextualist is encouraged to seek less obvious patterns of influence.

Effacing Locke's engagement with Hobbes, indeed, became a signature move of the Cambridge school founders. Peter Laslett sketched out the case in his path-breaking edition of Locke's *Two Treatises*.[2] There he argued that the *Two Treatises* 'cannot' have been 'written as a refutation of Thomas Hobbes', who is largely missing in the text because he was not an 'absolutist writer' favoured by Locke's foils, the Tories.[3] This presumed that Locke, had he engaged Hobbes, would have repudiated him on constitutional grounds. Laslett's case proved broadly influential. John Dunn further entrenched it as Cambridge dogma, concluding that 'lining Locke up against Hobbes and comparing their various dimensions was not the way to approach the study of Locke'. Locke supposedly evaded 'the dense and threatening mass of intellection which [Hobbes] represents'. Hobbes, if perhaps a 'ghostly adversary' in Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, was in the *Two Treatises* 'merely and blandly ignored'.[4] This soon hardened into a historiographical orthodoxy. John Higgins-Biddle used the 'case of Hobbes and Locke' to exemplify the 'common fallacy of intellectual history' that great minds of proximate generations were inevitably drawn into dialogue.[5] Gordon Schochet concurred that this 'standard myth' needed to be 'dispelled'.[6] To Quentin Skinner the notion that Locke wrote against Hobbes served as an illustrative example of lazy canon-formation.[7] Suspicions were elevated by the tendency of Straussian interpreters to associate Hobbes and Locke as fellow travellers on the low road from ancient political philosophy to modern political science.[8]

Erasing any presumption of a consequential Hobbes–Locke dialogue became something of a shibboleth of Cambridge school method. This scepticism did disrupt some less historically plausible schemes for understanding Hobbes and Locke in a common tradition. It is certainly correct to suspect the hoary interpretive model pitting an 'absolutist' Hobbes

[2] On Laslett, see Pocock, 'Quentin Skinner: The History of Politics and the Politics of History', 126–7.
[3] Laslett, Introduction to *TTG*, 67. [4] Dunn, *Political Thought of John Locke*, 77–83.
[5] Higgins-Biddle, Introduction to Locke, *Reasonableness of Christianity*, lxxiv.
[6] Schochet, 'The Family and the Origins of the State in Locke's Political Philosophy', 81.
[7] Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding', 25; Sagar, *Opinion of Mankind*, 109n.
[8] Strauss, *Natural Right and History;* Cox, *Locke on War and Peace*; Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, 1–4.

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against a 'liberal, constitutional' Locke. Nevertheless, it is a premise of the present book that Hobbes did exert an influence over Locke, first positively and then negatively.

The chapters that follow will suggest how John Locke should be read in the shadow of *Leviathan*. The book excavates Locke's direct commentary on Hobbes, which proves more extensive and thematically consistent than is often recognized. This book also reconstructs the biographical and political context of the Interregnum and Restoration, on the theory that – whatever his reticence in print – Locke wrote on fundamentally Hobbesian themes in a context saturated with polemical disputes over Hobbes's influence. Locke's engagement with Hobbes was thus often deflected or glancing, a by-product of his more explicit entanglements with third parties. It emerges clearly only when situated in a reconstructed political, and polemical, setting.

Political contextualization will thus constitute a primary method of this book. Alongside, the study will reconstruct the polemics over Hobbism that pervaded Locke's entire career. The book will chart his own experience of this printed debate as it left marks in his notes and library. Finally, the evidence of Locke's direct engagement with Hobbes will be reconsidered. This evidence takes the form of excerpts, allusions, brief unpublished commentaries, and suggestive mentions of Hobbes in manuscripts. The evidence for direct engagement is uneven but not nearly as fragmentary or accidental as is often assumed. Closely examined, it emerges as both intellectually significant and thematically consistent.

This thematic consistency, indeed, occasions another preliminary observation: namely, that the following book mines deeply a somewhat narrow vein. It is common, for instance, to compare Hobbes and Locke on the state of nature, or to contrast their accounts of natural law.[9] The present book, however, has not found these or similar topics dispositive. Instead, it pursues the influence over Locke of Hobbes's account of conscience, confessional governance, and religious freedom. Locke's explicit commentary on Hobbes, and much of his implicit engagement with him, consistently orbited these subjects. Locke and Hobbes shared a dominant concern with the problems of confessionalism and conscience in the new age of sovereignty. This was the context for their most consequential theoretical entanglement.

This claim will not surprise recent scholars of either Hobbes or Locke. The original and still powerful Cambridge scepticism of any 'Hobbesian

[9] Harris finds a consequential opposition to Hobbes on epistemology and natural morality. Harris, *Mind of Locke*, 91–107.

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Locke' privileged the epistemological or constitutional concerns that long dominated study of the two thinkers.[10] Recent scholarship, by contrast, has explored the theology, political theology, and ecclesiology of both. These two literatures, however, still largely operate in isolation. In particular, Locke scholars have been slow to accommodate the most recent work on Hobbes's theories of conscience and toleration. It is not surprising that Laslett and Dunn, writing in the mid-twentieth century, did not consider the toleration debates as a possible context for Locke's engagement with Hobbes. We should be considerably more surprised to find that the preeminent scholar of Lockean toleration, the authoritative John Marshall, has virtually nothing to say about Hobbes in this context.[11] Hobbes does not appear as a potential tolerationist in Marshall's account.[12] Richard Ashcraft, in his contextual studies of Locke, had somewhat more to say about Hobbes but primarily for his rival versions of the state of nature and sovereignty. He largely ignored the ecclesial dimension of Hobbism and did not accommodate tolerationist readings of *Leviathan*.[13]

Scholars of Locke still typically present Hobbes as a confessional absolutist and apologist for church establishment.[14] So understood, Hobbes can only serve as a foil for Locke's tolerationism, Latitudinarianism, and 'Christian humanism'.[15] It is still common among Locke scholars to find 'Hobbism', in the ecclesial context, interpreted as coercive, conformist, and deferential to the restored episcopal church. This is a fundamental misreading, one that only slightly recodes the old opposition of 'absolutist' Hobbesianism and 'liberal' Lockeanism.

In urging a reconsideration of Hobbes's influence over Locke, and in construing it around religious and ecclesiological categories, this study critiques an older and still influential historiography.[16] But it also contributes

[10] Grant, *Locke's Liberalism*, 71–2; Tully, *Locke in Contexts*, 295–7, 301–9; Aaron, *John Locke*, 26–6, 29–31, 147, 270–6; Ryan, 'Hobbes's Hidden Influence', 189–205 at 193–5.

[11] This book will not traverse ground covered in John Marshall's magisterial *John Locke, Toleration, and Early Enlightenment Culture*. Marshall foregrounds continental contexts and is chronologically limited to the late 1670s and early 1680s. The present book views Locke's developing tolerationism primarily within an English political and polemical setting. Marshall's account is broad and largely synchronic, fixing a single work in diversity contexts. Mine is narrower and diachronic, following the development of Locke's thought across his life, using his evolving engagement with Hobbes as a structuring device. Marshall, *Locke, Toleration*, 1–3.

[12] Ibid., 8. Locke's clearest engagements with Hobbes predate and postdate the chronology of Marshall's account. For passing references to Hobbes, see Marshall, *Locke, Toleration*, 130, 210, 324, 705, 717, 713.

[13] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics*, 293, 307, 570, 576.

[14] Stanton, 'Locke and the Politics and Theology of Toleration', 92.

[15] Nuovo, Introduction to Locke, *Writings on Religion*, xviii–xxi.

[16] Hobbes hardly appears in Marshall's important *John Locke: Resistance, Religion, and Responsibility*.

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to an emerging body of more recent work, where the problem of Hobbes and Locke is either explicitly or implicitly reopened. Much of this revisionist work takes Restoration Hobbism as its primary subject, and it has not been adequately absorbed into the scholarship on Locke.

Jon Parkin has mapped Hobbes's Restoration reception and in that context has made brief but shrewd observations regarding Locke. Jacqueline Rose's study of Restoration debates over the Royal Supremacy has recovered the diverse theoretical arguments (including Hobbesian ones) open to dissenters and tolerationists. Mark Goldie's masterful articles on Restoration political theology never keep Hobbes and his influence far from view. Richard Tuck, in an important article of 1990, first discussed the critical proximity of Hobbes and Locke to the Cabal ministry of the late 1660s. Historians of Lockean toleration, such as Tim Stanton, Ian Harris, and Nicholas Jolley – investigating natural law and epistemology – have remained open-minded about Hobbes's possible influence. All students of Locke must acknowledge a profound debt to the impeccable critical scholarship of Philip and J.R. Milton. A final word of grateful acknowledgement must go to Felix Waldmann. While this book was under final revision, Dr. Waldmann communicated to me an important manuscript discovery suggesting Locke's Interregnum reading of *Leviathan*, and thus confirming aspects of my first chapter as it then stood.

The present book does not always confirm the interpretations of these scholars, but it draws on all of them in its effort to knit together – with fresh evidence – a cohesive narrative of John Locke's experience of Hobbism.

There are two things that readers will not find in this book. The first is a comprehensive history of Lockean toleration. Locke's mature tolerationist theory has been located within a large variety of contexts: read as an implication of epistemic scepticism, of Locke's theory of natural law, of his Latitudinarian religious inclinations, or as an artefact of his European experience, particularly his late Dutch exile. A study that balances these diverse contexts would risk replicating the detailed studies of John Marshall. In doing so it would lose track of its chosen problem: the influence of Hobbes and Hobbism on Locke. Instead, I follow a narrower evidentiary and argumentative path.

Nor will this book exhaustively survey every Hobbesian doctrine that might conceivably have influenced Locke's broad philosophy. It instead interprets Locke against Hobbesian themes that seem to have directly impressed themselves on his mind: Hobbes's theory of sovereignty, right, and prerogative; his account of conscience and toleration; his histories of heresy. Less attention will be paid to alternative topics – such as the state of

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nature or epistemology – which have traditionally commanded more comment. The present work constructs its narrative around the surviving evidence base pertaining to Hobbes and Hobbism found in Locke's reading and writing. This evidence largely pertains to questions of religious conscience and religious governance. An exploration of other themes would regularly force the discussion into a speculative method, whereby common subjects in Hobbes and Locke are juxtaposed and shepherded into a single tradition. Political theorists write such 'juxtaposed' analyses as a matter of course, but the tendency can bedevil historical work as well.[17] Hewing closer to the explicit evidence, and eschewing the methodology of juxtaposition, renders this book a more focussed study. It is hoped that narrowness will also bring sharper precision and that the book will offer both a historical corrective to speculative theoretical musings about 'Hobbes and Locke' and a new vantage on the general literature discussing Lockean toleration.

Thematically and methodologically, this book extends my first, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*. That study detailed the implications, within the Interregnum context, of the language of conscience and the ecclesiology of Independency introduced by Hobbes into *Leviathan*. Chapter 1 of the present book locates the young John Locke within debates at Interregnum Oxford concerning these subjects and influenced by Hobbes. The remainder of the book moves through the transformed context of the Restoration. It argues that 'late Hobbism' critically informed the setting in which Locke developed his own thinking about conscience, the church, and the confessional state. The argument posits an initial and fairly durable connection between the two thinkers, followed by a gradual emancipation of Locke from Hobbesian patterns of thought. The core problems of the study are when, and why, Locke escaped the strictures of a *politique*, Hobbesian account of religious conscience, and developed an account oriented around natural rights, individual religious duty, and resistance theory. Political history and political polemics, I argue, played a crucial role in this development. Particularly important were the contingencies of the Stuarts' Indulgence policies. This context explains much of Locke's direct commentary on Hobbes and also the predominant understanding of Hobbism that Locke encountered in printed debate. Locke's view of Hobbes, it is argued, was

[17] The online bibliography of the John Locke Society contains scores of entries on 'Hobbes', but most are by political theorists deploying a method of textual paralleling. The model is exemplified by W. von Leyden's *Hobbes and Locke: the Politics of Freedom and Obligation*, where the two thinkers are said to 'belong together' as 'the first to build their political systems on the twin notions of freedom and obligation' (preface).

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heavily – not exhaustively but perhaps decisively – shaped by the Restoration toleration wars.

I further argue that, within this context, the development of Locke's tolerationism was dialectic. Originally favourable to the prerogative *tolerantia* encountered in Hobbes, Locke abandoned it partly to counter powerful clerical critics who opposed Hobbism as a violation of *ecclesiae libertas*. His own theory of toleration thus emerged as a translation of their churchly anti-politics and their sustained critique of the Stuarts' *politique* mode of religious governance. Locke's translation produced a more individualized, voluntarist understanding of religious duties and rights, but it preserved this hostility to civil religion and a fairly traditional understanding of church mission. In this regard the book supports the interpretation of Locke emerging from recent work by Tim Stanton and Ian Harris, who challenge the 'liberal, individualist' reading of Lockean religious freedom and recover its important communal and ecclesial dimensions.

Hobbes and Locke: Conscience in the History of Liberalism

This book offers a focussed historical inquiry. Nevertheless, it directs us to the heart of a very broad subject: namely, the place of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke within the liberal tradition. This book aims to make a contribution to the historiography of liberalism. In doing so, it further risks the discontent of the Cambridge contextualists, who rightly attribute a great deal of teleological myth-making to this historiography.[18] It is, however, a premise of what follows that the most plausible efforts to locate the origins of European liberalism within the new natural law thinking of the seventeenth century attend chiefly to the subject of conscience. The final section of this book will argue that Locke's account of religious conscience played an important role in shaping the eighteenth-century idiom of 'liberal' politics.

This finding will partly accord with, and partly dissent from, important strains in the modern historiography of liberalism. When in the mid-twentieth century the Cambridge contextualists first critiqued efforts to historicize liberalism within the seventeenth century, their dominant foils were the interpretations developed in Harold Laski's *The Rise of European Liberalism* (1936), his student C.B. Macpherson's *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (1962), and Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955). This socialist tradition interpreted liberalism primarily, in

[18] Stanton, 'John Locke and the Fable of Liberalism'; Bell, 'What Is Liberalism?'.

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J.G.A Pocock's words, as a political economy oriented around 'propertied individualism'.[19] Hobbes and Locke both played a role in this interpretation, but in truth any actual language of liberal politics defined in Macpherson's terms only traced back to mid-eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment figures such as Adam Smith and William Robertson. In this idiom neither Hobbes nor Locke figured as a significant intellectual forbearer.

The case is different with historiographies of liberalism taking individual conscience as their master category. This, it can be argued, is the currently dominant understanding of historic liberalism. This is particularly true of the Rawlsian tradition, as Chapter 7 will demonstrate. Early in his career, Rawls kept his attention fixed on questions of property and redistribution. But the communitarian critique of his work reoriented Rawls's priorities by targeting the ethical or metaphysical axioms of his system. Communitarians rejected his supposed neutrality, his notion of 'public reason', and his methodological individualism. The primary context for this was political conflicts over the public role of religion in liberal societies. Scholars began to investigate Rawls's own religious upbringing as a liberal Protestant, seeking there the seedbed of his later philosophy. Rawls's lectures and writing began to reconstruct the history of liberalism within a potted history of religious conflict and reformation.

Locke enjoys a heroic role in this Rawlsian mythology, but a revisionist reading of Hobbes can also be accommodated. That this is true is in no small part thanks to an interpretive understanding of liberalism again developed (as with Laski and Macpherson) by anti-liberals, this time situated within interwar German culture. The liberal Hobbes and Locke emerged not least from the works of Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss, which were composed partly in dialogue. In their hostile interpretations of the English natural rights tradition, the subject of conscience was afforded a priority. Schmitt's early *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (1922) cast Hobbes and Bodin as thinkers who 'understood the question of sovereignty to mean the question of the decision on the exception'.[20] Hobbesian absolutism cast the sovereign as God's 'representative on earth', using will and command to fashion sovereignty and (he later theorized) to impose the critical 'friend/enemy' distinction on the polity.[21] Against this, Locke functioned for Schmitt as an early exemplar of the emerging liberal tradition, which ignored the state of exception (and

[19] Pocock, 'The Myth of John Locke and the Obsession with Liberalism', 1–5.
[20] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 9–10. [21] Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 25, 37, 42, 65–7.

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the requirement for ultimate, arbitrary decision) in favour of a rationalist constitutionalism.[22] Lockean or Kantian liberalism futilely demanded that 'all personal elements must be eliminated from the concept of the state' and that specious 'objectively valid norms' and constitutional proceduralism must supplant the 'personal right to command'.[23]

Crucially, Schmitt attached this interpretive scheme to an inventive account of political theology, the notion that 'all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts'. Religion was crucial to Hobbes's merger of a scientific, mechanistic state with 'personalistic', representative authority. Hobbes 'heightened his state, the Leviathan, into an immense person and thus point-blank straight into mythology'.[24] By subordinating religion to the state, he managed to endow the state with the charismatic 'representative capacity' of the medieval church.[25] The church had long represented God as 'a man in historical reality', but this powerful Catholic 'form' could not endure on the 'electrified earth'. Only Hobbes, anticipating Schmitt's own decisionism, managed to preserve charismatic, quasi-divine authority within the new scientific statecraft. In his 1932 *Concept of the Political*, with his theory now serving the full-blown Nazi project, Schmitt wrote that 'the juridic formulas of the omnipotence of the state are in fact only superficial secularizations of the theological formulas of the omnipotence of God'. Hobbes, 'truly a powerful and systematic political thinker', had drafted the 'theological dogma of the evilness of the world and man' for a purely political mode of logic.[26]

Locke, by contrast, led the revolt in favour of purely procedural, depersonalized, and disenchanted forms of authority. The liberal 'machine state' supplanted the church (and Hobbes's charismatic Leviathan) and rendered religion a mere private matter. The rise of disenchanted, procedural politics was partly the fruit of the Reformation. 'Privatization has its origins in religion', Schmitt wrote. 'The first right of the individual in the sense of the bourgeois order was the freedom of religion.'[27]

Schmitt's tracing of liberal society to the privatization of religious conscience was more original than might appear to us today. It affirmed an absolutist reading of Hobbes and a liberal reading of Locke in terms of political theology, and, as suggested above, this interpretation has endured in many quarters. This reading of Hobbes finds support in those passages

[22] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 13–5. [23] Ibid., 29, 31–2.
[24] Ibid., 47; see also Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, 57–8.
[25] Themes explored in Schmitt's *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, 5–7.
[26] Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 25, 37, 42, 65–7. [27] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 16, 28–32.

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of *Leviathan* which present the sovereign as a 'Mortall God' and which subordinate ecclesiastical (even prophetic and sacramental) power to temporal sway. Hobbes, Schmitt would later write, had managed to 'dispel the anarchistic nature of Christianity while leaving it a certain legitimating effect, if only in the background . . . A clever tactician does not abandon anything, unless it is completely useless. This was not yet the case with Christianity.'[28] Hobbes had co-opted the power of God for the state. This affront to ecclesial Christianity had been a staple of anti-Hobbesian polemic for centuries. Schmitt's originality lay in his appreciative evaluation.

However, in a consequential interpretive manoeuver, Schmitt eventually overturned this reading of Hobbes. Partly in dialogue with Leo Strauss, he re-evaluated Hobbes's account of religious conscience and, by this mechanism, levered him into a new mythology of liberalism. In a 1932 critique of Schmitt's *Concept of the Political,* Strauss argued that Hobbes – far from being the antithesis of the Lockean liberal tradition – belonged within it. Strauss's particular argument was that the right of every individual to secure his own life, because it had the 'character of an inalienable human right', gave individuals 'precedence over the state and determines its purpose and limits'. Schmitt had ignored this and the way that it allowed individuals to use their own judgement in arbitrating their obedience to sovereignty. He thus evaded the individualistic, proto-liberalism of Hobbes's system, which Strauss would himself further elucidate in his 1936 study of Hobbes.[29] In the *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, Strauss continued to argue that Hobbesian 'rights' sprang from the principle of individual self-preservation.[30] But he hinted that Hobbesian individualism might also have a religious implication. 'In believing that the moral attitude, conscience, intention, is of more importance than the action, Hobbes is at one with Kant as with the Christian tradition . . . In the state of nature every action is in principle permitted which the conscience of the individual recognizes as necessary for self-preservation.'[31] This fundamental right of 'conscience' was structurally Christian, a point missed in Schmitt's enthusiastic portrayal of Hobbes as an anti-liberal.[32]

[28] Schmitt's *Glossarium: Aufzeichnungen der Jahre 1947–51*, from May 23, 1949, quoted in *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, introduction.
[29] Strauss, 'Notes on the *Concept of the Political*', in Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 91–3. Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*. My thanks to Sam Zeitlin for comments on a longer version of this section.
[30] Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 17. [31] Ibid., 23.
[32] Strauss noted Hobbes's endorsement of 'Independentism'. Ibid., 74–8.

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