

CHAPTER III

TRANSCENDENT INTERESTS AND HOBBS'S VIEW OF DISORDER

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a strong *prima facie* case that Hobbes is deeply concerned about social disorder that might arise from differences of opinion, particularly of religious opinions. But S.A. Lloyd's thesis is stronger: it is that Hobbes is most concerned with disorder in which rebellious parties' beliefs are held so strongly that the rebels are willing to die for them. Lloyd coins a term for this; such rebels are said to be motivated by *transcendent interests*—that is, interests which transcend narrow prudence because they “are given priority over men's interest in securing their temporal preservation and well-being” (19¹).² Disorder motivated by transcendent interests is particularly worrisome to Hobbes, Lloyd maintains, because it cannot be stopped by threats of force. The transcendence of the interests involved renders even capital threats ineffective, and therefore necessitates a different sort of response from the sovereign if it is to be prevented from upsetting order in the commonwealth, a response not dependent upon coercive threats (57). Since, according to Lloyd, Hobbes believes transcendent interests are held by a great many people, threats of force are ruled out as the primary means for the sovereign to maintain order.

Lloyd is not the only one who notes what appear to be transcendent interests in Hobbes. Stephen Holmes, for example, takes such passages as DCv 6.11 (discussed above at §II.6.3) and B 14f to show that Hobbes agrees with Augustine that we perceive damnation, not bodily death, as the greatest evil (1990, p. xxxix). But Lloyd has used this idea as the basis for a radical new take on Hobbes. If correct, her view undermines

some very influential interpretations, such as Gauthier's, Hampton's, and Kavka's. All of the latter hold that, according to Hobbes, order is maintained because the sovereign makes it rational for citizens to cooperate with each other, and that the sovereign accomplishes this by threatening sufficient punishment. In their picture of a Hobbesian state, citizens cooperate with each other because they know they may be punished if they do not. Obviously this sort of scheme presupposes that fear of temporal punishment is a sufficient motivator for most if not all citizens. If it is not—if many citizens are, as Lloyd maintains, transcendentally motivated and thus willing to act in spite of threatened punishments up to and including death—then Gauthier, Hampton, Kavka, and others are badly mistaken. In the true Hobbesian state as Lloyd sees it, threats of punishment play a minimal role and citizens cooperate with each other because they are *persuaded* that it is in their best interests—including their transcendent interests—to do so. For convenience we shall refer to Lloyd's view as the TI (for transcendent interests) thesis.

The TI thesis: Hobbes believes that many of the people who might rebel against the sovereign are motivated by transcendent interests, and hence that threats of force are in principle incapable of maintaining order in the commonwealth. He intended *Leviathan* to address the problem of transcendentally-motivated social disorder, and the solution Hobbes provides there is education: since force cannot keep order, people must be persuaded that the true pursuit of their transcendent interests will lead them to obey the sovereign (1-3).

Well aware of how controversial this is, Lloyd offers several sorts of evidence in its favor. She provides a series of arguments designed to show the inadequacy of alternative views for resolving the problem of recurring disorder as Hobbes conceived it, textual evidence to confirm her thesis, and a general argument showing the plausibility of her view. Furthermore, she points out that while the social-contract interpretation of Hobbes has difficulty accounting for Parts III and IV of *Leviathan*, her

view makes them essential components of the work. She argues that it is largely by means of the theological arguments presented in *Leviathan*'s latter half that Hobbes seeks to persuade Christians—those whose disobedience is most likely to be transcendentally motivated due to their religious views—that obeying the sovereign is in fact their religious duty.

My goal here is to show that the role played by transcendent interests in social disorder is actually, on Hobbes's view, much smaller than Lloyd claims, and of a different nature. To accomplish this, I will argue that there are alternative interpretations of Hobbes's views on the nature of social disorder and how to resolve it. In §III.2 and §III.3 I will cast doubt on the textual evidence Lloyd presents for her claims about the dominant role of transcendent interests. In §III.4 I will present further textual evidence that Hobbes does not think transcendent interests were of great concern. In §III.5 I will provide general theoretical grounds for doubting that transcendent interests are a primary concern of Hobbes's. In fact, it is hard to see that they play much of a role in his political thought. Rather, I will maintain that while some of the interests involved in social disorder might be transcendent, their transcendence is largely if not entirely superfluous to the process of social collapse as Hobbes sees it. I do not deny that transcendent interests can play a role in disorder; what I am disputing is their role in Hobbes's political philosophy.

As noted above in §I.1, the popular game-theoretic interpretation of Hobbes has little to say about what the second half of *Leviathan* is for. Lloyd's interpretation, on the other hand, not only provides an explanation for *Leviathan*'s second half but makes it essential to what she takes to be Hobbes's project. If Lloyd's view is incorrect, then we

must still account for why Hobbes devoted so much effort to his discussion of religion and education. In §III.6, I will argue that Hobbes had ample reason to discuss these topics at length absent any concern over transcendent interests.

2. LLOYD'S PRELIMINARY ARGUMENTS

2.1. Explaining Parts III and IV of *Leviathan*

Lloyd tries to show the importance of transcendent interests to Hobbes's view of disorder by arguing that if they were not important, we could not explain the presence of Parts III and IV of *Leviathan*, which deal with religion. She rejects the possibility that the presence of these parts could be explained as appealing to a non-transcendent interest in salvation:

If the interest in salvation didn't *override* fear of bodily harm, then it would not undermine the effectiveness of the sovereign's threatened punishments and the threats to preservation posed by a state of nature, and so would not need to be dealt with for Hobbes's argument to work. If it *does* need to be dealt with, then it must be that religious interests can jeopardize order, which they could do only if they could override concerns to avoid bodily death. (19³)

In other words, Hobbes's lengthy treatment of religion bespeaks a strong concern over religion; the only reason religion could be of such concern to Hobbes is if religious interests could pose a threat to order; and the only way they could threaten order is by being transcendent and hence immune to threats of force. So unless transcendent interests were a problem, Parts III and IV of *Leviathan* would be unnecessary. And given their collective size—half the book—we should suppose Hobbes thinks that transcendent interests present a large problem indeed.

However, we should be skeptical of the “onlys” here. Why should we suppose that the only reason Hobbes would write at length about religion is that it posed a threat to

order that could not be neutralized by threat of force? True, in the second half of *Leviathan* Hobbes appeals to religious interests, and these interests can (let's suppose) be transcendent. In it he argues that the sovereign is to be taken as the authority in religious as well as civil matters, and that it is our duty to God to obey the sovereign under almost all circumstances. Such an argument, if accepted by his Christian audience, could gain their willing (as opposed to coerced) obedience, and this could contribute greatly to the maintenance of social order, given the size of the Christian constituency at the time. But the fact that Hobbes thinks this appeal could help maintain order does not show that he believes order could not be maintained without it; and that the interests he appeals to are of a kind that can be transcendent does not show that his sole reason for appealing to them is that they *are* transcendent. Besides, it seems to attribute a certain inhumanity to Hobbes to suggest, in effect, that the only reason he could have for carefully proposing a solution other than force is that force is not enough.

Lloyd's argument here might be summarized as "Using the pen implies the sword could not do the job." My response is, essentially, that Hobbes could have something else in mind, such as "Why use the sword if the pen will do?" or "Both pen and sword are needed." I will argue on behalf of the latter in Chapter IV; in the meanwhile, in §III.6 below I will discuss Hobbes's possible motives for writing *Leviathan's* second half in more detail and will argue for some of them as plausible candidates, but for now it suffices to note that such possibilities exist.

2.2. The fear of death

Lloyd notes that "even if the political authority is obeyed by a sufficiently large number of people that it is capable of exercising coercion, it may not be able to compel

obedience from enough of the remaining members of society to secure effective social order” (101). She continues:

This is so for the simple reason that in order for obedience to be reliably attainable by means of threat of force, it must be true that fear of death, wounds, or imprisonment (fear of the means of coercion available to a political authority) must be the *strongest* motivating passion. But the existence of transcendent interests shows we *cannot* count on this passion (or, we might say, this interest in avoiding personal harm) to override all other passions and interests. (101)

Lloyd is arguing that if it were not for the presence of transcendent interests, social order could be maintained by credible threats of force; but since people have transcendent interests, threats of force cannot suffice to maintain order—and thus the “standard interpretation” of Hobbes, which sees threats as the keeper of order, can’t be right.⁴ And since, according to Lloyd, Hobbes is aware of this, and is primarily concerned with maintaining order (27), transcendent interests must be an object of great concern to him.

This can’t be quite right. The mere existence of transcendent interests is not enough to create disorder. At least two other conditions must obtain. First, those interests must motivate disobedience, or they could not lead to disorder; that is, religious beliefs must actually conflict with the sovereign’s commands. Second, the religious beliefs must be held by enough people that their acting on them creates a significant problem, or else the disobedience they motivate could either be tolerated or easily crushed. The first condition is obviously fulfilled. There is no question that, for Hobbes, people are motivated to disobey by their religious beliefs, and Lloyd is of course aware of this (37f). But, as already noted above in §II.7, fulfilling the second condition is more troublesome. It is crucial to the TI thesis that it be fulfilled, since the thesis implicitly

requires that it be possible—according to Hobbes—for enough of us to be motivated strongly enough to overcome our fear of punishment, and that we be so motivated often enough for disobedience thus motivated to be an object of major concern to Hobbes. In short, Hobbes must believe that overcoming fear of punishment, in particular due to transcendent interests, must be a widespread phenomenon. If most of us fear punishment enough to be deterred from disobedience most of the time, it would be difficult to see how the TI thesis could get off the ground.

Lloyd argues that

According to Hobbes, fear is often *not* the strongest motivating passion. He writes, for example, that one cannot be obligated to kill one's parent because "a son will rather die than live infamous and hated of all the world" [DCv 6.13]⁵, that "*most* men choose rather to hazard their life, than not to be revenged" [L 15.20], that "indignation carrieth men, not onely against the actors and authors of injustice, but against all power that is likely to protect them" [L 30.23], and that "most men would rather lose their lives...than suffer slander" [DCv 3.12]. We can see from his lengthy discussion of dueling that Hobbes recognized that pride could override fear of death; and seeing that legal prohibitions against dueling (with their concomitant punishments) had failed to eradicate that practice, he recommended a strategy of persuading people to think that dueling was ignoble (thereby fighting pride with pride, and not with fear). Fear of death, and the desire for self-preservation, seem *not* to be the strongest motivating forces after all. (36-37)

It seems to me that this does little to help the TI thesis. These citations serve to show that Hobbes thought there are several circumstances in which fear of punishment or death is not overriding, and that under some of those circumstances most of us would choose to risk our safety. However, transcendent religious interests, which Lloyd claims are Hobbes's greatest worry (42, 271), are conspicuously absent from her list. Moreover, it was shown in §II.6.1 above that when we consider the context in which they appear, Hobbes's remarks about indignation and not being obliged to kill one's father actually

support the idea that force can keep order rather than undermining it. This is the opposite of what the TI thesis requires. Moreover, the examples Lloyd cites do not show that we are, by and large, often in these circumstances. And it is plain that some of them are rare, at least for most people, and would have been so even in Hobbes's time. Most are never asked to kill a parent, or get involved in a duel; many are never slandered, or so driven by indignation or desire for revenge that life or limb is risked.

Even if we were, it would not necessarily mean that fear of death has been overridden. According to Hobbes, a man may attempt violent revenge on others when insulted because he "is afraid, unless he revenge it, he shall fall into contempt, and consequently be obnoxious to the like injuries from others; and to avoid this, breaks the law, and protects himself for the future, by the terror of his private revenge" (L 27.20). In other words, taking revenge—even violently, such that one's own safety is risked—can be seen as a means to avoiding future danger, and thus as a means to temporal security.

Not that Hobbes never mentions them, as we noted in §II.6. Consider the following passage:

By the Canonization of Saints, and declaring who are Martyrs, [Roman Catholics] assure their Power, in that they induce simple men into an obstinacy against the Laws and Commands of their Civill Sovereigns even to death, if by the Popes excommunication, they be declared Heretiques or Enemies to the Church; that is, (as they interpret it,) to the Pope. (L 47.12)

Given the context, where several other factors are also said to assure the power of the church over the sovereign, it appears we are to read "assure their Power" in the passage as "help assure their Power." But while what is described here is clearly the sort of phenomenon Lloyd claims Hobbes is most worried about, there is not enough here to

confirm the TI thesis. The text does not tell us how many “simple men” Hobbes thought there were, nor whether he believed this to be a large-scale problem, or even whether it was more or less significant than the other factors mentioned. It seems to me worth speculating that the very absence of such information here tends to tell against the TI thesis: if this was such a large problem for Hobbes, for this reason, why didn’t he say so? Moreover, as we will see below in §III.4.4, Hobbes’s discussion of the English Civil War does not show transcendent interests playing a major role. This is important because concern over this war was Hobbes’s stated motive for much of his political writing.

In addition, although it was mentioned in §II.8 it bears repeating that fear of death is not the only fear to which the sovereign can appeal to discourage disobedience. In the quote at the beginning of this section (from p. 101), Lloyd recognizes this to some extent, but in her other discussions she tends to focus exclusively on fear of death, as if the ability to override it were sufficient for threats of punishment to be rendered ineffective. But people also commonly fear physical pain, loss of liberty, loss of social status, and loss of money or property, and the sovereign can easily appeal to these fears with credible threats of torture, imprisonment or exile, stripping of titles or rights, and fines or confiscation of property. Any one of these fears may be not be strongly motivating in an individual, but collectively they seem to be, for most of us, quite powerful.

3. LLOYD'S TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

3.1. Disobedience in the face of punishment

To show examples of transcendent interests at work in Hobbes, Lloyd quotes a number of passages describing situations where threats of force are ineffective or, worse, actually exacerbate the problem. But it seems to me there is room for doubt as to whether these situations involve transcendent interests, or, if they do, that the problem they present is serious because of the transcendence itself. For example, Lloyd (38f) quotes Hobbes as follows:

And the grounds of these rights [of sovereignty] have the rather need to be diligently, and truly taught, *because they cannot be maintained by any civil law, or terrour of legal punishment.* For a civill law that shall forbid rebellion (and such is all resistance to the essentiall rights of sovereignty) is not (as a civill law) any obligation, but by vertue onely of the law of nature that forbiddeth the violation of faith; which naturall obligation if men know not, they cannot know the right of any law the soveraign maketh. And for the punishment, they take it but for an act of hostility; *which when they think they have strength enough, they will endeavour by acts of hostility, to avoyd.* (L 30.4, Lloyd's emphasis)

Hobbes is saying here that we don't break faith by failing to obey if we are ignorant of our obligation, and that if we are ignorant of it, we will interpret punishment as an act of hostility which we will in turn be hostile to when we have strength enough. But it seems to me that in such cases our defiance need not be motivated by transcendent interests. In a situation where we are ignorant of another's right to enforce laws on us, their attempts to get us to obey them would not appear as the act of an authority but as that of an enemy. Under such circumstances, an attempt to punish would be interpreted as confirming the "enemy" status of the authority. Reacting with hostility to an enemy is not self-sacrificing (i.e., transcendent), but rather an act of self-preservation.⁶

Also, we should pay close attention to Hobbes's qualification that people will avoid punishment by acts of hostility "when they think they have strength enough." This suggests that if they do not think they have strength enough, they will not react with hostility—i.e., that their alleged transcendent interests fail to motivate them. On the other hand, if they do think they have strength enough (presumably, strength enough to successfully avoid the sovereign's punishment), then their alleged transcendent interests no longer seem necessary to explain their willingness to disobey. Rather, the explanation of their disobedience rests crucially on the sovereign's relative weakness, his inability to threaten them effectively. I will argue in §III.4 that this is what Hobbes has in mind: that rebellion has more to do with rebels' perception of their chances of success than with the transcendence of their motives.

Lloyd (41f) employs another quote from *Leviathan* to show the inability of coercive power to keep the peace when passionately-held seditious opinions have spread. In it, Hobbes blames sovereigns for failing to stop the spread of these opinions:

For without their authority there could at first no seditious doctrine have been publically preached. I say they might have hindred the same in the beginning: *But when the people were once possessed by those sprituall men, there was no humane remedy to be applied, that any man could invent.* And for the remedies that God should provide...wee are to attend his good pleasure, that suffereth many times the prosperity of his enemies, together with their ambition, to grow to such a height, as the violence thereof openeth the eyes...*whereas the impatience of those that strive to resist such encroachment before their subjects eyes were opened did but encrease the power they resisted.* (L 47.18, Lloyd's emphasis)

"In the beginning," before the doctrine—actually, a set of doctrines favoring the authority of the church over the King (cf. L 47.2–17)—had gained a following, the sovereign did not act to prevent their spread. And after the doctrines had possessed the people, but before their eyes were opened by the violence the spread of the doctrines led

to, attempts to suppress the doctrines not only failed but tended to increase resistance to the sovereign. This is consistent with the TI thesis; if the people “possessed” by these doctrines were transcendently motivated, we could expect them to disobey the sovereign despite any threats the sovereign might make.

But this isn’t the only possible explanation for their disobedience. The doctrines in question taught the people that the church held worldly as well as spiritual authority, and was infallible besides. If such an authority told them that the civil government was secondary, and they believed it, and then the civil authority stepped in to try and take over power, it would be natural to treat the civil authority in the same sort of way as the enemy described above. Again, transcendence is not required to explain the inefficacy of force: if a large enough portion of the populace is “possessed” by these doctrines, as the quote suggests, it would be difficult and perhaps impossible for the sovereign to gather enough force from among the remainder of the people to coerce the obedience of those possessed. In other words, there was no “remedy” (of coercion) to be applied because too few were available to do the coercing, not because coercion could not have worked in any case.

Just above this (41), Lloyd quotes from *Behemoth*:

A state can constrain obedience, but convince no error, nor alter the mind of them that believe they have the better reason. Suppression of doctrines does but unite and exasperate, that is, increase both the malice and power of them that have already believed them. [B 62]

Lloyd attributes this obstinacy of belief to the fact that the doctrines in question are passionately held. But according to Hobbes, it is not the case that passionate attachment prevents forcing someone to change their opinions, for even when there is no passion such forced change is impossible:

For sense, memory, understanding, reason, and opinion are not in our power to change; but always, and necessarily such, as the things we see, hear, and consider suggest unto us; and therefore are not effects of our will, but our will of them. (L 32.4; cf. EL 12.6, 28.8)

We cannot will a change in our own opinions, so we cannot change them in acquiescence to threats, either. It is not transcendence that makes for stubbornness of opinion, but rather the ordinary operation of the mind. This does not sit well with some of Lloyd's statements. For instance:

One's interest in doing what one believes to be religiously required can override one's interest in self-preservation. It is precisely this *transcendence* of religious interests that makes them incorrigible by means of coercion. (42, Lloyd's emphasis)

But if, as Hobbes says, all opinions are incorrigible by coercion in virtue of the relation of opinion to will, we cannot point to transcendence as the cause of incorrigibility as if religious opinions are a special case.

3.2. *Leviathan* 14.31

As noted above in §III.2.2, it is important to Lloyd to establish the inadequacy of the sovereign's threats to motivate obedience. In her discussion of Hobbes's view of human nature, she tries to establish that Hobbes, too, could feel they are not enough to keep order. She points out:

There [is no] contradiction between holding, on the one hand, that "the passion to be reckoned upon [to hold men to the performance of their covenants] is fear" [L 14.31], and asserting, on the other hand that the rights of sovereignty "cannot be maintained by any civill law, or terrour of legal punishment" [L 30.4, cited above in §III.3.1]... Fear may be a more dependable motivating factor than pride (the other possibility Hobbes discusses) without being sufficient. (254)

It is true that there is no outright contradiction between saying that fear of temporal punishment is more reliable than pride and saying that this fear is nevertheless

inadequate. But it would be odd for Hobbes to say that fear may be “reckoned upon” if he believed it unreliable. This oddness is underscored by considering the following passage from *The Elements of Law*. In discussing the need to set up a sovereign to govern us all, Hobbes says that lasting peace cannot be established among us by our merely agreeing to get along with each other because

Consent (by which I understand the concurrence of many men’s wills to one action) is not sufficient security for their common peace, without the erection of some common power, by the fear whereof they may be compelled both to keep the peace amongst themselves, and to join their strengths together, against a common enemy. (EL 19.6; cf. DCv 5.6–8, L 17.3)

In other words, consent is insufficient for peace without a sovereign enforcing our agreement by threats of punishment. Although it is logically possible for Hobbes to say this and nevertheless hold that consent and threats together are still insufficient, that would be a very strained reading of the text. The clear implication is that together they are indeed sufficient for peace, as it is in several other passages in *The Elements of Law*, *De Cive*, and *Leviathan* discussed above in §II.3.

What is even more peculiar is Lloyd’s claim that “the fear Hobbes refers to in the passage quoted [from L 14.31] is fear of God; thus the passage cannot be used to support the standard philosophical interpretation” that order is maintained by the fearsomeness of the sovereign (370n11). In support of this claim, Lloyd quotes Hobbes as follows:

The force of words being (as I have formerly noted) too weak to hold men to the performance of their covenants, there are in mans nature but two imaginable helps to strengthen it. And those are either a feare of the consequence of breaking their word, or a glory, or pride in appearing not to need to breake it. This later is a generosity too rarely found to be presumed on.... The passion to be reckoned upon is feare, wherof there be two very generall objects: one the power of spirits invisible; the other, the power of

those men they shall therein offend.... The feare of the former is in every man his own religion, which hath place in the nature of man before civill society. The later hath not so, at least not place enough to keep men to their promises.... So that before the time of civill society, or in the interruption thereof by warre, there is nothing can strengthen a covenant of peace agreed on...but the fear of that invisible power which they every one worship as God; and feare as a revenger of their perfidy. (L 14.31; Lloyd's elisions)

The fear is clearly not only fear of God, but the edited text makes it appear that fear of man cannot be counted on, leaving fear of God standing alone by default as the sole means of strengthening covenants in the state of nature.

It is questionable whether even this heavily edited version of Hobbes's text really supports the TI thesis. Note that here Hobbes only says that fear of other men (i.e., of temporal punishment) is inadequate prior to society or during a civil war. This clearly leaves open the possibility that fear of temporal punishment *is* adequate "to keep men to their promises" in civil society. And when we restore the omitted passages (shown here in boldface), the TI thesis is seriously undermined:

The force of words being (as I have formerly noted) too weak to hold men to the performance of their covenants, there are in mans nature but two imaginable helps to strengthen it. And those are either a feare of the consequence of breaking their word, or a glory, or pride in appearing not to need to breake it. This later is a generosity too rarely found to be presumed on, **especially in the pursuers of Wealth, Command, or sensuall Pleasure; which are the greatest part of Mankind.** The passion to be reckoned upon is feare, whereof there be two very generall objects: one the power of spirits invisible; the other, the power of those men they shall therein offend. **Of these two, though the former be the greater Power, yet the feare of the later is commonly the greater Feare.** The feare of the former is in every man his own religion, which hath place in the nature of man before civill society. The later hath not so, at least not place enough to keep men to their promises; **because in the condition of meer Nature, the inequality of Power is not discerned, but by the event of Battell.** So that before the time of civill society, or in the interruption thereof by warre, there is nothing can strengthen a covenant of peace agreed on, **against the temptations of Avarice, Ambition, Lust, or other strong desire,** but the fear of that invisible power which they every one worship as God; and feare as a revenger of their perfidy.

Lloyd's elisions are appropriate in a sense, for they serve to highlight what Hobbes says about human nature (that is, in the state of nature), which is the topic of discussion in the text which referred to her note. But the omissions also significantly alter the meaning of Hobbes's text in such a way as to favor her views when Hobbes does not. The first boldfaced passage indicates that the majority of us are willing to break our covenants because we are pursuers of such self-serving, temporal ends as wealth, power, and pleasure—not of transcendent interests. This is underscored by the last boldfaced passage. The second boldfaced passage, in conjunction with the rest of the quote, indicates that the fear of other men is greater than the fear of God, but is nevertheless inadequate “before the time of civill society, or in the interruption thereof by warre” to motivate us to keep our covenants. But “before the time of civill society” simply refers to the absence of an effective sovereign,⁷ as does “the interruption thereof by warre.” The clear implications are that when there is an effective sovereign—who is, after all, a man in command of other men—(a) it is fear of men that is to be counted on to bind men to their covenants, which of course lends support to the standard interpretation; and (b), more importantly for our purposes, that fear of men is greater than fear of God in most of us. This weighs against any claim that religious transcendent interests are widespread, or—more to the point—that Hobbes is greatly concerned about them.

3.3. “The” cause of disorder

After rejecting the standard interpretation of Hobbes as incapable of accounting for the collapse of social order, Lloyd asks:

What does Hobbes say about the cause of disorder?...What he does say is this: “*The most frequent praetext of sedition and civil war, in Christian commonwealths hath a long time proceeded from a difficulty, not yet sufficiently resolved, of obeying at once both God, and Man, then when*

their commandments are one contrary to the other.” (37; quoting from L 43.1; Lloyd’s emphasis)

We might take Hobbes’s claim that this is “the most frequent” cause of disorder with a grain of salt. After all, in the Preface to *De Cive* Hobbes blames civil strife not only on religious doctrines but on “those hermaphrodite opinions of moral philosophers, partly right and comely, partly brutal and wild; *the causes of all contentions and bloodsheds*” (my emphasis). Nevertheless, as we noted above in §II.6.3, it is clear from many passages that Hobbes believes contention between religious and civil authorities is a serious problem. Here is a text from *Leviathan* on this topic, which gives us more detail:

When therefore these two powers [that is, the spiritual and the civil] oppose one another, the commonwealth cannot but be in great danger of civil war, and dissolution. For the civil authority being more visible, and standing in the clearer light of natural reason, cannot choose but draw to it in all times a very considerable part of the people: and the spiritual, though it stand in the darkness of School distinctions, and hard words; yet because the fear of darkness, and ghosts, is greater than other fears, cannot want a party sufficient to trouble, and sometimes to destroy a commonwealth. (L 29.15; quoted by Lloyd, 168)

When commands of God and king conflict, the greater visibility of the king, combined with clear natural reason’s guiding us to obey him, will draw him a good following. But despite the Scholastic obscurity of those claiming to speak for God, the fear of darkness and ghosts they are able to conjure up lures a sufficient number away from the king that the stability of the commonwealth is threatened. This is close to a full statement of just what Lloyd claims Hobbes is concerned with: people’s fear of civil authority being overcome through their religious interests, which lead them away from the king ultimately to upset the country. Note that if it were clear in this passage that overriding the fear of punishment were somehow crucial to causing the collapse of order, a very economical argument could be given for the TI thesis: Hobbes is primarily concerned

with maintaining order, and in particular with maintaining order in a Christian commonwealth, since he lived in one. He identifies the conflict between sovereign and (apparent or pretended) divine commands as the most frequent problem plaguing a Christian commonwealth, and in describing the problem he (let's say) identifies the transcendence of interests as crucial. Ergo, he was most concerned about transcendent interests.

But how, exactly, does transcendence play a role here? Hobbes does not say that the preachers who set themselves up as God's representatives had to overcome any danger of punishment to do so, nor that those who were moved to follow them by fear of ghosts did so in virtue of overriding *their* fear of punishment. Nor is it said that it is their willingness to sacrifice themselves for their cause is what makes them a danger. Rather, it is their number.

Recall that Hobbes blames sovereigns for allowing seditious doctrine to be publicly preached (L 47.18, quoted in §III.3.1 above; cf. L 18.9). He does not blame sovereigns for failing to make good on threats of punishment for spreading such doctrine, nor the preachers for acting in spite of the sovereign's orders or threats. It looks as if Hobbes believes that sovereigns fail to see early on that the doctrines publicly preached are seditious, and therefore allow the preaching to continue unhindered. I will mention three reasons why this might be so.

First, consider this passage from *De Cive*:

Many men, who are themselves very well affected to civil society, do through want of knowledge co-operate to the disposing of subjects' minds to sedition, whilst they teach young men a doctrine conformable to the said opinions in their schools, and all the people in their pulpits. (DCv 12.13)

Here Hobbes tells us that seditious doctrines may be spread inadvertently by loyal but ignorant teachers in schools and preachers in pulpits. This is consistent with Hobbes's claim that certain "opinions, pernicious to peace and government, have in this part of the world, proceeded chiefly from the tongues, and pens of unlearned divines" (L 29.8). These teachers and preachers do not spread sedition despite a threat, because they don't know they are spreading sedition at all.

Second, there is evidence that Hobbes thinks those who intentionally spread seditious doctrines deliberately conceal the danger their ideas pose to social order. Consider again Hobbes's discussion of sovereigns' neglect in allowing dangerous doctrines to be spread:

I say they might have hindered the same in the beginning: but when the people were once possessed by those spiritual men, there was no human remedy to be applied, that any man could invent. And for the remedies that God should provide...we are to attend his good pleasure, that suffereth many times the prosperity of his enemies, together with their ambition, to grow to such a height, as the violence thereof openeth the eyes, *which the wariness of their predecessors had before sealed up*. (L 47.18, my emphasis)

As discussed above in §III.3.1, Hobbes thinks the spread of certain erroneous doctrines leads to violence, and this violence opens our eyes—i.e., we become aware, too late, of the danger the doctrines pose. Why did we not see it earlier? The phrase "the wariness of their predecessors had before sealed up" here suggests it is because those who spread the doctrines in the first place were careful to conceal it. In any case, there is no indication the preachers or their followers face the threat of punishment until they are so numerous that the threat is relatively hollow. And if they do not face such a threat, the notion of transcendence is superfluous to explaining disorder here.⁸

Third, if we look at some of the doctrines that most worried Hobbes, we see that they do not of themselves motivate any disobedience. For example, the doctrine that one must side with God when the commands of God and king conflict does not direct one to defy the king unless it is also apparent that some command of the king's conflicts with some command of God's. Likewise, the belief that tyrannicide is lawful (cf. L 29.14) does not allow one to kill the sovereign unless the sovereign is perceived as a tyrant. Even then, this doctrine merely gives permission, it does not command assassination. Thus such doctrines are only potentially threatening, not inherently so. This makes it harder for a sovereign to perceive their danger. It also makes it possible for the spread of such doctrines to go unnoticed, since many people could become persuaded of them without taking any action against the sovereign.

Besides, there is something misleading about asking what Hobbes thinks is "the" cause of disorder in the first place. There isn't just one. In each of his three major political works Hobbes devotes a chapter to explaining the causes of disorder, and each of them lays out a wide array. For example, L 29, titled "Of those things that Weaken, or tend to the DISSOLUTION of a Commonwealth," identifies sixteen causes, eleven of which are described as "of the greatest, and most present danger" (L 29.18).⁹ To be sure, several of the causes discussed in L 29 are religious—and secular—doctrines which can motivate disobedience under appropriate circumstances. But other causes clearly have nothing to do with transcendent interests, such as allowing the sovereign's power to be limited or divided (L 29.3, 29.12) and lack of money (L 29.18). And as we will see below, in *Behemoth* Hobbes shows that a number of factors worked together to

generate a civil war. Lloyd notes this (212-3); but in contrast to Lloyd's interpretation, I will show that there is little evidence transcendence was one of them.

4. CONFLICTING TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

In §III.2 above we noted that we are not obliged to accept Lloyd's claim that the only explanation for Hobbes's writing Parts III and IV of *Leviathan* is that Hobbes is greatly worried by transcendent interests. We also noted that, although Hobbes sometimes does allow that fear of death isn't always our strongest motive, there is a dearth of evidence that Hobbes thinks willingness to risk death is widespread; this, in turn, undermines Lloyd's implicit claim that Hobbes thinks transcendent interests are widespread. In §III.3 we examined textual evidence Lloyd looks to as evidence of Hobbes's concern about transcendent interests. We found that these texts are open to interpretations that do not rely on transcendent interests: we need not suppose people are transcendentally motivated when they resist punishment or when they side with religious authorities against the sovereign. Contrary to Lloyd's claim that Hobbes is worried about one cause of disorder in particular, we noted that he shows concern about a wide variety of possible causes. But aside from our examination of L 14.31 (where we saw that Hobbes clearly thinks most of us pursue temporal goods such as wealth and pleasure, and that we fear other men more than we fear "spirits invisible"), all this has only established that we need not suppose transcendent interests are a great worry to Hobbes.

Now we will consider several passages which conflict with Lloyd's thesis and, I will argue, should lead us to reject the claim that transcendent interests play a major role in Hobbes's political thinking.

4.1. Hope of success

As Lloyd is aware (cf. 210), Hobbes says in *The Elements of Law* that hope of success is one of three preconditions of sedition:

To dispose men to sedition three things concur. The first is discontent.... The second is pretence of right; for though a man be discontented, yet if in his own opinion there be no just cause of stirring against, or resisting the government established...he will never show it. The third is hope of success; for it were madness to attempt without hope, when to fail is to die the death of a traitor. Without these three: discontent, pretence, and hope, there can be no rebellion; and when the same are all together, there wanteth nothing thereto, but a man of credit to set up the standard, and to blow the trumpet. (EL 27.1; quoted by Lloyd 363n11)

Hobbes continues:

Hope of success...consisteth in four points: 1. that the discontented have mutual intelligence; 2. that they have sufficient number; 3. that they have arms; 4. that they agree upon a head. For these four must concur to the making of one body of rebellion, in which intelligence is the life, number the limbs, arms the strength, and a head the unity, by which they are directed to one and the same action. (EL 27.11, quoted by Lloyd 363n11)

What is relevant about these passages is the absence of anything resembling transcendence in them. Here we have Hobbes giving us the necessary and sufficient preconditions for attempting to overthrow the sovereign, but there is nothing about willingness to sacrifice oneself for a cause, the ability to override the fear of death or other punishment, etc. Transcendent interests *could* conceivably contribute discontent and pretence of right (say, in the form of the religious belief that the Pope infallibly reigns above the king, and that their commands conflict on some important matter). They could also conceivably contribute some hope of success (say, in the belief that one will win in the end because one is taking God's side). But Hobbes does not hold that it is necessary for would-be rebels to have transcendent interests as Lloyd defines them. He implies the reverse when he says it is madness to attempt without hope because to

fail is to die a traitor's death. If people were transcendently motivated they would not be deterred by the prospect of death. Instead, what Hobbes says is necessary for hope are intelligence, a leader, arms, and numbers. These claims are repeated in *De Cive* (12.11). And as we have already seen in §III.3.3 and will see again below in our examination of *Behemoth*, it is the numbers that seem to worry Hobbes most.

In the next chapter (§IV.3.1) we will see that in *De Cive* Hobbes again claims that hope of success is necessary for rebellion and that numbers are necessary for hope (DCv 12.11). But we will find that hope and numbers disappear from Hobbes's discussion of disorder in chapter 29 of *Leviathan* (§IV.3.2). However, both *The Elements of Law* and *De Cive* contain passages expressing what Lloyd takes to be evidence of Hobbes's worry over transcendent interests (EL 25.14, 26.10; DCv 6.11, 12.5, 18.1). Some of them are just a few paragraphs away from his discussion of the need for hope and its requisite numbers. So we should not take the changes in L 29 as evidence that hope and numbers no longer mattered because of a new-found worry over transcendent interests. Rather, their absence is part of a trend in Hobbes away from declaring any causes of rebellion to be either necessary or sufficient. As I will show in §IV.3.2 below, this trend can be explained without reference to transcendent interests. Also, we have noted above in §III.3.1 that even in *Leviathan* Hobbes seems to think hope of success, or at least the "strength enough" to avoid punishment, is important.

4.2. The motives of conspirators

According to Hobbes, we may commit crimes, including fomenting rebellion, out of an exaggerated sense of our own wisdom (L 27.16). On Lloyd's view, these are instances of pride, which can be transcendent in nature (46f, 252): due to hubris, we

may be so sure that we are in the right that we are willing to stake our lives on it. As she sees it, this hubris consists of erroneously believing that we know the truth and others—including the sovereign authority—do not. But what Hobbes says of conspirators acting on “a false presumption of their own Wisdome” has a different ring to it:

For of them that are the first movers in the disturbance of commonwealth, (which can never happen without a civil war,) very few are left alive long enough, to see their new designs established: so that the benefit of their crimes, redoundeth to posterity, and such as would least have wished it: which argues they were not so wise, as they thought they were. (L 27.16)

Just what is it that gives the lie to their pretense of wisdom here? Not that they see themselves as superior to others. It is due to where the “benefit” of their acts goes: apparently where the conspirators would not have wanted it to go. Now, if they were acting on transcendent interests as Lloyd defines them, they might not mind sacrificing themselves for posterity. And if Lloyd is correct about their hubris, they would not care whether others wished for the changes brought about by the conspirators’ actions. It seems Hobbes means that what makes conspirators unwise is that, since they are unlikely to survive the disturbance they create, they themselves will probably not benefit from their actions. This suggests that he sees conspirators as motivated by desire for some temporal gain for themselves. This is not what we would expect if Hobbes believes they are motivated by transcendent interests. Rather, in his general discussion of crimes motivated by pride, Hobbes says vainglorious people believe they are exempt from legal punishment (L 27.13); or, if they are wealthy, they expect to bribe their way out of trouble (L 27.14); or, if they have a large following, they hope to successfully oppose the sovereign (L 27.15). In each case, there is no transcendence: the willingness

of the proud to act against the civil power comes not from a willingness to suffer that power's punishments but from the belief they will not have to.

4.3 The sovereign's coercive power

Hobbes famously holds that our natural condition is a state of war. One of the main sources of our misery in the state of nature is lack of trust. We cannot trust that others will keep their word; hence we cannot gain the benefits of cooperation, and rather must generally expect others to try and cheat us. Under such conditions, it makes no sense to call anything just or unjust. Further, the "standard interpretation" of Hobbes (which Lloyd rejects) holds that Hobbes's remedy for this is to set up a sovereign with the power to enforce agreements by means of threats. Several texts give strong support to this reading of Hobbes, among them:

Before the names of just, and unjust can have place, there must be some coercive power, to compel men equally to the performance of their covenants, by the terror of some punishment, greater than the benefit they expect by the breach of their covenant...and such power there is none before the erection of a commonwealth. And this is also to be gathered out of the ordinary definition of justice in the Schools: for they say, that justice is the constant will of giving to every man his own. And therefore where there is no own, that is, no propriety, there is no injustice; and where there is no coercive power erected, that is, where there is no commonwealth, there is no propriety; all men having right to all things: therefore where there is no commonwealth, there nothing is unjust. So that the nature of justice, consisteth in keeping of valid covenants: but the validity of covenants begins not but with the constitution of a civil power, sufficient to compel men to keep them: and then it is also that propriety begins. (L 15.3)

This text plainly links justice (that is, covenant-keeping), coercion, and the civil power or sovereign. Without a coercive power there is no justice and hence no peace. But to say there is "no coercive power erected" is just to say "there is no commonwealth," i.e., the commonwealth has the coercive power needed to enforce covenants. This is underscored by the last sentence: covenants are only valid when we can presume they

will be kept (cf. L 14.18), and this presumption only exists when there is a civil power “sufficient to compel men to keep” their covenants (cf. L 17.1-2).

That the civil authority, if properly constituted, is sufficient to impose order is also expressed in Hobbes’s discussion of how the sovereign is created, as we noted above in §II.3:

This is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that mortal god, to which we owe under the immortal God, our peace and defence. For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the commonwealth, *he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him, that by terror thereof, he is enabled to form the wills of them all, to peace at home*, and mutual aid against their enemies abroad. (L 17.13; my emphasis)

Taken at face value these texts seem to make the TI thesis a non-starter. The TI thesis holds that a sovereign’s threats are insufficient *in principle* to maintain order because many of us cannot be deterred by such threats. But in these texts Hobbes says the civil power can indeed maintain order by threatening us with death, prison, and so on. As we have seen above in §§III.2.2 and II.6, there are other texts in which Hobbes implicitly admits that the fear of death is not always an overriding motivation. However, these counterexamples are not enough to support the TI thesis because it holds that disorder due to transcendent interests is Hobbes’s chief worry because threats are ineffective in principle against them. The TI thesis thus requires that we believe Hobbes repeatedly and severely misspoke when he implied force was sufficient.

Lloyd’s response is to claim that establishing a sovereign with coercive power suffices to exit the state of nature, but not to explain how a commonwealth can last (27). The standard interpreters focus most on how the commonwealth is created, but according to Lloyd Hobbes thinks the most pressing problem is how the commonwealth

is to be maintained perpetually. Lloyd argues at length that the standard interpretation cannot account for how disorder can arise within a commonwealth (27-36). This claim, if true, opens the door for the TI thesis: if we cannot account for disorder given the assumption that a sovereign's threats can coerce us, then (Lloyd believes) we should give up that assumption. If threats cannot coerce us, it must be because we are able to overcome our fear of whatever a sovereign might do to us—i.e., that we are motivated by transcendent interests.

Lloyd's argument on this point is extensive and complex. However I will not lay it out and rebut it point by point. Rather, I will first remind the reader of the dearth of evidence that Hobbes was worried about transcendent interests, and of the evidence discussed above showing that Hobbes thinks we are generally not transcendently motivated. Together, these indicate that any Hobbesian account of how states collapse should not rely much on transcendent interests. Second, Lloyd's position depends on distinguishing between the means needed to exit the state of nature and those needed to maintain the commonwealth, such that force is needed for the former but not the latter. However, there is a lack of textual support for this distinction in Hobbes. Indeed, the texts we saw in §§II.2 and II.4–5 showing that force is necessary, definitive of sovereignty, and central to much of Hobbes's political thought weigh heavily in the opposite direction. Hobbes does not say, for example, that coercive power is only a defining feature of sovereigns in newly-created societies. Rather, he implies it is a defining feature of all sovereigns—else how could Christ's lack of coercive power be proof that Christ is not a sovereign?

Finally, in the next section I will offer an analysis of the case of disorder which most interested Hobbes—the English Civil War, as recounted in his *Behemoth*—which shows that transcendent interests played little role there, if any. This will render Lloyd’s argument moot.

4.4. *Behemoth*

Lloyd looks to Hobbes’s *Behemoth* for confirmation of the TI thesis, and claims to find it (192-219; esp. 214, 218). Noting that several different groups of people were involved in fomenting war, she claims that, “of the major groups that instigated the collapse of social order, only the merchants acted from an interest...that was *not* transcendent” (215; Lloyd’s emphasis). I, however, find evidence there that tells against the importance of transcendent interests to Hobbes. At the beginning of *Behemoth* (B 2), “B” asks how King Charles I—with his virtue, soldiers, and arms—could have failed to keep order. The reply from “A”:

If those soldiers had been, as they and all other of his subjects ought to have been, at his Majesty’s command, the peace and happiness of the three kingdoms had continued as it was left by King James. But the people were corrupted generally, and disobedient persons esteemed the best patriots.

According to Hobbes, the people were generally corrupted; but if the King’s soldiers had been loyal, the peace could have been maintained. The clear implication in this passage is not that the conflict is in principle unresolvable by force (as the TI thesis holds), but rather simply that there is not enough force available to keep order because the soldiers are disloyal.

Not yet satisfied with what A has said, B remarks,

But sure there were men enough, besides those that were ill-affected, to have made an army sufficient to have kept the people from uniting into a body able to oppose [the King].

If transcendent interests were indeed the problem, here would be a perfect opportunity to say so. Hobbes could simply have said something to the effect that the people were incorrigible by force because they cared more about their religious beliefs than about life itself. Instead he says, via A:

Truly, I think, if the King had had money, he might have had soldiers enough in England. For there were very few of the common people that cared much for either of the causes, but would have taken any side for pay or plunder. But the King's treasury was very low, and his enemies, that pretended the people's ease from taxes, and other specious things, had the command of the purses of the city of London, and of most cities and corporate towns in England, and of many particular persons besides.

Hobbes again implies that force could have kept order. And as for why there is not enough force, it is not a matter of the fear of punishment being overridden by passionately-held religious opinions, rendering force inadequate or useless. It is a matter of widespread apathy which is swayed by appeals to greed. (Note that this concern for money “enough readily to raise an army able to suppress any rebellion, and to take from his enemies all hope of success” is repeated at B 58.) Note also that, if we can assume the common people constitute the majority of the population, according to Hobbes only a minority of people, at most, could be motivated by transcendent interests.

The question next arises how and by whom the people are corrupted. Hobbes lists six groups of “seducers” (B 2–4) as responsible: (a) Presbyterian ministers; (b) Papists; (c) Independents, Anabaptists, and others who became disloyal due to private interpretations of scripture; (d) educated men who sought to emulate the Greeks and Romans; (e) “the city of London and other great towns of trade”; (f) those who had wasted their fortunes or thought them too small, or who saw no honest way to make money. Of the seduced (g), Hobbes says

Lastly, the people in general were so ignorant of their duty, as that not one perhaps of ten thousand knew what right any man had to command him, or what necessity there was of King or Commonwealth, for which he was to part with his money against his will; but thought himself to be so much master of whatsoever he possessed, that it could not be taken from him upon any pretence of common safety without his own consent. (B 4; cf. L 29.10)

Of these seven groups (the seducers and the seduced), how many were acting on transcendent interests? This last quote echoes the concern over money expressed in the previous one: the vast majority of people lacked enough loyalty to the King even to pay their taxes willingly, yet it does not appear that this is because they had strong loyalty to some other object more important than life itself; their loyalty to the King apparently was outweighed simply by attachment to their possessions. Of the others, group (f)—described as “a very great number” of the seducers—was clearly motivated by greed; Hobbes says they sought to enrich themselves through war by taking the richer side (B 4). Group (e) also acted on greed; seeing the prosperity of the Low Countries after they revolted against the king of Spain, the towns of trade “were inclined to think that the like change of government here, would to them produce the like prosperity.” (B 4; cf. L 29.13).

The motives of group (d)—described as “an exceeding great number of men of the better sort,” who made up the most influential part of the House of Commons—are a bit harder to discern. In *Behemoth* it appears that they admired the “great actions” of the Greeks and Romans and the “glorious name of liberty” associated with popular government (B 3; cf. B 43); but whether this admiration could be of a transcendent sort is not clear. The parallel treatment of them in *Leviathan* (L 29.14), however, is more detailed, and makes clear that some of it might have been transcendent, but some of it clearly was not. There Hobbes says that such men were led by reading the ancients to

see kingship as tyranny and tyrannicide as permissible; they came to see citizenship in a democracy as liberty and subjection to a monarch as slavery, and were so vehemently contrary that Hobbes compared them to rabid dogs. It is not entirely clear there whether they saw the monarchy as threatening their ideals or as threatening their worldly interests, nor whether they were willing to sacrifice themselves for what they cared about, as transcendence requires. But it is clear that Hobbes thought these men believed the glory and prosperity of the ancients was due to their form of government and therefore desired democracy: they, at least in part, sought a change in government as a means to glory and wealth.

Of the remainder, groups (a), (b)—”a very great number, though not comparable to” (a)—, and (c)—”not a few”—were all religious (B 2–3). But this is not enough to show that their interests were transcendent, and Hobbes claims they were often driven by the desire for power and wealth rather than a sense of duty or the desire for salvation (L 47.17; cf. Lloyd 193, 203). Further evidence of Hobbes’s opinion of their motives appears in *Six Lessons to the Savilian Professors of the Mathematics*:

The cause of my writing [*Leviathan*] was the consideration of what the ministers before, and in the beginning of, the civil war, by their preaching and writing did contribute thereunto. Which I saw not only to tend to the abatement of the then civil power, but also to the gaining of as much thereof as they could (as did afterwards more plainly appear) unto themselves.
(SxLs, Lesson Six, p. 335)

There was, then, a confluence of motives. Some of those involved sought prosperity—some of them even for criminal reasons—while others sought power and others might have acted for more virtuous reasons, but all sought to further their interests by opposing the government.

Certain things stand out about Hobbes's analysis of the civil war. One is that there was no single factor creating the unrest. There was sedition, but it was spread by diverse groups of people who were motivated by desire for wealth, glory, and power as well as by religious opinions. Stability could have been maintained if the King could have mustered enough soldiers, which he should have been able to do if the general populace had been mindful of its duty, which it might have been if the King had made it so. But since the people were ignorant, the only way to gain their loyalty was to buy it—which the King lacked the money for, while his opponents did not.¹⁰ Hobbes evidently did not see one factor as the key to it all, as the chapters on disorder in *The Elements of Law, De Cive*, and *Leviathan* suggest.

Another feature of this analysis is that transcendent interests do not appear to play any necessary role, let alone the most important role. Only some of those responsible for the sedition might have been motivated by transcendent interests, and where was the need for them to be self-sacrificing in the face of threatened punishment? Once they (and their greed-driven accomplices) had, in effect, bought off the otherwise apathetic common people, there was no such threat. It does not appear to be the case that the rebels' fear of death or other punishment was overridden by their attachment to their ideals, and hence that force could not deter them. (Besides, as the trilemma in the next section indicates, such a view is implausible anyway.) Rather, it appears Hobbes thought the reverse: their ability to gain a large following, coupled with the King's inability to do so, diminished the prospect of punishment for the rebels and their leaders. The fear of death did not need to be overridden, because it was not strong in the first place; but that was not because people did not fear death, but rather because the threat of

death was not sufficiently credible—that is, the threat of being punished with death by the existing government. Once the opposition had enough following that the King’s ability to maintain order was in doubt, there would be an evident threat of death or other injury due to imminent civil war. But in such a case, the threat of harm could not be avoided by obeying the sovereign, since he could not guarantee protection. Then, disobedience would not entail transcendent interests.

And note that this would still be the case even if the seducers had gained their following by appealing to transcendent interests among the populace. Hence the transcendence of the interests involved was not crucial. What was crucial, as our examination of the problem posed by competing civil and divine commands in §III.3.3 above suggested, was the ability of such appeals to gain a following. It may be that, according to Hobbes, a subset of the several sources of sedition could not be stopped by threat of punishment, but he does not feel that the unrest *caused* by this source was unstoppable by threats. Rather, the problem was that it tended to drain the sovereign’s power to make credible threats.

Moreover, despite her claim that her analysis of *Behemoth* “makes explicit the centrality of *transcendent interests* to the problem of order” (214; Lloyd’s emphasis), her actual analysis (192-212) is, surprisingly, consistent with mine here: it was the fact that rebellious leaders were able to persuade others of their doctrines that was key to dividing and factionalizing the kingdom (193). Strong willingness to risk their lives was not needed.

5. GENERAL THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Up to now I have focused on the arguments and textual evidence Lloyd provides, and on providing counterarguments based on Hobbes's texts. But it seems to me that there are also general theoretical grounds for doubting the TI thesis.

A trilemma. Suppose there is a group of people holding a transcendent interest which motivates them to disobey the sovereign. On one hand, if the number of people in the group is small, it is hard to see how the fact that their interest is *transcendent* could present a major threat to the state's stability. For the transcendence of the interest indicates that threats will not deter members from acting on their belief, but it does not by itself show us why a small group would be successful at creating serious social disorder and hence worthy of serious concern on Hobbes's part. To put it bluntly: so what if *threatening* to use force won't stop them? If their number is small, carrying out the threat will, besides providing an example to others of the futility of disobedience.

Then again, if the group is large the transcendence of their interest is superfluous to the problem of disorder because their numbers suffice to pose a serious threat to the sovereign. If their interests are transcendent, all the better for them; but it is not necessary that they be willing to sacrifice themselves in order for their revolt to cause widespread disorder and perhaps overthrow the sovereign.

The third possibility is that there are just enough people in the group that it is only their strong, self-sacrificing motivation that gives them a chance at success. I suppose this could occur, but this would be the rarest case. It would not serve to support Lloyd's claim that transcendent interests are Hobbes's greatest concern.

To the first horn of the trilemma it might be objected that the danger posed by the small group is not its ability, on its own, to upset existing authority, but rather its ability to inspire others to join in by its virtuous or heroic example. But in such a case, the greater the number of joiners, the less of a role transcendence plays. For, as the group becomes larger, its chances of success become greater, and hence the risk of death faced by its members decreases. At the same time, because people drawn to the group are drawn *away* from the pool the government could draw on for support, the ability of the existing authority to suppress them decreases, as Hobbes reports in the *Behemoth* example in the previous section.

To the second horn it might be objected that it is possible for a sovereign, by use of threats, to keep even a large group from open rebellion—and thus that self-sacrifice is necessary for rebellion to occur (as it obviously does).¹¹ But this presupposes that the ability of the sovereign to make credible threats remains constant. As our examination of *Behemoth* showed, Hobbes does not believe this is so. The sovereign's power to rule by force or threat of force waxes and wanes over time due to various factors, and there are periods in which self-sacrifice is not required. This is not to say that transcendent interests cannot make a difference. During a period when the sovereign is strong, it could conceivably be only the transcendence of the group's interest that gets sedition rolling. But this need not be true in all or even most cases. And, as I argued above in §III.3.1, transcendence is not necessarily required even when the sovereign is strong.

6. SO WHY WRITE THE SECOND HALF OF *LEVIATHAN*?

It appears Hobbes does not believe that social order is jeopardized by religious interests' immunity to threats of punishment, because he believes that force can

maintain order if it is available, and it can be unavailable for reasons having little or nothing to do with transcendent interests. Given this, it is implausible to suppose that the second half of *Leviathan* can be, let alone can only be, accounted for by a strong worry over transcendent interests. I argued above that the presence of the second half of *Leviathan* does not require us to believe Hobbes thought force was inadequate to maintain order; nor must we suppose that if force were inadequate this was due to transcendent interests. What then could account for Hobbes's evident effort in writing Parts III and IV?

The question is important, not only because of the length and complexity of *Leviathan's* second half, but because Hobbes himself feels that his remarks on Scripture are the part of the work most likely to offend his readers (L Dedicatory). Any explanation of its presence, then, needs to account for why Hobbes would think it necessary to go to such trouble and risk such offense. But it is possible to account for the presence of Parts III and IV without claiming that Hobbes was motivated by concern over transcendent interests. There are several other motives we might well attribute to him.

First, given that much of Hobbes's audience was strongly religious, it only seems natural to suppose that Hobbes feels the need to persuade religious readers to come to the same conclusion he arrived at in the first, secular, half of the book—namely, obey the current sovereign. This is particularly important in light of Hobbes's claim that perceived conflicts between the commands of the sovereign and the commands of God are “the most frequent praetext of Sedition, and Civill Warre” (L 43.1). It was argued above in §III.3.3 that we may be skeptical of this claim. Nevertheless, if Hobbes wants

to prevent such sedition, he will obviously have to mount a religious argument to do so, since his religious audience will not be persuaded by a secular argument on this matter.

Second, Hobbes evidently hopes that *Leviathan* would be used as a guide to ruling:

I...hope, that one time or other, this writing of mine, may fall into the hands of a sovereign, who will consider it himself...and by the exercise of entire sovereignty, in protecting the public teaching of it, convert this truth of speculation, into the utility of practice. (L 31.41)

At the same time, Hobbes clearly believes that the clergy has effectively made itself the rival of the sovereign. To make *Leviathan* an effective guidebook, then, it would be very helpful to provide sovereigns with the wherewithal to deal with a recalcitrant clergy—or rather, perhaps, the clergy’s followers and potential followers, for Hobbes believes that those whose interests were threatened by his arguments would reject them (L 30.6), and that the clergy’s interests are very much threatened by those arguments (L 47).

Each of these tasks—persuading his religious audience directly, and providing sovereigns the means to do so—requires a great deal of detailed argument, and at the same time is important enough to motivate the undertaking. The clergy has on its side a tradition of theology going back over a thousand years, a mountain of scholarship to fall back on for support of its authority. Hobbes makes clear that he believes much of that scholarship is garbage, but it was very influential garbage all the same. Hobbes knows that his audience will not be swayed to accept his arguments with just a few Bible quotes and some hand-waving. To make any headway at all he has to supply a highly detailed argument for his position; and sovereigns might well be ill-equipped to mount such a massive theological argument on their own.

But, Lloyd rightly asks (19), why is it so important to *persuade* his religious audience that obedience to the sovereign is compatible with obedience to God—so

important that Hobbes spends half his book on it? Why bother, if they could be brought into line by force? As I put it above, Lloyd feels that “using the pen implies the sword could not do the job,” and that Hobbes believes transcendent interests are the reason the sword could not do it. I have argued extensively above against the idea that Hobbes was worried about transcendent interests; now I must try to account for why Hobbes used the pen at such length. Doing so requires a bit of a detour.

Hobbes says of *Leviathan* that

I think it may be profitably printed, and more profitably taught in the Universities, in case they also think so, to whom the judgment of the same belongeth. For seeing the Universities are the fountains of civil, and moral doctrine, from whence the preachers, and the gentry, drawing such water as they find, use to sprinkle the same (both from the pulpit, and in their conversation) upon the people, there ought certainly to be great care taken, to have it pure, both from the venom of heathen politicians, and from the incantation of deceiving spirits. (L R&C.16)

Our examination of *Behemoth* showed that Hobbes believes force could have maintained order, but that force was not always available. And force became unavailable when an ignorant populace was seduced by appeals to greed (per *Behemoth*, cf. §III.4.3 above), or confused by obscure concepts and frightened by ghosts (per *Leviathan*, cf. §III.3.3 above); and they were seduced, confused, and frightened by various false doctrines espoused by the university-educated clergy and politicians. These false doctrines, when promulgated by persuasive, ambitious men, were attractive enough to gain a large enough following to divide the state and at the same time (because of the content of the doctrines themselves, which put God in opposition to the King, etc.) were such as to turn these divisions into competing factions. This depleted the sovereign’s ability to maintain order by threat of force, by taking away those who could act as his force.¹² This (and not that they appealed to transcendent interests) is

why Hobbes feels the spread of false doctrines is so dangerous. The quote above makes clear that Hobbes sees *Leviathan* as a way to neutralize this obviously serious threat: the people learn doctrines from their civil and religious leaders, and the leaders learn them from the universities; so “purifying” the doctrines taught there by teaching *Leviathan* would help eliminate the threat at its source.

It would not be enough merely to blame the universities for spreading sedition and call for their reform, especially considering that much of Hobbes’s audience was educated in those same schools. To make headway towards solving the problem presented by false doctrines, a new set of doctrines must be provided, along with reasons why it should supplant the old. *Leviathan* itself provides these, and thereby provides the basis of the new curriculum. It demonstrates (says Hobbes) that obedience to the sovereign is obedience to God, it exposes the errors of current doctrines, etc. And *Leviathan*’s second half is obviously a vital part of this project, since it is where Hobbes reconciles obedience with faith, and gives much of his criticism of competing views. Without it, some of the most pernicious (according to Hobbes) religious doctrines would go unchallenged. *Leviathan*’s second half is thus a crucial part of Hobbes’s response to a serious threat to social order.

It is also, Hobbes thinks, an economical solution. Reforming the university curriculum so as to show students that the civil laws are God’s laws, and so forth, would convert the universities from spreaders of malcontent to reinforcers of informed obedience (as well as, according to Hobbes, replacing false teachings with true). As Hobbes continues:

And by that means the most men, knowing their duties, will be the less subject to serve the ambition of a few discontented persons, in their

purposes against the state; and be the less grieved with the contributions necessary for their peace, and defence; and the governors themselves have the less cause, to maintain at the common charge any greater army, than is necessary to make good the public liberty, against the invasions and encroachments of foreign enemies. (L R&C.16)

Teaching the doctrines in *Leviathan*, Hobbes thinks, would undermine the ability of the discontented few to gather a following. It would also help make the people more amenable to paying their taxes—recall that the King’s lack of money was an important factor contributing to the disorder recounted in *Behemoth*. The end result would be a better-behaved society, where less money need be spent on armed forces to keep order.

It should also be noted that Hobbes does not see university reform as the sole remedy to the problem of false doctrines. In the first half of chapter 30 (L 30.1–14) he writes extensively about how the general populace should be taught the reasons for obedience and have these lessons repeated often. And see how this two-pronged educational strategy would respond to what Hobbes identified as the factors leading to unrest in the English Civil War: if things worked as Hobbes wanted, there would be less sedition because it would have been removed from the university curriculum. Fewer of society’s leaders would thus be led astray by false doctrines. Those who did try to spread sedition would meet a largely unreceptive audience: people who understand why their loyalty belongs with the sovereign. There would be enough of the populace loyal to the sovereign to overwhelm whatever following the opposition could gather—and willing to do so, either out of its inculcated sense of duty, or because the sovereign could afford to pay them to fight for him, since they had willingly paid their taxes. Knowing this, the discontented few would have no hope of mounting a successful rebellion. I find it difficult to grant that it could all work so smoothly.¹³ But even if they

don't, the danger of sedition and civil war could be substantially lessened. In any case, the texts indicate that Hobbes saw education as an answer to a number of the problems faced by the state, and that he felt *Leviathan*—including the second half—contained the necessary content for this education.

But utility was apparently not the only thing Hobbes had in mind when advocating educational reform instead of the use of force. Consider the following:

B: This that you say looks, methinks, like an advice to the King, to let [potential rebels] alone till he have gotten ready money enough to levy and maintain a sufficient army, and then to fall upon them and destroy them.

A: God forbid that so horrible, unchristian, and inhuman a design should ever enter into the King's heart. I would have him have money enough readily to raise an army able to suppress any rebellion, and to take from his enemies all hope of success, that they may not dare to trouble him in the reformation of the Universities; but to put none to death without the actual committing such crimes as are already made capital by the laws. The core of rebellion, as you have seen by this, and read of other rebellions, are the Universities; which nevertheless are not to be cast away, but to be better disciplined (B 57–8)

Why does Hobbes counsel against using force? Not because force is useless, as Lloyd believes; and not merely because there is a practical alternative to force. It is because it would be “horrible, unchristian, and inhuman” to do so. The reservation expressed here is primarily moral, and the vehemence with which A states it suggests Hobbes feels it strongly.¹⁴

In summary, I agree with Lloyd about the importance of *Leviathan*'s second half: that it is an indispensable part of his project in *Leviathan* and that understanding its role is key to understanding Hobbes's view on how a commonwealth is to remain stable. I disagree with her about why it is important. Lloyd believes the second half is essential for Hobbes because without it, transcendent interests hostile to the sovereign will cause

widespread social disorder which force would be helpless to stop; on my view, this was not the nature of the problem to be avoided.

7. CONCLUSION

Lloyd's preliminary arguments do not establish that her thesis is necessary to explain the presence of *Leviathan's* second half, or that Hobbes felt the fear of death is widely overridden. The texts she employs in favor of her view are open to alternative interpretations which do not give transcendence a role. Moreover, there is textual evidence indicating that in Hobbes's view, the role played by transcendent interests was minor. Nevertheless, Hobbes evidently had sufficient motive to write Parts III and IV of *Leviathan* without supposing he was concerned about them. Finally, there are general reasons for denying the TI thesis. On Hobbes's view, transcendent interests are not necessary for disorder to occur. Nor is the disorder they could motivate of a kind insuppressible by force. Rather it is the ability of the sovereign's opponents to gain a large following that renders the civil authorities unable to enlist enough support to suppress them. Hobbes was indeed worried about people's opinions, particularly their religious opinions. But the evidence does not show that it was any transcendence of those opinions that was the source of worry, but rather how those opinions could combine with other factors to create civil war. In short, it is hard to see how transcendence does much work in Hobbes's theory.

I find it plausible to suppose, as Lloyd does, that *if* Hobbes were concerned about dealing with disruption that could be caused by people motivated by interests which override their fear of death, then the strategy he employs in the second half of *Leviathan*—enlisting citizens' support by showing that it is in their (transcendent)

interest to obey the sovereign—might be effective, and be effective where force would not. As Lloyd says, it would, if successful, result in a much more stable state because the willing support of a large and highly motivated constituency would be on the sovereign's side. What is missing from Lloyd's account is the evidence that Hobbes *in fact believes* there was a constituency of people so motivated, who had to be approached in this way to avoid otherwise insuppressible disruption because of the transcendent interests involved.

In the next two chapters we will examine Hobbes's writings on the sources of disorder in the commonwealth and his solutions to it. Once that is done it will become apparent that force alone is indeed inadequate for maintaining order, though not because of transcendent interests. To put it more precisely, force *may* be sufficient, at least in the short term, in the sense that *if* a sovereign can credibly threaten subjects with punishment then most if not all the subjects will obey and order will be maintained. But over the long term sovereigns must take steps—which may be backed by threats of punishment, but are not threats themselves—to ensure they retain a credible power to threaten subjects with punishment.

¹ Number-only parenthetical references in this chapter are to Lloyd (1992). Regarding references to Hobbes, see the Scheme of Reference, p. v.

² Alternatively transcendent interests are defined as “beliefs upon which people are willing to act even at the expense of their self-preservation” (45; cf. 157, 228). The term “transcendent interest” can be

confusing; it ranges over interests and beliefs, and is defined in different ways. Note that the above definitions describe the weight agents actually attach to the interests, rather than the nature of the object of those interests. However, the objects of transcendent interests are often of a “transcendent” kind (e.g., divine laws). Moreover, there are passages where Lloyd discusses transcendent interests in somewhat different terms: as interests which “*can* override one’s interest in self-preservation” (42, my emphasis; cf. 271) or which are “worth risking preservation to satisfy” (314). These latter constructions could be taken to describe either the *potential* ranking of the interest by the agent, or the worthiness of the interest regardless of how it may be ranked. However, Lloyd stated (personal communication, 6/11/93) that what is important about transcendent interests is agents’ actually ranking them above narrowly prudential concerns such as personal safety.

³ All emphases are in the original unless otherwise noted.

⁴ This point was reiterated by Lloyd (personal communication, 6/11/93): “If there are motives which override self-interest, then a punishment-based system cannot work.”

⁵ Lloyd’s references to Hobbes are to the Head edition page numbers for *Leviathan* and to the Molesworth edition for Hobbes’s other works. For consistency I will substitute the scheme of reference used for the rest of the dissertation; see p. v.

⁶ Note that I am not here contesting Lloyd’s point that “‘changing the payoffs’ [i.e., threatening punishment] is *not* sufficient to preserve social order” (38, Lloyd’s emphasis). I simply wish to point out that insufficiency of force to maintain order does not entail the action of transcendent interests. I also do not contest her view on the importance of willing obedience, and hence of opinion, the maintenance of stability; that is why I do not call the quotes she uses on, for example, pp. 39-40 into question.

⁷ Lloyd claims that the defining element of the state of nature is governance by private judgment, not the absence of government (261). This ties in with her TI thesis, because if we transcendentally hold and act on conflicting opinions we will be at war with each other. However, the question of how to define the state of nature runs into a chicken-or-the-egg problem. On one hand there is strong reason to believe that (as

Kavka pointed out in seminar discussion, 5/24/93), private judgment is present in the state of nature but as a corollary of the absence of a common power, not as the direct result of the absence of public judgment. Cf. L 14.4: “the condition of Man...is a condition of Warre of every one against every one; *in which case* every one is governed by his own Reason” (my emphasis). In other words, given that each is at war with every other, each is on his own, including the use of his own judgment. Note that this fits well with the first Law of Nature, L 14.4. And cf. L 13.8: “during the time men live without a common *Power to keep them all in awe*, they are in that condition which is called Warre....” (my emphasis), and L 15.3. This interpretation is consistent with the passage Lloyd quotes from L 15.40 (“And therefore so long a man is in the condition of mere nature, (which is a condition of war,) as private appetite is the measure of good and evill”), which implies coextensivity between private judgment and the state of nature, but does not imply any priority or causal connection between the two. Hobbes’s other statements imply that the causal connection runs the other way—from the absence of a coercive power to governance by private judgment. It’s also worth noting that the state of nature is, after all, called the state of nature—i.e., the non-artificial state. The artificial state is in a commonwealth, with a sovereign (cf. the definitions of ‘commonwealth’ and ‘sovereign,’ L 17.13); thus the state of nature is the state without a sovereign. On the other hand, the commonwealth is formed only when each of us gives up our right of governing ourselves, and this right obviously includes the right of private judgment. All things considered, I would rather maintain that the state of nature has a number of important, interconnected features than try to show that just one of them is primary. But even if I am incorrect about how the state of nature is best defined, the conclusion of this section still stands.

⁸ This helps resolve the apparent inconsistency between what Hobbes says in the passages examined in this section and his implying earlier that fear of men, rather than fear of spirits, is to be counted on to bind men to their covenants (L 14.31, quoted above in §III.3.2). It may appear that in these latter passages (L 29.15 and 43.1) Hobbes in effect grants that fear of men (specifically, fear of the king and his enforcers) is weaker than fear of spirits in enough people to be a serious problem. But while he says in the latter passages that people are motivated by fear of spirits, he does not say that this fear overcomes fear of

the sovereign. Rather it appears that, before the clergy's followers became numerous, the sovereign was not making any threat; hence there was no need to overcome any fear of threat from him.

⁹ In §IV.3 we will examine these three chapters on disorder, EL 27, DCv 12, and L 29, in detail. Among other things, we will see that Hobbes's division of the causes in to greater and lesser dangers in L 29 is dubious. But the effect of this is not to show that there are fewer serious dangers; rather the reverse.

¹⁰ Compare Lloyd (214): "The fact is that none—not one—of the concepts alleged by the standard philosophical interpreters to be crucial to Hobbes's theory of disorder appears in *Behemoth*. Neither psychological egoism nor mechanistic materialism nor overriding fear of violent death nor order by sheer might play any role whatsoever in the *Behemoth* analysis." Again, I do not wish to side with the standard interpretation (particularly not as Lloyd describes it), but a case could be made that at least some of these concepts were at work in *Behemoth*: that order was not kept because of the *lack* of sheer might, which in turn was due to the egoism of many of the seducers and of the general populace; and that the rebels' fear of violent death did not stop them, *not* because their fear of death was overridden but because their numbers diminished the prospect of dying.

¹¹ Greg Kavka raised this point in discussion. The ability of a sovereign to maintain rule by fear even when universally disliked is discussed in Kavka (1986, p. 257ff).

¹² Transcendence *could*, hypothetically, play a role in this process by motivating the promotion, spread, and following of divisive doctrines in the face of threatened punishment. But the account Hobbes gives does not indicate that such transcendence was necessary or even active. Rather it appears that the doctrines were spread by the universities and the priests and others who were educated in them without significant interference or threat of it by the government (see the passage quoted in §III.3.1 from L 47.18 and the further discussion of it in §III.3.3). This gave the opposition the numbers necessary for hope of success. Also note that a crucial element in the rebellion was money, and that seems to have been supplied by people acting out of narrow prudence—the desire for prosperity. Nowhere do we see transcendence actually playing a role, or Hobbes afraid that it might.

¹³ Perhaps Hobbes did as well. Note his recurrent use of “less” in the above quote from L R&C.16: he does not say that proper education would eliminate sedition, or the need for an army to keep internal peace; he only says it would lessen them. Lloyd disagrees with this interpretation; she believes Hobbes thought “We can do all we need to do toward ensuring perpetual stability by systematically and aggressively socializing people in stability-reinforcing beliefs, interests, and motives.” (165), so that internal policing would become unnecessary.

¹⁴ Strangely, Stephen Holmes cites this passage as a bit of Machiavellian encouragement for the sovereign (in this case Charles II) to kill his opponents (Holmes 1990, p. xl, n73). This reading seems to come from mistaking B for Hobbes. Hobbes, on the other hand, consistently recommends that sovereigns co-opt the university system to their purposes (cf. EL 28.8; DCv 13.9; L 30.24, R&C.16). And rather than beheading the ambitious as Hercules beheaded the hydra, Hobbes recommends rewarding those who benefit the commonwealth. For those who don’t, Hobbes recommends the sovereign rather “oppose the beginnings of such men, with a little danger, than after a longer time with greater” (L 30.24; cf. B 72).