THE HISTORICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE OBEDIENT SUBJECT

by

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Abstract

What explains our current norms and practices of political obligation, and how should we account for the more problematic aspects of obedience to political authority? We can answer this question partially through an historical analysis of the processes constitutive of political obedience. This dissertation analyzes two major instances of disobedience that promised to radically revolutionize the political system: the Revolution of the Common Man (1525) and the English Civil Wars (1640s). Early modern, absolutist forms of political obedience emerged in the counter-revolutions that followed. I trace the transformation of the norms of obedience, during that period, from communal promises provided to a local lord through negotiation to individual obedience to political authorities that could be broken only through extraordinary justification. Thus, as the early modern state emerged, it brought forth a completely new form of obedience due from an individual to a state. This new form was engineered in part by political elites in response to the threats to their authority posed by the communal form of political organization, which functioned as sites of entrenched political resistance. In this relationship, the mastery of political authority over the individual is no longer contested, and, due largely to her political isolation, the individual remains socially and politically underequipped to offer resistance to political authorities, even when they turn oppressive. Many modern and even contemporary norms and practices of obedience still reflect these early modern attempts to engender individual discipline. Counterintuitively, when it comes to disobedience and resistance to political authorities, late feudal and early modern subjects of empires and lords were much less constrained, and freer, than the citizens of early-modern and even many modern states well into the twentieth century.

Lay Summary

Why do people obey oppressive and abusive political authorities? I argue that the reasons for the more problematic aspects of political obedience date back to the origins of the early modern state, when the conception of individual obedience to the state was developed. This conception was engineered by political authorities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in response to constant rebellions and resistance to their rule by communities. By the seventeenth century, the ideas, beliefs, and values that dictated obedience to political authorities were thoroughly transformed to produce submissive subjects. The two defining qualities of this submission were the isolation of subjects and their social disciplining by a central political authority, the state. Despite various rights and freedoms, individuals under the state remain more obedient and submissive than their late feudal ancestors. This is the result of that new conception of obedience that originated with the early modern state.

Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, Serbülent Turan. None of this material has been published elsewhere. The research project did not require approval from UBC's Research Ethics Boards.

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Acknowledgements

It has taken me a long time to conclude this dissertation and it would not have been possible if not for a large number of people whose kindness, generosity, and intellectual depth provided an invaluable source of support, encouragement, and guidance. I was very fortunate to have worked with a series of extraordinary scholars. Mark Warren has shown me what a political theorist should be: not just a brilliant academic, but a wise, generous, and very patient mentor. From his graduate seminar to our conversations on my work, he has never ceased to amaze me with his optimism, his seemingly-boundless knowledge, and most of all his ability to articulate the deepest and most sophisticated connections in the simplest and most elegant ways. More than once I left our conversations wondering how, after five minutes of listening, he could elaborate my own arguments, and their shortcomings, better than I ever could. Barbara Arneil, to me, is a beacon of hope, support, and a source of energy. At every bump on the road, Barbara was there to offer support and help and even the briefest of encounters with her have left me with a sense of warmth and joy. Reading her work closely has influenced me as a political theorist more than she could know. Laura Janara's kindness, friendship, and academic rigour provided me with support exactly when I needed it most. It was on her patio, drinking tea and talking about life that I first realized I am where I belonged. I am deeply grateful to her.

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For Daphne, without whom this would have been completed
two years ago, and my life immeasurably poorer.

Chapter 1: Introduction

> *"Nobody knows what is going to happen because so much*
> *depends on an enormous number of variables, on simple hazard.*
> *On the other hand, if you look at history retrospectively, then,*
> *even though it was contingent, you can tell a story that makes sense."*
> Hannah Arendt (1974 Interview with Roger Errera)

Why do we obey in the ways we do? This question is both an inquiry into a very prevalent feature of our socio-political existence, and a problematization of what can only be seen as a dangerous and unhealthy practice: unconditional and uncritical obedience to political authorities. I ask both, 'What explains our modern practices and norms of political obligation?' and, 'How did these problematic aspects of political obligation come to be?' To illustrate the importance of these questions, consider Hannah Arendt's shock at discovering that Adolf Eichmann was no monster but a conscientious civil servant whose dedicated obedience to duty overrode all other considerations to the point of thoughtless compliance with all orders. Stanley Milgram's famous experiments, repeatedly reproduced since then, have further demonstrated this behavior is not only possible, but can become widespread under some conditions. Unquestioning, thoughtless obedience to the commands of authorities turns ordinary people into agents of injury. I argue that a central and probably key condition lies in the historical development of the collective structures of authority: the modern state.

Obedience is historically constituted. Modern forms of obedience to political authority can thus be explained in part by the foundational qualities of the early European state; the way authorities engineered the relationship of obedience between the early state and its subjects at the time of the state's inception in response to major acts of disobedience. Put otherwise, key

developments during the dawn of the early modern state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have laid the groundwork for what will become individual, thoughtless, unconditional obedience. These developments involved particular institutional, structural and normative changes contrived, in part purposefully, by rulers and elites of the system in response to major acts of disobedience that threatened to topple socio-political orders. Their goal was twofold: most immediately to save the socio-political system by counteracting concerted efforts which aimed to revolutionize it; and, in the longer run, to prevent the recurrence of similar system-threatening uprisings by redefining possibilities for future political action, extinguishing potentials and obfuscating alternatives. They were successful in achieving both goals at least in part, as twentieth century totalitarian regimes based on unconditional obedience suggest. In short, as the state gradually came into existence, a new form of obedience emerged with it. It is this new form which underlies the most problematic aspects of obedience that we find in the twentieth century forms of totalitarianism.

In this dissertation, I focus on the emergence of the theory and practice of unconditional obedience in Europe, from the early sixteenth to the late seventeenth centuries. A combination of religious-normative and institutional arrangements established in that period laid the foundations of the structures and norms which would lead to the routine production of thoughtless, habitual obedience in subjects, leading to the production of individuals shouldering the responsibility for finding a master to obey. Consequently, political authorities of the late seventeenth century ruled over individual subjects always already assumed to owe obedience to the state. This relationship was developed partly in response and opposition to the naturally-organized political communities of the early sixteenth century. In contradistinction to the later obedient individuals, these communities habitually and strategically disobeyed various political authorities over them to preserve and increase their communal autonomy.

As disparate political authorities transformed into the early modern state, the sites of domination changed alongside to the disadvantage of the subjects: lords ruling over communities with longstanding traditions of political action and resistance were replaced by emerging state systems that ruled over increasingly isolated individuals disciplined *en masse* by wide ranging mechanisms of control and discipline of unprecedented magnitude. The state initially shared the control of these mechanisms with religious institutions from whence it borrowed most of its disciplinary norms, but later fully incorporated them into state institutions as well. In the long run, with the displacement of the sites of obedience, the communal traditions of strategic disobedience and negotiation by riot, common and widespread throughout late medieval Europe, were replaced by an individual obligation of submission, constructed and well cultivated by religious and bureaucratic disciplinary norms. Unlike communities that enabled resistence based on collective solidarity, increasingly atomized individuals had very few ways to escape the expansion of the political authority; refuges manifesting sometimes in physical, and more often in spiritual escape.

That century and a half associated with the rise of the modern state was decisive in the gradual emergence of this unprecedented new form of political obligation. In that peridod, obedience transformed from an explicit, negotiated and often-withdrawn promise by the communities to an individual responsibility, always already assumed to exist. For the communities, the promise of obedient behavior and actual obedience were two distinct political goods, strategically deployed or withheld. In that way, these communities were natural political associations acting as sites of habitual resistance against the abuses of political authority, as well as the expansion of its powers. The atomized individual which replaced these communities, on the other hand, stood isolated and powerless against political authorities. Habitual individual obedience replaced occasional communal disobedience, and became the norm in this period.

This new conception of obedience was part of the fragmentary transformation of the entire constellation of norms and concepts central and tangential to obedience: political authority, rights and duties, freedom and autonomy, legitimacy, law and natural law, and limits of governmental power among others. The sum of these redefinitions effectively reformulated the political struggle over authority and obedience, diminishing it from a communal quest for autonomy and self-governance into an individual need for a political master to submit. Obedience becoming political obligation, defined as an individual moral and rational duty to obey, is associated with this process.

With this theory, my argument is *not* that the traditional narrative of liberation largely assumed in mainstream western political theory – the linear, almost teleological story of progress from unfree subjects under absolutisms to emancipated citizens with rights under liberal democracies – is *entirely* wrong. The gains described in this narrative – individual rights and freedoms, representative democracies, universal suffrage and so on – are undeniable advances for freedom. Indeed, individual rights and freedoms, I shall argue in this dissertation, are merely the modern manifestations of the same struggle for emancipation which animated the communities I invoke here comparatively. However, I do argue that this narrative fails to highlight a parallel development, the emergence of new and dangerous norms and practices of obedience in the early modern era. To capture this other narrative, we need to expand the timeframe to the sixteenth century – allowing us to reconsider some of the key concepts that originated in this period. In my efforts to expand to the sixteenth century the origins of modern concepts and ideas, I turn to other political theorists like J. H. Burns, Francis Oakley, and, to some extent, Quentin Skinner. Here, I expand these studies to include the emergence of the modern understanding and behavior of obedience.

Before the 'unfree individual' within early modern absolutist regimes from whom we imagine to track the progress of freedom, were the autonomous communities which were entrenched sites of resistance, holding in check the expansion of political authorities and preserving alternative, horizontally-constructed spaces for freedom, association, and political action. The 'unfree individual' from whence the traditional narrative starts was, in essence, the result of the diminishment and eventual destruction of communities that deployed disobedience both casually and strategically. For them, the explicit promise of obedient behavior and obedience itself were two distinct parts of the relationship, and both were subjected to constant negotiations. Their diminishment was a *purposeful* one, undertaken by the elites of socio-political systems plagued by their disobedience, in order to produce individuals disciplined into submissive and obedient creatures of the state. The production of this individual, I argue, was necessary for the early state to emerge. This story links the premodern to the modern from a different perspective, incidentally also helping us understand the forms of unfreedom that made their way so destructively into political systems in twentieth century—systems described by numerous modern thinkers, including Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, and numerous others. Each of these thinkers describes that oppressive sense of being besieged by an overwhelming system which diminishes people into one dimensional beings, leaving them no avenues for alternative existences, or meaningful escape. Here I seek to reconstruct the early modern origins of this relatively contemporary critique of modern political systems.

To put it otherwise: the individual with whom most of the traditional story of progress is associated is not and was not always a step forward for greater freedom and emancipation. In fact, the political individuation of subjects during the Reformation pushed in quite the opposite

direction, with elites and emerging ideologies isolating people of rebellious communities and leaving them materially and normatively unable to resist submission. The story of progressive emancipation, where "the gradual progress of equality is something fated … universal and permanent" (Tocqueville, 1969:xiii), wherein democracy defeats absolutisms and individuals gain rights and increased autonomy is thus only half the story. Told by itself, it undermines our ability to recognize the authoritarian impulses buried deep in the foundational qualities of the state; it blinds us to one of the key reasons why many states in the modern era were so susceptible to authoritarian takeovers; and dangerously misleads us into thinking these kinds of gains are both unprecedented and irreversible.

In this dissertation I shall argue that these gains, made for and in the name of the individual, were achieved only after the defeat of the rebellious communities, conclusively establishing the mastery of political authority over its subjects. This mastery was consequential in defining the ensuing struggle. When the struggle for individual emancipation started in earnest, the mastery of the political authority over the individual was no longer contested; conditions of submission were. Put otherwise, when it comes to disobedience and resistance to political authorities, premodern and early modern subjects of empires and lords were much less constrained, and freer, than the citizens of early-modern and modern states.

In this dissertation, I analyze the emergence of the obedient individual from the Reformation to the English Commonwealth, tracing the formation of the new conception of obedience through major acts of disobedience. One period I discuss involves the emergence of the centralized state in England, already in the works since before the reign of James I. The other is the Reformation, which is widely recognized to be the starting point of the early modern state. As Jason Edwards puts it, "the consequences of the Protestant challenge were ... of incalculable

importance for the formation of the modern political system in the West and for the character of modern political theory. The Reformation oversaw the consolidation and eventual triumph of a form of political organization that in 1500 was only barely discernible in certain parts of the West: the sovereign territorial state" (2007:6). In short, in this work, I trace the formation of this new concept of obedience as it emerges alongside the early modern state. I then argue that this emergence, together with the practices associated with it and the constellation of norms that gave rise to these practices, have affected our modern practices of obedience much like the early modern state left its marks on the modern state. The historical constitution of this concept of obedience can be summarized as the mass disciplining of the individuals for the production of subjects willing and eager to submit.

Methodologically, I use an approach inspired by Quentin Skinner, and engage in a historical inquiry into the conditions and events which were responsible for the constitution of the forms of obedience under the early state, tracing the norms and structures as they are altered, sometimes purposefully, to produce obedient individuals. This method also combines revelatory and subversive approaches to illustrate the forces and motives behind the constitution of obedience as we know it. By this I mean that a history of ideas approach is capable of revealing events, agents, and motivations that were silenced, and forgotten, overwritten by other stories often told by the victors of successive conflicts. Thus composing another narrative, it is also capable of subversing the existing justifications and undermine the perceived naturalness of concepts and behavior, such as obedience.

I focus on the epistemic breaches provided by failed revolts – acts of disobedience strong enough to pose a systemic threat and produce distinct political agendas, but not strong enough to succeed. In focusing on epistemic breaches, I am following Antonio Gramsci and Stephen Lukes

who argue that evidence of the workings of power can be found "through the contrast between what an oppressed social group does in normal times, when it is submissive, and what it does in abnormal times of social unrest and upheaval" (Hoy, 1986: 126). I am particularly indebted to Lukes' conception of three faces of power, which help us to make sense of how large swathes of the population can be made to accept their powerlessness, even when they are conscious of oppression, and would be willing to rise in moments of epistemic breach. Finally, I also draw occasionally from Foucault's concept of disciplinary power and, of course, the Marxist understanding of power to better describe the economically exploitative nature of oppression. Together, these conceptions allow me to point at both the manufacture of norms which would yield obedient subjects and the longer-term effects these would have on the relationship of obedience between subjects and authorities.

I argue that what is constituted alongside the state is the obedient subject. I further argue that this outcome is at least partly by design: it is the result of a process engineered at the dawn of the early modern state. Obedience was *purposefully* reconceived by the elites of a system under threat to reconceive the sites where the relationships of obedience emerged: from the communities with their own autonomous spaces and routine disobedience, to the individual whose gradual isolation and disciplining diminished political alternatives available to her to the choice of different masters. What we encounter with the emerging state is a practice of social discipline that reaches all individuals, isolating and disciplining them to ultimately render individual obedience the unquestioned norm. The foundations of this constellation of norms and practices that givern obedience to state were laid back in the days of the formation of the early state in response to widespread disobedience threatening the socio-political order. Hence, the answer I shall develop to the questions asked above: we obey in the ways we do because of a centuries long process,

which constitutes an inextricable part of the process of state formation, isolated and disciplined us into submissive individuals. Disobedience and resistance, once habitual and constituent parts of pre-modern communities, now require the deliberate development of political, social and psychological resources, tools, and connections on the part of the individuals.

I proceed, first, by outlining the ways in which obedience is a problem and flesh out my normative position in undertaking this study as well as what I hope to achieve with it. I then discuss the research design and why this design rather than another is the right way to go for this study. After that, I move on to the literature review during which I also advance one theoretical point based on existing literature. Following that, I present my argument in brief, going over the key arguments and claims, and underlining what contributions I hope to make with this work. The introduction ends with the plan of the dissertation.

1.   Why, and when, is obedience a problem?

In this dissertation I do not aim to provide a normative discussion on '*should* we obey the law?'; or, 'why or when *should* we obey?'; or even, 'when is obedience *justified*?' Though undeniably interesting, these are not my questions here. Instead, I take obedience as the indisputable societal phenomenon it is, and explore how its more problematic aspects came into existence through historical processes. Thus, when I ask 'why we obey in the ways we do?' I am asking: Why are we thinking of obedience to political authority in largely individual terms? How have we come to think that way? And what are the consequences of thinking that way about obedience? By the 'more problematic aspects of obedience', I mean the thoughtlessness of submission and, even more dangerously, of uncritical and unconditional obedience to commands which often follow from the thoughtlessness. Those questions, I believe, can only be answered by a historical analysis of the processes constitutive of these conceptions and behavior. This is the

task undertaken in this dissertation. Below I further clarify the problematic aspects of obedience, illustrating what precisely I aim to explain.

It would be beneficial, first, to briefly discuss the normative underpinnings of my position in the undertaking of this work and the problematization of obedience. This discussion is also instrumental because it will allow me to underline certain key aspects of obedience. Following Robert Paul Wolff, A.J. Simmons, and Michael Huemer, I believe that obedience is always a problem, and there is no theory of political obligation that manages to successfully justify obedience. At the same time, there is no denying that it is also an inescapable part of social and societal existence. In his treatment of obedience in *Injustice: Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (1978), Barrington Moore makes the key assertion that any societal organization finds itself face-to-face with the problem of authority, which it almost always resolves through some sort of hierarchy. Indeed, even in much smaller societal groupings with substantially weaker tools for organization and control – such as the Yanomamö of the Amazon, the Dani of New Guinea, or the Siberian Dolgans – political authority still takes on hierarchical forms, albeit very often temporary and task-based ones. Though in those societies obedience takes expectedly different forms, its generation nevertheless remains a permanent quality of political authority.

This apparent tension between 'obedience can never be justified'; and 'obedience to political authority is an inescapable societal fact' necessitates that I qualify a more nuanced position between these two seemingly paradoxical statements. Obedience to political authority is dangerous precisely when it is not problematized; when it is unconditional, unquestioned, and resistance to it is exceptional and of no or little effect. Put otherwise: when obedience to political authority seems like the only realistic alternative and, as such, is an embedded part of life while disobedience is rare and normally inconceivable; when obedient behavior is an unquestioned norm,

then it is a problem. This, I believe, is precisely the type of obedience the emerging state in Europe, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was engineered to develop in its individual subjects through social control, individual self-discipline, and normative and legal reorientation. Those became the norms and practices espoused by the early authoritarian forms of European states, and, I believe, provided the seeds of later totalitarianisms. Accordingly, what I seek to explain in this dissertation is the constitution of these problematic aspects of obedience to the state, rather than hierarchy or obedience as a human condition, or the philosophical justifications of obedience.

In the absence of a critical problematization, the processes which produce habitual, unconditional obedience are exceptionally damaging. A central consequence of these processes is the one we find ourselves in too often: an impoverished political imagination only able to envisage political alternatives as substitutes for the state. Indeed, as is also suggested by the cases in this dissertation, genuine alternatives to pervasive systems could emerge mostly, if not only, from places of autonomy and disobedience. Without access to these venues of freedom, political imagination remains crippled in its ability to create true alternatives and ends up heroizing the moment it is in as ideal, content to either reproduce or fine tune what is. These are the results of the persistent nature of constant, habitual obedience which guides political agency into predetermined paths, obscures other possibilities for political action, and, at its worst, diminishes people into mere tools. Henry David Thoreau illustrates this point: a file of soldiers "marching in admirable order against their wills … against their common sense and consciences … serve ... not as men mainly, but as machines ... they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones ... they have the same worth only as horses and dogs" (1971:177-8). Michel Foucault relates a similar observation from Pyotr Kropotkin: "'Very good,' Grand Duke Mikhail once remarked of a regiment, after having kept it for one hour presenting arms [frozen in place], 'only *they breathe*'"

(1995:188, emphasis original). Foucault uses this 'moment' to demonstrate the ritual of disciplinary power enjoined to the sovereign power and underline the 'visibility of the subjects'. Note, however, that the goal of this process is to engender unconditional obedience which is well evidenced in the example.

These examples can be multiplied with disturbing ease. They capture how people can be disciplined to surrender their agency, suspend their moral judgments under orders from political authority, and become mere extensions of its will. The "absence of thinking" that Arendt observed in Eichmann (1992:123) is not a condition unique to him. That thoughtlessness which avails unconditional obedience is the result of a process which routinely reduces people to means for the ends political authorities wish to achieve, turning them to cogs in the machine, often capable of producing tremendous harm and injury, but always limiting their potential. In this manner, individuals lose their selves to accommodate the needs of the political authority. Indeed, Milgram explains his motivation for the experiments by pointing at the mass obedience witnessed during the Nazi period: "these inhumane policies may have originated in the mind of a single person, but they could only be carried out on a massive scale if a very large number of people obeyed orders" (1974: 1). The steady provision of mass, unquestioned obedience which is one of the consequences of the historical processes I describe, remains an essential problem of obedience.

Another central problem associated with the same process is the gradual development of the illusion of detachment. The obedient subject convinces herself that her 'inner' disagreement is sufficient to detach her from her actions carried out in obedience – her inner self remains pure and untouched and, as such, constitutes an always available safe haven from the outside world. This 'inner freedom', of course, comes at the expense of outer freedom; in fact, its existence become a tool for engendering submission. For Arendt, this false escape "remains without outer

manifestations and … is by definition politically irrelevant" invented to pacify the slave (1968:146). Precisely in its pacifier effect, however, it is *not* irrelevant but a potent tool for political authorities seeking submission and external obedience. Marcuse points to a similar process where the concepts of freedom and submission are engineered together to pacify disobedience (2008:7). Adorno similarly argues that the transcendental attitude is a fruitless escape; the detachment from the actual for the ideal as a tool at the service of authority meant to pacify (Allen, 2016:216).

The origins of the contemporary versions of both these problems, I shall argue, can be traced back to the norms underlying the early absolutisms of Europe, and more specifically to the world-historic effects of the Reformation on thought and behavior. The normative justifications for the abandonment of one's self to become a mere extension of political authority, and the transcendental escapism that avails one to disagree with the authority on the inside, and yet still carry out its commands on the outside are constituent aspects of the new disciplinary techniques underlying the early-modern state. Furthermore, their initial use in these forms are in an explicit attempt, by Martin Luther, to quash a rebellion and ensure obedience. Luther writes that all that is done under orders from political authority, including torture and killing, are 'good acts' and the hand that commits them belongs to God from whence the order originates. The Reformer also adjusts his concept of 'Christian freedom' to subdue the rebelling peasant: he declares the slave's suffering immaterial, his emancipation irrelevant, and his quest for freedom sinful – all irrelevant next to true freedom which lies within. A slave, Luther writes, is free on the inside where it counts, and should never disobey. Those are the norms we encounter a century and half later, well established and embraced. After his republican cause was defeated and monarchy restored, the

once-radical republican John Milton puts the same belief thusly: 'A Paradise within thee, happier farr'.[1]

A constitutive element of the processes I describe, and thus one of the consequences of their coming about, is the substantial erosion in the meanings of certain key concepts and norms like freedom and autonomy. They are defined with increasing narrowness in the space allowed to them under the state – sometimes even predicated on the state as a condition for their existence. We encounter these essentially political concepts presented as separate from politics, even as explicitly non-political, robbing them of political power and use. *Inner* freedom, *personal* autonomy, and others can be deployed to denote non-political, almost solipsistic uses, rendering them irrelevant to socio-political struggles altogether. Similarly, in subjecting these concepts to the existence of a large, state-like political organization, John Locke's conditioning of rationality to industry (Hulme and Jordanova, 1990: 25-29), or G. W. F. Hegel's subsuming of freedom and ethical existence to the state, are far from being solitary examples. However, this freedom which is defined by the authority reveals itself, utterly inescapably, to be inadequate and insufficient. Yet, in the absence of a space which regularly allows the production of alternative definitions and practices, 'what is' becomes not only the only possible society but also 'what ought to be'. The inescapable sense of being surrounded and besieged, and the inability to even express one's grievances with a system which overwhelms results from this seeming lack of alternatives, are nicely described by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002), as well as Herbert Marcuse in his *One Dimensional Man* (1964). To an individual thus surrounded, spiritual or physical escape becomes the only viable avenue.

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[1] The poem is readily available in numerous venues. Check, for instance, www.paradiselost.org

In the absence of a sustained critical inquiry, these norms remain hidden, embedded within daily life just like most normalized behavior. This is even more so for obedience: without a critical examination, it often remains habitual, everyday, naturalized in whatever context it occurs in. Consider, on that point about the uncritical acceptance of obedience, the treatment of obedience in political thought. Living under very different forms of political authority – some of which were anathema to each other – many thinkers nevertheless championed obedience in very similar terms. Precisely this problem has been captured masterfully by Nietzsche's notion of "the degeneration of philosophy." Gilles Deleuze writes, relating Nietzsche's point, that philosophy itself has become "submissive, an enumeration and justification of all the reasons man has created to obey." "The history of philosophy," he continues, "has become a long story of legitimizing various forms of submission" (Deleuze, 1985: 18-22). I also reject the follow-up argument that this, then, suggests a fatal flaw in human character against authority. No; I argue instead that we are looking at a learned behavior, the disciplining of the individual, associated with the expansion of political authority as the modern state developed. The modern man's freedom, as Marcuse puts it, is described only as "its voluntary sacrifice"; subjects are free to choose submission for the real and imaginary returns they are promised (2008:7-8). Freedom becomes tied to an apolitical inner world while external unfreedom becomes both a universal condition and the price to be paid for that internal freedom.

What results from all of this is a tremendous asymmetry in relationships of obedience in the wrong ways: subjects which *create* authority become its captives. From the view of the subject, the relationship seems one-sided and without real alternatives. Erich Fromm summarizes the consequences: "Man has continued to evolve by acts of disobedience. Not only was his spiritual development possible only because there were men who dared say no to the powers that be in the

name of their conscience or their faith, but also his intellectual development was dependent on the capacity for being disobedient" (2001: 167). The way we obey, then, stunts our political, intellectual, and spiritual development. By surrendering our agency, resigning our morality to the authority, habitually lowering ourselves to mere tools we lose all potential for betterment. Where Francis Fukuyama once saw the end of history, I see the continuing potential for dystopia. Fromm agrees: "Disobedience was the first act of freedom, the beginning of human history … If the capacity for disobedience constituted the beginning of human history, obedience might cause the end of human history" (2001: 168). It is a frightening thought that in a time of looming climate catastrophe, rediscovered impulses for xenophobia and exclusion, and tremendous economic injustice, Fromm's warning seems more pertinent than ever before.[2]

Those, then, are unequivocal problems with obedience: the diminishment of people into mere extensions of political authority; the detachment from the actual by the false freedom of the inner world; the embedded nature of these practices and the uncritical acceptance of the constellation of these norms and practices as the ideal; and, finally, the great threat posed to humanity's future by submissive populations unable to imagine and generate genuine alternatives to the present even as we move towards climate catastrophy, tremendous economic inequality, and increasingly unrepresentative and unresponsive political systems. All these problems, I argue, are made even more pertinent, and much more pressing by the presence of the state. Indeed, the central argument of the thesis is this: contra its claims, modern mainstream western political practice *orbiting the state* as the central political authority produces *more*, not less, obedient subjects than

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[2] This is perhaps another discussion. However, I see in the efforts in various countries to replace existing democratic structures, however imperfect they may be, with authoritarianisms a clear manifestation of the worries underlying Fromm's passage: the institution of political authorities that demand total obedience in return for a (false) sense of security and belonging.

its predecessors. In their ability to engage in autonomous political behavior, resist hierarchical impositions, and expansion of state power over them, and, in their capabilities to imagine alternative political futures, people are worse off under the state then they were before.

Of course, none of these arguments are meant to dismiss, or belittle, the momentous achievements for freedom such as individual rights and freedoms, or governmental transparency, accountability, the pacific change of power through regular elections, and others. I believe those gains to be manifestations of that struggle for emancipation that seems, at least to me, a part of the human condition. They are, however, originating from a place of defeat and powerlessness which followed from an earlier form of that struggle within which, I argue here, people were less constrained and freer in disobedience vis-a-vis political authorities. This is the argument which I expand on in this dissertation but it is helpful to underline that the comparison I am drawing, when it comes to disobedience, is not between the totalitarianisms and democracies of the the twentieth century. Instead I trace the changes in the patterns of obedience from the sixteenth century to the late seventeenth and argue that, in contrast to its pre-state forms, we witness a diminishment in people's capacity to resist political authorities.

2.   Methodology and Research Design

As a concept and a relationship, obedience presents unique challenges. To analyze it, I examine the moments of conflict where those normally bound by obedience refuse to submit, and instead present their own agenda for another world. In that endeavor, I use a combination of tools taken from three major thinkers: a history of ideas approach after Skinner, and the radical view of power described by Lukes. I borrow from Foucault the emphasis on subjugated knowledges as tools of revelation and subversion, two aspects of a Foucauldian genealogy. I also use the concept of 'discipline', but not in the diffused, decentralized way Foucault understands it. Instead I use a

top-down conception of disciplinary power, the way it is described by the sociologist Philip S. Gorski. Equipped with these, I turn to the dawn of the early modern state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries where, I argue, lie the foundations of the new conception of individual obedience to the state – a conception still with us, albeit in a much more sophisticated form. I detail these factors below.

2.1.   A History of Ideas

As I noted, the relationship of obedience is a difficult one to examine, particularly over time: it is naturalized, habitual and submerged in daily life. Yet, the criteria for justified obedience have been produced differently in every age and many political philosophers, in return, reproduced and justified what they saw. Consequently, until it is challenged and altered, in every age obedience to authority is presented as normal, common and habitual – the way it *must* be, despite the unique conceptions which are, again, sometimes anathema to each other. To analyze how such a compound and contested concept has developed over time I believe the wisest option is to proceed with a historical inquiry, deploying a history of ideas approach that follows Skinner. To supplement this method I introduce elements of a genealogy by focusing on what Foucault calls 'subjugated knowledges' – truths that were silenced, extinguished through historical practice, and forgotten. It would be helpful to conceive of my approach a modified understanding of the 'primacy of war' thesis Skinner espouses (Tully, 1983) to focus instead on the conflicts between the rulers and the ruled: the risings of the powerless.

An historical tracing of the processes constitutive of obedience, traced through failed revolutions, may capture the transformations and alterations I seek to expose, and allow for a comparative outlook. This sort of inquiry also embodies the critique I intend to bring to my study of the topic by bringing together revelatory and subversive approaches: it reveals the workings of

power over time, the motivations of actors, and thinkers and their ideas in their historical settings. It also subverts our teleological, totalitarian stories by exposing what was forgotten, obscured, and buried, and rediscovers historical contexts for acts and ideas that were often reinterpreted later without proper contextualization. It is here that my approach is closest to a genealogy. My focus, however, is not on microhistories; instead, I observe moments of conflict, of revolutions and revolts, when the usually submerged workings of power are revealed in stark contrast to the challenges put to the system.

During open conflict the legitimacy of authorities and the sort of obedience owed to them is contested by another narrative; this is when we can see the alternatives presented. These are the best moments to capture the norms of political obligation as they are contested, resisted, and the aftermath, when they are reconstituted. The theoretical underpinnings of this approach rely upon the central insight of Antonio Gramsci and Stephen Lukes. David Hoy writes that Lukes "follows Antonio Gramsci in thinking that some evidence [of the workings of power] can be obtained through the contrast between what an oppressed social group does in normal times, when it is submissive, and what it does in abnormal times of social unrest and upheaval" (1986:126). Here also my approach deviates from a genealogy: I conceptualize power in the relationship of obedience as essentially a 'power over', in terms of the rulers and the ruled. In this, and more (see below) I turn to Lukes's radical view of power.

The relationships I seek to reveal are the result of numerous struggles during which the increasing control and authoritarianisms of political authorities is opposed at every turn by another strong impulse, always present, to create another world, to reconstitute political life on other principles. Though they are conceived of, understood and defended differently in every era, the principles which animate this resistance seem to be based on self-governance, autonomy of the

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commons, economic justice, and fairness. Yet, just like the casual, daily act of obedience, these impulses are both buried and submerged within daily life and make full sense only when properly contextualized. They also can be best captured and understood in moments of explosion, in the alternative political agendas put forth by those who present a systemic challenge at a moment when they are able to do so.

Thus, I focus on failed revolutions and revolts: major acts of disobedience strong enough to pose a systemic threat and forward a sufficiently distinct political agenda, but which fail to achieve their goals. These revolutionary attempts to reconstitute the world, once failed, result in authorities reasserting themselves in stronger ways and enacting various measures to assure that such threats to their rule do not surface again. It is in those moments, when the constitution of the world is a clear and explicit process that we find in conflict different worlds and different sets of political norms, ideas, practices and justifications. In revealing and contrasting these competing narratives and constitutions of the world, I undertake an exploration into how particular understandings of legitimacy, authority, freedom and agency coalesce into constellations, producing particular patterns of obedience. It is also in these moments that we can observe, sometimes through clear and explicit statements, the motivations of the actors guarding the threatened system.

2.2. A Radical View of Power and Disciplinary Power

Within this constellation of concepts, consider the abundance of work justifying obedience to radically different kinds of authorities. Besides providing us with a glimpse into the justification mechanisms embodied by each age and various conceptions of authority, such work also points at the self-legitimizing nature of authorities. Lukes notes this succinctly: "if authority is justified, it is justified from a point of view, namely that of the authority itself, which becomes that of the

subject" (1987:70-71). Despite his conceptual differences with Lukes, Foucault's general disinterest in discussing political legitimacies – because "he understands political rationalities to be self-legitimating" (Brown, 2008:78) – belies a similar conceptualization on his part. We find a comparable take in Max Weber as well: his conception of legitimacy is similar to the way Foucault understood it: a morally neutral side effect of an inescapable societal phenomenon. (Moore, 1972:54).

I remain dissatisfied by these arguments; not because they are wrong – indeed, they are correct as far as they go – but because they undermine the general inquiry into the subject in different ways. Some, like Foucault, naturalize and dismiss the entire topic as uninteresting. Others, like Hegel, contribute to its mystification by obfuscating or confusing. These are serious shortcomings for a concept as central as obedience. Legitimate authorities which demand obedience are ultimately creatures of their time and are in constant dialogue with various conventions of the society, codified and uncodified, themselves partly products of previous ages and historical processes. Freedom and political agency are inextricable from the conception of legitimacy which presupposes certain possibilities of freedom, allowing or disallowing certain actions by political actors. In this way, legitimacy and freedom define and limit political agency: what actors may or may not do, what is allowed and disallowed, what is acceptable to society and what is not, and, perhaps most important, what is possible to demand.

Political imagination is conditional on all these considerations. Much like counter-cultures are dependent on the cultures they surround, possibilities in a system depend on the consistency of the system's normative framework. In other words, what can be demanded or even discussed within any political system is defined within a constellation of norms – legitimacy, authority, freedom, obedience – which defines, limits and delineates all cohesive political agendas within

that system. Furthermore, this constellation is in part self-replicating, as is well noted by Weber, Foucault, Lukes, and others. In that picture, the argument often advanced on obedience – that subjects, freely convinced of the partially self-produced, partially inherited legitimacy of an authority, choose of their own volition to obey – remains deeply unconvincing at best, and counterproductive and misleading at worst.

We see, again and again, this ambiguous relation between obedience and freedom surface in different legitimizations of authorities: while the erudite of a given age explicitly point at it in their discussions, others simply 'know' it to be 'true.' Political action and imagination directly or indirectly follow from this relation. The quick dismissals of the discussion of legitimacy and obedience hide the reasons given or, more often, not given for obedience.

In light of this discussion, the tendency to place the responsibility for obedience squarely on those who are bound to obedience is troubling. As we will see below, the conceptual ambiguity surrounding this central social phenomenon in these accounts is clear: explanations are either circular excuses or dismissals based on its universal, automatic occurrence. When it comes to obedience, it seems, obedient subjects are shouldering all responsibility for subscribing to what is effectively described as an inevitably self-producing quality found in all sorts of authorities. Put otherwise, believing in the truth-claims of their age and being creatures of their own epistemic universe somehow seem to amount to a conscious and deliberate choice on the part of the subjects to obey certain functions of power, effectively legitimizing it as authority.

These explanations do not answer the question 'Why we obey?' At worst they are muddying the relationship and misplacing responsibility. At best, they reveal a conceptual web within which we become trapped and lost. One clear reality that stands out in all these accounts is that obedience is an effect of power, being intimately linked to authority, itself "a species of

normative power" (Raz quoted in Lukes, 1987:67). Moore notes: "The modern citizen is caught up in a web of beliefs, expectations, and sanctions that tie him to the existing regime far more tightly that was the case with most of his peasant ancestors" (Moore, 1972: 35). Besides the strength of these ties, and partially explaining them, is the lack of natural alternatives: the average modern citizen, unlike her peasant ancestors, is bereft of most, if not all, of the connections naturally provided by the communities to which her ancestors belonged.[3] Those connections which relatively effortlessly availed themselves to horizontal political solidarity and action, are characterized radically differently under the state. While authoritarian states block venues for these possibilities, they remain available to the citizens of democratic states only through sustained effort to establish and keep up, a feat possible only for those who can dedicate both the time and the resources needed for political organization. Even then, it is difficult not to worry about their permanence or strength.

For instance, agricultural communities of the sixteenth century reacted together to issues that concerned their members and demonstrate a strong communal political identity. Consequently, they were also equipped for and experienced in political action, especially against political authority in defense of their rights. The modern citizen, on the other hand, is politically isolated in a society of many millions and though these connections naturally vary based on a plethora of factors (education, social class, locality, race relations and so on), political associations nevertheless require a tremendous amount of work to form and to sustain for an isolated individual, not to mention sustained political action. Consider, for example, the Arab Spring which brought

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[3] We must note, here, that there are numerous communities which have managed to preserve these relations, whether through tradition and culture or through choice. I think, however, these communities are the exceptions that prove the rule rather than countering my argument.

radical changes to the region: it is difficult to ignore the relationship between the spontaneity of the resistance and the lack of control by the protestors over the end results. More to the point: while in Tunisia political parties, long-standing associations with established practices of political action, managed to steer the popular uprising to a more controlled, democratic outcome, other countries bereft of such resources (such as Egypt and Libya) experienced either a kidnapping of the process by existing political actors like the army, or descended into a tribal civil war. I believe the political isolation of the modern citizen compared to the naturally existing associations of the pre-state is comparable to the contrast illustrated in these examples.

This is where I turn to Lukes and his three dimensions of power. Lukes's radical conception of power and domination go against the grain in a groundbreaking way. The first two dimensions, for Lukes, are relatively straightforward and well explained. The one-dimensional view of power simply observes behavior and prescribes those as preferences: "interests revealed through behavior". The second dimension also observes the exercise of power through agenda setting, issue selection, bias mobilization, systemic manipulation and so on. In both these aspects agents are fully aware of their preferences with an objective understanding of their interests.[4] This applies more specifically to the third dimension of power wherein people are unaware of their subjection. In this dimension, power "shapes and modifies desires and beliefs in a manner contrary to people's interests" (Lukes, 1986: 9-10). For Lukes, "Even the most despotic domination we know of, the rule of master over slaves, who always outnumbered him, did not rest on superior means of coercion as such, but on a superior organization of power – that is, on the organized solidarity of masters" (1986:67-8). This insight has deep implications: political authority is, in effect,

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[4] For further details, alongside a summary of the thinkers who subscribe to these dimensions, see Lukes, Power: A Radical View, 1986, in particular chapter 1.

institutionalized organizational power. Furthermore, it lives "not from force but from recognition" (1986:85). The third dimension of power, then, essentially captures this: an organized body's attempt to shape and reshape norms, definitions, understandings, and people's expectations from the political system. So much so that, in essence, even those at the bottom social rank end up accepting the *normalcy* of the system, locking themselves in patterns of non-challenge, if not passivity vis-a-vis political authority's power over them. Consider, precisely on this point, that Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous 'I have a dream' speech was very tellingly entitled 'Normalcy no more'.

Making use of Lukes's third dimension allows us to begin to conceptualize a more convincing explanation for legitimacy and obedience: people obey because it never occurs to them that there can be another way. They are epistemically captured, as it were, in a universe where their relationship of obedience is the only way. Since it is also inextricable from numerous other concepts, obedience is part of a massive tapestry of social behavior and cannot be altered on its own in a meaningful way. Put otherwise, one cannot affect a systemic change of the rules governing obedience without also revolutionizing the social and political world, or at least radically altering many aspects of it. So, until an alternative is provided – breaching the epistemic bubble – these relationships are bound to remain unchallenged and maintained without any particular effort by the elites. In fact, with Lukes, "both the dominating group and the dominated may be unconscious of the exercise of power" allowing all parties to be naturally embedded within relationships of power and obedience (Hoy, 1986:125-6).

This understanding leads to a better contextualization of the naturally obfuscated quality of obedience. The exercise of power prevents people not only from doing – as in preventing rebellions of the oppressed – but also from thinking of alternatives: they remain obscured and

political imagination remains limited to producing simulacra. Thus, far from the development of coherent political agendas, even more modest possibilities remain unimagined and often even unimaginable by the powerless. Once established, these habits of submission require no special action from the powerholders to maintain. They are further preserved by the inaction of the powerless who either do not realize the extent of their domination, lack the vocabulary to articulate it, or have simply accepted that their struggles will not bring them salvation and adjusted their world view to naturalize and internalize their powerlessness.

I believe, however, Lukes's account is lacking one very central aspect: the historical constitution of this dimension in specific ways. It is possible to imagine that throughout history there have always been masses of people unaware of the dominance being exercised over them, or internalize their submission, obeying authorities simply because alternatives – let alone coherent political agendas to bring them about – simply did not occur to them. In fact, the extent of the domination was often so thorough that its naturalization would render impossible the mere imagining of these alternatives, let alone acting upon them. Of course, in all ages this dominance has taken different forms: the obedience of the Egyptian slave or the Spartan helot is dramatically different from the obedience of the medieval peasant or the early Enlightenment merchant, none of which compare with that of the modern citizen. Indeed "modern times do differ qualitatively from pre-industrial times, when, for example, the most powerful sovereign of the age of royal absolutism, France's Sun King, could be characterized by serious historians as the most poorly obeyed of rulers" (Moore, 1972:151). That we encounter, a hundred years after Louis XIV, rulers much less despotic yet incomparably better obeyed suggests a much more profound transformation that has little to do with coercion or the willingness to deploy violence against subjects.

The processes of disciplining that act upon the modern citizen are incomparable to anything before in their strength and pervasiness. I argue, however, that its beginnings – at least when it comes to engendering obedience – can be traced to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the way I understand disciplinary power as engendering obedience, I am closest to the description of Philip S. Gorski, in particular in '*The Disciplinary Revolution*' (2003). Gorski points at the so far unrecognized "critical role that religious ideals, elites, and institutions played in the disciplining process" (1999:161), precisely as I do. I also argue, like Gorski, that "the disciplinary mechanisms and strategies put in place during the sixteenth century could not be so easily removed – and are still with us today, in slightly altered form" (1999:175). However, while Gorski points at Calvinism as the main driver of the disciplinary revolution in Europe, I pull back these ideas further back to Luther himself, and point at his writings produced during and in response to the 1525 Revolution to trace the political applications of his religious ideals. Similarly, like many others, Gorski treats obedience as largely a side effect of the disciplinary power of the state and the church while I see engendering obedience as one of the – if not *the* – primary motivation behind the state's cannibalizing of disciplinary ideas and practices from religion and religious institutions.

This discussion points once more at one of the most central qualities of the relationship I seek to uncover: obedience is often naturalized, habitual and, thus, obfuscated. Indeed, David Hume compares its naturalness to gravity: obedience is always the unquestioned norm (2007:236). Its quick dismissal as an automated side-effect, (see below with, for example Weber) self-generating under every regime, hardly adds anything substantial to our understanding of this most crucial of phenomena. To the contrary: if it is self-occurring, this is all the more reason for a political theory with an emancipatory purpose to turn its full attention to the historical processes which naturalize it. These considerations are central to the methodological necessity of focusing

on epistemic breaches. To reveal what is normally submerged, I must concentrate on the moments of conflict, on open instances of war where rival episteme clash and the immediate aftermath, the reconstitution of truth and politics as continuation of that war. On this both Foucault (1990:15) and Skinner agree (Tully, 1983).

Beyond the theoretical conception I describe above, there is another reason for focusing on conflicts to reveal the changes I seek to expose: the reality is that for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries conflict is very much a central method for change. In fact, analyzing Skinner's method, James Tully argues:

> The predominant form of practical activity that destabilizes, realigns and codifies shifting political forces in this period [covered in Skinner's Foundations] is warfare. There are moments when arms are set aside, but then the struggle is carried on by political means in the councils, royal courts, universities and churches, thus investing political life with relations of war. Effectual changes in European political thought and action are the consequences of war and secondarily the outcome of the ideological response to the legitimation crises engendered by the shifting power relations that give way to battle I cannot think of one counter example… (Tully, 1983:506).

However, this is where I introduce a genealogical element into Skinnerian methodology: my interest is not in the wars between kings and princes and lords: I look at the risings of the powerless. I focus on the moments when domination is openly described by the dominated, the workings of power unveiled and deciphered in their own language, and coherent political agendas put forth, multiplying alternatives. The best moments to capture the norms of political obligation are when they are contested and resisted; when those normally bound to obedience imagine alternatives, put forward coherent agendas for political alternatives, and fight to bring them about. As previously argued, I am far from alone in believing that the workings of power can be unmasked in moments of conflict, by contrasting the 'normal' with the 'abnormal'.

Those moments reveal the epochal understanding and transformations of norms, structures and practices of obedience in unparalleled ways. When the war is over and the conflict once more hidden in daily life, victorious parties – now, dubbed or redubbed political authorities – shape and

reshape the world into one where their dominance is natural, normal, just and justified and, as Hume puts it, obedience as natural as gravity. Put otherwise, in moments when resistance to authority comes to the fore, we can see the dimensions of historical change that govern the relationship of obedience. To reemphasize: to reveal the naturally obfuscated relations of obedience, I focus on moments where prevailing forms of authority and obedience are contested by a genuine alternative, a true threat to the system, revealing a clash of rival epistemes.

2.3.   Historical Moments of Disruption: Case Studies

As I previously argued, I believe that the origins of our modern conceptions of obedience can be found at the dawn of the early modern state: at the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is the period where we can observe a shift in episteme, as concepts and conceptions are challenged, pushed back, and reformed. Historian Christopher Hill writes: "A man like Richard Cromwell, who was born under Charles I and lived in the eighteenth century, had seen the end of the Middle Ages, the beginnings of the modern world … Between his birth and his death the educated person's conception of nature and of man's place in nature had been transformed" (2002:4). If we extend the period of transformation back to the sixteenth century so we cover the Reformation, the impact of the social, political, and economic changes in Western European countries cannot be exaggerated. From 1500, immediately prior to the Reformation, to 1700, Europe was so thoroughly transformed that almost none of the central conceptions of the former remained valid in the latter era. In fact, even the changes in governance which were staggering (rule by Divine Right, the place and role of the Church, politics as a matter of rational inquiry) pale in comparions to the changes in the conception of man's place in the universe.

This is the period I examine in this dissertation, linking the pre-modern to the modern through the development of the constellation of norms that govern obedience to political authority. My argument, as stated, is that, as the modern state emerged, it produced more obedient individuals compared to their habitually rebellious European ancestors. The two cases I develop in this dissertation substantiate the argument, by showing how, over time, the space for autonomous political action and auto-governance available to communities – naturally organized political actors – diminished, and the space vacated was taken over by emerging state authority. The first case is the Revolution of the Common Man, the massive uprising in 1525 that was mistakenly dismissed for centuries as the German Peasants' War. The second case is the radicals' revolt during the English Civil Wars of 1640-1650.

The Revolution of the Common Man was an uprising of unparalleled proportions, spreading to over one third of the Holy Roman Empire and lasting over a year. In its size, area of effect, socio-political and economic results and, most important for my purposes, its breaking through the epistemic entrapments of the era, it is beyond comparison. None of the other, seemingly similar, uprisings embody all the qualities the Revolution of the Common Man does. For instance, the 1521 Revolt of the Comuneros in Spain displays similar radical, anti-feudal characteristics but it lacks an epistemic breach that allowed central European peasants to build a new political system. The Hussite Wars display a similar epistemic challenge to the system and is equally anti-feudal and anticlerical. However, due mainly to its dispersed nature (in time, geography, and parties) it did not trigger the unified response 1525 uprising did; in other words, the Hussite Wars do not have a counter-revolution. Finally, and perhaps most to the point, this is precisely where I locate the origins of the norms of obedience I trace: with the theory of Martin Luther and the actions of the Swabian League.

While it lasted, the revolution temporarily ended the feudal system and established a federation of communal democracies throughout the land. The rebels radically redefined all major aspects of social, political, and economic life. They established deliberative and representative local institutions of governance based on elections; legislated universal equality before the law; instituted communal property; and created self-taxing, self-governing political associations based on principles of subsidiarity. What prompted the revolution was the epistemic breach provided by the Reformation – that is, the realization that the world as is, was not necessarily condoned by God. The agents of the revolution were, however, communities with their own traditions of autonomy, resistance, and self-governance. The revolution lasted almost a year and was defeated in the field by the army the lords have raised in that period.

Deeply aware of the role of their communities played in the revolution, the lords' designed their counter-revolution to destroy communal autonomy and political agency. In this, they were supported by Martin Luther who transplanted his religious principles into politics to counter the revolution. The legal and normative changes brought about by the counter-revolution has substantially weakened the communities as political actors: communal bodies, communal representation, assemblies, and even economic associations were disbanded and outlawed, and all communities were legally dismantled into their pieces – namely, individuals.

The uprising also played as central a role in forming Luther's thought, very much like the English Civil Wars played in affecting Hobbes's thought. When we consider Luther's status "a forerunner of the modern theory of state" (Waring, 1968: iii) and his political theory's "vital role in helping to legitimate the emerging absolutist monarchies of northern Europe" (Skinner, 1978: 73), the importance of the revolution and the counter-revolution comes into sharper focus. Normatively and legally, the counter-revolution has radically altered the centuries-old political

culture in Europe which, since before the manorial period, was centered around communities, communal autonomy, and communal representation. All this was to put an end to the rebellious habits of communities and ensure obedience; indeed, both the lords' alliance and Luther explicitly framed their goal in these terms. This revolution and the counter-revolution that ensued are of primary importance in establishing the structures and norms of the early modern state.

Approximately a century after, during the English Civil Wars, these norms have fully taken hold in the political landscape. This case unites two important factors: it is where we can see the norms, originally developed in the counter-revolutin of 1525, completely embedded within political struggles as evidenced by the demands and negotiations of almost all parties excepting only the communal radicals whose difference effectively serve to further illustrate the norms of political individualism embraced almost universally. Second: the political authority that emerges at the end of the English Civil Wars, the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell, is familiar to us as the early state. Indeed, in its strength measured by the reach of its authority, the number of legislations it passes, and the effect these have on the nation, the Commonwealth continues to baffle theoreticians of state-formation, as we will see later. This case thus also allows me point at the strength of these norms, not just widespread in the beliefs and actions of various political actors but also in the clear disciplinary intent wielded by policy makers.

In this period in England there were two revolutions: one by the greater gentry and rich merchants which succeeded and another by the common people that failed. This latter was an attempt to overturn the socio-political order and institute a democratic system with principles of economic fairness and religious toleration. The Civil War provided the epistemic breach that triggered the radicals' rising. The radical revolt in England was comparable to the 1525 revolution in numerous ways. Like their continental counterparts, the English radicals aimed to revolutionize

the socio-political order based on egalitarian and democratic principles: a more inclusive, representative democracy with wider suffrage and individual rights; communal access to enclosures and privatized land; the dismantling of the state church and institution of full freedom of conscience and religion. They were also devout Christians and leveraged the language of Christianity into emancipatory ends.

Quite notably, the strongest radical grouping represented also the first manifestation of a new, liberal, tradition of resistance based on individual rights and freedoms. The emergence of this group already signals the conclusive defeat of the communal tradition which remained active – and nevertheless threatening – during the civil war. The struggle for emancipation is now waged in terms introduced back in the counter-revolution: an individual whose submission is always already expected. The starting position for the Levellers' struggle is very close to the one defined by Luther and the lords of the counter-revolution following the defeat of the 1525 revolution. Indeed, radicals use the same vocabulary used by the ruling elite and embrace the same assumptions, namely rights defined as individual property, and the uncontested mastery of political authority over the individual. Others, such as C. B. Macpherson and, in some part Skinner (2006) analyzed these norms similarly: Macpherson names them 'possessive individualism' (1962), and Skinner calls the Leveller theory of liberty as full possession of one's self (2006). Unlike them, however, I see this as the result *also* of a normative heritage dating back from the counter-revolution of 1525. The relationship of obedience I seek to describe is largely already established during that period and these norms are its symptoms.

The communities of 1525 which, in their brief moment of glory, established sophisticated structures of self-governance on a background of universal equality were replaced, in 1640, by individuals who were always already bound to obey in search of a new, better master. Although in

both cases the models of governance put forth by the rebels are clearly democratic in nature and practice, a comparison of the two revolutions shows a clear diminishment in the quality and reach of their democratic aspirations. The realities of 1525 – local assemblies, peasant parliaments, economic democracy, universal equality before the law – are, by the 1640s, reduced to exceptions, the dreams of a few radical sects. The social contract of the communities of 1525 – an agreement negotiated yearly for the community's promise of obedient behavior – is now transformed into the Hobbesian contract that could be understood as a secularized version of Lutheran ideals.

The period following the English Civil Wars sits at the end of the emergence of the early modern state in England. What takes shape during the Commonwealth, in the immediate aftermath of the Civil Wars, is the most centralized body of governance seen yet with a strong disciplinarian character. The norms that underlie this body are those of the counter-revolution of 1525. By and large, these are the foundational elements of the relationship of obedience that modernity inherited, including the definitional terms of the struggle for emancipation: individual, and often dependent on the state for recognition, even when its aims are to provide protection from the same state. Gorski argues that "the disciplinary mechanisms and strategies put in place during the sixteenth century …are still with us today, in slightly altered form … Because challenging them means challenging some of the most deeply held 'values' within modern Western culture – individual 'moral responsibility', the 'Protestant work ethic', and the impersonal 'rule of law'" (1999:175). I argue that in the period from 1525 to 1650s the conflict between communal emancipation and the expansion of political authority has decidedly settled with the defeat and dispersion of the former and the eventual mastery of the state over the individual. This development has set the stage for the new conception of obedience to the state as well as the new form the struggle for emancipation has assumed to be fought between the rights of the individual and state authority.

3. Argument in Brief: The Individuation of Subjects and the Deification of the State

In this study, I engage in a historical inquiry into the conditions and events which were responsible for the constitution of the forms of obedience as early modern states emerged and consolidated, tracing the norms and structures as they are altered, sometimes purposefully, to produce submissive and isolated individuals against political authorities of overawing strength. Lukes's dimensions of power, and the concept of top-down discipline by the state of individuals allow me to point at both the manufacture of norms which would yield obedient subjects and the longer-term effects these would have on the relationship of obedience between subjects and authorities. Obedience was reconceived in ways that fragmented communities with their own space and habits for creating political alternatives, and created isolated and disciplined individuals whose only political alternatives are often in the choice of different masters. The constellation of norms which govern obedience now look more alike to each individual than ever before and it acts on all individuals the same, isolating and disciplining them to ultimately render individual obedience the unquestioned norm. The foundations of the way this constellation is shaped and shapes individual behavior were laid back in the days of the formation of the early modern state.

The historical constitution of this new form of political obligation is, in a distinct way, the history of two forces colliding: a drive for greater authoritarianism and popular resistance to it. Though the bare existence of these two forces alone suggests a constant and continuous tension below the surface – well theorized for and exposed elsewhere[5] – it is the moments of

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[5] James Scott's famous work *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance* (1985) documents the conflict between the powerful and the powerless as a constant, ongoing struggle that takes many forms, though of course his

explosion that are of interest to me. In those moments and their aftermath, concepts and practices that are usually buried in the day-to-day are revealed in open contestation. The emergence of this new form of political obligation owes much of its constitution to these rebellions and subsequent efforts to quash and counter them in the short term and preempt their repetition in the long term.

This new form reflected substantial alterations in the way several key political concepts and relationships were understood. In this dissertation, I focus on two essential parts to this redefinition: the individuation of subjects and the deification of political authority, both of which took place in Europe from the early sixteenth to the late seventeenth century. By the former I mean a process by which subjects are severed from their local and political communities, isolated vis-à-vis political authorities, and disciplined as obedient individuals responsible for their own obedience. By the latter, I mean the ways the early modern state sought to assume the place of God on Earth, to use Hobbes' evocative description of the Leviathan.

In light of the above discussion on faith, the two cases also serve to capture the shifts in beliefs defining authority. In the first case, the 1525 Revolution of the Common Man, what we witness is a tectonic shift in the *same* axiomatic plane: though the interpretation of the core belief changes radically, the belief in God's ordering of things is not challenged. The revolutionaries, who call themselves the Christian Association, do not reject God's order, nor God's ordering of the world. Instead, they reject political authority's claim to embody that order. In this instance, the Reformation's effect is also, and perhaps mainly, on the *political beliefs* of the common men. The peasants, miners, burghers, and others who became revolutionaries already knew full well the exploitative and abusive behavior of their rulers. The Reformation gives them the ability to

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work took place in Kerala, a village in Malaysia. This exact tension between the two forces, however, can also be found in Foucault's works as well as Moore's, from different angles.

brand that behavior un-Christian and thus reject that they are worthy of holding office in God's order. The lords are the rebels: they hijacked God's order. The epistemic breach for them is tremendous: this is not God's order; another world is possible. What turns their epistemic breach into the revolution, however, is the political forms that they command: their communities. What we witness, thus, is the shattering of the third dimension of power and the consequent springing of people into action.

In the second case, the radical revolution in the English Civil War, we can observe the world-historic shifts that have occurred. There are two conflicts on the normative plane: an axiomatic one between parliament and the King and an interpretive one between parliament and the radicals. While the absolutism of Charles I relies on the old Divine Right dogma and all that comes with it, parliament has already moved on to frame their cause in terms of individual rights and liberties. For them the struggle is about individual rights, namely right to property, and privileges. Once the crisis nears, almost all conversations between the parties reveal the disconnect: what parliament considers 'rights' the King considers a gift from himself to the people.

The radicals, in particular the Levellers and most sectarians, share Parliament's belief in these norms. Their struggle is about expanding individual rights to more (though not all) people. They not only share the belief in the axiom concerning the centrality of the individual as the main political agent shouldering the responsibility for her obedience, but also never truly challenge the authority of Parliament. Even in their most desperate, the Levellers' method of communicating with Parliament is thought 'humble' petitions; the lowest of the form of resistance deployed by the communities of 1525. Indeed, the Levellers' goal is to expand to more people what parliamentarians have: individual rights, liberties, and properties for more people.

The actual systemic challenge comes from the Diggers who seem to have subscribed to another belief system which thoroughly delegitimizes the entire socio-political order. What emerges from the crises of the era is the individual at the center of the normative and political field. Because politics is now determined and defined in individual terms, the defeat of the radicals is also individual: both Mill's 'paradise within thee' and the firebrand Freeborn John's conversion to the pacifist arm of Quakerism (not the only version at the time) reveals the almost solipsistic mindset of the defeated radical. Hobbes's authoritarian theory is also, notably, built on individuals. Political individualism, self-discipline, and obedience to authority became the norms upon which the modern state was built: a disciplined, or self-disciplined, and isolated individual.

It is not difficult to find this individual later identified in political thought: Alexis De Tocqueville described him in terms very close to mine in his warnings about the danger which threatens democracy specifically in France, though of course the warning is applicable to all democracies. In his magnum opus, *Democracy in America* originally published in 1835, Tocqueville writes of individuals who are each "withdrawn into himself, [and] almost unaware of the fate of the rest". He continues, describing what we could call the disciplining of that isolated individual: "Having thus taken each citizen in its powerful grasp and shaped him to his will, government then extends its embrace to include the whole of society". This, to Tocqueville, is an "orderly, gentle, peaceful slavery". Only after this definition does Tocqueville name the problem I attempt to tackle: "I am much less interested in the question who my master is than in the fact of obedience" (1969:691-3). The individual, unlike Tocqueville, readily accepts the fact of obedience as a given and only seeks the right master to "put the collar on [him]" (1969:693).

Nietzsche's description in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886/2008) is close to Tocqueville's, except maybe even more ominous: "Nothing has been exercised and cultivated better and longer

among men so far than obedience … the need for it is now innate in the average man, as a kind of formal conscience that commands: 'Thou shalt unconditionally do something, unconditionally not do something else,' in short 'Thou shalt'." (2008:110). This individual Tocqueville warns against, and the "average man" Nietzsche describes, are isolated individuals who are effortlessly, almost willingly, bent to the will of political authority and constituted as an obedient subject. This was the problem which plagued Milgram at the end of his study: how "obedience becomes an unquestioned norm" for the individuals who stepped into his laboratory (Miller, 1995:8). The constitution of this individual is the first part of the redefined relationship of political obligation the modern state emerged on and alongside.

By the second part, the deification of political authority, I understand a process through which emerging states increasingly acquired unparalleled and unprecedented powers over their subjects. The gradual cannibalizing by political authorities of the structures of the church and the norms and practices which governed obedience to the divine was both part of these newly acquired powers, and a further means to acquire them. Political authority infused with aspects of the divine, especially in so far as obedience is concerned, is also easy to locate in political philosophy, and in much more explicit terms at the beginning of the process: Martin Luther and John Calvin in the early sixteenth century both thought of disobedience to political authority as identical to the original sin which caused the fall, and political authorities as but masks over God's face. Stephen Gardiner, the Catholic Lord Chancellor to Mary I, used the exact same terminology, calling the King God's image on earth due the same obedience due to God without exception. Pierre Belloy, another Catholic, used the exact terms Luther and Calvin have used and described disobedience against the image and lieutenant of God as disobedience against God himself. James I of England explicitly described himself as God's lieutenant: "like Luther, he

argued that wicked rulers were sent by God as a punishment for their sinful subjects" and, as such, "resistance could never be justified" (Wottoon, 1996:95). In *Leviathan* (1651/1994), Thomas Hobbes, arguably the first thinker who has systematically conceptualized the state, came up with the idea of the "Mortal God", which effectively coincided with the end of the divine right of kings, at least in England.

A considerable number of thinkers in that two-century period, from Jean Bodin to Samuel Pufendorf, from Johannes Althusius to Christian Wolff, have described the state as a distinct person, aside from the ruler and the instruments of governance. This is, of course, all in line with Hobbes's definition of the state wherein "a multitude of men" become "one person," who is called the Commonwealth, i.e. the state (1994; Chapter XVI). This fictitious personality – "a person by fiction" as David Runciman calls it in response to Skinner's "purely artificial person" (2000:268) – had no previous existence in political reality. With its invention, the person of the state was endowed with qualities, some original and unique, others adjusted and transferred from other entities such as the king, the church and God. For instance, Hobbes and Pufendorf sees it as immortal, or at least very close to it. For Pufendorf, and the continental thinkers which followed him, it is also a moral entity.

Kant's description of the three powers forming the state – the legislative, the executive and the judicial – in *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1793/2003), are all aspects of the divine: "irreprehensible," "irresistible" and "without appeal" (2003: 141). On the same note, Hegel's conception of the state describes the state as the final, objective form of a quasi-divine entity only under whose presence can people find their true individuality and objective ethics. Unsurprisingly both these thinkers were ardent proponents of absolute obedience to the state. An influential twentieth century example is Carl Schmitt who famously argued that political theory

treats the state in a similar manner as theology treats God. This is, of course, in line with Nietzsche's and Deleuze's analyses concerning the submissiveness of philosophy, both of which I cover below. These examples can easily be multiplied. The legal personality of the state is, of course, here to stay. Whether the moral personality of the state later perished, as Schmitt argues, or simply changed shape is beside the point for my argument: the constellation of norms and practices governing political obligation, which formed around the state, were established in the period I cover and they are still embedded in the conception of obedience. These were based on a state that has assumed God-like qualities and incorporated the institutional and disciplinary structures of the church, and an isolated individual always already owing obedience. Indeed, it is truly surprising to see that these norms, originating in the sixteenth century, are capable of partially accounting for the obedient behavior in twentieth century authoritiarianisms.

Beyond its conception in political thought, there are also the realities of the emerging state that are relatively less noted in discussions of political thought. From Catholic France to Reformed England, from the Holy Roman Empire with its religious conflicts to countries much more religiously settled like Sweden, Denmark and Spain, political authorities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries increasingly took over the roles and functions of the church. Besides material benefits that came with the incorporation of church entities into the state – which were plenty – there was a substantial shifting of the ground in the normative plane, unifying temporal and ecclesiastical political authority first in the person of the sovereign, and later in the person of the state. What emerged in the seventeenth century were a series of "national churches" which championed obedience to the state instead of God, collected tithes by the authority of the state, and, for all intents and purposes, became extensions and "agents of the state" (Rokkan, 1999: 287). With the Commonwealth, Oliver Cromwell who once promised to abolish the tithes in full,

instructed ministers to abandon "the claim to collect them by divine right" and keep the collection but by the law of state (Hill, 2002:164). Catholic countries were not exceptions: in 1682, the French clergy declared their King, still called 'the very Catholic King', independent from the Pope, and his decisions the superior law of the land.

Thus, while the reach and powers of political authority achieved unprecedented levels in the form of the state, subjects diminished into isolated individuals easily disciplined for obedience and conformity. The relationship of political obedience which resulted from these two processes, the individuation of the subject and the deification of the state, is between an isolated individual who is always already assumed to owe obedience, and the political authority which, beyond being the most powerful of its kind, has also acquired certain aspects of the divine from whence part of its authority and powers were wrested. This new conception of political obligation has impoverished the imagination for alternatives and dramatically diminished spaces for political action which might bring about systemic change opening up new, and greater, avenues of freedom and association.

Even the most critical, revolutionary political agendas were inhibited in ways that would have been unimaginable before the state. A good example of this is Thoreau's famous case of civil disobedience. Fighting what he deemed to be gross injustices, corruption and moral crimes, Thoreau's disobedience is nevertheless symbolic, individual and ultimately ineffective to affect the change he sought.[6] His subsequent escape from society follows on similar grounds: an individual's pacific response to an overwhelming system which leaves no meaningful alternatives to obedience and conformity. In that sense, Thoreau's actions were reminiscent of

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[6] Though it is important to note that it has had a strong impact for posterity.

the earlier political escapees from state power like the post-Munster Anabaptists, the pilgrims of the English civil wars era, and even the many individuals who sought an alternative, and often democratic, political existence with the pirates of the Brethren of the Coast.

So, to the question 'why do we obey?', the answer that emerges from my work is this: we obey because the modern state has turned out to be a successful project of control, engineered to engender obedience from habitually disobedient subjects. More specifically, I argue that from the counter revolution of 1525 to the first emergence of the liberal ideals in forms familiar to us during the English Civil War, there has been a substantial shift in our conception and evaluation of the relationship between political authorities and their subjects. Once conceived of in terms of communities, communal action and rights, the individual came to occupy the central role. Though that individual would later occupy the central role in the new, liberal quest for emancipation, her submission to the state was now always already a constitutive part of the situation.

3.1.   Theoretical Contributions of the Thesis

I conceive of this work as a contribution to the studies of political obligation and history of political thought, as well as to historically-situated democratic theory. I also examine a long-standing tradition of popular, democratic communal resistance against the expansion of political authorities, and the successful attempts of political authorities to counter that tradition. Those two forces which are present at different times in different forms and shapes espouse considerably different forms of obedience to political authority. Quite notably, in both cases I analyze, the forces of resistance take on democratic forms. Though these movements are fairly well known for the English Civil War, I believe my work is the first in political theory to analyze their existence and impact before the Reformation. On the point of established democratic

principles and practices in pre-Reformation Europe, I also demonstrate the widespread existence of the practice of a social contract between rulers and the ruled which appears to be genuinely binding on both parties and which triggers consequences in cases of non-observance. I am hopeful that my analysis of democratic practices and resistance to authoritarianisms dating to the early sixteenth century will be useful to the scholars of democracy and democratic theory.

Second, and following from the last point, is that this work contributes to the historical literature on the 1525 German Peasants' War – making the case that it was a genuine democratic revolution: an emancipatory struggle for equality, representation, and economic justice that far surpasses anything else offered by the premodern era. As such, its impact can and should be rightfully compared to other revolutions such as the English Revolution and the French Revolution. The Revolution of the Common Men, as it is now known among historians, has impacted the emergence of the early modern state, as well as the norms and structures of the time in unparalleled ways. This argument is, to my knowledge, unprecedented in considerations of political theory despite the fact that it is increasingly seen as commonplace – though not uncontested – among historians of late feudal and early modern Europe. The impact of the dissertation on political theory too, I believe, will be substantial. To start with, I demonstrate that Luther's political thought has been heavily affected by this uprising in concrete ways that I trace both textually and geographically as it spreads throughout Europe. Additionally, my work on the revolution points to a longer and more substantial tradition of radicalism, pushing back to early sixteenth century revolutionary radicalism as a coherent and viable political agenda.

A third contribution of my work to the discussions of the history of political ideas is an argument for extending the beginnings of modern political ideas to the early sixteenth century. Alongside other political theorists such as J. H. Burns, Francis Oakley and, to some extent,

Quentin Skinner, my dissertation makes the argument that we have very good reasons to reconsider some of our key concepts as inheritances from the early sixteenth century where both the drive for greater authoritarianism and the struggle for emancipation were being waged on grounds which are more familiar to us than so far assumed. I point, in particular, to numerous ideas and practices thought to originate with the time of the English Civil Wars which have very clear precedents in the Reformation era – including democratic radicalism in the 1630s and 40s. The Reformation is the era, broadly conceived of as the 'moment' in history, to which I trace the foundations of our current understandings of political obligation notably as a relationship between an all-powerful state and an individual already bound to obey. I also find, in that historical moment, widespread democratic resistance to that expansion of authority. Finally, my investigation into the early generation of the structures and norms of obedience may give us a renewed motivation to revisit some key discussions in political thought. By recasting the histories of the concepts of autonomy, freedom, social contract and, of course, political obligation in a new context of extended conflict between political authorities and communal drives for emancipation, I hope to contribute to ongoing conversations on these issues.

Additionally, an argument emerges in the later chapters about the Lutheran origins of the thought of Thomas Hobbes. Combining an analysis of Martin Luther's thought as it transforms throughout the Revolution of the Common Man, and Hobbes's self-admitted adherence to Lutheran principles, I argue that the Lutheran influence on Hobbes is much stronger than previously posited in the literature. In fact, I point to several places where Hobbes seems to have effectively secularized Luther's arguments for unconditional obedience to the sovereign, almost identically using the Reformer's ideas *sans* the spirituality. This much is well recognized by theologians of his age. Remarkably, when attacked by his peers over the 'atheistic' nature of his

arguments, Hobbes's fallback position is Luther. Surprisingly, in political theory, these connections were either disregarded or dismissed as an opportunistic attempt by the famously polemical Hobbes to defend himself. However, I believe, alongside Jürgen Overhoff (1997), that there is much more to this connection than previously thought.

Finally, I also contribute to the discussions on the state formation theories. Interestingly, none of the stronger accounts of state formation – the institutionalist, Marxist, and bellicist – consider ideas and practices of obedience as a motivation for elite behaviour let alone a factor in state formation.[7] This inattention speaks both to the naturalized status of obedience and the default expectation for its presence. However, my work suggests otherwise: that engendering obedience and ensuring its provision seem to be emergent concerns for rulers, in particular those faced with threatening uprisings. On that point I stretch Gorski's argument further: he criticizes the state formation literature on neglecting the importance of religion and confessionalization. His work goes a long way to establish how religious norms and mechanisms avail the early modern state with mechanisms of control and discipline beyond anything comparable to date. I add to this argument a clear expression of motivation on the part of the rulers. Whether their need was to mobilize their populations, exert control and consolidate power, increase and solidify sources of income, or a combination of all these incentives, an obedient population was primary to achieving all these goals. Though our accounts have neglected this factor, I very much doubt that the rulers have, in particular if they have experienced major acts of disobedience. In fact, I wonder if the obviousness of this proposition – that obedience is always taken for granted – has played a part in its omission.

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[7] Though of course Weber does pay considerable attention to that point.

4.   Plan of the Dissertation

Following this introduction, there are six chapters: a literature review, two chapters for each case covering the revolutions and the counter-revolutions, and the conclusion. Chapter two covers the literature review, and in what ways I believe my work to be a contribution to the gaps in the literature. In that chapter I pay particular attention to the conceptions of authority and obedience, as well as the centrality of faith in the constitution of those. Indeed, as we will see, numerous modern authors identify these three as inseparable and point to insurmountable problems arising from their forcible separation by the Enlightenment. Drawing from these arguments, I also use the end of the chapter to argue that obedience to state is as much dependent on faith as obedience to God was. This argument partially supports the above-mentioned point about the deification of the state.

Chapter three, entitled 'Revolution and Community: The Popular Quest for Political Autonomy,' covers the beginnings of the Revolution of the Common Man. Here I present a view of the conditions which gave rise to the revolution, illustrating the relationship of obedience between communities and their feudal lords as well as the material and normative conditions which gave way to massive popular discontent. I portray the explosion of this discontent, linking it to a substantial normative shift in the popular imagination which was brought about by the Reformation. Part of this shift is evident in the rebellion's manifesto and the political structures they put in place in the brief time they have taken over the land from the lords. The communities we encounter in this chapter were, in numerous ways, much less constrained in their disobedience than modern citizens: with centuries long traditions of political autonomy and communal agency, they treated actual obedience and the *promise* of obedient behavior as two distinct strategic good, negotiated for and provided separately. Communities were almost always

strategically engaged in acts of disobedience and resistance to preserve their rights and advance their interests. It was this widespread practice of disobedience that communities leveraged into a revolution threatening the entire feudal order. The system they established in their year of victory was a thoroughly democratic one with ascending, egalitarian structures organized around representative principles and elections with universal manhood suffrage. The reason that this massive act of disobedience transformed into a democratic revolution, I believe, is precisely because these traditions of autonomy and agency are most naturally served by democratic structures of governance.

Chapter four, 'The Counter-Revolution and Isolation: the Defeat of the Political Community' deals with the counter-revolution of the lords. In this chapter, I present in particular Martin Luther's struggles to put down the uprising, and the ways in which this effort has shaped his political thought. By focusing on his texts and declarations, I show that Luther is one of the primary opponents of the revolution as well as the architect of the norms which was to ensure such uprisings will not happen again. Those of Luther's works that were most profoundly impacted by the revolution were precisely the ones picked up by numerous European lords including the English and Swedish kings, and helped to constitute the normative underpinnings of the early modern state. This was exactly as Luther hoped, as he intentionally tried to present his works as a cure to the disobedience. In this chapter I also trace the lords' attempt to create a legal framework with the goal of breaking up communities, isolate individuals and pacify discontent by new conflict settlement methods which were designed purposefully in labyrinthine ways. The chapter shows that the radical alteration of the political culture in Europe, defining the lines of what is to come for centuries, was done quite explicitly to counter the revolution and ensure that no such revolution will happen in the future. The explicitly stated goals behind the

plans of the lords and Luther was to dismantle the communities which have proven themselves to be a constant threat, and to isolate individuals so they could not collectively threaten political authority. Luther's transplantation of his originally religious ideas into politics was driven by the same goal.

Chapter five, 'The Revolution That Never Happened: The Birth of a New Struggle', turns to a much better-known uprising: the English Revolution. It focuses on the radicals of the era in particular. While illustrating the conditions that gave rise to the discontent, I also distinguish strongly between the various parties of the Civil War, presenting the radicals as a distinct third party besides parliamentarians and the royalists. By providing comparisons to the 1525 where these can be drawn I argue that the effect of the Lutheran and Calvinist ideas was strong and deep on the political scene. However, this time, despite the widespread discontent with the increasingly oppressive socio-political conditions, economic exploitation and inequalities, there were no pre-organized communities with traditions of disobedience. Instead, most of the organizational strength of this revolution emerged from the religious sects and congregations, churches, and poor houses. It was this lack of organization that kept the radicals dispersed and under control. The absence of structures for organized political action and practices of disobedience undermined the radicals almost as much as their convictions of the centrality of the individual.

The sixth chapter is entitled 'The Constitution of the Obedient Subject.' Here I cover the defeat of the radicals and underline some of the reasons. Comparing the Diggers' communal tradition of resistance with the new, liberal tradition spearheaded by the Levellers, this chapter shows that aspects of unfreedom – individual isolation, inability to create their own terms and language, an eagerness to submit to the 'right' authority – were already interwoven in the

Levellers' struggle. Those were the ideas originally championed by Luther, and later largely imitated by Calvin insofar as obedience is concerned. I argue that there are clear continuities from 1525 to 1640s, both in the uprisings and their failures. A key argument in this chapter is that, as part of this continuity, Hobbes was much more influenced by Luther's arguments than previously thought. The conclusion of this period largely frames the definitional concepts of the new relationship of obedience due from individuals to the state.

By this time, the struggle between the communities and political authority is decisively settled: the emergence of the political individual signals the end of this conflict and the unchallenged mastery of political authority, as initially planned for by the counter revolution of 1525. The new struggle of emancipation, defined on individual terms, and using the demands and vocabulary already voiced by the ruling class, indicates that the contestation is no longer over disobedience; it is over the conditions of the individual's submission. The liberal struggle for emancipation, centered on individual rights and freedoms, starts following that defeat. Her rights and freedoms not-withstanding, the individual that emerges from there is much more constrained and less free in her disobedience than the communities of the sixteenth century.

The dissertation ends with the seventh chapter covering the conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I address the literature which has dealt with the question of obedience, why I find them wanting, and in what ways my work can fill these gaps. Obedience is one of the oldest and most central problems in political literature. It is also one of the hardest to pin down due to two main reasons: first, obedience is very closely related to several other core concepts of socio-political life, such as authority, force, freedom, and legitimacy, among others. Second, and following from the first, these conceptions are all interrelated. Accordingly, a very large part of the conceptual framework I am attempting to map is linked in ways that are often difficult to disentangle. Below I go over these literatures. I also take advantage of this review to further develop the position and normative assumptions that underlie the dissertation. This clarification is useful as it helps to better contextualize the theoretical discussion that follows on authority, legitimacy, force, faith, the enlightenment, and modernity. First, however, I must briefly address the conspicuous absence of the 'psychology of obedience' in this dissertation.

1. Psychology of Obedience

Despite the fact political science has always taken a substantial interest in obedience, with the earliest mention occurring in Plato's *Crito*, it is not wrong to say that the treatment of obedience as 'obedience' has remained largely, though of course not exclusively, in the field of psychology.[8] In this work I do not deal with the psychology of obedience mainly because the arguments in this

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[8] The brief discussion in Plato's *Crito* is toward the end of the book when Socrates, jailed and awaiting execution, points at the idea of a social contract between himself and the city to explain his obedience to an unjust law which condemns him to die. It is telling that, despite its centrality considering the context, Plato only tackles this issue indirectly and towards the very end of the text. It is also notable that the first argument on obedient behavior is one made for an implicit social contract which creates obligations for citizens who seem to have agreed to it tacitly, by continuing to live in the city.

dissertation do not require it.[9] Also, and possibly more importantly, I am convinced that when it comes to understanding the collective, societal nature of obedience, its normative underpinnings, or its historical constitution, this scholarship has significant limitations.

While there is no denying that there are psychological reasons for conformity and obedience, these are far from being the only reasons for it. In fact, despite substantial contributions in the wake of the Second World War, it is not unfair to say that in the quest to understand unconditional and unquestioned obedience, psychology's most momentous achievement has been the provision not of answers but of questions. Miller et al notes: "It was not that Milgram had actually solved a problem or confirmed a theory that made this research so provocative. Rather, his experiments raised extraordinarily vital and sobering questions" (1995: 4). Though progress was made, those questions remain far from answered.

Indeed, when we turn to the works of psychologists on mass atrocities that involve obedience, we find that they resort more and more to adjectives and definitions denoting the otherworldliness, the incomprehensibility of it all: "extraordinary evil" (Waller, 2002:11), "roots of evil" (Staub, 1989), "evil" (Baumeister, 1999), "the tenth circle of hell ... ancient devil" (Hukanovic, 1997), "the theory and practice of hell" (Kogon, 1998), "insanity, a form of demonic possession"; "X factor" (Wilshire, 2005:75, 131), "true devils" (Dutton, 2007: 66), and so on. Most of these works focus on the instances when violence is committed (the killing, the torturing) and point to some kind of temporal insanity to explain them, often drawing comparisons to

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[9] I have, however, spoken extensively in various media on several important psychological experiments and insights we can draw from these. In these discussions I have made an explicit effort to link psychology's contributions to the social and political aspects which are of interest to me. See, for example: 'Why We Obey?', CBC's *Ideas from the Trenches*, April 2015; and '1984', The Guardian Podcast *Science(ish)*, March 2017. For an exclusively psychological take, including issues of neuropsychology, see also Turan and Dutton, (June 2010), "Psychic Freezing to Lethal Malevolent Authority", *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research,* pp.4-16.

schizophrenic behavior. They offer almost nothing on how so many different people in so many different places can be systematically brought to 'the brink of insanity.'

There is a good reason why they cannot offer these explanations. The kind of obedience that Arendt and Milgram examined, the kind of obedience I try to explain cannot be, and is not explained solely in terms of the circumstances of the day or the psychology of the individuals involved. It is a simple and very central argument of this study that obedience, as well as disobedience, is *mainly* a socio-political phenomenon and thus cannot be fully understood without *socio-political* problematization. Milgram, unsurprisingly, recognizes that "obedience was an unquestioned norm" for the individuals long before they stepped into his laboratory (Miller, 1995:8). Thus, his work has *revealed* the pre-existing individual condition vis-à-vis authority and he was, of course, fully cognizant of that. Concerning the psychological scholarship on obedience I am further skeptical of the trans-historical, universal quality of the results suggested by psychological experiments such as Milgram's. The suggestion that a Spartan Helot, a peasant living in the fourteenth century, an escaped slave in the nineteenth century, and an electrician living in the 1960s will respond to authority in the same way does not seem believable.

Practices of obedience and disobedience are historically situated and can make sense only if understood in the context within which they have meaning. Revealing the impact on the individual of these conditions, important as it is, does not amount to an explanation for these conditions. Even if an explanation were to be attempted, the individual nature of that answer would severely limit its value. For an explanation that would surpass these limitations, we must turn to political science and political sociology: obedience is a historically constituted and learned behavior, and requires a socio-political treatment.

2.   Political Science, Political Theory, and Obedience

As noted earlier, I am convinced, like Robert Paul Wolff, James Scott, A.J. Simmons, and Michael Huemer, that there is no theory of political obligation that manages to successfully justify obedience. Simmons argues that "beliefs about political obligation, insofar as we actually have any, are suspect as a kind of false consciousness" (2001:195). Wolff (1971, 1998) and, more recently, Huemer (2013) voice similar arguments, only expanding it further to also cover the concept of political legitimacy. To them it is not just that political obligation fails when political authorities cannot substantiate their claim to legitimacy. More radically, it is not possible to morally justify the very idea of political legitimacy. Wolff declares all "beliefs about the legitimacy of political authority ... as groundless as metaphysical speculation" (1971: 244). Huemer asks why we should accept for states actions that would be unacceptable for individuals, and "ultimately conclude[s] that political authority is an illusion: no one has the right to rule, and no one has the obligation to obey a command" for any reason (2013:18). Their position is stronger than Simmons who leaves the door open for authorities to be legitimate under certain circumstances.

There are, of course, other theories of political obligation. Transactional accounts argue that obedience is owed to the state in return for certain societal goods like security and public services; utilitarian theories assume obedience is owed based on societal outcomes like justice and human rights; proponents of natural duty theories describe a moral duty independent of any transactions; and associative theories derive political obligation from membership in a community, from which certain duties follow. All of these theories have a unifying idea, which was well put by George Klosko: "the idea that we have obligations to particular countries is a basic feature of our political consciousness" (1992:24). So much so, in fact, that one of the more interesting arguments takes this point further and ascribes a *pre-political* existence to political obligation,

bypassing the need for justifying it. Leslie Green writes that political obligation, by the nature of its widespread and clear existence needs no justification; it simply is. She writes: "having a virgin birth, [political] obligation has no father among familiar principles such as consent, utility, fairness, and so on" (Dobos, 2012:16). Part of the appeal of the virgin-birth theory is its function as a philosophical white flag, surrendering to the reality of the concept's widespread existence without having the need to justify it: it just is.

One of the best known and longest lasting theories of political obligation is the transactional account known as the social contract. The social contract theory has different versions, emphasizing regime types, particular transactional goods – like security, or natural membership to political communities. But, though details change in different versions, at the core of this theory lies the argument that there is an explicit or implicit contractual relationship between the rulers and the ruled. Some form of consent by the ruled – through voting, owning property, residing in the country, or even tacit consent – is essential to the legitimacy of authorities, in turn creating political obligation. Various arguments for it by, for instance, Hobbes (1994), Locke (2009: ch.8), Rousseau (2012; Book IV), and of course John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1999) are well documented, as are their shortcomings. As I noted above, the first ever treatment in Western political literature of obedience – Plato's *Crito* – uses a tacit social contract argument to justify obedience even in the direst of circumstances.

In its various forms, social contract theory is possibly the most widespread justification for political obligation: that those who are bound by obedience either temporarily or permanently, are owed and receive certain returns for their submission. Indeed, Barrington Moore's *Injustice: Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (1978) starts this way: "This is a book about why people so often put up with being the victims of their societies and why at other times they become very angry and

try with passion and forcefulness to do something about their situation" (1978: xiii). Yet despite the similarity of our starting questions and the considerable value of Moore's work, his comparative study takes a pronouncedly different tone with a largely materialist focus. Most importantly, Moore formulates his conception of authority and obedience as an "implicit social contract" based on mutual obligations that is broken when authority fails to live up to its obligation to "protect," "cherish," and "take care of its subjects" (1978: 510). This acceptance by Moore, to me, suggest flaws with the framework in damaging ways.

I believe Moore's use of the contract as an explanation here amounts to a circular logic allowing him to bypass the philosophical discussion of obedience: people obey because of the contract, they disobey because it is broken. It may even be undermining the framework of the book which covers ten cases of revolts by the powerless of different societies, from miners to farmers – those who get the least from the societal arrangement. In fact, at least one of the cases – the casteless of India – are specifically not part of the societal contract: it is, indeed, the point of their being casteless. Lower classes do not suddenly realize that political authorities have stopped taking care of them and revolt; it is not even a gradual realization that they were left behind for good. As I will show in the coming chapters, rebellion does not break out because people start feeling uncherished; this feeling has a quasi-permanent quality with those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. In fact, I doubt very much that many from these classes would ever describe their relationship with political authority as one where they are cherished.

Instead, I argue, like John Gaventa does in his *Power and Powerlessness* (1980), that not only are people often aware that they are not being protected, cherished, or taken care of, they have a profound sense of having been left behind. For Lukes, subjects do not rise up not because they are implicitly or instinctively aware of a contract but because they are acted on by power. As such,

people from whom we would expect disobedience naturalize their subjection, internalize their position, or, are convinced that their attempts to change the status-quo will only fail and bring them nothing but more trouble. So, far from being cherished and taken care of, in Moore's terms, lower classes do not ever expect to be cherished and they either internalize this – 'it is right that I am not cherished' – or simply accept it as one of life's realities that they cannot change – 'this is our lot in life'.

For a work such as Moore's describing the relationship of obedience as a contractual one is very distant from the socio-political realities. Though it is true that political life offers instances – such as elections – where the definition of a contract is not entirely misplaced, the overall relationship between a political authority is a *relationship of power*. Furthermore, without dismissing the Foucauldian understanding of power as one that irrigates the entire social field, when it comes to obedience the exercise of power is very unbalanced. We are not looking at a symmetrical relationship where parties are on equal, or close to equal grounding, freely reacting to the violations to the spirit of a supposed agreement. With a Foucauldian interpretation, they may embrace similar norms and beliefs, have similar understandings of proper behavior and conduct, and may even share more or less the same epistemology. But these norms and beliefs describe a world where advantages and benefits are distributed in a dramatically unequal way. So, independent of the social irrigation, the relationship of obedience is inescapably one of direct power.

Concerning consent in particular, and the social contract in general, the criticism has been substantial and overwhelming. Hume, who favors a natural moral duty theory, conclusively argued that the social contract has no basis in reality, either for the state or its citizens: if you speak about "voluntary consent or a mutual promise, the magistrate would soon imprison you, as seditious, for

loosening the ties of obedience; if your friends did not before shut you up as delirious, for advancing such absurdities" (2007: 236).

Social contact theory as a purely philosophical construct has been subject to criticism on the basis of its exclusions based in race and gender. Charles Mills' *The Racial Contract*, explicitly inspired by *The Sexual Contract* by Carole Pateman (1997), notes: "the social contract [is] continually forced to retreat into illusory idealizing abstraction, the never-never land of pure theory" (1997:130). Combined, these works laid bare the inherently exclusionary practices of these arguments. Mills puts it with his trademark witticism that social contract theory is continually astonished and embarrassed by revelations about it. In their *Contract and Domination* (2007), Mills and Pateman leverage all arguments against the contract theory, effectively asking for it to be scrapped or completely rethought, given it was and is an exercise in domination.

The democratic consent theory, a contemporary branch of consent theory, draws heavily on accounts from Locke to Rawls. Once more, arguments for and against it are fairly widely known: many have critically challenged the proposition that residence, holding property, or voting amount to an explicit or tacit acceptance of the laws and practices of a country. Even the most positive theoretical cases – such as fully inclusive democracies with explicit consent – cannot seem to fully justify political obligation, falling prey to several inconsistencies rising from the particularity problem; the casual exclusion of the disenfranchised; the potentially uninformed nature of consent; the availability of final goods to insiders and outsiders, and so on… It is again Pateman who has amassed the critical attack on democratic consent in her *The Problem of Political Obligation* (1985). Therein, she contends that "the fraudulent liberal social contract" is an illusion designed to simulate the appearance of freedom (1985: 145). She argues, "political obligation in the liberal democratic state constitutes an insoluble problem" (1985: 1). Pateman sees a central

contradiction: "the practice of political obligation, it is usually accepted, is institutionalized in the liberal democratic state" (1985: 6); yet, she says, precisely these "liberal democratic institutions do not – and cannot – give expression to liberal ideals" (1985: 3).[10]

The other, older, theories of political obligation have fared much worse. Natural duty accounts, for their part, suffer from the widespread inability of political obligation theories to match theory with the reality. The Achilles' heel of natural duty theories is the particularity problem; the inability to justify allegiance to one authority over another. Even if one were to accept that individuals have a natural duty to obey – to sustain society, or moral goods, or general cohesion – there is no reason for them to obey this unit over the other. Utilitarian theories are subject to similar shortcomings, being unable to justify obedience to one unit over another, or even one regime type over another, fully bypassing considerations of morality in the process. On the other hand, associative accounts deal with the particularity problem very well by tying individuals to obedience to the unit they are natural members of, just like families. However, these accounts fatally forsake considerations of morality in their demanding obedience to all authorities no matter how terrible, simply by virtue of an individual's existence under them. In that, associative accounts effectively prescribe full, and unconditional obedience for everybody to all authorities. They also openly confound familial associations with political ones.

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[10] To further clarify Pateman's position, two central distinctions she carefully draws must be mentioned: first, she repeatedly underlines that liberal democracy is not "a synthesis of 'liberal' and 'democratic' ideas and practices; it is, instead, an assimilation of democratic theory into liberal democratic theory." Second, she insists that the social contract theory that has become a trademark of liberal democracy also contains a second, more democratic, branch championed by Rousseau who rejected the liberal contract. Liberal democratic theorists, Pateman argues, "conveniently ignore [this] brilliant critique of liberal arguments about political obligation" (1985: 5). Both Pateman and Mills should be seen not as opponents of democratic legitimacy theories but instead as radical democratic theorists, who reject the current cooptation of such theories under liberalism.

Though I will say more about democratic legitimacy below, in the discussion on legitimacy, the central point here is that all theories of political obligation, even liberal democratic ones, suffer from fatal shortcomings which cannot be fixed by a better elaboration of their arguments. There is a simple reason for that: there is more to our inability to justify obedience than just finding the right theory and tweaking it in the right ways. The problem lies not with our theories but with our historically constituted conception of obedience. To put it in a dramatic way, there may be something wrong with our basic conceptions that we no longer have the vocabulary to describe. A historical analysis can be instrumental in uncovering these issues. More to the point, individual obedience to the state is a deeply foundational, constitutive aspect of modern life. Its understanding necessitates moving beyond philosophical justifications into an exploration of its constitution.

This is not as controversial a position as it initially seems. Many serious thinkers such as Arendt, Hans Georg Gadamer, and Hans Blumenberg among others, have argued that the Enlightenment hollowed the concept of authority so thoroughly that we are left with a conception of obedience we can no longer justify and an idea of legitimacy which is crucially endangered. Though he does not mention obedience, Gorski's elaboration comes very close: "Despite their evident 'irrationality' and 'inefficiency', the disciplinary mechanisms and strategies put in place during the sixteenth century could not be so easily removed – and are still with us today, in slightly altered form … Because challenging them means challenging some of the most deeply held 'values' within modern Western culture – individual 'moral responsibility', the 'Protestant work ethic', and the impersonal 'rule of law'" (1999:175).

To better articulate and explain the theoretical framing of my argument, I expand my analysis to now include the key neighboring concepts of authority, force, legitimacy, and freedom.

2.1.   Authority, Force and Legitimacy

Over the last century, numerous thinkers pointed problems with modern conceptions of authority. The reason we can no longer justify obedience, they hinted, is because we can no longer take for granted one of its main components: faith. For centuries, faith – in God and in the order of things as God ordered them – was a crucial, constituent part of authority. The Enlightenment claimed to have made a radical break with the past and engender a wholly new set of concepts. This, however, was not the case, and as Hans Blumenberg (1966/1999) articulated extensively, a radical break was never a possibility. In effect, the Enlightenment's attack on the Christian concept of authority crippled its moral component. To substantiate this argument in this section, first, I go over the concepts of authority, force, and legitimacy, establishing the deeply intertwined relationship they share.

Authority, as a concept, has an inherently ambiguous character (Connolly, 1987) with numerous possible sources and manners of exercise. Yet, virtually all its forms ultimately describe, besides the usage of force, a *right* to wield power based on a certain *authorization*; it is the right to demand and receive obedience (Wolff, 1971). The extent and strength of a political authority is independent of the content of its commands, and the reasons it provides for holding this right (Hart, 1958; Rawls, 1964; Weber, 1978; Raz, 1990; Green, 1988; Christiano, 2008; Huemer, 2013). Furthermore, the deployment of political authority always includes coercion, or at least the threat of coercion. Huemer writes that there is broad consensus that "the basis of the legal system is intentional, harmful coercion" (2013:10). Georg Simmel's argument unites these two points: force's "claim to authority" is "deeper" than any other; its association is "indifferent to the quality of the ruler and to any individual right to dominate." Simmel thinks all forms of

domination, "whether the authority be an ideal or social law [or] an arbitrarily decreeing personality," include coercion as a central element whose "functional significance" renders its "particular content ... of secondary importance" (1971: 344-5).

Indeed, there is broad consensus on the role of force: drawing from Cicero, Blaise Pascal and Hobbes, Gerhard Lenski notes that "the fact has been recognized by countless observers of the human scene in every age [that] force is the foundation of political sovereignty" (Lenski, 1986: 244). However, force exercises a constitutive effect, establishing the system. After that, political rationalities create their own legitimation. Étienne de La Boétie notes: "in the beginning men submit under constraint and by force; but those who come after them obey without regret and perform willingly what their predecessors had done because they had to" (2008: 54). David Hume sees the same picture: "[t]he original establishment was formed by violence, and submitted to from necessity" (2007: par.22). Foucault sees violence as "[power's] primitive form, its permanent secret, and its last resource, that which in the final analysis appears as its real nature when it is forced to throw aside its mask and to show itself as it really is" (1982:789).[11] John Locke famously offers consent as the basis of government to offset the only remaining possible argument that "all government in the world is the product only of force and violence" (2009:17).

In his *Critique of Violence* Walter Benjamin talks of a similar foundational effect with the "lawmaking character inherent" in violence as he points at the "victorious power" at the origin of all legal systems (2002: 241-248). Discussing Benjamin's critique, Jacques Derrida notes that the original *Violence/Gewalt* in Benjamin's text (entitled *Zur Kritik der Gewalt* in the original German) corresponds to "both violence and legitimate power" rendering the distinction further

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[11] I am, of course, aware that there is much more to power in Foucault than just authority. However, this only amplifies the point about force's place at the origin and heart of authority.

blurry. He continues: "the supposedly originary violence that must have established this authority

... could not itself have been authorized by any anterior legitimacy" (1999: 77). Put simply, at the

foundation of authority lies force that is not and could not have been authorized; in fact, if another

authority already existed, it is more likely that this force would have been un-authorized, illegal,

and fought against. In rejecting uncontrolled, outside violence authorities are not only fighting

instability and insecurity; they are also – and perhaps mainly – fighting with the alternative

normativity potentially espoused by such violence. Benjamin thus says, "the state ... fears [the

great criminal's] violence simply for its lawmaking character" (2002: 241). Indeed, the parallel is

well established: Charles Tilly clearly defines the state as a racketeer, creating threats and charging

for protection against them (1985). For Tilly, the analogy captures state-making much better than,

for example, the conception of social contract. The opening paragraph of his *War Making and

State Making as Organized Crime* (1985) is informative for my purposes:

> If protection rackets represent organised crime at its smoothest, then war risking and state making
> – quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy – qualify as our largest examples
> of organised crime. Without branding all generals and statesmen as murderers or thieves, I want to
> urge the value of that analogy. At least for the European experience of the past few centuries, a
> portrait of war makers and state makers as coercive and self-seeking entrepreneurs bears a far greater
> resemblance to the facts than do its chief alternatives: the idea of a social contract, the idea of an
> open market in which operators of armies and states offer services to willing consumers, the idea of
> a society whose shared norms and expectations call forth a certain kind of government.

Similarly, J. S. Migdal simply underlines the mafia as a smaller governance organization with its

own bubble of sovereignty (1988). Giorgio Agamben's *State of Exception* (2009) describes the

law's using of the 'exception', the legal suspension of the law by law itself, as evidence of the

sovereign's existence outside and above the law. From there, he draws the analogy to the crime

lords who, in their own zones of influence, behave like states. Indeed, the famous story between

Alexander the Great and the pirate Diomedes speaks to this very point. According to that story, in

his judgment hearing Diomedes tells Alexander that they do the same thing, but because he uses

one boat he is called a pirate while Alexander, who commands navies and armies is called an

emperor. Thus, from Benjamin's description of violence as lawmaker, to law as a weapon of political authority the fluidity of these borders appears to be a widely known secret.

One very important tradition that describes the relationship of force and authority differently is that started by Hobbes. For Hobbes, violence leads to political authority *not* by establishing the successful force-holder over others but because *all* force-holders agree on the necessity to avoid "that miserable condition of war" they are "necessarily" stuck in without a "power to keep them in awe" (1994: 106). Even though Hobbes explicitly presents his "covenant of every man with ever man" as "more than consent, or concord" (1994: 109), this proto-liberal approach spearheaded the fiction of voluntarism that social contract theory later came to embody. Charles Hendel, like many others, perceives Hobbes's "authority as a saving power in [men's] existence" and this saving not only demonstrates "the dire need" for authority but also the "moral reason for authority" (1958: 7-9).

Hobbes thus reconceptualizes the building blocks of authority: authority does not have to be caused by an initial force which establishes itself.[12] Instead everyone's agreement with everyone to avoid the dominance of naked force could be the source of authority. It is not violence that establishes authority – it is men's reason to get away from the condition where violence rules. So, Hobbes's account of political obligation is a mixed one: it is a natural duty because it achieves security for all; but it is also a 'virgin birth' because it antecedes the existence of politics, rights and moral goods – all of which only come into existence with and after the establishment of authority. Also noteworthy is Hobbes's ingenuity in avoiding including the authority into the social

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[12] Hobbes plainly recognizes the direct constitution of authority by force and details it in another chapter ('Sovereign by Conquest'). However, he pays more attention to the 'Sovereign by Institution'.

contract he describes: it is, indeed, the subjects who contract each other to be bound by an authority which is above it all.

In all these accounts, force plays a formative, constitutive effect that brings forth authority which, only after that, uses a legitimating set of values in its own establishment. This set of values effectively legitimizes an authority – either for the first time or in an ongoing basis. This set of arguments could be genuinely new, establishing a foreign authority with its foreign values (like with colonialism, or conquest) or it could have manifested from the conventions of that society. No matter how legitimacy is brought about, it enables and constrains power at the same time, by defining what can and cannot be done, and what can and cannot be proposed. With legitimacy, power thus becomes 'authorized'. The values described and supposedly contained by the conception of legitimacy also act, importantly, as the chief instrument of evaluation for the authority. This is worth repeating: the constellation of norms which legitimize authority (and maybe even bring it about in the first place) are the benchmark by which this authority is evaluated. So: qualities that are indispensable constitutional elements of an authority are also the chief instruments of the evaluation of what they constitute. In short, authority is evaluated by and against its parts. Lukes notes: "if authority is justified, it is justified from a point of view, namely that of the authority itself, which becomes that of the subject", or, simply put, authority itself "defines the objectives and sets the standards" (1987: 70-71).

2.2. Authority, Faith, and the Modern Age

Political authorities have an intimate, inseparable relationship with force. They also are inextricably linked to a set of values and norms which act as their enablers, constrainers, and evaluation criteria – collectively deemed that authority's legitimacy. These legitimizing norms, values, and behavior, however, *always* need to be believed and recognized as the correct, right,

good values. Put otherwise, if we are democrats we believe in a set of statements concerning people's autonomy, dignity, reason, and so on; if we believe in the divine authority of a great leader, this suggests belief in both the divine and its intervention in politics through his chosen. Whether well elaborated or not, belief in the principles legitimizing an authority appears to be an inescapable aspect.

In that sense, every authority seems to possess an organic and inevitable relation to faith. Indeed, "the practice of traditional authority is inevitably linked to faith" (Connolly, 1987: 131). Huemer hints that the reason we treat governments with a different set of criteria than individuals, allowing them behaviors which would be inacceptable to us in another person, is this unexplained, irrational sense of belief in its qualitative difference (2013;2-22). Hence, "the illusion of authority" (2013:1). Before the Enlightenment, belief in the authority's justness, or at least in the infinite wisdom of the power that placed authorities where they are, was hardly a problem. Indeed, the Divine Right of Kings is predicated on the belief that kings are there because God had entrusted that position to them. The contrast between Luther and Locke on precisely that point is informative as to the role of faith in legitimating authorities. To display the excessive nature of Robert Filmer's arguments Locke asks whether God's power which is supposedly transferred to the King through Adam, is also exercised by the lowest constable? His question is, of course, rhetorical, meant to illustrate the extremes to which Filmer's theories of divine right can be stretched. A century and a half before, Martin Luther's *Whether Soldiers Too Can Be Saved* (1526) answers yes, by drawing a line of indisputable legitimacy from God to the soldier who exercises his will through the commands of the lord.

With the Enlightenment's assault on all that is (or looks) metaphysical or mystical, this qualitative linking of authority to faith started to look deeply problematic. Locke's argument above

is a case in point, illustrating the beginnings of the attempt to substitute faith with reason. Consider, as another case in point here, Kant's famous maxim, approvingly quoted from Frederick the Great: in *What is Enlightenment?*, Kant writes "*Argue as much as you like and about whatever you like, but obey!*" (2008: 59, emphasis original). He explicitly links arguing with political authority to the free use of one's reason, which he also sets as the condition of acting freely. Yet, the free use of one's reason occasionally – if not always – ends up opposing authority's commands, arguing and refusing obedience. Trying to resolve this seemingly insoluble contrast, Kant severs the two, the free use of reason and obedience, subjecting one to the other once and for all. He consequently abandons 'acting freely', the ultimate consequence of 'thinking freely', to authority's judgment. In short, 'Obey!' Kant says, and never resist; only after that, you are free to use your reason as much as you want about whatever you want. This is, indeed, identical in function to obedience to God – unconditional obedience – though the content is different. The tension, though, is hard to miss.

If obedience to authority must remain inherently linked to faith, as all these considerations suggest, the question that faced modern thinkers was about whether authority can ever be justified in the Enlightenment's conception. In response, Arendt says, the modern age "not only challenged one or another form of authority in different spheres of life but caused *the whole concept of authority to lose its validity altogether*" (1968: 104, emphasis added). Mark Lilla writes: "by attacking Christian political theology and denying its legitimacy, the new [Enlightenment] philosophy simultaneously challenged the basic principles on which authority had been justified in most societies in history" (Lilla, 2007: 5). Enlightenment thought, which considered faith "the continual suicide of reason" (Nietzsche, 2008: 60), tried to do away with precisely this mystical aspect, the requirement of faith. Consequently, it rendered the obedience relationship very difficult

to conceptualize. Gadamer explains: "on the basis of [the Enlightenment's] concept of reason and freedom, the concept of authority could be seen as diametrically opposed to reason and freedom: to be in fact blind obedience" (2004: 280-1).

The discussion on the legitimacy of the modern age that Gadamer and Arendt weighed in upon with these statements was a major one. It started in the interwar period, and predictably intensified after the Second World War following the monstrous displays of what blind obedience is capable of under a malevolent political authority, and continued until the late 1960s. Though there is more to the background, it is not unfair to look for its beginning at Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology* (1922) and for its end to Blumenberg *Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966). Schmitt famously argued that all the significant concepts of the modern age are secularized theological concepts. Following the Second World War, Karl Löwith greatly expanded this argument in his *Meaning in History* (1949), arguing that, indeed, from the understanding of a linear history, to the salvation stories, to the pretensions of progress, all concepts espoused by the modern age were taken over from Christianity with some degree of change and altering of content. Even the story Marxism tells, Löwith argued, is nothing other than the story of Christianity retold. The modern age, to Löwith, was "crucially illegitimate" precisely because its arguments were those which it claimed to have made a radical break with; under the glossy face of the Enlightenment, Löwith found exactly what the Enlightenment rejected.

Blumenberg's work was a response to these arguments in general and to Löwith in particular. He underlined the massive conceptual shift that occurred with the Enlightenment and noted, for instance, that progress is a concept inextricable from agency. Blumenberg's argument was a compromise between the radical Enlightenment position which championed a full break with the past and the arguments by Schmitt and Löwith which saw in the Enlightenment the same

old wine in different bottles. There was no radical break but a continuum; Christianity was an inescapable part of that continuum and forever a part of the legacy which brought forth Enlightenment concepts and practices. This recognition of the continuity also mandated accepting that the Enlightenment has indeed reoccupied some of the key positions of pre-Enlightenment thought – from Blumenberg's perspective this was inescapable. Christianity provided answers to human concerns and occupied positions in all discussions central to life; the Enlightenment had to respond to the same concerns. Blumenberg noted, most remarkably, that in this continuity, totally heterogeneous content can take on identical functions.

This diagnosis of Blumenberg's – different content fulfilling the same function – indeed applies to a number of key concepts that transitioned from Christianity to the Enlightenment: I already noted Huemer's take on authority; as well as Kant's severance of obedience and use of reason. Another great example to precisely this argument is the concept of legitimacy. Consider, in light of these discussions, Max Weber's well-known view of three different types of authority with three corresponding forms of legitimation. Lukes explains that Weber "basically saw the principles of legitimation (especially democratic ones) as 'myths' injected into the masses by elites" (Lukes, 1987:64).[13] Weber sees in different legitimacies a "generally observable need of any power ... to justify itself" (Habermas, 1997: 97). This is probably why, despite the unrivalled importance of his sociology of domination and the three ideal types of legitimate authority (the charismatic, the traditional and the legal-rational[14]), Weber does not asks 'when and why do we obey?' Nor does

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[13] Weber differs from Foucault by perceiving power as the tool of the elites who consciously invent stories to justify their rule rather than themselves being products of the systems that produced these myths.

[14] To briefly summarize these types: in charismatic authority, built on the force of a leader's personality who embodies and represents the legitimacy of his regime, allegiance as well as obedience is given to the leader supposedly endowed with great - if not supernatural - qualities. The second, traditional, type of authority relies on customs, traditions and conventions that represent and constitute the legitimacy. Here obedience is given to the order of things perceived as sanctified and ideally unchanging. The last type, the rational legal authority draws its

he question whether there is any difference in degree or in kind in the legitimations provided by the three types. This is also probably why he focuses on "the beliefs that legitimate authority" and almost completely neglects "to conceptualize systematically the structural conditions that give rise to it" (Blau, 1963: 316). Consequently, despite fully recognizing the link between obedience and authority and explicitly arguing that different forms of obedience go along with different forms of authority, Weber does not actually differentiate between these different forms beyond pointing at their different connections. This is precisely the example of heterogeneous content achieving an identical function: obedience.

To replace faith, and fulfill its function, the Enlightenment had little to offer. The first replacement was to gradually shift that belief in the institution: from God and church to, first, the person of the king as God's lieutenant and then the institution of the state. Indeed, even after the English Civil War, belief persisted that the King can cure most common illnesses and some of the serious ones by simply touching the sick person (Hill, 2002). This is a process I call the deification of the state in which the institution and person of the state gradually cannibalizes qualities belonging to the religious realm. I will deal with it more substantially below. The second replacement for faith was the belief in the individual, which demonstrated itself in both political relevant and irrelevant ways. The former can be observed with ease in all the normative assumptions underlying modern democracies – such as the individual's rationality, autonomy, and so on. The latter found an expression in the 'inner freedom', a concept carefully crafted to pacify

legitimacy from a set of universally binding legal/legalized rules that are accepted as rational. Practically, obedience is given to leaders but in theory allegiance is to a set of uniform principles embodying the legitimacy of the system that is relatively more open to change after the dictates of reason (Weber, 1978:213-5).

the individual and direct her potential resistance towards an 'inner disagreement' preserving obedience.

2.3.   Habitual Obedience, and Freedom to Disobey

Numerous authors argue that subjects enjoy complete freedom to obey or disobey authorities. This claim is particularly prevalent in the democratic consent theory. Below I elaborate this particular claim. Although the freedom to disobey is not completely illusory – as is evidenced by thousands upon thousands of instances of disobedience – there is still much to qualify this freedom.

Despite his belief in the somewhat mythical quality of legitimacy, Weber nevertheless places the responsibility for the type of authority-obedience relationship squarely on those "who are bound to obedience": "the quality of the[ir] motives largely determines the type of domination" (1978: 213-4).[15] Indeed, many before him – like La Boétie and Hume above – likewise pointed to obedient subjects as the primary authors of their predicament. Simmel provides the reason why: "even in the most oppressive and cruel cases of subordination, there is still considerable measure of personal freedom. We merely do not become aware of it, because its manifestation would entail sacrifices which we usually never think of taking upon ourselves". The condition for submission, Simmel thinks, is "our desire to escape from the threatened punishment or from other consequences of our disobedience" (Simmel, 1971: 97-98). This is much like Hobbes who sees a choice available in being robbed at gunpoint: one can refuse to cooperate and choose to suffer the consequences.

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[15] Weber defines domination as "the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed" and uses it interchangeably with authority. See, for example, chapter 1; 16 (1978: 59), chapter 3;1 (1978: 212).

Marcuse sees another layer at play, mainly because he addresses the issue in the context of contemporary capitalism. He qualifies Simmel's 'awareness of personal freedom': "all liberation depends on the consciousness of servitude" (1991:7). Though Marcuse looks at another manifestation of unfreedom, this connection he draws – between awareness of oppression and consequent liberation – remains key in linking my discussion of freedom to the creation of another, politically irrelevant form of freedom. For Marcuse, false needs and created satisfactions induce in the individual a shared sense of comfort and habitual acceptance of 'what is' that largely obfuscates servitude; the emergence of this consciousness is linked to the replacement of these false needs and numbing satisfactions. The subject's unfreedom is hidden with objects and false needs, the satisfaction of which brings a false sense of achievement without in any real way altering the situation. Marcuse's point is expectedly materialistic and draws from the Marxist conception of false consciousness. There are, however, other venues which follow from these analyses which I follow.

Marcuse's argument – alongside Pateman's above – also counters democratic consent theory. Many contemporary political theorists often argue, implicitly as well as explicitly, that disobedience is expected, justified and should even be encouraged in regimes of an authoritarian, repressive nature, but they insist that democracies are different. In *Democracy and Disobedience,* Peter Singer quotes T. H. Green: "in a country ... with settled methods of enacting and repealing laws, the answer of common sense is simple and sufficient [to the problem of disobedience]. He should do all he can by legal methods to get the command cancelled, but till it is cancelled, he should conform to it" (1974: 2). It is immediately noticeable that, for all intents and purposes, Green's statement effectually qualifies Kant's initial 'argue but obey' to apply only to democratic governments.

In doing so, Green argues our obligations to obey laws of a political system are vitally altered if that system is a democracy: unlike other systems democracies provide citizens with other recourses to deal with laws they perceive to be unjust or against the common good. In theory, in democracies where citizens are free to express their opinions, civil disobedience, protests, conscientious objections, boycotts and the like are available to all citizens. So, Green's explicit appeal to common sense is not accidental. Indeed, in problematizing political obligation in liberal democracies, Pateman describes the widespread acceptance on the subject: "no such problems exist"; in fact, even "to suggest that a general problem may exist shows only that one is philosophically confused" (1979: 1). Democracies are, accordingly, open systems easily penetrated by all participants; non-participation, in turn, is largely a matter of personal choice and cannot be taken as an indication of a systemic or systematic problem (Almond and Verba, 1963; Dahl, 1961).

When it comes to contemporary democracies, this conception is far from the truth.[16] As Gaventa amply demonstrates, in contemporary democracies, just like in any other system, power still possesses an unrivalled ability in "shaping the perceptions of the powerless" (Gaventa, 1980: ix). Indeed, he argues, "power works to develop and maintain the quiescence of the powerless" (Gaventa, 1980: vi-vii). Questioning the creation of deceptive liberties as "a powerful instrument of domination", Marcuse describes how advanced industrial societies shape and reformulate the descriptions of freedom, free choice and liberty (1991: 7); Brown argues that "the problem Marcuse diagnosed has expanded from capitalism to liberal democracy," and tracks the neo-liberal

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[16] Already by 1869 J. S. Mill diagnosed the gap between theory and practice: "It was now perceived that such phrases as 'self-government,' and 'the power of the people over themselves,' do not express the true state of the case. The 'people' who exercise the power are not always the same people with those over whom it is exercised; and the 'self-government' spoken of is not the government of each by himself, but of each by all the rest" (2008: 7).

political rationality's de-politicization and eventual obfuscation of certain social and economic issues in the US as "both freedom and equality have been redefined by neoliberalism" (2005: 57). Zygmunt Baumann, in *Wasted Lives*, shows the cost of non-participation to the market game is a loss of dignity, loss of control and even loss of self. He asks why the rejects of the system should "respect the rules of the political-democratic game" when they themselves are so blatantly ignored (2008: 13). Pateman's arguments on that point, mentioned above, only add to these criticisms.

Various critical approaches, then, draw a picture of existing liberal democracies that indicates problems with obedience and authority within them: certain groups, unable to introduce their grievances to the political arena, and sometimes even unable to find the language to articulate them, often end up adopting the language of the powerful and are socialized in the roles cut out for them as powerless, perpetually bound to a system they are taught to be without alternative. They are locked, in Gaventa's useful formulation, in "routines of non-challenge which require no particular action on the part of the powerholders to be maintained" (1980: 255). Accordingly, as political systems, current Western democracies are certainly not exceptions when it comes to the generation of large groups of disenfranchised citizens whose submission to the system is either out of habit, as a consequence of power acting on them – as described by Lukes – or, simply an acceptance that there is nothing much they could do about it – as described by Gaventa.

That being said, there is much that addresses these problems in certain contemporary theories of democracy which interpret and re-elaborate some Kantian ideas mentioned here critically. I have in mind, here, deliberative democratic egalitarians, radical democrats, and pragmatic democrats whose theories describe democratic ideals unburdened by such systemic inequalities and asymmetries. Indeed, even some philosophical anarchists find much in Kant that can be leveraged for fairer, more just political systems much closer to 'true' democracies than

current practices. They suggest, at least in theory, possibilities where the glaring inequalities that plague our systems are not consequences of democratic practices but, to the contrary, the lack of their full realization and application. Pateman – herself a democratic theorist – provides an exemplary formulation of this stance: "liberal democratic societies are in origin, and remain today in institutional form and ideology, essentially *liberal* societies. Their one democratic element was introduced when universal suffrage was guaranteed" (1979: 5). More recently, Douglas Lummis substantively expanded this idea, making a critical case for distinguishing true democracies from the contemporary liberal usage of the word (1997). As recently as 2018, seven democratic theorists made an impassioned plea that the current challenges global democracies are facing mandates its reimagination away from the "liberal representative version" which not only failed to deliver (The Conversation, 2018).[17]

If one pays attention to the habitual – unthinking – nature of obedience, my concern with the problematical aspects of obedience are brought into sharp focus. It is largely because this aspect is ignored that an overwhelming portion of the studies on obedience miss out on one of the most central and interesting pre-modern thinkers to tackle the problem: the little-known French philosopher Étienne de La Boétie, whose insights on obedience are truly remarkable. Some historians and political theorists (such as Harold Laski) make brief mention of him because his seminal work *The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, written in 1552-3, was picked up by radical Huguenots who published it anonymously in an attempt to propel support against the crown. Yet,

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[17] This piece 'Democrracy has a future, if we rethink and remake it' was the first of a three part series, *Is Democracy Dead or Alive*, co-published by the journal Democratic Theory, Sydney Democratic Network, and The Conversation. I retrieved it from the latter (https://theconversation.com/democracy-has-a-future-if-we-rethink-and-remake-it-88239?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=facebookbutton)

even when he is quickly referred to in that context, he is often identified as 'Montaigne's friend', and a writer out of touch with his time (La Boétie, 2008:11). [18]

La Boétie problematized obedience like never before: "the fundamental political question is why do people obey a government. The answer is that they tend to enslave themselves, to let themselves be governed by tyrants" (2008:39). The tyrant, La Boétie notes, has nothing other than what obedient people provide him with: "How does he have any power over you except through you?" (2008:46). La Boétie's treatment contains numerous arguments future thinkers will incorporate: "Liberty is the natural condition of the people. Servitude, however, is fostered when people are raised in subjection." (2008:5). The primary reason for obedience to tyrants, for La Boétie, is not fear, indifference, or stupidity – though these play a part – but, most remarkably, "the bulwark of habit". Murray Rothbard summarizes his argument: "once the public experiences tyranny for a long time, it becomes inured, and heedless of the possibility of an alternative society" (2008:36). La Boétie is thus the first thinker who identifies obedience as a habitual, unquestioned act which becomes stronger over time with dire consequences: people become complicit in their own enslavement and start acting as tools of tyranny, lending it ears to spy with, arms to beat with, and feet to trample with. [19]

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[18] La Boétie was a very close friend of Montaigne. Montaigne's famous essay 'On Friendship' is dedicated to him. Due to his early death, it fell up to Montaigne to later defend his friend from allegations that his works was as revolutionary as the Huguenots made it to be. In his attempt to do that, Montaigne falsely argued that La Boétie wrote the text when he was 16, inadvertently contributing to the dismissal of his work as the fiery ramblings of a teenager.

[19] When La Boétie's work was picked up later, it was by the anarchists. Quotations from his works surface in Leo Tolstoy, Barthelemy de Ligt, and Gustav Landauer. Accordingly, later historians (such as Max Nettlau and E. V. Zenker) qualified him as part of the anarchist tradition. This is also inaccurate. La Boétie was not an anarchist; he was concerned with tyranny and not government which he deemed legitimate. Ironically he even advised the French crown on the proper methods to deal with the Huguenots (forced conversion or exile) (2008:15-30).

Perhaps closest to the French author on obedience stands none other than David Hume who, two centuries later, made a similar observation, emphasizing the habitual character of submission: "obedience or subjection becomes so familiar, that most men never make any enquiry about its origin or cause, more than about the principle of gravity, resistance, or the most universal laws of nature" (Hume, 2007: 236). To Hume, "nothing appears more surprising" than "the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers" (1998: 24). This is just like La Boétie who is surprised at people "obeying so easily and so willingly that one is led to say, on beholding such a situation, that this people has not so much lost its liberty as won its enslavement" (2008: 54).

Much better known in the identification of obedience as a habitual, unquestioned act fraught with perils is Arendt. Arendt's rightly famous reflections on Adolf Eichmann – one of the key organizers of the Holocaust – contextualizes unthinking obedience precisely in the context that pushed Milgram and others into inquiring: Eichmann was not the monster driven by an uncontainable hatred for his victims, in fact "it was difficult not to suspect that he was a clown" (1992:27). It was the "absence of thinking" that underlay Adolf Eichmann's obedience to "superior orders" and the accompanying state of thoughtlessness that "connected" him to "evil-doing" (1992: 123; 1978: 4-5). In this way, Arendt has revealed precisely how uncritical, unthinking obedience can be leveraged into a tool for a political authority bent on doing great harm and injury.

This last argument by Arendt is instrumental in capturing the point on freedom and habitual obedience: Eichmann, Arendt says, did not consciously choose at every turn to obey monstrous orders. He simply did as he was commanded in a thoughtless, automatic way, endeavoring to the best of his ability to satisfy his orders like a conscientious civil servant. When put on trial for his behavior, Arendt's work suggests, Eichmann showed every sign of confusion and inability to

explain his stance beyond clichés about obedience and duty. Arendt notes: "instead of saying: What horrible things I did to people!, the murderers would be able to say: What horrible things I had to watch in the pursuance of my duties, how heavily the task weighed upon my shoulders!" (1992:46). In this way obedience exalted them precisely because the orders they had to obey were so monstrous. They defined themselves not as independent agents being used for horrible purposes but as instruments at the service of authority; they have lost their selves and became extensions of authority.

Arendt offers another example demonstrating the level of this abandonment and loss of self to become one with authority: a female Nazi "'leader' who came to Bavaria" in 1944 and facing "frankly the prospect of defeat" said the Germans need not "worry because the Führer 'in his great goodness had prepared for the whole German people a mild death through gassing in case the war should have an unhappy end'" (1992:52). And, finally, an example of the carefully crafted 'inner world' of those who obeyed orders: almost all of the Nazis on trial (e.g., Dr. Otto Bradfisch of the Einsatzgruppen, Gauleiter Arthur Greiser of the Warthegau) kept insisting they "had always been 'inwardly opposed'"; their "'official soul' had carried out the crimes ... their 'private soul' had always been against them" (1992:75). I believe at least some of these people were sincere in their belief of a division between an inner world, that they managed to keep pure, and the external world where they followed the directions of their superiors to the best of their abilities.

But whether this was truly the case or whether these men lied is secondary to the reality: they believed that this was a valid argument to make. They clearly argued that they had an 'inner world' wherein they remained pure, which still matters in the face of the atrocities they had committed; furthermore, they thought others would be able to understand and sympathize with that condition. Even if their statements were untrue, the fact remained that they made them, hoping for

some understanding or, at least thinking that they would be understood. This is truly worth reemphasizing: 'in our inner world', those Nazis said, 'we were against it all.' They hid whatever arguments they had in their inner worlds and obeyed. It is not surprising after all that Eichmann thought, very erroneously of course, that Kant would have approved of his behavior. In duty and obedience he sacrificed his 'inner world' and was thus, in his mind, worthy of recognition. Though Kant most certainly would not have, Luther would have approved – and indeed *did* approve – of such selfless dedication to orders while preserving the purity of one's inner world.

3.   Conclusion

The Enlightenment's attack on the pre-modern took a particular form when it comes to the conceptions of concepts constitutive of authority. Though different content continued to fulfill the same function, this was not the case with all parts. Of authority, legitimacy, faith, and force, only the last was untouched. While force remained, as always, at the heart of authority, spearheading the formation of new authorities and its last resort, the others had gone through substantial changes. For legitimacy, the replacing of content has not affected the function dramatically; different types of legitimacies continued to act in the same manner in the service of different authorities.

The central part of the modern relationship of obedience to state authority that has changed the most and with dramatic consequences is faith. It was replaced with two very dramatic consequences. First: faith in God's will to order the things precisely as they are, faith in Kings acting as God's lieutenants, was replaced by a belief in the individual's properties: rights, freedoms, autonomy, dignity. The politically irrelevant 'inner world' became the powerless individual's refuge against the all-powerful authority. Subjects devoid of political power and reach, could thus disagree vehemently in their inner worlds and still act as tools in the service of authority for whatever ends required. Moreover, where these rights were recognized and respected,

it was again by the hand of the political authority: laws and institutions to ensure and guarantee the individual's rights. In recognition of her rights, the individual was further bound to the state; in powerlessness she sought refuge in the inner world and solipsism.

Second, faith in God gradually shifted towards the state. On the normative plane God first hid behind the person of the King, and then behind 'the person by fiction' which was the institution of governance. On the institutional level, meanwhile, the Mortal God, or the God on Earth, has incrementally acquired in its body the mechanisms of control initially developed and perfected by religion. Gorski quotes from Heinz Schilling: "Through domestic counseling (*Hausbesuche*), church visitations, ecclesiastical discipline, church discipline and episcopal justice (*Episkopalgerichtsbarkeit*), they [the Lutheran pastors and Calvinist elders] monitored and disciplined everyday life-conduct, penetrating into the last house in the most isolated little village'" (1999:159). This process of faith's gradual shift towards the state, I call the deification of the state – the state's taking over not just the instruments and tools of the Church but also the qualities of God from whence these instruments and tools were once legitimized.

Chapter 3: Revolution and Community: The Popular Quest for Political Autonomy

1.   Introduction

In 1524-1525, following decades of relatively minor uprisings, rebellions and struggles, approximately 300,000 'common men' rose up against their lords in the popular uprising that has been mistakenly called 'The German Peasants' War of 1525'.[20] This rebellion was unparalleled in the Middle Ages in its intensity, scale, scope and aims: fueled also by the epistemic breach provided by the Reformation, thousands of communities that had never before broken through their political boundaries rose up collectively to revolutionize the entire order of feudal domination. For nearly a full year almost all cities and villages of southern Germany and many more beyond were aflame with revolutionary fervor.[21] Indeed, except for the obvious distinction of failing, the 1525 uprising is arguably second only to the much later French Revolution in its significance to European history (Blickle, 1979; 1981; 1992; 1997; 1998; Blickle et al., 1984; Cohn, 1979; Sabean, 1972; Scribner & Benecke, 1979; Scott, 1991; Bak, 1976; Scott & Scribner, 1991). By the time the army of the *Swabian League* – the vastly powerful lords' alliance – took the field, dozens of cities from Frankfurt to Nuremberg to Memmingen and thousands of towns

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[20] I am refraining from using the traditional name "The German Peasants' War of 1525" as "not a single word in [it] is now thought to be accurate" (Blickle, 1981: xi). The uprising was not constrained to German-speaking lands but spread to France to the West and as far as Russia to the East. The rebellions started in April 1524 (in Stuhlingen, Black Forest) and fully concluded only by late 1526 though lordly retaliations against villages continued for several years and specific individuals were hunted for decades. Most important, it was joined not only by peasants, farmers and lower class burghers but people from all walks of life including knights and lesser nobles. In fact, 1525 is the *only time in history* a 'peasant' uprising fielded a heavy cavalry division – Florian Geyer's Black Company – populated by nobles and knights. The rebels also "did not see their uprising as one of just peasants" (Blickle, 1981: 122). Therefore, I use instead 'The Revolution of the Common Man' suggested by Peter Blickle, one of the foremost historians of 1525.

[21] I stick to the standing practice of using 'Germany' in relation to the revolt area as the majority of rebels were German-speaking. The reality, however, is more complicated: "the term 'German' can only be retained as a rough, rule-of-thumb designation" (Scott and Scribner, 1991: 3) since the revolts spread far and wide to present day Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, France, and numerous Italian-speaking communities (up to the Venetian border) drawing their lords alongside to the conflict.

and villages were controlled by the revolutionaries. Where rebel armies took control, parliaments and forums sprung up; villages and towns elected their chiefs, judges, priests, and even bishops; armies elected their leaders, officers, and banner bearers; city governments and councils were restructured on deliberative and representative principles, and property rights recast in communal terms. The privileges and special rights of nobility and clergy were supplanted with universal legal equality now extended to the burghers and the peasants. Political authority was displaced and rematerialized in communities which were re-imagined in stark contrast with the standing feudal world as self-governing, self-taxing, autonomous political associations established on popular interpretations of the Christian principles of common good, equality and brotherly love. The political principles of the Revolution consistently translated into democratic policies and values, embodying consent of the governed, universal equality before the law and political rights and widespread economic justice.

If the rebels' attempt to reinterpret and radically redefine all major aspects of social, political, religious, and economic existence was a revolution, as I believe it was, then the eventual response from the lords, when it came, was nothing short of a counter-revolution with remarkably long-lasting effects. The revolution did not fail so much as it was defeated in war. Following the violent defeat of the communities, the counter-revolution, designed to prevent the recurrence of similar acts of disobedience, succeeded in fundamentally shaping political culture and practices, altering the socio-political foundations from which the absolutist European state was to emerge later on. In short, the counter-revolution reshaped the political landscape and radically redesigned the relationship between political authorities and the subjects beneath them.

The changes brought about by the counter-revolution can be broadly characterized by two intertwined factors: a new conception of subjects and a new mode of governance. The new subject

brought forth by the counter-revolution was individuated to the point of isolation from the political community he was embedded within, alone vis-à-vis an all-powerful political authority, and obedient. The individual subject, as conceived by the counter-revolution, contributed to the rapid expansion of political authorities. The new mode of governance, a hierarchical, centralized political authority, capitalized on and furthered the ongoing centralization of political authority at the expense of the defeated communal modes of political organization. Though part of a historical continuity, these characteristics were nevertheless tailored explicitly to counteract what the religious and secular authorities of the day perceived as the main strengths of the revolutionary uprising: the communities (*Gemeinden*) which were the primary agents of the revolution, and the Communal Reformation (*Gemeindereformation*: the popular interpretation of the Reformation) which initially fueled it. To that end Lutheran and Catholic lords acted in cohesion to hastily enact a series of political, legal and socio-economic measures essentially reconstituting the threatened apparatus of feudal domination into an early form of absolutism.

Maybe even more important were Martin Luther's notions of Christian freedom and human agency, key aspects of which the Reformer elaborated *in direct response* to the uprising, and which were embraced by the traumatized lords and perpetuated by the counter-revolution of 1525. The revolution had a profound formative effect on Luther's political thought and theory. One of Luther's most famous and most influential tracts, *De servo arbitrio* (On the Bondage of the Will), was written in 1525 during the revolution and published in December of that year, as the last of the rebel armies were suppressed. This tract is where Luther's thoughts on human freedom and agency took their definitive shape, as Luther himself repeatedly stressed until the end of his life. Luther argued here for man's inescapable captivity to sin and the inevitability of his slavery –

either to Satan or to God.[22] Indeed, the two tracts Luther produced in reaction to the revolution in 1525 crystallize the political applications of Lutheran theology concerning man's agency and freedom. Aspects of his political thought which dictated that Christians were to "suffer patiently all the tyranny [imposed] on them in their bodies and property" (Skinner, 1978: 70) were fleshed out clearly in 1525 and the reformer emerged as one of the chief actors in the revolution's subjugation. The political applications of Luther's theology, I hope to demonstrate below, are clear in his very strong condemnation of the revolution.

Luther transplanted into politics the Protestant principle of individuality and the rejection of all mediators between God and the individual. These developments coincided with the lords' need to break up political communities which had entrenched resistance to their rule and rejected expansions of centralized, hierarchical political authorities. The Lutheran individual, conceived in politics, resulted in isolated subjects left defenseless against all-powerful political authorities which were taken as direct extensions of God's will. The ideal Christian subjects described by Luther were, in explicit contradistinction to the communities which were the agents of the revolution, individuals devoid of all communal rights, individuals who were told to cherish the suffering and oppression visited upon them in silent submission. These principles and the Lutheran understanding of individual subjects constituted in perpetual, unconditional and unquestioned obedience to political authorities were preached by very prominent reformers such as John Calvin in Geneva, William Tyndale in England, Olaus Petri in Sweden and Hans Tausen in Denmark, to great political effect.

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[22] "Nevertheless, even when directed by the Spirit of God, men remained 'slaves and captives', although this time of God's immediate spiritual power." (Overhoff, 1997: 616)

The new socio-political and juridical measures enacted by the lords and Luther's counter-revolutionary norms of political behavior radically altered the political culture of the age. Together, they were instrumental in terminating many major forms of political, legal and economic communal existence including the centuries-old traditions of communal rights to representation, access to commons and communal political agency. As such, the revolution and the counter-revolution inhabit a point of major significance when the historical trajectory of continuous contestation over political authority and rights came to the fore in an explosive, and later decisive, way. This contestation no doubt included a vibrant conflict over meaning; the acts and understandings associated with certain concepts which regulated, for the Christians of the late Middle Age Germany, social life and relations with authorities.

Walter Ullman points to "two fundamentally different, mutually exclusive, legal and governmental principles in the Middle Ages, the one theocratic and descending, the other populistic and ascending" (Rublack, 1984: 31). The latter principle, he believes, argued for a "legally based government … ultimately legitimized by the populace and that purely as a matter of convenience, authority is invested in particular persons for specified periods of time" (Rublack, 1984: 31). In the conflict between different conceptions and forms of political existence which for centuries animated the European political landscape, the counter-revolution dramatically strengthened the first, embodied in hierarchical centralized authorities, at the expense of the second, embodied in autonomous communities.

The political imagination of the Revolution, the language it deployed and the revolutionary project at large starkly reflected, most clearly in its brief moment of glory, the tradition of communalism from whence its participants hailed, and the egalitarian, democratic understandings of political authority, rights and economic relations which derive from that tradition. With the

counter-revolution the lords equipped themselves with all the tools – normative, socio-political, economic and juridical – they needed to deliver a major blow to communalism and strongly diminish the political powers and reach of communities which were for decades the most energetic sites of resistance to the expansion of increasingly centralizing authorities. Below, I also attempt to illustrate in conflict these competing beliefs, actions and interpretations as they came to life in the alternative worlds they built.

My general argument is that, in the foundational aspects of early-modern political authorities, and consequently also of the later absolutist states, we find the *clear goal of normatively and structurally conditioning subjects into perpetual obedience*. What emerged from the combination of Lutheran principles of political authority and the counter-revolutionary push of the lords were the seeds of the *gradual deification of political authority*. The counter-revolution succeeded in shifting the conception of obedience to political authority from a communal promise negotiated collectively, that could have been and occasionally was withdrawn, to an individual obligation always already assumed to be owed to the political authority, and understood as a proxy of God. Put otherwise: the counter-revolution transformed communal negotiation for political obedience into individual political obligation.

The Lutheran principle of individualism which removed all mediators between God and the individual, applied to politics in response to the revolution, also removed all rights and support structures of the individual vis-à-vis the political authority. Subjects were left isolated and right-less before increasingly powerful political authorities from 1525 to the 1550s when the Supreme Court of the Empire decided on an individual's right to sue his lord and, more substantially, the 1560s when rights for individuals emerged for the first time, and rather weakly, in the shape of 'citizen's rights' in free Imperial cities (Skinner & Strath, 2003), This new, obedient subject, built

on the defeat of the communities and the victory of the centralizing authorities, was to become a constituent part of the state on the presumption of obedience: it was conceived of as individuated, silenced and solitary against an increasingly strong political authority, precisely because the uprising that immediately preceded was one by autonomous communities with clear and explicit demands for a new world.

Though the scholarship on them is far from complete, neither the world-historic importance of the Reformation, nor Luther's role as "a forerunner of the modern theory of state" (Waring, 1968: iii) nor his political theory's "vital role in helping to legitimate the emerging absolutist monarchies of northern Europe" (Skinner, 1978: 73) are novel insights. What is remarkable, and what my work in this and the following chapter speaks to, is that the 1525 revolution, "*the* largest mass movement in Europe before the French Revolution" (Sreenivasan, 2001: 30, emphasis original), remains under theorized, even in the most meticulously researched studies. As a consequence, we have failed to recognize the importance of the changes wrought by the reactions to that popular uprising.[23] Similarly, the considerable impact of the revolution on Luther's thought is almost completely overlooked. An explanation for these most puzzling omissions may be informed by Foucault's conception of 'subjugated knowledges,' which points to truths that have been extinguished through historical practice, and discourses that have been silenced. Indeed, one of the far-reaching effects of the counter-revolution was the suppression of the peasant memory and the obfuscation of the remarkable degree of ideological sophistication and political agency

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[23] Some studies on the Reformation, such as Euan Cameron's great work *The European Reformation* (2012), briefly mention the 1525 uprising because they erroneously qualify it as a religious revolt before quickly dismissing it. Lutheran scholarship rarely acknowledges the rebellion despite it providing context for two of his less well-known works: *An Admonition to Peace: a Reply to the Twelve Articles of the Peasants of Swabia* and the later *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*, both written during and in response to the uprising. Even the most extensive histories of political thought, such as Quentin Skinner's *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (1978), almost completely fail to mention the uprising and, consequently, the counter-revolution that followed.

deployed by the common men in the collective struggle for popular autonomy and communalism against noble authoritarianism.

The rediscovery by scholars of this momentous event dates, with one notable exception (see below), to after the Second World War and it has led, in the last two decades, to "a widely accepted view [among historians] that traces the *cooperation between state power and reformers to their response to the Peasants' War of 1524/5*" (Ocker, 2006: 8-9, emphasis added). Yet the even these accounts of the rise of the European (absolutist) state have largely missed the central reason for this cooperation and, consequently, the purposeful agency behind the historical shifts in governmental structures and norms that followed the Reformation. I argue here that the gradual spread of Lutheran principles in governance was not pacific, nor was it largely motivated – as it is often argued – by materialistic concerns of the lords looking to secularize the immense wealth of the church. It was an *explicit response* to the Revolution of the Common Man which almost overthrew the entire feudal world, that aspects of Lutheran thought were developed and politico-legal structures specifically tailored, adjusted and combined together to prevent similar acts of disobedience in the future. For the lords, the authoritarian aspects of Lutheran political thought were much more than a happy side effect of taking over church powers and properties; it was, in the area of the revolution at Luther's time, a central motivation.

Besides the arguments advanced above, this chapter of the dissertation serves another central goal for the larger study: the identification, as part of a historical dialectic of continuous conflict, of alternative interpretations of the concepts at work in the larger picture I attempt to reveal. These are: alternative and rival conceptions of political authority; legitimacy; freedom and political agency; rights; and of course, obedience to authorities. The Revolution of the Common Men brings to the forefront, in explicit and pronounced ways, all these and more as they are

contested and fought over. With the revolution and the counter-revolution we can see revealed these naturally obfuscated concepts in relatively fixed constellations attached to particular political agendas, structures and behavior while they shift back and forth along the spectrum between communally based, egalitarian modes of political existence and hierarchical, authoritarian interpretations of political organization.[24] Incidentally, it is precisely because this case sets the stage for the larger study and sets in relief both the central conflict and the concepts contested by sides that it is spread over two chapters: the Revolution of the Common Man with its communal, democratic norms and structures including economic democracy; and the counter-revolution of the lords which redeployed the political structures of noble authoritarianism and norms of submission.

I start by discussing the historical silencing of the Revolution's narratives, and outline the continuity of discursive practices from Martin Luther onwards that discredited and obfuscated the extraordinary agency of the common men in the struggle for communal political autonomy. I then move on to the Revolution, covering its manifesto, its interpretation of the central concepts and the world it has built in the socio-political structures installed during its victory. I also attempt to illustrate the revolution's inextricable connection to the Reformation and the role played in the

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[24] A note of caution: situating medieval political life and thought vis-à-vis contemporary life and political theory is a considerable challenge. It is at the same time discovery, interpretation and translation. Above and beyond the terminological problems, the use of modern concepts is both inescapable and inadequate to fully reflect their medieval counterparts (Höfert, 2003: 65). Further complicating their understanding, many terms are impossible to discuss in isolation from each other, presenting themselves instead as interrelated and even entangled continuities that stretch over time. The absence of clear distinctions between many medieval, early modern and modern concepts led Bettina Koch (2005) to conclude "that the categories of 'medieval' and 'modern' cannot be completely useful except as a sort of shorthand" (Von Heyking, 2006: 356). While medieval elements are ever present in modern thought, medieval thought and practice are replete with what Max Weber identifies as "rational elements in pre-modern societies" (Höfert, 2003: 68). Moreover there are certain overlaps within and between some central concepts: such as the modern understandings of freedom, law, and the state (Ryan, 2003: 51) or the medieval conceptualizations of law, tradition, and religion. In wrestling with these difficulties I have tried to capture and reflect the concepts as they were understood at the time by *those who used them*.

uprising by this new understanding of the world. The chapter concludes with an account of the defeat of the common men and the start of the counter-revolution.

2.   Silencing and Dismissal

If the revolution of the common men was indeed as central as to be the "most important mass uprising in premodern Europe" (Blickle, 1992: 12), "whose significance can be compared with that of the English Civil War or the French and Russian Revolutions" (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 1), how can we explain its absence, until the late 20th century, from almost all accounts of the European state formation and histories of political ideas? For instance, despite his interest in both war and peasant resistance moments, when Charles Tilly argues that the Reformation "established extensive state control over the religious apparatus and close cooperation between clergy and lay officials in local administration" (1990: 61), he completely misses what Reformation scholar Berndt Hamm later points at: it is "*only following the Peasants' War*" that "original ideas of spiritually justified lay Christianity give way to a new theological and practical stress on the divinely legitimated secular office to care for the ordering of the church" (2004: 218-9). In other words, Tilly misses a central causal relationship between the revolution, counter-revolution, and emergence of the early modern state I point to here.

Francis Oakley's 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520-1550' in the *Cambridge History of Political Thought* does not even mention the uprising despite its nigh exhaustive treatment of Luther's political thought and theology. Similarly, Quentin Skinner, who completely misses the uprising, remains puzzled by the seeming lack of material gains made by the German lords who converted to Lutheranism. Unable to identify the reason, Skinner ends up assuming that German princes simply had less success than their counterparts elsewhere in appropriating church

wealth and resources (1978: 63).[25] Christopher Ocker disagrees: for the reformed princes of Luther's generation "secularization [of church properties]… was neither the stated ambition nor the assured outcome" (Ocker, 2006: 8).[26] Indeed, though the material incentives were not negligible – and some lords did make considerable gains – for the lords of the land traumatized by the largest uprising to date, it was the authoritarian aspects of Lutheran theology that proved invaluable in securing and extending their power to previously unknown levels. Unlike most other places German princes were far less motivated by the material appeal of converting to Lutheran faith. Totally omitting the uprising and thus missing the fact that Luther "tried to sell his movement as preventive medicine against revolution" (Blickle, 1981: xxii) Skinner remains unable to make sense of the lords' motives and finally dismisses "the question of motivation" as "not a crucial one" (1978: 64). I argue to the contrary: the question of motivation was central to the lords and it points squarely at the ignored revolution.

Likewise, up until today, the remarkable turn in the principles and practices of governance that made up the building blocks of the later territorial, absolutist states is largely explained by a general, pacifically unfolding turn in governance towards Lutheran principles. Skinner, Oakley and many others clearly recognize the stunning speed with which, in less than two decades, the Protestant Reformation dramatically reshaped the political thought and the principles of governance with it. Here also, I argue, is a considerable gap which can only be filled with the

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[25] It must be noted that in many countries *other than German lands* a major appeal of Lutheranism for the princes was the material benefits. In Sweden, Denmark, England, parts of France and elsewhere conversion brought forth secularization of monastic lands, transfer of fiscal powers and receipt of tithes besides a dramatic curtailing of papal powers (Skinner, 1978: 60-65). For German cities and princes the conversion "was unquestionably a more popular and less cynical process" (Skinner, 1978: 62).

[26] The question of the confiscation of church property and resources is far more complicated than I can deal with here. Contrary to general perception "no question of church property can be confined within a narrow chronology of reform. It was an ancient problem" (Ocker, 2012: 7). For my purposes it suffices to say that the process of redistributing church property has been far more complicated and slower in German lands than practically anywhere else and, in certain places, took up to the 18th century.

recognition of the uprising as a genuine revolution and the response by the lords in embracing Lutheranism, with its "enhancement in status of the temporal authority and enormous emphasis on its claims to loyalty and obedience," (Oakley, 1991:191) as part of a counter-revolution. Indeed it was *during* the 1525 rebellion, as their castles fell, monasteries were looted and higher nobility captured, that the Catholic and Lutheran lords of the land acted in unison and decided that appointing priests was now a ruler's responsibility: "Every ruler ought to take care to see that the parishes are supplied with pious, honorable priests who (...) admonish subjects to act with brotherly love, to uphold the honor of God, and *to obey the secular ruler*" (Blickle, 1981: 184, emphasis added). Rightly wary of the evangelical preachers of the Communal Reformation, which justified and added the language of the divine to the uprising's arsenal, the lords' assumption of that responsibility was bloody and violent.

The ultimate result of these principles unifying ecclesiastical and secular authorities is well known. In Geneva, Calvin "faced the same basic issue: how to incorporate religious reformation that preached increase of individual freedom with political developments that brought increase in the sovereignty of the Genevan city-state" (Sessions, 1968: x). A century before Thomas Hobbes wrote *Leviathan*, Geneva bestowed its laymen city officials with extensive religious powers as elders of the church and its religious officials with top level administrative capacities. Calvinist Geneva effectively united ecclesiastical and temporal authorities in the body of the city which, in the person of the mayor, "ultimately gained the power to excommunicate" as an administrative measure (Sessions, 1968: x), the image of Hobbes's Mortal God. To emphasize: though Calvin's

example has been relatively free of violent conflict, at the inception of the principles we witness here lies a revolution and a counter-revolution.[27]

Around the same time, in 1555, the Peace of Augsburg achieved a roughly similar result for a much larger territory: the famous principle '*cuius regio, eius religio*'[28] resulted in the unification of all authority in the person of the lord. Skinner notes that in the space of a decade, from the 1520s to the early 1530s, by "a series of simple moves – strikingly similar in each country," the Lutheran doctrine on the position of the church as subservient to the lord of the land "ceased to be treated as heresy, and came to be accepted as the basis of a new and official view of the proper relationship between ecclesiastical and political power" (1978: 81). Once more, Skinner ascribes this remarkable and widespread turn in principles of governance to material motivations of the lords, some of whom later failed to achieve these ends. I do not mean to dismiss material considerations or reduce all the consequences of the Reformation to various reactions to the 1525 Revolution. However, it is obvious that there are unmistakable connections and, consequently, a considerable omission that requires an explanation. How could Skinner, Tilly and many others have fully missed a revolution of such magnitude or, at best, ascribe it to a gross misunderstanding of higher ideals by the uneducated common men? How could they dismiss it as a mere inconvenience, a footnote in the history of Lutheran Reformation?

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[27] I will talk more about the Calvinist and Lutheran influences in Hobbes's work in the coming chapters.

[28] Roughly translated as 'whose region, his religion,' this principle meant that the religion of the people was dictated by the religion of their ruler. Obviously, this principle legitimized only Lutheranism and Catholicism, excluding – and sometimes severely persecuting – all other branches of the Reformation as heretical beliefs.

3.   Historical subjugation and rediscovery

Part of this explanation can be found, as I have already suggested, in the Foucauldian concept of subjugated knowledges. Owing to a combination of historical vicissitudes, mostly centered on the Reformation, and history written by the victors – in this case the lords' perspective – the revolution was demoted to one of the many religious uprisings and, as such, diminished as a misunderstanding of Luther's principles. I will briefly touch below on how this particular instance of history written from the monarch's gaze has affected the study of the revolution. But first I will expand on the Luther's central role in the subjugation of the revolution and the Lutheran Reformation's overshadowing of the revolution through the obfuscation of one of its central components: the Communal Reformation.

3.1.   The Communal Reformation and Luther

The partial account of what exactly was obscured and why lies primarily in the appreciation of the popular interpretation of the Reformation principles. The impulse to reform the Church, from its earliest inceptions in the 12th century onwards, was always a site of heated contestation which often turned violent.[29] The 16th century was no exception. Following Luther's launching of his Reformation in 1517, the widespread anticlericalism of the age, combined with a very popular demand across all levels of the German public to curb the political and economic powers of Rome and rediscover Christianity bereft of the corruption of the church, led to an immense proliferation

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[29] Of course attempts to reform the church date much earlier than the 12th century; there are clear accounts of coherent proposals for reforming certain practices and beliefs of the church as far back as the 7th and 8th centuries in the West and even earlier in the East. However, there is a particular historical tradition of reform embracing similar – if not identical – principles which Luther can be seen to be following: arguing for the individual's freedom from all mediators in his dealings with God and quest for salvation, including the pure-preaching of the Bible, championing voluntary poverty and shunning excessive displays of wealth by the church, and attacking the privileged socio-political role of the church in society. For instance, Peter Waldo of France in the 12th century, John Wycliffe of England in the 14th century and of course Germany's John Hus all championed positions very similar to Luther.

of reformative thought, today known as the period of 'wild growth' (*Wildwuchs*) where competing interpretations led to numerous break-away sects (Cameron, 2012; Blickle, 1992; 1997; Strauss, 1971). As is well known, an overwhelming number of these interpretations were branded heretical and hunted to extermination.

Despite the retroactive equation of the Reformation with Luther only, in its early years the Reformation was more of an uncontrolled combination of a multitude of different impulses, agendas and movements. Today these are aptly known as the storm years (*Sturmjahre*) of the Reformation when it was many-headed, unpredictable and difficult to control. At that time some of these alternative reformations were at least as much, if not more popular with different parts of society than what Luther had in mind. Of those, perhaps the most important was the *Gemeindereformation*, or, the Communal Reformation which united the promise of spiritual salvation with a promise of immediate, worldly emancipation through Christian freedom, equality and brotherhood. Rather than a major reformer at its head, it was embraced and championed by vast numbers of urban, rural and roaming preachers who spread its messages throughout. The Revolution of the Common Men, from its very inception, was inextricable from the Communal Reformation.

Luther's gaining full control over the course of the Reformation, which he duly steered towards the authorities, happened only through the counter-revolution. Indeed, the defeat of the common men "effectively put an end to the Communal Reformation and opened the way for a *Fürstenreformation*, a princes' or magistrates' Reformation" (Scott, 1991: 184). In the first-ever anthology of the Revolt in English (1968) Kyle Sessions, who seems to have had no concept of the Communal Reformation, timidly points at the discrepancy he detects between Luther's Reformation and the popular one:

> In the outcome of the revolt the Lutheran movement was seen to be diverted from the wide-ranging, popularly impelled reforming currents and borne into the still waters of conservative authorities. It even seemed that Luther's own role created the undertow that dragged the Reformation away from the crest of enthusiastic pressures to change things for the better. He proffered an alternatively compassionate, stern, and enraged face to the peasants, who turned henceforth in disillusionment away from him. *Lutheranism as an organized religion after 1525 moved steadily toward alliance with the established authorities which was completed in 1555*. (1968: viii-ix, emphasis added)

Though Sessions did not have the tools to make the connection at that point, it is noteworthy that 1525-6 also marks the end of the 'storm years' (*Sturmjahre*) of the Reformation.

It was the *Communal Reformation* which infused the uprising with a spirit unlike anything the past had to offer, providing through its reinterpretation of the axiomatic principle of God's presence in the world the ideal vessel for the rebels to re-constitute the world and achieve political emancipation. Effectively, with the Communal Reformation, the rebels availed their uprising of the revolutionary potential and ideological apparatus of the Reformation and gave new voice and vitality to existing social discontent. Ultimately, after generations of oppression, and eroding rights and freedoms, the peasants discovered, in the popular take of the new interpretation of the Bible and God's Word, new forms of freedom, equality[30], auto-taxation, representation and communal autonomy and property rights. Besides the great danger it posed to established political authorities, this interpretation of Christianity was anathema to Luther. Consequently, there was a major

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[30] It is imperative to qualify the 'equality' mentioned here. Above and beyond the larger structures at play, the myriad communities that were part of revolution had their own inequalities, their own internal power dynamics within which women were already subject to various layers of oppression. Of course, neither the presence of different levels of domination interwoven into each other nor the historical subjugation of women are today groundbreaking or even controversial arguments. However I believe they nevertheless require explicit acknowledgement. The collective political belonging in a German speaking community in early 16th century relied largely on two symbolic acts of arms-bearing and oath swearing, areas from which women were decidedly excluded. In other words, past their socio-economic subservience, the 'common men' were, indeed, men. For a conclusive treatment of gender dynamics before and during the revolution see Lyndal Roper, "'The Common Man', 'The Common Good', 'Common Women': Gender and Meaning in the German Reformation Commune," *Social History*, Vol 12, No 1 (Jan. 1987), pp.1-21: "Women were not even supposed to be in the open 'public' space where armed townsfolk assembled, (…) nor were they allowed to watch the swearing of the oath" (19).

movement on the part of the major reformers and established authorities to discredit and dismiss the revolution's take on Christianity. This effort succeeded remarkably well following the revolution's defeat.

The rediscovered God of the common men was about worldly fairness, justice and legitimate governance besides spiritual salvation. The Communal Reformation conquered the hearts and minds of people everywhere through this interpretation of Christianity, and thus posed an imminent threat to the feudal order. As important, it was in competition with Luther's theology in determining the fate of the Reformation and it was against everything he believed in and hoped to accomplish. Harro Höpfl notes Luther's "best known political doctrines are" his "hostility to rebellion and … endorsement of princely 'absolutism'" (2011: 720) and the Revolution was precisely this: a rebellion to end lordly authoritarianism.

On this point, there is consensus: the basic political principle of Reformation, "derived from Luther" was "the doctrine that all secular authority was derived from God and that rebellion was always wrong" (Thompson, 1984: 91). Indeed, Lutheran political thought held that "all existing political systems must be taken to form a part of God's providential design for the world" (Skinner, 1978: 67). To Luther faith in God mandated unconditional obedience to existing political authority. Put otherwise, while the Communal Reformation required assent of the governed and participation as conditions for the legitimacy of a Christian ruler, to Luther all political institutions were direct extensions of divine will on earth.

Luther thus emerged as the chief detractor of the rebel cause and, besides the lords, one of the main actors in its subjugation. It is worthwhile to underline once more that though Luther's resistance was certainly sincere it was not devoid of a degree of instrumentality: the popularity of the rebel cause meant for Luther a genuine danger of losing control of the Reformation. Indeed,

the defeat of the revolution proved central in cementing his place as the uncontested master of the Reformation. The forcible destruction of alternatives to Luther's Reformation climaxed with the revolution's defeat; by 1526 Luther was in an unrivalled position of power to have authorities eliminate or at least exile all his rivals and he took full advantage of that. Luther's availing his Reformation to the service of the authorities was also a major milestone in bringing about the end of the period of 'wild growth'.

What emerged after 1526 was an orderly and order-inspiring Reformation that was carried out by the territorial rulers, either under the direct theological guidance and superintendence of Luther or, at least, influenced by his principles of governance. From his seat in Wittenberg, Luther and Luther alone dictated faith and policy for decades. The impulse to reinterpret Christianity to revolutionize the world and emancipate mankind was thus narrowed to reforming the Church and bringing spiritual salvation to obedient individuals after their death. The initial drive, also found in early Luther, to let laymen determine local Church administration was fully abandoned and the reform was centered on bringing the churches under the complete control of the rulers of the land.

This particular unification of political authority in the person of the lord was a Lutheran formulation that found its final form in the Peace of Augsburg and, by the early 17th century, managed to turn "the established national churches simply" into "agents of the state" (Rokkan, 1999: 287). It is also noteworthy that this outcome lost Luther the entire area in which the revolution had occurred. As Sessions also notes (above) the overwhelming number of people who so passionately embraced the teachings of a Reformed Christianity turned from Luther and "the part actually hit by the Peasant's Revolt … remained overwhelmingly Catholic" (Lotz, 1968: 15).

3.2.   History from the victors' perspective

Following Luther's condemnation of the rebels, first as "drunk or out of their mind" (Luther, 1525a: 30), and later as "mad dogs" at the service of the devil who must be put down (Luther, 1525b: 40), historians for centuries uncritically reproduced a portrayal of the common men as wild, easily confused beasts who were simply fooled into misusing higher concepts beyond their comprehension rather than fully conscious political actors with their own agenda for a more just and fair system. Already by 1531 evangelical scholars were describing the peasants in the worst light. Humanist and one-time radical reformer Sebastian Franck writes:

> Rejecting all offers of mediation, the peasants scorned reason and moderation and turned even more violent as the authorities tried to compromise … Ask a peasant for something and you will see his belly swell; offer him a finger and he demands your hand. This is how it was with this rebellious, raving, and disorderly rabble. They brought on nothing but disruption, injustice, murder, robbery, tyranny, rape and all other wickedness (Sebastian Franck's '1531 Chronicle,' excerpted in Strauss, 1971: 166).

By the 1800s, a standard history of 1525 condemned the peasants as "arrogant," their grievances as "extravagant and exaggerated" and their demands as "strange and foreign" (Maurus Feyerabend, *Ottenbeuren Jachbucher* (1803), quoted in Sreenivasan, 2001: 58). As we will see, the only part of society who found the peasants' demands strange and foreign were the lords. Thus, a long-standing historical tradition, still dominant mostly in Lutheran and Reformation scholarship, describes the entire affair – in the rare instances it is mentioned – from the perspective of the lords and Martin Luther: a gross misunderstanding of the real Reformation by the uneducated common men and the nature-bound peasant.

A good example of this tradition is provided by the famed historian (and President of Royal Historical Society) Sir C.W.C Oman: "it is not strange that his ignorance and misery led [the peasant] to carry the ideas which were brought to him concerning religion into the sphere of social life" (1890: 67). Thus, the peasants inevitably fell into the hands of "evil and rebellious fellow[s]"

and "fanatic[s]" (1890: 69) who turned them into "blaspheming hordes" (1890: 89). "With the spirit of the children released from the fear of the rod," and displaying "a grotesque and lumbering hilarity," the peasants had "strange ceremonies," or just "rode from village to village" aimlessly (1890:77). Oman is far from alone in ridiculing, diminishing and ultimately dismissing the common men; but being an accomplished historian, he is one of the most articulate representatives of that long standing tradition that robs the common men of all purposeful political agency.

In this dismissive attitude Winfried Schulze, a historian of peasant movements, sees complicity: "historians ... adopted unquestioningly the official assessment of documents and the evidence of contemporary reports which referred to the rebellious people as a 'many headed monster' or a '*beste farouche*'" (1984: 62). A case in point: portraying the peasants as "delusional", Oman's text reproduces word by word the definition of the Monk-Abbot of Irsee who wrote of his rebellious subjects "*Rustica gens nulla genus arte domabile, semper irrequietum animal*" [31] (1890:77). Once infantilized or demoted to beasts, the political claims and agenda of the rebels were dismissed with ease as beyond the consideration of the serious historian.

The first studies that deviated from this sort of discourse date back to the popular revolts and the rise of organized Marxist and anarchists movements in mid-to-late 19th century, creating a genuine interest towards the neglected histories of peasant revolts. However, those early studies were subject to their own limitations and contextual biases and they largely reinterpreted the uprising to suit the political needs of the day. A good example is Wilhelm Zimmermann's book of 1841, *The History of the Great Peasant War*, which called the uprising "a battle of freedom against inhuman oppression, of light against darkness" (Blickle, 1981: 3). "One of the best in the extreme

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[31] 'Rural folk are untamable, always the restless animal' – my translation.

left wing in Frankfurt" according to Engels (2010: 2), Zimmerman spearheaded the attempt to interpret the common men's struggle from a 19th century Marxist perspective. Better known is Friedrich Engels's *Peasant War in Germany* (1850) which draws very heavily from Zimmerman. Engels picks up on Zimmerman's work to find parallels to the 1848 rebellions in his search for a 'German' revolutionary tradition. To that end Engels strongly downplays the role spirituality played, disregards the astonishing political agency rising from communal action, and greatly exaggerates the place of Thomas Müntzer – an early reformer who guided one of the peasant armies.

Casting Müntzer as some sort of proto-communist revolutionary leading the ignorant masses, Engels describes him as a "magnificent figure" and the battle of Thuringia which led to his capture as "the climax of the entire peasant war" (Engels, 2010: 17). Though there is still great value in Engels's analysis of the material conditions of the time (see below), recent research has thoroughly discredited those major conceptions.[32] As is also clear from Oman's much later study, Engels's and Zimmerman's efforts failed to alter the general discourse. In fact, even Marx, who in his last years paid considerable attention to Russian *Obshchinas* – the agricultural communes in Russia with communal ownership and collective farming – as possible shortcuts to socialism, does not mention the revolution or hint at the parallels.[33] Similarly, Peter Kropotkin, who points at

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[32] Economic issues and systematic widespread exploitation were indeed at the center of rebel grievances, but the spirituality of the uprising cannot be downplayed. Similarly, the battle of Thuringia was but one of several major battles that decided the outcome and Müntzer's actual effect on the uprising is, at best, controversial. Though he has added much needed powers of articulation to the rebellion's arsenal, he certainly was not the only one to do so. Moreover, he now appears like a remarkably bloodthirsty figure whose sincere belief in the immediacy of the end times and God's inevitable intervention to personally crush the lords' armies may have undermined sounder strategies suggested by others (Friesen, 1990).

[33] See, for example, Marx's 'First Draft of Letter to Vera Zasulich', 1881.

Obshchinas as a viable alternative to centralized state authority later in his *Mutual Aid* (1902) seems unaware of the parallels provided by German history.

In 1925 the noted Soviet historian David Riazanov still thought of Zimmerman's 1841 work as "the most detailed narrative of the events of the Peasant War in Germany" (Engels, 2010: 69). Besides the strength of Zimmerman's study, this statement also points at the general absence of any work that challenges the Lutheran dismissal of the uprising and the rebelling common men. Indeed, for over a century the study of the revolution "has been kept alive … largely by the socialist tradition of history" (Scribner and Benecke, 1979: 1) and this was due in no small part to Engels's interest. This attention was, at best, a mixed blessing, leading to further dismissal: "most non-Marxist historians refused to regard the Marxist viewpoint as worthy of consideration" (Scribner and Benecke, 1979: 4).

It was this particular weakness of the field that allowed Gunther Franz, widely considered to be the first modern historian of the revolution, to interpret it to fit the ideals of the Nazi party, of which he was a prominent member.[34] Just like Engels found an early communist hero in Müntzer, Franz identified several characters in the uprising as early heroes of German Nationalist ideals.[35] Notably, Franz was the first one to identify the uprising as a mass movement and identify communal action as both the cause and strength of the revolt. Somewhat ironically, it was Franz's

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[34] Becoming a party member in 1933 Franz was soon promoted to Captain (*Hauptstürmführer*) of the SS. He rose further in the party's ranks becoming in 1939 a cabinet member of and aide to the notorious Alfred Rosenberg – the chief racial theorist of the Nazi party. After a brief setback in his career post-war, Franz returned to academia and even became the President of Hohenheim University. Of his many students two in particular, Adolf Waas and Walter Peter Fuchs, also became historians specializing on the uprising.

[35] I was amazed to discover that one Nazi song from late 1930s (*Wir sind des Geyers schwarzer Haufen* - We are Geyer's Black Company) was written after the knight Florian Geyer (see the first footnote of this chapter above). Although the words of the song are from the time of the uprising the song's emergence as a Nazi march is due very likely to Franz's popularization of Geyer as a proto-Nazi hero and the uprising as one done for early national socialist ideals. Franz indeed wrote that only with Adolf Hitler were the goals of the uprising finally realized. On a brighter note, the song today can be found in many German songbooks bereft of its Nazi trappings.

co-optation of the uprising to serve the Nazi ideals that did the most to popularize the subject. Likely due to the post-war repulsion with all things Nazi, Franz's work managed to elicit the strong response that previous Marxist work failed to generate.

After the war, historians from East Germany attempted to discredit Franz's interpretation in favor of a reading more in line with Engels's study by thorough archival research. This, in turn, prompted historians from West Germany to undertake their own research. With historians on both sides of the divided Germany contributing, this almost accidental revitalization of the subject eventually led to massive archival work and fostered a more accurate description of the events of 1525. In 1984 Schulze wrote that "historians have only very recently begun to tackle the subject [of peasant uprisings]" (62). It is thus, after considerable work from a generation of German historians, in the last quarter of the 20th century the revolution started to be recognized for what it is. However, as I have already underlined, this recognition still remains far from universal and, to my knowledge, almost completely absent in political theory.

4.   An epistemic-interpretative conflict

The uncritical reproduction of Luther's condemnation of the rebels and the writing of the rebellion from the lords' gaze until the late 20th century also missed, or dismissed, the massive chasm that is revealed by a closer comparison of the Reformers' arguments and those of the rebels. The interpretations, norms and goals of both seem so clearly different in almost all aspects that the initial labeling of the rebels' normative framework as a misunderstood version of Luther's theories can hardly be an innocent confusion. Indeed, such claims – of rebels misunderstanding higher ideals or abusing them for their base desires – were first voiced by conservative preachers during the uprising to discourage the urban population from supporting the rebels (Cameron, 2012: 209-11). This accusation also hints at another major motivation for the active discrediting of the rebel

take on Christian concepts: throughout the rebellion the armed conflict in the field was paralleled by a fierce struggle over meaning-giving and the interpretations of particular concepts and words.

Akin to Foucault's regimes of truth, the deployment and use of these rival constellations of norms, concepts and practices was anything but purely theoretical: concrete structures and behavior were associated with each set of concepts.[36] The competition over the meanings of these words amounted to two radically different interpretations of the world and two radically different political projects. To the revolution, the Bible was meant to be interpreted to embody a political order which is egalitarian, popular, ascending and consent-based. The concepts within, peppered with familiar language of 'brotherhood' and 'common good' were deployed to recast politics into horizontal relations of solidarity and support; practices drawn from communal political existence and projected universally through the language of the divine. The rebels embedded radical political change in the guise of the familiar and the natural: things already known as they should have been. On the other hand, the authorities used the same vocabulary to preserve the existing order; an ossified hierarchical, authoritarian socio-political system under the ultimate superintendence of God.

In practical terms the tools of this particular conflict were meetings, speeches and the widespread use of the latest technology, the printing press. Assemblies and popular gatherings were held, tens of thousands of pamphlets were printed and distributed and city councils, priests, propagandists and agitators on both sides argued for radically different worlds using the exact

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[36] That is not to imply that these new norms were proposed purely instrumentally. The rebels were sincere in their struggle for a new interpretation of God's will: "the slogans which the rebels embraced – God's word, divine law, brotherly law – were not superficial catch-phrases adopted merely to ignite the revolt and soon relegated to the background. Peasant correspondence and legislation for the regions they controlled show that these principles often remained embedded in their thoughts throughout the war, even when the tide had turned against them" (Cohn, 1979: 26).

same terminology of 'brotherly love', 'common good' and 'Christian equality'. The revolutionaries consistently described 'brotherly love' to mean equality, freedom and reasonable, Christian justice; 'Common Good' translated as economic justice and release from lordly exploitation; 'pure Gospel' corresponded, besides the pure preaching of the Bible without additions legitimizing current rulers, to congregational election of ministers, priests and bishops.

The rebellion was of and by communities of peasants, journeymen, miners, burghers and others. With the feudal power structure collapsing, these groupings naturally took on the qualities of political associations and often assumed legislative characteristics too. The religious concepts and principles which initially fueled the uprising and referred to in the pamphlets were thus seamlessly transformed into political principles that found their final, worldly expressions in deliberative meetings. It is worthwhile to underline this: the religious concepts of 'brotherly love', 'common good', and 'pure Gospel' deployed at the onset of the uprising to mean specific socio-political behavior and formation, in victory, were indeed used as the centerpieces of revolutionary legislation and institutional formation.

As such, the 'Christian Brotherly Love' of the revolutionary agenda led to the constitution of corporative-federal states; a loose unity of equal communities that promised to treat each other with 'love and respect'. Perhaps as central, the language of "divine and fraternal love" was used in rebel correspondence to proclaim solidarity with all "Christian brethren … burdened and oppressed" everywhere (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 106). The horizontal recognition of each other as Christian brothers was used not only to underline equality – which was central – but also to denounce the 'most-Unchristian' oppression of the lords who, in turn, resorted to the same language to champion a hierarchical political structure under their authority. Indeed, "Dear Christian brothers" became standard greeting in rebel correspondence and legislations and

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remained so even as the war was being lost (Scott & Scribner, 1991; Cohn, 1979) signaling once more the sincerity with which the brotherhood of all Christians was embraced by the revolution as an indication of solidarity and equality.

For smaller territories and petty states, the political body was "formed by autonomous village and urban communes now bound together in 'armies,' which became political rather than chiefly military bodies". These 'armies' were led by elected leaders who may or may not have had military experience.[37] Having almost complete autonomy, these units "federated voluntarily into 'Christian Associations' without surrendering their individual 'sovereignties'." As for the larger territories, which were mostly centered on populous cities, constitutions were developed that based governance "on an assembly of peasants, citizens, and miners" alongside burghers (Blickle, 1981: 187-189). In all cases, elections were required for each and every office including political, religious, legal and even military ones in all territories controlled by the rebels.

On the other hand, the use by authorities of these same concepts relied on the long-standing interpretations. The 'brotherly love' of the authorities meant harmony in the realm which was naturally led by the head of the union: lords put in place by God to ensure the lack of strife by the preservation of unbroken obedience. It is important to note that the 'brotherhood of the faithful' was at no point contested; the contestation was over how these 'brothers' would live together.[38] When new, revolutionary, interpretations proved too appealing to fully reject and too strong to

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[37] For example, one of the most successful rebel armies, the Franconian army of 20,000 – which Florian Geyer's Black Company also joined – was led by Jacklein Rohrback, a serf from Beckingen who was elected through popular vote (Blickle, 1981: xvii). The Alsatian army elected a 'Common Committee' of forty-two peasants to which the elected army leader – former mercenary Erasmus Gerber – was responsible (Blickle, 1981: 130). Both armies were joined by lower nobles and knights who functioned as military advisors.

[38] For a very interesting discussion on precisely this point, the language and conceptions of paternalism/fraternalism as a basis for political equality see Laura Janara, *John Locke's Kindred Politics: Phantom Brotherhood, Vicious Brothers and Friendly Equal Brethren*, 2013.

ignore, authorities tried to repurpose them in old, familiar terrain. In Nördlingen, the city council attempted to prevent a large pro-rebellion demonstration by explicitly appealing to 'brotherly love' to mean the solidarity of the city's inhabitants against all outsiders, and in that specific case, the rebels with their foreign demands. A document from Nördlingen's large council consultations has notes reminding the Bürgermeister: "above all things brotherly love should be called upon," and again later "do not forget brotherly love" (Rublack, 1984: 40-1).

Against the rebels' 'Common Good' meaning revolutionized relations of ownership and economic production, lords sent notices to towns and villages describing 'common good' as peace and unity throughout the land achieved by obedience to authorities. While some revolutionary documents explicitly point to the restoration of common ownership as conducive to common good, lords referenced Matthew 12:25[39] to ask all settlements, even free Imperial cities that only answered to the Emperor, to step forward and "declare their obedience to the authorities" for the 'Common Good' (Rublack, 1984: 39). In that moment when "the future of society," indeed the world, looked like "an open question" (Cohn, 1979: 8) the struggle over the meanings of these words was very real and very central. Deployed, as they were, in a particular constellation of meanings, the revolutionary use of language and Christian terms was a momentous force for worldly emancipation which could not have been ignored. The lords clearly failed to match the revolution's proliferation of pamphlets and the appeal of the familiar language in revolutionary use. However, in that particular conflict the greatest weapon on the side of the authorities proved to be Martin Luther. I will return to this point later, demonstrating how Luther countered the revolutionary use of 'Christian equality.'

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[39] "Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand'."

Once more it was the strength of arms which put an end to the epistemic interpretation side of the conflict. The revolution's arguments and interpretations were not so much countered as they were defeated by brute force before their eventual silencing over time. After the war several city and town councils – such as Trier and Muhlhausen – were forced to step forward and pledge allegiance to the lords for the common good, while most others were replaced by men loyal to the lords, decisively concluding this aspect of the conflict. Here, in the silencing of this crucial struggle we discover a particularly successful sort of subjugation that fits Foucault's description rather well:

> Power relations … are essentially anchored in a certain relationship of force that was established in and through war at a given historical moment that can be historically specified. And while it is true that political power puts an end to war and establishes or attempts to establish the reign of peace in civil society, it certainly does not do so in order to suspend the effect of power or to neutralize the disequilibrium revealed by the last battle of war. According to this hypothesis, the role of political power is perpetually to use a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals. (2003: 15)

In a clear example of politics as the continuation of war (Foucault, 2003: 14), the victors of the day ended up obscuring an alternative epistemology by discrediting its authors and belittling their agency. Ultimately, this turned into a dismissal of even the possibility of its existence.

To be clear, this is not to imply that the revolution of 1525 was the only time when the presence of common men and peasants as conscious political actors was discredited and ignored. Until late twentieth century "historians naturally considered the peasant resistance moments from a monarchical point of view" (Schulze, 1984: 62) and the monarch's gaze saw the peasants as either incapable or unworthy of conscious, purposeful political agency. However, the Revolution of the Common Men remains an unrivalled case of uprising where lower classes not only displayed an astonishing level of sophistication in the political and ideological formulations of their demands but also the subsequent political applications of these ideas. They thus threatened not only the position of a local or regional lord but to overwhelm the entire feudal order of domination in a

large part of the Holy Roman Empire. Theirs was a revolution which succeeded in bringing about what it intended: an egalitarian political order based on communal consent and economic fairness derived from a new interpretation of Christianity. As such, its silencing was of crucial importance to the reestablishment of the feudal system and in that silencing, I will argue further in the next chapter, we find a clear and purposeful agency on the part of the authorities of the day.

Of course, the tendency we observe in later historians to reproduce Luther's words on the revolution and thereby subsume it into the Reformation due to this latter's world-historical relevance is easy to understand. However, it remains intellectually and academically unsound, and factually inaccurate to do so. More important, the diminishment of the rebellion's normative arguments into a misunderstood version of Luther's Reformation is a prime example of subjugation: it indirectly contributes to the centuries-long oppression by reproducing a regime of truth built on the suppression of the common men's rebellion and the obfuscation of popular agency in the struggle for egalitarian, communal autonomy against hierarchical, noble authoritarianism.

5. The Revolution

The revolution, which at one point spread to almost one third of the Holy Roman Empire and controlled nearly half of present day Germany, did not fail so much as it was defeated. Once the lords' army took to the field in mid-May rebel armies quickly found themselves on the losing end of the battle. In armed confrontation, despite their greater numbers, a strong will to fight and even the possession of up-to-date weapons, they were no match for the seasoned generals and troops of the lords' alliance whose numbers contained lords' retinues, military garrisons and, most important, a great number of battle-tested veterans returning from the Emperor's campaign in Italy

against the French forces.[40] Traversing all of Swabia in several months, the lords' army defeated

all armies it encountered and massacred close to 100,000, including women and children.[41] In the

months following the defeat of rebel armies, tens of thousands more were killed, injured,

imprisoned and maimed by the League army and various punitive attacks by individual lords.

Rebelling villages and cities were forced to pay reparations in dues, labor, heavy taxes and territory

while urban folk who largely stood with the rebels saw their previous political gains taken away

and their various unions often forcibly disbanded (Blickle, 1981; Blickle et al, 1984; Scott, 1991;

Bak, 1976; Scott & Scribner, 1991).[42]

That peasant revolts and upheavals were instrumental in the growth of modern states is by

now a well-established conclusion. Perry Anderson claims that, at least for the case of France, each

rebellion initially stalled but then accelerated the growth of the absolute state (1979). This was the

case also for this revolution: Franz concluded that "the Peasants' Revolt cleared the road for the

princes to surmount the old corporate state and to erect the modern, absolute territorial state"

(quoted in Sessions, 1968: 24). However, as I have already argued, with 1525 more than any other

case, the continuation of traditional authority structures in German-speaking parts of the Holy

Roman Empire was directly predicated on the complete subjugation of the rebels' ideologies and

interpretations of the world precisely because it was conducive to the revolutionizing of the feudal

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[40] In one of the most resounding battles of the era, the Battle of Pavia witnessed the utter defeat of the French forces by the combined Spanish-Imperial army, killing over 15,000 and capturing 50 guns as well as the French King, Charles V. Quite remarkably, the victory cost the Spanish-Imperial alliance less than 500 soldiers in the entire battle. Though this is idle speculation, it is difficult not to think that had this battle gone differently or with major losses for the Imperial army, the results of the revolution might have been radically different.

[41] It did not encounter all rebel armies however; the armies of Franconia and Wurttemberg concluded deals with the League army and dispersed. Those deals, as I note elsewhere in this chapter, were not honored by the lords later.

[42] For example, the city of Muhlhausen – where Thomas Muentzer resided until his capture and eventual execution – was compelled by the Swabian League to "pay 10,000 gulden immediately, 30,000 gulden within a year, and 80,000 gulden over an indefinite period with payment guaranteed by pawning the villages controlled by the city to the princes" (Sea, 2007: 234). That not all these villages were later returned to the city's control should come as no surprise. Indeed, this was but one of the ways in which victorious lords increased their power post-revolution.

order. It was not so much the military aspect of the revolution that is of interest to me but those ideologies, arguments and counter-arguments which embodied the spirit of the revolution and the ensuing counter-revolution. Of all the deeds and documents that were obscured, few rival in importance the *Twelve Articles* in its embodiment of the ideals of the uprising and the threat it posed to the feudal order.[43]

5.1. The Twelve Articles

This manifesto of the rebel armies was printed 25,000 times in two months, read in every village and city and used by all armies of the uprising.[44] The *Twelve Articles* established "a form of rule based on participation and assent of the organized community" and declared: "*in the future we will not allow a lord to oppress us further*" (Scott and Scribner, 1991: 252-255). It is difficult to overstate the importance of the document: "No programme of the great peasant revolts of early modern Europe surpassed the Twelve Articles" (Bak, 1976: 7). Whereas all previous European peasant revolts – notably, excluding perhaps only the Hussites – still harbored the conception of the 'Good King' "who would intervene if only he knew how badly off his subjects were" (Bak, 1976: 8), the rebels of 1525 rejected lordship in its entirety in favor of representative structures and communal authority. Indeed, "no other peasant platform attacked the questions of landlordship, serfdom, jurisdiction and local dominion so comprehensively" (Blickle, 1981: 58). For instance, the peasants in Allgau walked up to their lord's castle and simply told him that "they

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[43] It is believed to be "nearly certain" that the authors of the text were Christoph Schappeler, the highly influential reformist preacher at Memmingen's St. Martin church, and Sebastian Lotzer, a journeymen-furrier and political pamphleteer from the same city. Though later shortened for obvious reasons, the original name it was first published under was '*The Just and Fundamental Chief Articles of All Peasants and Subjects of Ecclesiastical and Secular Authorities in Which They Consider Themselves Aggrieved*' (Blickle, 1981: 25).

[44] To provide a point of comparison the distribution of Luther's *entire* works (consisting of about 30 separate tracts) amounted to 300,000 copies in over 3 years from 1518 to 1521 in all Central and Western European countries including and up to England (Duchesne, 2006: 83). Coupled with the tens of thousands of pamphlets accompanying the manifesto, it is not difficult to imagine how Luther might have felt threatened by the extreme popularity enjoyed by the political principles of the Communal Reformation embodied in the Twelve Articles.

did not wish to have a lord any longer" (Blicke, 1997: 22); in Brandenburg they wrote their priest "we shall not recognize you as a lord, but simply as a servant of the parish. You do not command us, but we command you" (Blicke, 1997: 15). Reflecting these developments and fully embodying the social discontent which animated it, the *Twelve Articles* described largely egalitarian, democratic polities constituted by autonomous communities and elected officials.

Those were the principles that the rebels acted upon in their short moment of glory to establish participatory, representative structures of governance and popular ownership of commons. At the peak of the revolution, on the 6th and 7th of March 1525, hundreds of representatives from "almost all urban and rural communities – excepting only the Imperial cities" met in Memmingen under the protection of approximately 50,000 troops from three rebel armies of Allgau, Lake Constance, and Baltringen. There they convened the legislative Peasant Parliament which named itself simply the *Christian Association* [45] and established new, representative governance structures for all of Swabia (Blickle, 1981: 100). Under this name the delegates from throughout the land agreed by mid-march to adopt the *Twelve Articles* as the official manifesto of the rebellion and it appeared in print following this adoption. Following this adoption in all the lands of the revolution *the Twelve Articles* was reproduced, spread and used by all legislative assemblies as a guideline.

In Tyrol, to the east, the constitution designed by the rebels embodied "the most sophisticated expression of the revolution's fundamental aims": a "Christian, democratic, peasant republic" (Blickle, 1981: xix). In Salzburg – further east – the peasants, miners and townsmen were given political rights "which until then had been reserved for nobles and clergy" (Blickle,

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[45] Some sources give the name as the Christian Union.

1981: 125). In Alsace and Black Forest in the west, just like in Hegau at the Swiss border, all economic structures were completely revamped to replace "the lords' exploitation" with "common welfare and brotherly love" (Blickle, 1981: 128) corresponding to a communal form of economic democracy. The Franconian rebels made into law that "from now on all spiritual and secular persons, noble and non-noble, should obey the laws of common burghers and peasants and not claim to be above what other common man have to do" (Blickle, 1981: 123).

But the most remarkable, almost stunning, expression of the ideals that drove the revolution was found right across the border, in Switzerland. The 1526 articles of grievance of the Ilanz Canton essentially established a constitution and brought the revolution of the common man to its natural conclusion: "*the form of our government is democratic* and the election and deposition of the magistrates, all kinds of officers, judges and commanders … *belongs to our common man*; he has the power, according to his majorities, to create and abolish them, to establish alliances with foreign princes and estates, to dispose questions of war and peace, and to deliberate about all other matters to the high and lesser magistrates." (Blickle, 1998: 114-115, emphasis added). In other words, the political principles embodied by the Twelve Articles, when put into action, consistently translated into communally-based democratic practices and values explicitly including consent of the governed, universal equality before the law, universal political rights and suffrage[46] and widespread economic justice.

A rather brief text, the 1525 manifesto nevertheless managed to pose the deadliest threat to the feudal system and achieved unparalleled popularity with common folk everywhere. Though

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[46] I feel the obligation to underline once more here that though the uprising revolutionized social hierarchies and universalized political rights to all classes it did very little to alter existing gender relations. To my knowledge, except in a few notable instances, women remained devoid of all these rights.

each article was justified by or based on the Bible, the demands within clearly stemmed from the vast asymmetries dominating peasant life: complete abolition of serfdom; abolition of, or at least a radical reduction in numerous direct and indirect taxes; restoration to communities of almost all lordly properties; a new legal and judicial system; and, finally, an end to widespread clerical abuses. Above and beyond the nature of the demands – almost all of which were capable of delivering a killing blow to the feudal system – their wording was quite revealing of the mentality that drove the uprising. It was from "all peasants and subjects" to all authorities, ecclesiastical and religious. The first article on the list, reserved for the communal election of pastors, decreed "we should henceforth *have the power and authority for the whole community*" (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 254). From the complete acceptance of their subservient position barely six months ago, lower classes now appropriated the power and authority so far held by the lords. Considering the groundbreaking nature of the document and the implications that its very presence brought to the fore, it is not surprising that peasant armies treated it with almost religious reverence. It is indeed difficult to overstate the impact of this document: spreading like wildfire in the rebellion area, the document was read in every village and used by every army. Most rebel bands would have the lords, clerics and nobles that they had captured swear allegiance to it before releasing them.[47] Many cities had the list nailed to their doors by enthusiastic inhabitants. This strategy proved very important. Though it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how much of a justification they managed to provide or what precise effect they had, "the leading role of evangelical preachers is now indisputable" in spreading the message and arming the revolution with powers of articulation it

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[47] There were many nobles and ranking clerics captured by rebel armies. Among those were at least two governors, two Archbishops, and perhaps most notably the Elector of Mainz. With the exception of the nefarious Weinsberg massacre they were all released after taking an oath to the 'Christian meeting of the bright Army' to uphold the Twelve Articles.

otherwise would have lacked (Ocker, 2006: 8). The Twelve Articles itself, a product of that exact collaboration between preacher and laymen, goes a long way to demonstrate the potency of that union at the service of the revolution.

The Twelve Articles also demonstrates the extent to which the revolutionary understanding of religion and religiosity was at the service of radical social change. The manifesto declares that the Bible dictated that all men are free and redeemed by Christ "from the shepherd to the highest"; so, argued the rebels, "it is demonstrated by the Scripture that we are free and wish to be free" (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 254). With their version of Christianity clearly supporting it, they appealed to the lords: "as true and genuine Christians, you will gladly release us from serfdom, or else show us from the Gospel that we are serfs" (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 255). Most taxes were similarly rejected on religious grounds: "the small tithe [paid for the animals] we will not pay at all, for the Lord God created cattle for the free use of man." The grain tax, ordained by the Old Testament, would be paid but not to the lords: "since it should be given to God … it belongs to a pastor" to be elected by the community, and after community expenses were deducted from it "the remainder shall be distributed to the needy poor." Since it would also be sufficient to provide military protection for the village "no territorial [or military] taxes will be laid."

Most important, they argued, authorities would have to be reconstituted if they wish to be obeyed: "[God] does not show and teach us not to obey authority … so that in this way we will gladly *obey our elected and appointed rulers in all reasonable and Christian matters*" (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 252-257, emphasis added). Thus, the peasants described the authority they would obey henceforth: elected, reasonable and Christian. By enserfing their subjects, both ecclesiastical and temporal lords were behaving in a most un-Christian manner. By viciously oppressing all under their power, they were proving themselves to be beyond reason, conscience and Godliness.

Since the religiosity of the ruler, as described by the *Twelve Articles*, was a major touchstone of political legitimacy, the manifesto effectively managed to declare the entire feudal order of domination illegitimate.

The authors of the manifesto deployed their powers of articulation further by turning the tables against the lords in their interpretation of the axiomatic principle 'every rebellion is against God'. Initially, the *Twelve Articles* explicitly acknowledges their position as a rebellion: "The following articles … will … provide a Christian justification for the disobedience, indeed, the rebellion, of all the peasants" (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 253). However, it goes on to claim that despite their open uprising the peasants and subjects were not the ones going against God; it was, instead, the authorities that were in rebellion against His Divine Word. God decreed all men equal and free; by enserfing and oppressing the peasants the lords were at fault against God. So, they argued, "the peasants who ask for this Gospel as their teaching and rule of life should not be called disobedient or rebellious" (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 253). By extension the rebels were simply attempting to restore the order as God had originally intended by putting down the lords that distorted it in the first place. It is most likely that when John Locke deployed this argument, almost in this precise formulation, he was unaware of its previous use by the German rebels.[48]

Incidentally and further evidencing the ingenuity of this defense of the uprising, centuries later the early ideologues of the French Revolution (who were almost certainly unaware of the Twelve Articles but quite familiar with the work of John Locke) used this very justification for their uprising. Baron D'Holbach claimed that "the tyrants – kings, aristocrats, and priests and their

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[48] John Locke's rather famous argument outlined in the Second Treatise, in a nutshell, dictates that a government that breaks the social contract (or, rather, the basic set of assumptions that amount to a contract) and uses force without proper authority is rebelling against the natural order of things. In such cases the people have a duty to rebel against the government and take back the power initially given in trust (2005: Chapter XIII and Chapter XIX).

supporters … were the true rebels" whose oppression forced good men to rebel (Israel, 2011: 809-10). Above and beyond the justification for the uprising and the religious grounding of each article, the revolutionaries themselves clearly pointed at the source of their grievances: the unbearable, un-Christian oppression they were being subjected to by the lords of the land. It is this oppression that – for the rebels – rendered the lords unchristian and the system illegitimate; these conditions ultimately explain and contextualize the *Twelve Articles.*

5.2.   The Revolutionary Common Man

The *Twelve Articles* and numerous other rebel pamphlets were quite right in their identification of the universality of oppression and the commonality of the common men's plight. By the turn of the sixteenth century the myriad communities in the southern Holy Roman Empire that were under the authorities of various lords were experiencing a similar oppression under the expanding reach and powers of increasingly centralizing authorities. They were going through similar processes of diminishment as distinct communal entities. Bound to the land, from roughly the last half of 15th century to the eve of the revolution, the view of political authority for a German-speaking peasant was from the perspective of a serf: the oaths of obedience sworn by the peasants of the abbey of Rot in 1456, several hours north-west of Memmingen – promising to be "useful, willing, and obedient" – were almost identical to those sworn in 1523 by the subjects of Weingarten abbey, almost two days to the West (Blickle, 1981: 33).[49] The oaths taken by the

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[49] The most common measure of distance in 16th century Central Europe was 'an hour,' meaning the distance a man or a horse could walk in one hour. Though it obviously varies this is thought to be about 5-6 kilometers. The official measurement used by Imperial officers was *Meile* which also varied vastly from region to region: approximately 7500 meters in Bavaria it would fall to about 4500 meters in Pfalz and rise to over 9000 in Saxony. In any case the distance between Memmingen and Rot an der Rot (where the abbey still stands) is approximately 15 kilometers; hence 'a few hours.' Weingarten is over 50 kilometers West.

peasants of Ottobeuren, a few hours south of Memmingen, were also very similar: to remain "true, responsible, liable to service, obedient and servant-like [*Pothmeßig*]" (Sreenivasan, 2001:51-2).

With their social, economic and political status set firmly at the lowest rank, rural communities were also losing valuable ground legally and economically: the communal rights to woods and fisheries were being chipped away and more lords were finding more ways to pass on various expenses – such as the occasional military expenditures[50] – to their subjects. Besides regularized tithes on harvest and animals, certain taxes – such as *heirot*, the infamous death tax[51] – were systematically diminishing peasant holdings over a few generations, eventually indebting them into servitude/serfdom. In fact, the increases in taxes in late 15th and early 16th centuries were both relative and absolute, giving rise to a particular type of recurring revolt, which was later named 'tax revolt': "the peasant's most direct response to the early modern territorial state's demands" (Blickle, 1997: 68).

Though lengthy, Engels's summary of the peasants' material conditions is worth reproducing:

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[50] Despite their uncommon occurrence military levies were a true burden whenever they were levied: for example, the Swabian League's 1519 campaign against the Duke Ulrich of Wurttemberg translated into about half a gulden per month per farm (Blickle, 1981: 44). Considering an average free farmer's yearly taxes rarely exceeded 5-6 guldens (and a cottager's often less than half of that) the enormous load this tax alone would bring to the peasant comes into sharper focus. Also noteworthy: the Swabian League levied yet another military tax in 1522. This frequency of extra taxes could not have been easy on the peasants, leading to further debts. As indebting the peasant was a favorite tactic of the lords, this consequently translated to loss of land, status and rights.

[51] The death tax [*Heirot*] was the name of a particular tax collected by the lord upon the death of a peasant. As with all else it varied considerably from region to region. Still, consisting at least "of the best horse or cow, the best garment, and, less frequently some cash as well" this tax was the death's knell in particular for the poorer farmers who would have one or two animals (Blickle, 1981: 34-5). In the worst case the tax let the lord take, besides the best animal and garment, a large portion or even the entirety of the land. Death of a peasant thus rendered the family literally homeless and destitute at the lords' mercy. This latter would rent the land back to them with certain conditions which became more and more imbalanced over time. That the death tax was a major problem throughout can be deduced from the Twelve Articles. The eleventh article was solely about the death tax: "widows and orphans shamefully deprived and robbed of their property, contrary to God and to honor … where those who should protect and guard them have instead flayed them and us; and if they had the slightest pretext they would have taken it all" (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 256-257).

Whether the peasant was the subject of a prince, an imperial baron, a bishop, a monastery or a city, he was everywhere treated as a beast of burden, and worse. If he was a serf, he was entirely at the mercy of his master. If he was a bondsman, the legal deliveries stipulated by agreement were sufficient to crush him; even they were being daily increased. Most of his time, he had to work on his master's estate. Out of that which he earned in his few free hours, he had to pay tithes, dues, ground rents, war taxes, land taxes, imperial taxes, and other payments. He could neither marry nor die without paying the master. Aside from his regular work for the master, he had to gather litter, pick strawberries, pick bilberries, collect snail-shells, drive the game for the hunting, chop wood, and so on. Fishing and hunting belonged to the master. The peasant saw his crop destroyed by wild game. The community meadows and woods of the peasants had almost everywhere been forcibly taken away by the masters. And in the same manner as the master reigned over the peasant's property, he extended his willfulness over his person, his wife and daughters. He possessed the right of the first night. Whenever he pleased, he threw the peasant into the tower, where the rack waited for him just as surely as the investigating attorney waits for the criminal in our times. Whenever he pleased, he killed him or ordered him beheaded. None of the instructive chapters of the Carolina[52] which speaks of "cutting of ears," "cutting of noses," "blinding," "chopping of fingers," "beheading," "breaking on the wheel," "burning," "pinching with burning tongs," "quartering," etc., was left unpracticed by the gracious lord and master at his pleasure. Who could defend the peasant? The courts were manned by barons, clergymen, patricians, or jurists, who knew very well for what they were being paid (2010:18).

All in all, as the 16th century dawned, under the gradual expansion of the powers and reach of authority, a larger rural population than ever was trying to survive on less land and fewer resources with heavier taxation and greater oppression. With the urban population of most European regions at the time limited to five to ten percent of the total population (Cameron, 2012: 212), this meant that the conditions of life for a great majority of people were going from bad to worse.

I have argued, against the literature which dismisses 1525 as merely a year of religious revolts, that the uprising was a socio-political awakening largely in reaction to existing conditions of oppression and that it found its ideal venue in the language of the Reformation. Indeed, under the increasingly unbearable conditions approaching the eve of 1525 there was a steady and quite noticeable rise in the number of armed rural rebellions: between 1500 and 1522 alone there were

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[52] *Carolina* is the name of the criminal code published in 1532 under Emperor Charles. It effectively gathered the criminal laws, and torture and punishment techniques from over 300 German states and principalities.

18 major uprisings, involving at least several villages with at least a thousand armed rebels – almost one each year. This number, compared to eight for 1475-1500 and 13 for the remainder of the 15th century, plainly shows the rising discontent (Blickle, 1979: 232). Tens of thousands took up arms against their lords in separate incidents. The *Bundschuh* (literally, 'tied shoe')[53] uprisings of 1493, 1502, 1513 and 1517, just like the *Armer Konrad* (Poor Conrad)[54] revolt of 1514 and numerous others demonstrated the unparalleled rise of lower class discontent with the feudal system. Even knights and some lesser nobles took up arms against the ecclesiastical lords in the Poor Barons' Rebellion of 1522. Unsurprisingly, a creeping awareness on the lords' part of the vehemence of their subjects' discontent was also obvious (Sea, 1999; 2007; Demarolle, 1997). In short, the revolution was nowhere near as spontaneous as it was made out to be by historians who ascribed its explosion solely to the Reformation.[55]

Of these previous uprisings, only one managed to acquire a cross-border quality by transcending the local frameworks and politico-geographical boundaries within which they were triggered: the Poor Barons' Rebellion made use of the networks of the lower nobility – such as knight associations – to organize, and though the rebellion was limited in the number of participants, they came from diverse lordships. All others were largely limited to their localities. For instance, in the *Bundschuh* uprisings a great number of peasants, sometimes supported by the urban dwellers of their areas, used similar symbols, grievances and even tactics. Yet, despite a few

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[53]These revolts were named after the traditional peasant shoe often depicted on the peasant armies' flags.
[54]This revolt was named in mocking reference to the noble usage of the term generally meaning peasant.
[55] This is obviously not to belittle the effect of the Reformation or discard the strong religiosity driving some of these revolts. A good indication of the Reformation's effect can be readily observed in the frequency of urban revolts: over 40 individual urban revolts (almost one fifth of all city-based uprisings in the five centuries from 1300 to 1800) occurred in the decade between 1520 and 1530 (Blickle, 1997: 73). It is nigh impossible in this study to fully distinguish the nature of all urban revolts but it would not be wrong to assume that the remarkable increase in their number in that period points, at least in some if not most cases, to the Reformation's effect in providing an ideal venue for expressing pre-existing socio-economic and political grievances.

individuals who traveled from region to region, effectively acting as organizational leaders, all uprisings were confined to their localities. In Alsace, Bruchsal, Lehen and Rhine, rebels raised the same flag, but the rebellions rose and fell independently in each area. In fact, considering the fractured nature of the legal and political frameworks that defined the feudal landscape, it is indeed amazing that the revolutionaries of 1525 managed to transcend their local frameworks and grievances to identify the universality of these conditions. As such, the *Twelve Articles* reveals an unprecedented ontological shift in the perspective and world-interpretive tools of the rebels.

This transformation points at the abandonment of the centuries-old legal understanding, the Old Order (*Altes Herkommen*) or Old Law (*Altes Recht*), in which every village was individually bound by its own set of customs, traditions and past agreements, in favor of a universal law binding on all. The rebellions in early 1524 still used the language of the 'Old Law': communities would present to their lord individual grievances against particular measures, basing their demands on ancient traditions and old rights negotiated by their ancestors. To the rural subject, for the longest time, legitimacy was the old law and the old law was legitimacy. This particular understanding practically constrained hundreds of communities with very similar – if not identical – complaints to their geographical boundaries. Thus, despite widespread conditions of exploitation and oppression across the land which were recognized for what they were, communities were constrained by the legal and legitimate avenues they knew, and were only able to look for individual redress, seeking refuge in ancient agreements unique to their community. At its most intense, the oppression would lead the communities under one lord to band together in disobedience but collective action very rarely crossed political borders. When it did there was the certainty of violence to put them down.

Put otherwise, this obligation to the old law effectively forced what were in essence universal, objective conditions to be fought on the communal grounds of localities, using increasingly obsolete legal frameworks, themselves already under attack by the top-down spread of Roman law. Despite all, peasants still defended with all their might this very system that greatly limited their avenues of struggle and often victimized them. This was partly because these avenues occasionally did win the peasants some reprieve, and more important, they quite clearly had nothing else to use. In other words, the peasant conservatism – which Engels identifies as the reason for their continuous defeats (2010) – was a consequence of a series of historical and structural contingencies that limited their struggles to a politico-legal system that recognized only traditions as the basis for legal rights. Simply put, to defend their meager existence, lower classes were forced into conservatism. Consequently, even when the peasants won their cases, their struggles could only recognize and reaffirm the hierarchical relations of the feudal system from whence these traditions sprung.

The dissolution of this local, limiting and inherently conservative understanding of law in favor of a universal, prescriptive and revolutionary version was due to the epistemic breach provided by the Reformation. But this normative shift would have been certainly less effective, maybe even ineffective, had it not been coupled with an increasing awareness, on the part of the lower classes, of the universality of their conditions which they explicitly recognized as unjust and unfair. Also, as a result of consecutive rebellions in response to increased exploitation and oppression, a sort of class consciousness best described as 'everyone but the lords' was beginning to emerge.

Yet with the legal and normative frameworks limiting their struggles to political boundaries, this awareness had no avenues to actualize itself in the political realm. In other words,

being constrained to smaller localities was a well-entrenched quality of peasant resistance. The community which was the cradle of the resistance was also, somewhat ironically, its limits. The unification of different localities with identical grievances or, put otherwise, the universalization of the struggle necessitated a normative language that could embody and articulate these grievances. Thus, at the moment of the revolution's birth we find these two historical conditions converge: identification by the rebels of the universality of their suffering and the consequent move to a universal normativity which could justify and legitimize their demands. To contextualize this discussion, identify why exactly this move was needed and what exactly the switch to a language of the universal, in this instance embodied by Divine Law, did for the revolution, it is worthwhile to visit that moment.

5.3.   The Birth of a Revolution: A new normativity and universalism

The authors of the *Twelve Articles* created an extraordinary political piece: transcending all previous borders – political, normative and legal – the text recast the all-dominant concept of 'Christian authority' to make clear that the lords could never be deserving of obedience. I argue that the cross-border identification of the similarity of the conditions of oppression and exploitation was already there, leading to an emergent sense of horizontal solidarity against the lords. If nothing else, the *Bundschuh* revolts plainly demonstrate that peasants in varying regions were ready to rise up under the same banner with almost identical complaints and demands. All these uprisings however were still limited to their localities. The peasants' traditions, legal language and imagination were limited to these boundaries and when, rarely, they attempted to break through one of those borders, they were held back by the others. Again, the *Bundschuh* demonstrates this: the identification of the conditions of oppression and similar demands across political borders did not lead to an uprising transcending these borders but instead a series of identical uprisings spread

in place and time. At the beginning of the revolution we find, again, the same pattern. Let us focus on that moment to fully contextualize this discussion.

One Sunday in early April 1524, peasants of Stühlingen in Black Forest refused to collect snail shells for their Countess (of Lupfen). Toiling under a particularly demanding lord, the requisition of their free day for such a task was the last straw for the villagers.[56] As was the custom, the villagers gathered in the village market, publicly withdrew their oaths of obedience to Count Sigmund and raised their banners. In a few days peasants from other villages under the Count joined them. In line with the long-standing practices of collective bargaining by riot, the Count asked the peasants to present a list of their grievances: his intention was most likely to start negotiations and by a few acts of goodwill get his peasants back to work during planting season.

It is here that we find the breaking point. It is impossible for this study to pinpoint exactly how that decision was made, but instead of delivering their grievance list to Count Sigmund, the peasants decided to cast a wider net, join forces with peasants from three neighboring lordships – Fustenberg, Schellenberg, and Reckenbach – and compose a joint list of grievances.[57] This list was then presented to the Imperial Court of Chancery as part of a lawsuit against *all their lords* (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 65-73). Such an act was not only outside all traditions, it had no possible justification in the Old Law either. Of course, peasants were well aware of these facts. Since early manorial times each settlement, even different villages in the same lordship, had different customs.

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[56] Perfectly illustrating the complicated nature of the late medieval allegiances, Count Sigmund of Lupfen was Austrian bailiff in Upper Alsace. Incidentally, this also goes some way in explaining why the Count was particularly demanding: occupying a prestigious position coveted by many in an area surrounded by higher nobility, he needed to make the best use of his resources. This inevitably translated into exceptional burdens for his subjects.

[57] The election as leader of a retired mercenary (*Landsknecht*), Hans Mueller, may have had something to do with this remarkable departure from tradition and disregard of law. As a veteran soldier, Hans would have had experience beyond the borders of the region and may have thought greater numbers more advantageous than strict adherence to laws and traditions.

To formulate their demands on a broader level unifying villages from four lordships, they simply had to abandon previous forms of justification. It would have been impossible for the collective traditions of dozens of communities under multiple lordships to present a formulation under the old law(s) that would be cohesive enough to make a strong case. In short, the peasants had no legal grounds and they knew it. So, they pleaded with the judges:

> We ask your graces to consider not only the law in its strict sense but, in judging our claims, also to ponder the dictates of divine and natural law, of fairness, reason, and common sense so that we might be released from the above-mentioned insufferable grievances and be permitted to live our lives as honest, God-fearing men in our land and among our wives, children, belongings, and property… (Strauss, 1971: 165)

This substantial, unprecedented shift in peasants' normative perspective, abandoning the conservative, defensively deployed Old Law and starting to consider other avenues, was dictated in part by this move from local to regional; from one lordship to four. The widespread conditions of oppression and exploitation are clearly recognized by the lower classes who seem, now, to have fully realized the inadequacy of the legal and normative tools available to them. Since the older, largely obsolete frameworks fall short of expressing their plight they turn to other avenues: fairness, reason, common sense but also divine and natural law. Put simply, when the peasants transcended their political borders to present a universal case, they found their case necessitated a universal language which could embody that case.

Consequently, the joint list of grievances perfectly captures the peasants' political and legal consciousness in that transitionary stage from local to universal normativity, to a revolutionary mindset. It includes everything and more that the *Twelve Articles* would later contain but it is decidedly confused and weaker when it comes to justifying its demands. Some demands (such as access to woods or reduction of feudal obligations) are justified by common custom and old traditions; others that are very similar in nature (like access to fisheries) are based on divine law and Christian justice (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 65-73). Contrary to dominant practice which

dictated "the peasant could only demand what he could legally justify" (Blickle, 1981: 86), a good number of articles have no justification whatsoever.

For instance, concerning the practice of serfdom Stühlingen peasants simply argued that they wanted to be released from it. This demand for the abolition of serfdom was not justifiable: both the Old Law and the traditions had clear and explicit recognition of the practice along with rules regulating it. Significantly, here, it did not seem to occur to the peasants to base this demand on divine law, a form of justification that would later prove ideal. It is likely why this article dealing with this most crucial issue of all, so fundamental on every level, was pushed to the very end (article number fifty-nine of sixty-two), squeezed between minor issues like 'the inheritance of bastards' and 'excessive fines for non-compliance with duties.' To complete the transition to a revolutionary, universal normativity and base their grievances fully in the Bible, peasants needed a level of erudition and elaboration that was not, at that stage, readily available. This would be achieved with the *Twelve Articles*.

What pushed the peasants further into rebellion and ultimately turned the Stühlingen/Lupfen revolt into the precursor of the revolution was the complete rejection by the Chancery Court of the joint list: following objections from the lords, in June, the judges simply rejected the joint application. They broke the collective list into individual lordships according to long-standing custom and laws, and demanded that the peasants refile their grievances based on existing political boundaries. Ten weeks later most of Black Forest was in open revolt; in three months, the revolt had already spread south and west, beyond German-speaking lands; in six months the revolution was at its peak with all armies and bands using only one list: 'the *Twelve Articles*'.

As the rebellion snowballs into the revolution it becomes exceedingly difficult to show exactly when and where the move to the language of the Communal Reformation was completed. That being said, the precursor rebellion gives all the signs that such a move was in the making. The breakthrough provided by the language of Divine Law is apparent in the *Twelve Articles*. The appeal to the law of God easily supersedes and makes obsolete all ancient frameworks, and the peasants seem, at the outbreak of the Lupfen rising, on the brink of this move. It is important to note, here, that the peasants were actively searching for the right avenues to express their reality of oppression, appealing to reason, fairness and common sense alongside Divine Law. As we know, it was the latter, already alive in the Communal Reformation spreading fast, which proved the ideal avenue.

With the transition to universal normativity, the language followed: the *Twelve Articles* was written on behalf of 'all subjects.' The definition of subjecthood to mean all those without authority is apparent throughout: in numerous pamphlets, the rebels described themselves in Black Forest as "the poor common man in town and countryside"; in Wurttemberg "a meeting of burghers and peasants"; in Renchen "bands of subjects"; in Franconia "the common man." The lords saw quite the same picture: the Habsburg government "spoke simply of a union of the common man"; the Swabian League warned of the unity of the "common man" and "peasants"; the elector of Saxony feared the governance of the "common man" (Blickle, 1981: 122-124). Thus, the Revolution of the Common Men was the uprising of and by "the peasant, the miner, the resident of a territorial town; in the Imperial cities … the townsman ineligible for public office" (Blickle, 1981: 123-4).

Insofar as the rebels themselves were concerned they were the counterparts of the lords and the rebellion was a rising of those without authority against those who exercised their authority

with gross disregard and contempt for the powerless. They repeatedly asserted in their various declarations that "we wish to stand by one another … and to help each other attain justice" (Blickle, 1997: 23), and as we have seen, the language of the Communal Reformation allowed the horizontal solidarity of 'Christian brothers' in their struggle for justice. This broad self-conception as the oppressed, pious class fighting in solidarity against the exploitative, unchristian oppressor helps us further understand the causes of this extraordinary uprising. Incidentally, this self-identification and the *Twelve Articles'* inclusion of an itemized list of the major economic tools of subjection from serfdom to various taxes also helps make sense of the Revolution's initial rediscovery by Marxists, and Engels's attempt to interpret it as part of the revolutionary tradition of communism.

As I already argued the *Twelve Articles* was a revolutionary document in part because it has managed to transcend the political, legal and normative boundaries that limited peasants' world to their immediate locality. It is fitting and largely significant that at the start of the Revolution we find the literal crossing by peasants of their lordship's borders. The universal language of the Revolution followed the peasants' cause in transcending borders; a universal cause necessitated a universal language. That the Communal Reformation was there to answer this need was what turned this uprising into a full revolution.

There is no doubt that the rebels were completely sincere in their espousal of the Communal Reformation. With its focus on worldly emancipation derived from Divine law and its emphases on fairness, equality and Christian justice, the Reformation simply confirmed what they already knew: God would never condone such an order; the oppression they were experiencing was simply unchristian. The inclusion of this new – divine – normativity in their daily struggles never challenged religion's central place in life and politics; it was, if anything, further embraced. But the popular interpretation of Christianity was alive with and responsive to concepts that derived

from daily life and the grievances of 'all subjects' with the economic and socio-political order. The revolution's Christianity was a momentous force for the emancipation of people conscious of their own exploitation.

6.   The Conclusion

In 1525, the Revolution of the Common Men attempted to do away with the entire order of feudal domination, annihilating all of its trademark practices from serfdom to tithes, from economic exploitation to lordship. Animated by the epistemic breach provided by the Reformation, the common men quite literally reconstructed the socio-political world in another way. Using Christian principles in emancipatory ways and deploying the Bible of the Communal Reformation as a tool of political liberation, thousands of communities banded together to institute democratic, ascending, egalitarian structures to govern Swabia; practices which later spread to over a quarter of the Holy Roman Empire. Communities became self-governing, self-taxing autonomous political associations voluntarily banding together to govern larger territories on deliberative principles. Revolutionary parliaments were put together in various regions to create constitutions which governed the land.

The Christian Union, as the largest revolutionary assembly in Memmingen named itself, adopted the *Twelve Articles* as representative of its ideals and legislated a new political structure within which the issues identified by the text could have been dealt with. To that end the parliament brought about what was in practice a federal league on a corporate basis. Smaller communes – villages, small towns, urban neighborhoods – banded together as legally equal entities to constitute regional units run on representative principles. These regional bodies of varying size, in turn, became equal partners in the running of the federal state of Upper Swabia. Lordship, insofar as it

would be needed for technical purposes, was set to be legitimized by elections and brought no legal or economic privileges (Blickle, 1981: 125).[58]

This Revolution was the result of the unification of the language and norms of the Communal Reformation, one of the most prevalent branches of reformation thought, with the long struggle for communal political autonomy against the expansion of centralizing, hierarchical authorities. This unity explains, in part, the silencing of a popular revolution the significance of which far surpasses most, if not all, great revolts of the Middle Ages and can rival other modern revolutions. In its coming to life the Revolution of the Common Man not only made feudal structures and politics obsolete, it also demonstrated that another world was possible.

Revolutionized Swabia was very close to what the revolutionaries aimed for in their documents and, in particular, the *Twelve Articles*. Political authorities were completely reconstituted and relocated to communities operating on elections and consent; legitimacy was redefined from automatic divine legitimization of all existing authorities to a quality based on the compatibility of rulers' actions with reinterpreted Christian concepts embodying fairness, justice and equality. Parliaments and assemblies were created throughout for almost all socio-political tasks from leading armies to running mines and for ruling every political body from isolated villages to largest cities on representative principles. As such, the Revolution of the Common Man was closest the feudal order of domination came to being dismantled. The lords' reaction was accordingly strong, comprehensive and lasting; in the next chapter I turn to the counter-revolution.

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[58] The rebels were quick to realize that lordship somewhat naturally produced technical experts at professions in which the revolution was woefully underequipped. Most nobles who joined the revolution were quickly given advisory roles, supporting elected military commanders in armies and castles as well as coordinating logistics.

Chapter 4: The Counter-Revolution and Isolation: The Defeat of the Political Community

1.   Introduction

In the previous chapter I attempted to show how the revolution's concepts and practices were partly inherited from past struggles and partly the result of newly imagined practices and ideas. Similarly, the counter-revolution itself was partly the result of the century-long push for greater authoritarianism against communal politics and partly a reaction to the revolution's unique strengths. The strength of the revolution, as well as its source, were the communities; the same communities which were, not coincidentally, at the heart of the entrenched resistance to the expansion of centralizing political authorities. Unsurprisingly, the lordly response was aimed at dismantling the community as a viable political alternative and ending the threat it posed. The counter-revolution of the lords succeeded in that goal in two distinct ways: in the immediate aftermath of the revolution communities were diminished as legal and administrative entities, losing in part or in full their powers of representation and their autonomy; and conflict settlement methods were redesigned in labyrinthine, unending processes engineered to pacify discontent. Second, and as important, the conceptual and legal primacy of the individual over the community emerged as the new norm which would eventually define the new relationship between political authorities and their subjects.

The counter-revolution was waged on three fronts: military, politico-legal and, not least, normative. On the military front the lords had had little trouble. Most armies of the revolution were either defeated on the battlefield or pacified through negotiations and promises which were never kept. With the ensuing punitive attacks on their disobedient subjects by individual lords the death

toll mounted to over 100,000.[59] On the political and legal side, the Swabian League had authority over the land; with lords of both confessions acting in unity and with clear purpose new laws and regulations changed the political culture of the land for good. And finally, on the normative side, facing the revolution's attack to reshape and reimagine the world, stood Martin Luther. In a series of tracts published from 1525 to 1529 Luther fought the rebellion stronger than anyone else and eventually substituted political authorities with God and obedience to them with faith, treating obedience to political authorities in all things as Godliness and disobedience as the work of devil.

In this chapter I largely focus on the latter two: Luther's response to the revolution and the new legal and administrative measures enacted by the Swabian League. The goal of these measures was to diminish the communities which, for decades, were the primary sites of resistance to the expansion of lordly authority. Throughout the revolution the lords were acutely aware of the role played by the communities as the primary agents of the revolution and the building blocks of the new world; part of the counter-revolution was a clear and explicit attempt to dismantle these political units and replace them with isolated individuals. Luther, on the other hand, played a role which proved much more decisive in the long run. He took on the Communal Reformation and his political theory, heavily influenced by the revolution he saw as threatening to 'destroy both kingdoms', proved fertile ground for authoritarianisms which followed. Indeed, the clearest and

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[59] The punishments visited on rebelling villages by some lords were truly stunning. Lord Casimir of Hohenzollern, the Margrave (*Margraf*; a Count with additional military powers) of Ansbach and Culmbach stands out as one example. Following his forced exile his peasants, like many others, publicly boasted that they would never set their eyes on their lord again. After their defeat, Margrave Casimir had these peasants rounded up and their eyes put out with red hot irons: 'your prediction is now verified' he told them, 'you will never see me again.' In another village he had the rebels' hands cut off, piled up and burned as they were forced to watch: 'now you cannot raise your hand against your rightful lord' (Oman, 1890: 91-2). His retaliations were so brutal that his brother Georg – himself a Margrave – had to intervene: "If all our peasants are done to death in this manner where shall we find others to grow our food? It really behooves us to consider the matter wisely" (quoted in Sessions, 1968: 53).

most explicit application of Luther's political thought and the political behavior he championed for those bound to obedience crystalized in his attempts to counter and defeat the Revolution.

I start the chapter with Luther, analyzing in detail his response in the two texts produced in reaction to the revolution. This part is also instrumental in demonstrating that despite his heroization by Protestants as an icon of resistance and protest, Luther's attempts to justify absolute obedience to all authorities had him arguing that even the lowest constable acting in obedience is a direct agent of God. Famously, John Locke ridiculed precisely this idea when it was implied by Robert Filmer. I then move on to the Swabian League's reaction, contextualizing their efforts with their stated objectives and the outcomes that followed. This chapter concludes by uniting these parts to underline the insights we can draw for political thought from the events of 1525-6.

2.   The Counter-Revolution: Martin Luther

Throughout the revolution Luther emerged as its primary detractor and his attacks on the revolution ultimately furnished vital components for the counter-revolution. As previously argued, his resistance was a combination of genuine ardor and self-interest. The revolution was anathema to Luther's political theory which emphasized "the right to command, the duty to obey, and the mastery over resources to ensure compliance with commands" (Höpfl, 1991: xiv). For Luther it was always very clear: "what matters is rulers and ruling; it is these that constitute a polity" (Höpfl, 1991: xiv). It is crucial, for our purposes, to recognize here that though Luther always valued obedience and the distinction between the rulers and the ruled, never before were these thoughts deployed with such sharpness and real-world application. What emerged from Luther's tracts against the revolution was a clear desire to save men from the inherently and inescapably sinful nature of agency. For Luther, the desire to subsume man's self into the commands of authority, of

constituting man's subjectivity in unconditional obedience to authority was to save what must be saved: man's spiritual salvation.

The revolution had a profound formative effect on Luther's thought and his response reveals, in an unprecedentedly concrete way, the applications of his political thought. The two central dualities in Luther's thought – spiritual versus temporal and internal versus external – that define and hierarchize the world are perhaps clearest and most tangible in their application to counter and put down the Revolution of the Common Men. In other words, the conceptual leg of the counter-revolution, its most important and largely ignored part, was furnished by the adjustment on the ground by Luther of his conceptualizations of authority, freedom, agency and equality. These remarkable adjustments yielded the most authoritarian and even totalitarian aspects of Lutheran thought in the realm of politics.

That Luther changed his theology in response to political developments is not contested: he substantially softened his blanket condemnation of disobedience later, in 1531, to allow his supporters resist the Emperor and fight back the Catholic lords. However, his previous adjustments of these same ideas to help the lords suppress the rebellion and the consequences these changes had for the next five years is much less recognized. One possible reason for the disregard might originate in the fact that one of Luther's most celebrated works – *De Servo Arbitrio* (On the Bondage of the Will) – was produced in 1525, alongside his two tracts against the revolution. Until the very end of his life Luther thought of *De Servo Arbitrio* as his decisive work on freedom and agency; indeed, this work is today considered "the embodiment of Luther's reformation conceptions, the nearest to a systematic statement of them he ever made" (Warfield quoted in Gatiss, 2013). It is simply inconceivable for a revolution of such magnitude and the war that came with it to not have a profound formative effect on Luther's political thought; omitting the

Revolution from our histories has substantially impoverished our understanding of the Reformer's thought.

These effects, I attempt to crystallize below, could be read easily from his two tracts against the revolution. These two brief texts embody quite clearly the political application of Luther's thoughts on human agency, freedom and will. Though the most restrictive aspects of these ideas were dropped later to let his supporters disobey and fight the forces of the Emperor, by then those particular elaborations were picked up and spread by first generation Lutherans to highly receptive lords and princes who quickly applied them to reshape their political authority. In this way they became embedded in the frameworks of the emerging absolutisms across Europe. It is difficult to exaggerate the tremendous impact Luther's absolute and total condemnation of resistance has had on European political structure. Oakley notes: "Forcible resistance to the princes and potentates of this world has rarely been an occasion for moral anguish among late medieval Catholics. But Luther's rejection of it as sinful transformed it for the remainder of the sixteenth century and a goodly part of seventeenth as well into the central and critical question confronting European political thinkers" (1991, 173). As I already noted, Luther's impact went much beyond moral anguish or the decision to resist or not; it completely changed the way resistance is conceptualized.

Besides his genuine desire to save man from his own sinfulness and defeat the revolution, Luther also had a clear interest in seeing the *Communal Reformation* silenced. This was due to two central causes. First was the speed with which the *Communal Reformation* emerged as the most alluring rival to Lutheran Reformation for the hearts and minds of common folk everywhere. Second was that despite all his efforts his enemies trumpeted the entire revolt as Luther's doing. The claims that rebels were influenced by his theology seriously undermined his attempts to enlist rulers to the evangelical cause. Catholic preachers always framed Lutheran Reformation as a

genuine threat to social order: already in 1522 "the most skillful Catholic propagandist of the time

… Thomas Murner" published a tract – *The Great Lutheran Fool* – that depicted Luther greasing

a *Bundschuh*, "the leather peasant boot which had served as the symbol of peasant rebellion since

1502" (Scribner, 1976: 31). With the printing press carrying the propaganda everywhere the

explosion of the 1525 revolution made Murner look not only prophetic but also right in his

accusations. For decades after the revolt Luther would have to fight the – manifestly unfair –

accusations that his theology instigates rebellion and poses a clear danger to authorities everywhere

(Thompson, 1984).[60] Quite conscious of his own role in championing political authority, Luther

fought back these allegations in exaggerated – and rather self-aggrandizing – ways: in 1526 he

wrote "I may boast here that since the time of the Apostles the temporal sword and government

have never been so clearly described or so highly valued as by men, as even my enemies must

admit"; and later in 1529 "no other teacher has written so nobly or so usefully about temporal

government since the time of the Apostles, unless it be St. Augustine" (Thompson, 1984: 1-2).

Consequently, in addition to his thought's clear incompatibility with the uprising, Luther

also had a very clear need to distance himself from it. Thus, in the two tracts he published against

the revolution Luther went to extraordinary lengths. To counter the rebel interpretation of the Bible

he first rejected one of the central aspects of previous reformation literature – that he previously

indirectly embraced – and championed slavery as Christian practice. This surprising break, I will

demonstrate, constitutes a clear break from Luther's previous ideals, voiced as late as 1521, but

parallels his arguments in the 1525 *On the Bondage of Will* on the inescapable nature of men's

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[60] In fact, for Catholics Luther remained a convenient scapegoat for at least another century. In France during the religious conflicts in early seventeenth century prominent clerics would still lay the blame for disobedient subjects on Luther and Calvin (Sommerville, 1991: 356).

slavery, suggesting that Luther's changing his mind on the issue of slavery occurred during that period, and most likely with the Revolution. Moreover, with the second tract, written months after the first, he has moved on to seemingly contradict even the most central aspects of his own theology (see below). Those texts had a definite, traceable impact on his theology and political thought. Later attempts to justify them ended up considerably sharpening what was already a very strong stance on obedience to political authority. In brief, that Luther "tried to sell his movement as preventive medicine against revolution is true enough" (Blickle, 1981: xxii) but I argue that it goes further: that the Revolution of the Common Men had a strong impact on Luther's thoughts and shaped his political theory particularly strongly.[61]

Luther's position vis-à-vis temporal authority and disobedience is quite clear and definite as early as 1520 (*On Christian Liberty*) and even more pronounced in 1523 (*On Secular Authority*). It becomes sharpest and most concrete in 1525 (*On the Bondage of the Will*, but also the two counter-revolutionary tracts) and right after in 1526 (*Whether Soldiers Too Can Be Saved*), finding its ultimate and most restrictive formulation later in 1529 (*On War Against the Turk*). The very first recognition of disobedience as legitimate in Luther's thought dates to late 1530. Reformers who threatened temporal authorities by attempting to translate Divine Law to worldly constitutions

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[61] Noting Luther's efforts on that front, Engels and later Marxists believed Luther changed his mind and switched sides during the rebellion. Engels argued that when forced to choose between the peasants and the lords, "he dropped the popular elements of the movement, and joined the train of the middleclass, the nobility and the princes" (2010: 23). This is simply untrue; Luther never sided with the revolution. It is likely that Engels's attempts to read some continuity and parallels between 1525 and 1848 led him to be over-enthusiastic in some of his observations. What Engels mistakes for an earlier desire for political emancipation in Luther is in fact a strong anti-clericalism, rather characteristic of the time. When, early in his reformation career, Luther argued for the burning of "all those evil teachers of perdition, those popes, bishops, cardinals, and the entire crew of Roman Sodom" (Engels, 2010: 23) he was reflecting the widespread hatred against a thoroughly corrupt and all powerful church whose members routinely abused their power and privileges with impunity (Cohn, 1979; Sreenivasan, 2001). Strauss points at the literature that describes "the monk [as] cursed and despised" and "the priests who … are nothing more than thieves and robbers" (1971: 240). In short, despite the world-altering impact of the Reformation one can safely assert that Luther's was never a call for a complete political revolution against the authorities.

were either convinced by Luther to drop these positions (such as Martin Bucer) or were vehemently opposed until they were exiled by authorities and their influence diminished in Germany (such as Huldrych Zwingli). The reformer Thomas Müntzer, who led the Thuringian leg of the uprising in 1525, was among Luther's targets: "he admonished Frederick the Wise in 1524 of his duty as ruler against the peace-breaker Müntzer: 'in this matter Your Electoral Grace dare not sleep nor tarry, for God will require and you will have to answer for such lackadaisical and negligent use of the sword entrusted to you'." (Lotz, 1962: 14).[62]

As I noted above, the claim that Luther changed core aspects of his political theory to fit the major developments of his age is not as controversial as it initially may seem. Skinner points out that Luther has altered his blanket condemnation of resistance "after 1530" and argued "instead that any ruler who becomes a tyrant may be lawfully and forcibly opposed" (1978: 74). Höpfl concurs: "in the 1530s" Luther asserted "a legal right to godly princes subject to the Holy Emperor to resist the Emperor when he acted outside his constitutional authority". Oakley recognizes this turn for what it is: "Luther changed his mind in the 1530s, though only with great difficulty and in the face of changed political and religious circumstances in Germany" (1991: 173). But Oakley's pragmatic interpretation is not in the majority. Others who concentrate on Luther's political thought in isolation of the circumstances within which they were formed either fully omit or largely downplay the conditions that led Luther to such a remarkable change of mind, just like the omission of the revolution obscures the conditions surrounding Luther's previous convictions on obedience.

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[62] Interestingly, among all the other Reformers he opposed, Luther seems to have feared Müntzer the most. Referring to him as 'the servant of the Devil' or 'the archdevil of Muhlhausen', for years Luther used him in his writings as an example of evil lawbreaker. Even after his execution, Luther became "especially disturbed by the specter of Müntzer. Even five years after … he feared again there could 'come a jolt like that of Müntzer, whose spirit still lives'." (Lotz, 1962: 16)

From 1529 onwards, under the leadership of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, there was a clear attempt to suppress Lutheranism through force of arms. Luther's counsel was being sought constantly by evangelical lords. For several months, unable to reconcile resistance to the Emperor with his previous stance on unconditional obedience, "Luther found it agonizingly difficult to sanction resistance to Charles V" (Housley, 2002: 88). However, in 1531, faced with the imminent danger of his supporters' violent extermination he wrote another tract: *Dr Martin Luther's Warning to his Dear German People*. Here, Luther concluded with clear trepidation: "I will not reprove those who defend themselves against the murderous and bloodthirsty papists, nor let anyone else rebuke them as being seditious, but I will accept their action and let it pass as self-defence" (1531: 88). Kingdon notes "it can be argued that this resistance made possible the very survival of Protestantism" (1991: 200) as the Schmalkaldic League – the defensive alliance of Lutheran lords – was founded mere months after the tract. Indeed, the Schmalkaldic League was the armed leg of Protestantism for over two decades, most notably fighting the Emperor to a stalemate from 1546 to the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, ultimately gaining recognition for Protestantism in the Empire.

The most politically relevant wording of the possibility of resistance Luther very reluctantly developed in 1531 was formulated later, in 1550, by the elders of the city of Magdeburg in its ultimately unsuccessful attempt to rekindle the momentarily subdued Protestant resistance movement. The magistrates and pastors of the overwhelmingly Lutheran town of Magdeburg argued, in their call to revolt, that "it is lawful for an inferior magistrate to resist a superior that would constrain their subject to forsake the truth" (Kingdon, 1991: 203). It was a very careful formulation which justified revolt only by the lords and governors – i.e. *the magistrates* – but not for anyone in the general population. It was, in fact, the exact formulation already generated and

preached by the Calvinist Pierre Viret as early as 1547 which accepted as legitimate only resistance led by magistrates themselves (Kingdon, 1991: 205). As such it anticipated the famous principle agreed upon in the 1555 Peace of Augsburg: '*cuius regio, eius religio*'. The protestant theory of resistance, very much like the Huguenot theory of resistance during the French Religious Wars (Salmon, 1991: 219), described political resistance in the same vein as 'the truth' as worded by Magdeburg elders: exclusively an affair for the lords and princes. This formulation by which disobedience was removed from the people's arsenal completely and given over exclusively to the 'magistrates' is as far as the Lutheran theory of resistance went.

Perfectly illustrating the dangers of omitting the historical context, Kingdon goes as far as arguing that "the Lutheran theory of resistance, as it developed from 1530 to 1550 … remains primarily religious in nature … [assuming] that its adherents have a religious obligation to fight for the true faith" (1991: 204). I disagree; this was the precise formulation – fighting for the true faith against the un-Christian oppressor – that Luther vehemently rejected but a few years before 1530, advocating instead for submissive death in the name of the faith. What this new theory does, in fact, is to attempt to move the inescapable fact of political resistance exclusively to the realm of the rulers and magistrates, further impoverishing the subjects in the political realm. The 1550 Magdeburg formulation, reproduced closely in 1555, makes it very clear that the 'truth' as well as the fight for it is purely a lordly affair – all based on Luther's 1531 tract.

However, for Luther in 1525, with even the lordly self-defense against tyranny being unacceptable, an uprising by the general population was anathema.

2.1.   The Admonition to Peace: A Reply to the Twelve Articles

It seems beyond doubt that before and during the uprising Luther emerged as the chief enemy of the revolutionary cause: "if this rebellion were to proceed and get the upper hand, both

kingdoms [of God and of the world] would be destroyed and there would be neither worldly government nor Word of God" (Luther, 1525a: 29). Luther perceived the revolution not as an attempt to rebuild a new world but simply as one to destroy the old for a world without authority. The similarities between Hobbes's much later description of the state of nature and Luther's description of a world where the rebellion succeeds are evident:

> If your enterprise were right, then any man might become judge over another, and there would remain in the world neither authority, nor government, nor order, nor land, but there would be only murder and bloodshed; for as soon as anyone saw that someone was wronging him, he would turn to and judge him and punish him (1525a:32).

Thus determined to shut down the rebellion Luther first countered the *Twelve Articles* in *An Admonition to Peace: a Reply to the Twelve Articles of the Peasants of Swabia* written in April and distributed widely immediately. Therein Luther describes the peasants as "drunk or out of their mind" (1525a: 30) and blames "false prophets" who "led [the peasants] away from Christian laws … [making] them worse than heathens" (1525a: 33).[63] Contra his 1531 tract which will recognize forcible opposition by 'inferior magistrates' to a tyrant as lawful, Luther's theory of non-rebellion comes across very clearly when it comes to peasant disobedience: "the fact that the rulers are wicked and unjust does not excuse tumult and rebellion … he who resists is wrong … he who resists makes strife" (1525a: 32). It is difficult to come across a stronger condemnation of resistance.

In giving specific responses to rebel articles, Luther's zeal for order led him to reject even the most key aspects of previous Reformation literature – of which he was most certainly well aware. Thus, while one of the "best known and most influential" pro-reform documents, *The Reformation of Emperor Sigismund* (*Refomatio Imperator Sigismundi*, circa 1438), condemned

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[63] It is likely that this is the text Oman was using when he describes how the peasants fell into the hands of evil fellows who turned them into 'blaspheming hordes'.

the re-emerging practice of serfdom as "an incredible outrage," with particularly damning words for priests who would partake in it (Strauss, 1971: 7, 24), Luther went as far as championing slavery to deny any validity to the *Twelve Articles*. In explicit contradiction to the *Reformation of Emperor Sigismund*, which described one man saying to another "you are my property!" as fundamentally un-Christian (Strauss, 1971: 25), Luther argued instead that those who even disagree with the practice of slavery are not Christians:

> [The Peasant's Third Article argues] 'There shall be no serfs, for Christ has made all men free.' That is making Christian liberty an utterly carnal thing. Did not Abraham and other patriarchs and prophets have slaves? Read what St. Paul teaches about servants, who, at that time, were all slaves. Therefore this article is dead against the Gospel. It is a piece of robbery by which every man takes from his Lord the body, which has become his lord's property. For a slave can be a Christian, and have Christian liberty, in the same way that the prisoner or a sick man is a Christian, and yet not free. This article would make all men equal, and turn the spiritual kingdom of Christ into a worldly, external kingdom; and that is impossible (Luther, 1525a: 35).

In this championing of slavery Luther was going against not only the established reformation literature but also his own previous convictions. In 1519, after reading John Hus's 1411 treatise *On the Church*, Luther wrote "I have taught and held all the teachings of John Hus, but thus far did not know it" (Skinner, 1978: 48). Remarkably, among numerous statements underlining the equality of the believers, in that particular treatise Hus argues: "an equal has no rule over an equal … and … if no equal has rule over an equal, the catholic faith is gainsaid" (Hus, 1411). As such, the Hussite rebellions in neighboring Bohemia were the only other peasant uprising which rejected all lordship (Bak, 1976: 6). As late as 1521, Luther still stood by this conviction and did not fear to publicly "associate himself with the Bohemian heresy" (Skinner, 1978: 48). These convictions seem to have changed with the Revolution which led Luther to rediscover the Christian justification for slavery.

One explanation for Luther's easy embrace of slavery might lie in *On the Bondage of the Will*, the 1525 tract which remains one of Luther's most valued works (as well as the centerpiece

of his famous diatribe with Desiderius Erasmus). In it, Luther carefully described that through his own fault, man's will was "not free nor under its own control" but "the slave of sin" and Satan. This slavery was inescapable too: even after embracing God and being directed by His Spirit, "men remained slaves and captives," this time "of God's immediate spiritual power" (Overhoff: 1997: 616-8). Thus, Luther was not abandoning previous reformation literature just to combat the revolution; he was sincere in his belief that the disobedience of the common men was both cause and proof of their slavery to Satan. Actual slavery of a real Christian and worldly unfreedom, to Luther, was incomparably preferable to slavery to Satan in the guise of worldly emancipation.

On the Bondage of the Will reveals the desperation with which all men were seen by the Reformer: "free choice is nothing"; "free choice avails for nothing but sinning" (Skinner, 1978: 6). This conception was a clear departure from the Thomist lineage which imagined man as intuitively seeking virtue. Indeed, Thomas Aquinas placed great value on men's freedom and, after all else, had an unreserved faith in his ability to find God by his own will. It was this break which eventually led to "one of the most famous exchanges in western intellectual history" (Kolb, 2005: 7) between Luther and Erasmus. The great humanist saw in man a creature of reason capable of free will and good acts pleasing God. While Erasmus continued a line of Thomist optimism regarding men's ability to do good, Luther was adamant: only in obedience to civil authorities and moral law can men perform good acts. Thus, man's obedience should never be a choice: it is a mandate not because of the value or the justness of the command but *because* it is a command. Luther's unconditional condemnation of all resistance in the *Admonition* is better understood in this light.

From the discussion on Luther's defense of slavery we can glimpse a striking, central duality that is very informative of his thought: the spiritual versus worldly existence of concepts.

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It is certainly not the first time a variation of the old Platonic duality is used by a Christian thinker to establish a hierarchy that devalues worldly existence, but analyzing its Lutheran interpretation and application during the revolution leads exactly to those insights that I was hoping to flesh out. In this text this central duality emerges in two forms: the existence of a spiritual, Christian liberty versus a temporally existing freedom and a conception of Christian equality as distinct from worldly equality.[64] Luther rejects worldly equality precisely because it belongs to the kingdom of Christ – and the peasants were misled in seeking it here. On the other hand, since the peasants already have full Christian freedom in *their internal world* they could not gain more by rebellion; they would only be robbing their Lords of their own bodies and, through disobedience, risk their salvation too. For Luther, then, the fact that all men have inner freedom thus becomes the reason and justification for their complete and unbroken obedience to all commands and conditions, up to and including the perpetual enslavement of their outer-selves. The rebels' attempt to actualize their Christian freedom in this world and emancipate themselves from oppression, for Luther, only demeans and diminishes the perfection of the concept. Whereas the *Communal Reformation* justifies the uprising by the Bible which declares all men free, Luther here argues that since the peasants are free spiritually, they *should* be unfree actually.

In a similar way, the existence of perfect, universal equality in the kingdom of Christ leads to actual inequality that could not and should not be changed. Since it is 'perfect' in God's kingdom, it could not be had in the temporal world; the equality of all Christians thus justifies their actual inequality. The peasants *must* be serfs and slaves in the world precisely because they have Christian freedom in their inner world and full equality in the kingdom of Christ. Marcuse

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[64] It must be noted, here, that for Calvin also "Christian liberty was 'in all its parts a spiritual thing' … not to be misinterpreted and placed in the service of anarchy and licentiousness" (Oakley, 1991: 187)

interprets this stance as one in defense of the relationships of property (which, I argue, is a side-effect of Luther's staunch defense of the established order), but he also sees pretty much the same picture with Lutheran dualities: "Precisely because he [the peasant] is 'actually' (as a Christian, as a rational person) completely free must he 'unactually' (as a member of the 'external' world) be unfree" (Marcuse, 2008: 7). Luther describes perfect freedom and equality and carefully puts them out of reach: because of and by their perfection both freedom and equality remain unattainable in this world; one, because it already exists in full in the inner (as opposed to actual) world, the other because it belongs to God's realm (as opposed to the world). Luther's interpretation of the Platonic distinctions is completed with even the possibility of actual freedom becoming immaterial and seeking it becoming a sin.

With these two core concepts – of equality and freedom – safely locked away, it becomes almost an afterthought for Luther to dismiss the socio-economic and political problems that aggrieve the peasants. The *Admonition to Peace* responds to the rebels' many socio-economic woes thusly: "these things do not concern a Christian, and … he cares nothing about them. He lets anyone else rob, take, skin, scrape, devour, and rage, for he is a martyr on earth" (1525a: 36). Accordingly, since the willingness to endure exploitation and be 'devoured' are outward signs of Christianity, the clear unwillingness of the rebels to be exploited further became an indication of their un-religiousness and, later, their service to the devil.

It is here, in this condemning dismissal, that we can see the third, and to us maybe most important, duality that informs Luther's political thought: the external behavior and internal demeanor of the subject. The Christian described by Luther's text is not only completely subservient to his master, he *welcomes* life-long slavery. This point is worth emphasizing: Luther does not just prescribe to lower classes non-resistance to life-long exploitation; his arguments

amount to more than the justification of and submission to the existing order. *He asks that the slave receives his worldly condition gladly*. In other words, it is not sufficient that lower classes act obediently in the world; their inner worlds must also match and fit their external conditions. They must behave like slaves because they are enslaved; they must also welcome the slavery, thinking, feeling and happily behaving like slaves because they are Christians. Luther's conception of obedience, in short, put chains to the minds of people. It is precisely because his conception of Christianity is so strongly enmeshed with unconditional and constant obedience that Luther clearly writes 'he who resists is wrong'.

This is very telling of the norms of obedience embraced by the counter-revolution and the ideal Christian subjects its engineers had in mind: Luther counters the Communal Reformation's justification for the rebellion – that Christians are made free and equal by God and thus should be so on earth – by severing the link between internal and external freedom and differentiating between spiritual and actual equality. A Christian's freedom can never be an excuse for actual freedom. However, the relationship is reversed when it comes to a Christian's slavery. This time the actual, external conditions dictate inner acceptance and prescribe worldly behavior. In short: internal freedom does not and cannot lead to external freedom; but external slavery leads to the internal acceptance of constant and unconditional submission. It seems Luther's theories, when applied to the real world, leave no avenue for any sort of political emancipation; however, they provide the ideal tool for political authorities to isolate and enslave their subjects.

Contra his previous claims and the overwhelming consensus of the accumulated Reformation literature, in his fierce refusal of the emancipatory and egalitarian qualities of the *Communal Reformation* used by the revolution, Luther argued that slavery is not only justified but is an essential form of political obligation for all true Christians. With this claim Luther denies the

possibility of real-world equality and freedom because of their 'ideal' existence; he also extends real world slavery to the slave's 'ideal,' inner demeanor. The perpetually obedient slave who was happy with his enslavement – which will surface later on, in 1529, in its final form (see below) – was Luther's cure to the revolution. To the lords, German as well as Swedish, English and so on, it was an ideal solution.

2.2.   Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants

Despite whatever presumptions he may have had to the contrary, Luther's clear condemnation of the rebellion in the *Admonition* had no real effect on the revolution's spread. Luther thus wrote his second manuscript – *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants* – in late April, following several major rebel gains: the surrender to the rebels of Duke Ulrich of Württemberg, the capture of the Elector of Mainz and the declaration of allegiance to the revolution's cause and the *Twelve Articles* by the Archbishop of Mainz. This text reveals the full outrage Luther must have felt and the extent to which the reformer was willing to go to put down the rebellion. The brief text, published in early May just as the lords' armies started taking the field, shocked even his most devout followers and friends. Hermann Mühlport, the Lutheran mayor of Zwickau, to whom Luther previously dedicated one of his most famous tracts (the *Christian Liberty* (1520)), wrote in a personal letter to a friend: "He [Luther] became the hammer of the poor … he called for the private and public murder of the peasants … There was enough murdering of peasants, burghers, women, and children taking place; not only were the poor folk being killed, but also their goods and possessions were being taken away from their innocent wives and children and burnt." In doing all those, Mühlport feared that "they [the nobility] will [now] rely on Martin's tract, that this will gain them eternal salvation" (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 322-323).

Mühlport's fears were not exaggerated: the short tract opens by Luther declaring that "the peasants … have abundantly merited death in body and soul … because they are breaking this obedience [to be submissive and obedient]" (1525b: 38). Punishing disobedience with death, Luther wrote "it is the devil's work they are at … let everyone who can, smite, slay, and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel. It is just as when one must kill a mad dog." And "if a man is an open rebel *every man* is his judge and executioner." He further called on all princes of the land: "Even heathen rulers have the right and power to punish; nay, it is their duty to punish them for it is just for this purpose that they bear the sword… Stab, smite, slay, whoever can. If you die in doing it, well for you! A more blessed death can never be yours, for you die in obeying the divine Word and commandment" (Luther, 1525b: 37-38). So, Luther shifts the martyrdom from the Christian peasant who welcomes slavery to the executioners of these peasants who refuse the initial martyrdom to which he subscribed. Whereas in *The Admonition* Luther conceded the possibility of the rulers being wicked (yet still not to be resisted), *Against the Robbing…* opened the doors of heaven to all rulers, even those who "[do] not tolerate the Gospel", so long as they killed rebellious peasants.

Though exceptionally strong on the surface, these lines are better understood alongside *On the Bondage of the Will* and Luther's conviction that resistance is the root cause of men's damnation and follows from slavery to Satan. Likely unaware of these connections – as *On the Bondage* was to be published seven months after this tract, and, quite famously, in response to Erasmus – Luther's many friends and defenders argued that this tract is not to be considered a theological one (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 322). To Luther, however, this tract "did not appear at all exaggerated" (Lotz, 1962: 14). In fact, in 1526 he incorporated the "violent and bloodthirsty" (Cameron, 2012: 209-11) condemnation of the rebels into his theology in a substantial way,

rendering it a central part of his political thought. Quite the contrary, and in contradiction to modern scholarship which chooses to ignore this text, his private letters show that he always considered it an essential part of his theology: "Whoever condemns this treatise ruins what up to now he has sought in the Gospel" (Lotz, 1962: 14). We can then assume without hesitation that this text captures Luther's convictions concerning rebellion: that "nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel." Indeed, considering his staunch belief that Adam's rebellion was the source of all sin and the reason for humanity's curse, this should not come as a surprise (see below).

Through letters and meetings, Luther's confidents, such as Mühlport, reminded him that there were far too many peasants he was sentencing. Others apparently underlined that the lords were behaving in despicable ways leaving peasants no alternatives. Luther was adamant: "The peasants, even though there are many thousands of them, are all robbers and murderers … it is pitiable but necessary [that severe penalties are used], in order to bring fear and meekness to these people … Don't let yourself be too distressed [with their fate] for it will do good for many souls who will be intimidated by this" (Lotz, 1962: 14). One final argument was put to him that among the 'many thousands' there may be innocent souls. "If there are some among the peasants who are not guilty, God will save them. If they will not obey, then little be the pity for them" (Lotz, 1962: 14).

Though extraordinary, Luther's condemnation to death of *all* disobedient peasants and letting God sort out the innocent is not unparalleled. Illustrating that historical parallel here will help me further flesh out the argument concerning the substitution of faith with obedience in Luther's political theory. Luther's argument is very similar to the justification used by the early 13th century Inquisitor, and later Archbishop of Narbonne, Arnaud Amalric, for the slaughter of

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all the 20,000 inhabitants of the city of Beziers during the Cathar Crusade in 1209. When his soldiers worried that innocent Catholics might be in the city the inquisitor replied '*Caedite eos. Novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius*' - kill them, for the Lord knows those that are his own (excerpted from Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Medieval Heresies* in Reich, 2004: 180-181). But whereas Amalric's concern was with the Catholicism of the victims, Luther's response *explicitly substitutes faith with obedience*. It is striking that, when asked of the possible innocence of certain victims, Luther himself makes the connection between innocence and obedient behavior. This point bears underlining: the mark of an innocent soul, to Luther, seems to be that he is obedient. If not, the disobedient subject should be killed, and his death made an example for intimidating others into obedience and thus innocence for which obedience is the sign.

Another central controversy with the text was Luther's promise of divine blessing to the soldiers and rulers. Despite the central doctrine of *sola fide* (salvation by faith alone), he was understood as having promised divine rewards in return for good works, namely, the slaughtering of rebels. Even loyal followers – like Mühlport – interpreted Luther's meaning to that effect. This was unprecedented for Lutheran theology and his contemporaries did not miss the implications: "God help us! Luther forgot himself that time! Before he taught that a man must obtain grace and salvation by faith alone, and not by works, and here he ascribes salvation not only to works, but even to the heinous work of bloodshed! The Rhine is on fire at last!" (Housley, 2002: 87). The Catholic conception of 'good works' was indeed rejected by evangelical theology. Luther clarified his stance the following year, incorporating the strong condemnation of 1525 into his theology with another tract. *Whether Soldiers Too Can Be Saved* (1526) clearly followed from the *Against the…*. In it Luther writes: "Slaying and robbing do not seem to be works of love" but when it is done "in obedience" to a Prince by a "soldier fulfilling his office by punishing the wicked, killing

the wicked", it is just. Because, he argues, when it is done in obedience to authority "the hand that wields this sword and kills with it is not man's hand, but God's; and *it is not man, but God, who hangs, tortures, beheads, kills, and fights*. All these are God's works and judgments" (Luther, 1526: 218-219, emphasis added).

This is a crucially important revelation on Luther's part. Again, one central aspect of Luther's theory that was already present – the belief that all authorities are placed there by God – found its explicit, actual elaboration in the face of the revolution. The 1526 text written to clarify and defend the second tract against the rebellion expands on the previous condemnation of disobedience and takes it further; it marks the ultimate point in Lutheran theory on what is permissible in obedience to political authority: *everything*. So long as it is done under orders from political, temporal authority, robbing, hanging, torturing, beheading, and killing were not only justified and right but they were in fact works of love. What makes them into God's works carried by His hand was that they were done under the commands of political authority. Oakley notes that Luther thought of political authorities "as the masks (*larvae*) behind which God conceals the exercise of his temporal governance," and thus "to be obeyed as much for conscience sake as for fear" (1991: 170). It was precisely this line of thinking that resulted in the portrayal of tyrants as merely the instruments of God's wrath: the ruler's wickedness, oppression and tyranny was a sign of God's anger.

However, if we were to consider the continuity, that the 1526 tract was in part an effort to clarify and defend the controversies generated by the 1525 tract *Against the* …, Luther's argument goes beyond that: since political authority is a direct extension of Divine Will, all that is done in obedience to that authority is, in fact, done by God. Following orders, independent of their nature, absolves one of any potential wrongdoing since the obedient nature of the act transfers agency to

the the political authority, and then onto God, the absolute owner of authority. Through obedience to political authorities one becomes instruments and agents of God.

It is worthwhile, here, to further clarify the reach of the argument of the 1526 tract. Much later, John Locke rejects Robert Filmer's arguments thusly: in an attempt to display the excessive nature of Filmer's argument Locke asks whether God's power, which is supposedly transferred to the King through Adam, is also exercised by the lowest constable. Luther's *Whether Soldiers Too* clearly answers yes. The essential argument here is not that Luther's argument seems to favor the Divine Right of Kings; it is that Luther presents a clear binary to understand political agency between obedience which justifies everything and disobedience which can never be justified. In the obedient action of a soldier, independent of what that action is, Luther sees God's hand literally doing the act; in the disobedience of the peasant he only sees demons from hell. In brief: *when it comes to obedience Luther substitutes political authority with God*. Oakley's argument above, that Luther perceived authorities as masks behind which God hides, speaks to this point. When it comes to obedience to political authorities, Luther effectively filled God into the vessel which was political authority; for all intents and purposes the institution became the object of faith.

Thus, Luther saw no contradiction or irony when *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants* resulted in the eventual justification of robbing and murdering as works of love: it was not the act that determines whether the action was justified and right but the context under which the agent acts. Luther's take on human agency was famously bleak: "*All our actions* proceed from our 'averse and evil' natures, which are completely enslaved to Satan … we can 'do nothing but averse and evil things'." (Skinner, 1978: 5). Man's bondage to sin was inescapable: "through the one transgression of the one man, Adam, we are all under sin and damnation" with "no capacity to do anything but sin and be damned" (Skinner, 1978: 5).

This desperation with which the Reformer perceived man's agency resulted in a particular conception of free will: one which must be inhibited at all costs if men were to escape evil. Acting in this world was an inescapable burden; men could not have been prevented from acting – how could that be? But all acts, Luther seems convinced, proceed from and result in evil damning men from the start. Luther thus had to find a way, for the spiritual salvation of men, to direct this unavoidable capacity for agency away from damnation. This was the core challenge which plagued Luther and, I believe, this was the motivation which drove him to the extremes we witness in these two texts: saving people from themselves. He always perceived authorities' duty accordingly: bring order to the evil of the world and contain the wickedness of men from damning their eternity. His constant tolerance for the authorities' behavior, which came through loud and clear in the first text, was due to this understanding too: to Luther, they were men who were burdened with the sword and necessarily dealt with the evil of the world.

Thus, since men's agency – which inevitably rose from and led to evil and damnation – could not be stopped, it had to be constrained and directed towards obedience. This obedience freed man from the burden of agency and turned him into an instrument of God. The only way to act in this world but escape the damnation which is sure to follow from these actions is to live in complete – external *and* internal – obedience to political authority, which is the direct extension of an otherwise inscrutable, unknowable Divine Will. This is the thinking which justified and legitimated torture, murder and robbery in obedience to authorities but condemned all disobedience to death and damnation. For his spiritual salvation, this most important of all things, men had to act in obedience to God as expressed through the existence and commands of political authority. In the application of his theology to political thought Luther gave full meaning to this point: we can only do averse and evil things; an act can be justified only and explicitly if it was

done in obedience to political authority; and in obedience to political theory all acts were just and justified. The internal discipline, the losing of one's self in authority, the obedient constitution of men's subjectivity, were all for his own good; to save his soul from the inescapably evil nature of his agency. The irony of Luther's becoming a later icon of resistance and protest is difficult to miss.

From here it truly was not a long stretch to the explicit, unquestioned and unconditional prohibition of disobedience for the slave, which, it is worth remembering, is the inescapable state of all men. Indeed, it is precisely this formulation which, in 1529, found its final form in Lutheran theology. Luther had already argued, against the peasants who likened their plight to the Jewish slaves of Egypt, that "a slave can be a Christian, and have Christian liberty, in the same way that the prisoner or a sick man is a Christian, and yet not free" (1525a: 35). In *On War Against the Turk* (1529), Luther advised the Christian enslaved by the heretical Turk – whom he elsewhere calls 'the infidel scourge of God' – to never disobey his new master: "you have lost your freedom and become someone's property, and that without the will and knowledge of your master you cannot get out of this without sin and disobedience" (Luther, 1529: 346). This was really but a natural extension of his writings on the revolution: a perpetually obedient slave who was bound internally by God's will which is made evident in his external conditions. The nature and context of these conditions – the identity of the master, the conditions of exploitation, the unbearable nature of life – were all irrelevant: political authority, in any and all forms, thus emerged in Luther's political thought as the only knowable, recognizable extension of God's Will. God may or may not have been behind the mask of political authority; for the slave all that matters was the mask and its commands.

The implications of this line of thought are rather clear and very central. With his reaction to the revolution, Luther ended by describing obedience to temporal authority – independent of its creed or tyranny – as a proxy for obedience to God. Whereas Luther's theology always argued that worldly authorities are extensions of divine will, it is only with Luther's response to the revolution that this description found its concrete meaning in a political environment: *partial deification of political authority* by imbuing its commands with Godly qualities and *transference of individual agency to God*. In that obedience everything is just and justified while anything else will result in death as punishment on earth and damnation after. His reaction to the 1525 rebellion made it abundantly clear that for Luther, with God partly hidden, partly evident in all authority *obedience was worship and disobedience rebellion to God* independent of the specific actions that were taken. In that way Luther could declare, very much in the same context, that robbing and slaying are offences meriting death and damnation when done by peasants and blessed works of love undertaken by God's hand when done by the soldiers. A Christian's task was, then, to act and think like a slave vis-à-vis political authorities: to offer unconditional subjection and obedience to political authorities even when they rob, take, skin and devour their subjects. In fact, Lutheran preachers, *exactly* between 1525 and 1529, reached the conclusion that "it may be *particularly* wrong to resist tyrannical rulers" (Skinner, 1978: 70). William Tyndale of England, the first-generation Lutheran who was immensely influential in the English Reformation, reproduced the argument in 1528 in his *The Obedience of a Christian Man*: "evil rulers" are simply "a sign that God is angry and wroth with us" (Skinner, 1978: 70). He elaborated: "'They will kill us then,' sayest thou … We are still bound to submit: … a Christian called to suffer even the bitter death for his hope's sake, and because he will do no evil" (Skinner, 1978: 70). It was also in 1528 that Olaus Petri gave his famous sermon *Kronungspredikan*, during the coronation of Gustavus Vasa.

Very much like Tyndale, Petri's sermon, which essentially laid out the definitive principles of the Swedish Reformation, underlined "the duty of all subjects, clergy as well as laity … to be loyal and obedient to the King" and presented "even tyrants and wicked rulers [as] ministers of God, instruments of his wrath to punish those that do evil" (Oakley, 1991: 176). These words were echoed in a few years by Calvin who firmly rejected all disobedience "even to tyrannical oppression. Tyrants," Calvin argued, "may be the instrument of God's wrath" (Oakley, 1991: 187).[65] Thus future alterations, which Luther had to make to ensure the survival of evangelism, have had little effect on the initial spread and appeal of Lutheranism to lords everywhere.

Despite differences in their theologies – which I will not go into – Luther and Calvin are almost identical in their take on disobedience. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Luther and Calvin shared an equally bleak view of human agency. In his work, Calvin echoes Luther's *On The Bondage of The Will*: "man [is] now deprived of freedom of will, and miserably enslaved" (Calvin, 2012: Book Second, Chapter 3). Man as described by Luther was "averse and evil"; he had "no capacity to do anything but sin and be damned" (Skinner, 1978: 5). Calvin agreed: "the intellect and will of the whole man [are] corrupt" (Calvin, 2012: Book Second, Chapter 3). For Lutheran political theory, the real threat to a Christian is not worldly oppression or even enslavement but *disobedience to authority*, which, through God's will, was always embodied by a person. Disobedience, to Luther, was the chief reason "all people became sinners and subject to death and the devil." It is "called the original sin, the chief sin" (Luther, 2005: 348); "a greater sin than murder, unchastity, theft and

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[65] It is noteworthy that, just like Lutheranism before, Calvinism only articulated a coherent theory of resistance once its existence was in danger following the St. Bartholomew's massacres of 1572 in France which put Calvinists under a very real threat of violent annihilation (Kingdon, 1991: 193-218). However, since this was after Calvin's passing in 1564, he remained more consistent in his condemnation of all disobedience.

dishonesty, and all that these may include" (Luther, 2009: 81). It is "through the transgression of the one man, Adam, [that] we are all under sin and damnation" (Skinner, 1978: 5).

The evangelist conception of original sin – weighing upon all future generations and rendering all men worthless and undeserving of freedom – was "characteristic of the authoritarian experience" (Fromm, 2001: 146-147) and Calvin, exactly like Luther, also understood the original sin as *inoboedienta*, i.e. disobedience (Marcuse, 2008: 23). He argued "through the fall and revolt of Adam, the whole human race [was] made accursed and degenerate" (Calvin, 2012: Book Second, Chapter 1). To Luther as well as Calvin, Adam's disobedience rendered all men thereafter inescapably evil, corrupt, and enslaved to sin and Satan. For men envisioned as such it was not only sinful but clearly blasphemous to claim political autonomy to reshape political order and disobey existing authorities – who owed their positions to God.

These aspects of Lutheran theology were unsurprisingly popular with the rulers who were now able to step into the shoes of the ecclesiastical authorities as well. Reading in Tyndale's 1528 book that, in Lutheranism, disobedience to political authority is always wrong and "they that resist shall receive the damnation" (Skinner, 1978: 68), Henry VIII exclaimed "*this is a book for me and for all kings to read*" (Scarisbrick, 1968:247; Oakley, 1991:177). J.J. Scarisbrick (1968) claims that Tyndale's book was instrumental in convincing Henry VIII to found the Anglican Church in 1534, declaring himself 'Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England' and turn England into the practical theocracy it has become under his reign.[66] This is noteworthy: a few years before he admired Lutheran conceptions of kingly authority and obedience in Tyndale's work, Pope Leo X named Henry VIII 'Defender of the Faith' for his 1521 work *Defence of the Seven Sacraments*

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[66] Effectively making the monarch the final authority in all theological, doctrinal and legal disputes, the 1534 Act of Supremacy was one of the most important milestones of the English Reformation.

wherein he fought Luther's attacks against Catholicism. [67] Henry VIII's behavior, here, is characteristic of the swift turn towards Lutheranism and further strengthens my argument that a central motivation for the rulers was the authoritarian aspects of the reformed faith.

Indeed, Hobbes also notes, in his *Behemoth*, the effect Lutheranism has had against rebellion: Henry's reign was "without any rebellion at home" in clear part because "the doctrine of Luther beginning a little before" was "so well received" (Hobbes, 1839: 117; Overhoff, 1997: 605). [68] Similarly, following his adoption of Lutheranism in 1531, Gustavus Vasa of Sweden immediately proceeded to appoint as Archbishop Laurentius Petri, the brother of Olaus Petri who was the major champion of Swedish Reformation. With secular and ecclesiastical authority united in the person of the King, Sweden also quickly became an autocracy under the absolute rule of Gustav I. The conversion of these countries by their Kings to versions of Protestantism were predicated precisely on the principles of obedience Luther elaborated in response to the revolution.

Following the conversions, royal propagandists had no need for the sophisticated theological justifications the Reformers used. The new norms for governance and obedience which dominated the arena of public debate derived from factual autocracies and, unsurprisingly, justified them in return. The ideologists of royal supremacy, Oakley argues, already looked very much like proto-Protestants in their commitments (1991: 178). [69] Stephen Gardiner's *De Vera Obedientia* (1535) provides a case in point. A devout Catholic Bishop (and later Lord Chancellor to Mary I

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[67] Indeed, the King's book became quite famous quickly, going over twenty reprints – two in German – in several decades. It also prompted Luther to respond to him in 1522 with *Against Henry, King of the English* (Scarisbrick, 1968: 110-113).

[68] Hobbes's assertion on the absence of rebellions at home is, of course, not accurate. There were a number of significant uprisings during the reign of Henry VIII, most notably the 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace.

[69] Oakley documents that when those ideologists and propagandists had to face key developments which forced them to address delicate issues, they chose to bypass them by various methods such as declaring papal decrees "of none authoritie among the people in any countrey, tyl they be confirmed by princely power" or discounting such efforts as "thinges … indifferent" (1991: 179)

during her persecution of the protestants), Gardiner wrote: the King "is 'God's lieftenaunt', 'as it were the ymage of God upon earthe', upon our obedience to whom the scriptures impose no limits and add not 'one sillable of excepicion' save only 'the obedience due to God' himself (Oakley, 1991: 180). Later, another important figure in the English Reformation, Richard Taverner wrote that "kings 'represent onto us the parson even of god himself', so that God 'adourneth them wyth the honourable title of hys own name callying them Goddes'." (Oakley, 1991: 181). The ascension of kings to the level of Gods demonstrates, besides the clear Lutheran influence in Hobbes's much later formulation, how quickly and decisively the new Lutheran norms of obedience were accepted and championed by the ideologists of royal power independent of confessional standing. To put it using Oakley's analogy (God hiding behind the mask of political authority), the mask ended up assuming all the qualities of the face behind and no longer needed the legitimation provided by the face. The constellation of norms associated with obedience to God, alongside its qualities – unconditional, unquestioned, constant – shifted to the institution which now embodied political authority in full: the early state.

Luther offered the rebellion two major things: his personal example as a rebel standing up against the two greatest authorities of the land – the Holy See and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire[70]; and the epistemic breach rising from the realization that God does not necessarily condone the order of domination under which so many are oppressed and exploited. His target was the papacy and the overwhelming power of the church in socio-political life. But the uprising's revolutionary use of biblical norms and concepts were profoundly anti-Lutheran and Luther

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[70] Luther's fame increased immensely following the Diet of Worms. There, asked to denounce his writings and repent, Luther reportedly told the Pope's representatives and the Emperor himself, 'Here I stand, I can do no other'.

responded to it with great fury.[71] Part of what he produced in reaction was so radical that even his close friends and supporters were moved to condemn (even if privately) his writing. Those aspects nevertheless constituted key parts of Luther's theology and were reflected in his political theory, spreading far and wide with his blessing. Luther's unconditional condemnation of all rebellion and unquestioning, unqualified submission to *all* authorities were invaluable to the lords, both those who fought the rebellion and others. It became clear from the height of the revolution in 1525 to 1531 that, for Luther, all political authorities were indirectly yet inescapably objects of faith in their own right simply by virtue of existing, independent of their holders' behavior, virtue, or even faith and religiousness. In short, the obedience of the subject to the political authority described by Luther's political theory was an exact replica of the obedience due to God.

Finally, Luther's contribution to authoritarianism and even subsequent totalitarianisms was beyond the absolute condemnation of rebellion. His discovery of complete freedom and absolute equality in every Christian's 'inner world' rendered even the possibility of actual freedom immaterial. Hannah Arendt, observing that this "inner feeling" of freedom has "no outer manifestations" argues that it is "by definition politically irrelevant" (1968: 146). Though this is true for Luther's theology, more certainly needs to be said to illustrate the extent of its effects. The individual's estrangement from the material conditions of the world and subsequent alienation from political freedom has had decidedly political consequences. Arendt's tracing of the "conscious attempt to divorce the notion of freedom from politics" (1968: 147) quite

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[71] In fact, if a spiritual connection must be established between the reformers and the rebels, the revolutionary drive to transform worldly laws and practices to conform to the law of God is much closer to the reformation ideals of Hyuldrich Zwingli who was preaching similar ideas in Zurich. As can be expected, Luther fought against Zwingli and sought, successfully, to eradicate his influence from Germany. Another reformer, Martin Bucer, also initially embraced the idea of temporal law determined by God's law but changed his mind years before the rebellion and unhesitatingly joined Luther in condemning the rebels.

characteristically spans from ancient Greece to Kant's anchoring of freedom to the faculty of will and skips Luther. However, neither Karl Marx nor Friedrich Nietzsche misses the momentous implications of Luther's theology for political freedom and obligation. "Nietzsche looked upon Luther as a moral fanatic"; "a sick man looking for a cure"; "the greatest single force that ruined Europe's most important chance of throwing off the Christian yoke" (Bluhm, 1956: 79, 83). From a Nietzschean perspective, Luther emerges as *the* heir to the reversal of values, the German embodiment of the slave revolt in morality. Marx's analysis of Luther's impact is surprisingly close to Nietzsche's: the internalization of the priest to the layman. He "overcame bondage based on devotion by replacing it with bondage based on conviction … He freed man from external religiosity by making religiosity the inwardness of man" (Marx, 1994: 34). To Marx, "the Peasants' War, the most radical fact of German history, came to grief because of theology" (Marx, 1994: 34). Marx points clearly at Luther's theology and his creation of the 'priestly man' as chiefly responsible for "the most unfree fact of German history – [the] status quo" (Marx, 1994: 34). It is striking that for all his materialism Marx's analysis of the internalization of the priest to man is evocative of the disciplining techniques later described by Foucault.

3.   The Counter-Revolution: The Swabian League

Luther's impact on European thought and state is, of course, incomparable. Nevertheless, the other part of the counter-revolution, the concerted reaction of the Swabian League lords should not be underestimated. While Luther redefined the norms of political obligation and legitimacy, the concerted reaction of the lords restructured the socio-political, legal and economic background of the time and set the stage for the emergence of the early absolutisms. Though nowhere as world-altering as Luther's influence, the lords' restructuring effectively altered the political culture of the age and laid the groundwork to produce a political system where disobedience on a large scale

would become harder than ever. Obedience as a negotiated contract between the communities and the lord was replaced, to a large extent, by an individual political obligation which was due unconditionally. Disobedience also changed form from an occasional communal act, undertaken for bargaining or resistance, to an individual plea for reprieve or negotiation.

The policies decided at the Swabian League meetings during and immediately after the revolution reshaped the relationship of obedience from a feudal arrangement between unequal parties into an absolutist model between an all-powerful authority and a powerless individual subject. Of course, much more time was necessary for these changes to take root and become the norm but this is where and when their roots were planted. While Luther's theories and theology effectively legitimized this new relationship between an all-powerful absolute and absolutist authority and the naked individual, the League's reaction to the revolution was instrumental in the overall move to an early form of absolutism.

The changes that followed 1525 were embedded in a continuity of increasing centralization and oppression at the expense of the lower classes; the lordly response to the revolution hastened and further crystallized this already present impetus. The complete military defeat of the uprising and the widespread dismantling of the traditional sites of resistance allowed the landed elite to further their economic and political interests with no real opposition. Ultimately, the centralization of power and resources coupled with the isolation of the subjects robbed of their traditional rights created the ideal outcome for the lords: a politico-legal framework conducive to the preservation of obedience throughout the land. This, I hope to show below, was always the lords' intention. Individually, autonomous communities were always the main sites of popular resistance against the lords; united, they turned out to be an existential threat.

Thus, what followed was the almost universal abolition of the bodies of communal representation and socio-economic associations, like trade unions, artisan groups and guilds.[72] Not even knight assemblies, some of which, by 1525, traced their history back over two centuries, managed to survive the onslaught against organized representation (Strauss, 1971: 181-2).[73] Consequently the economic situation, social status and political rights of the lower and middle classes in larger towns and cities suffered considerably. The defeat was harshest on the peasants whose punishment was thorough and complete: bereft of their traditional support structures and rights, the peasant "became excluded from the life of Germany for almost three centuries. He ceased to play a political role … [and] was now degraded to a working animal. He became a subject who spent his days in darkness and did not expect a change" (Franz quoted in Sessions, 1968: 24).[74]

By mid 1530s more peasants than ever were poor and more were enserfed. Numerous tax records document the immense increase in the number of landless peasants and peasants who were enserfed. For instance, in the Ottobeuren village the number of *Seldern* (landless cottagers) increased from 14 in 1525 to 25 in 1536 with the attached plummet in income and social status

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[72] Naturally some of these bounced back and reformed. Notably journeymen's associations and guilds were later reformed and, despite a general loss in political influence and role, nevertheless remained notable political actors. That being said, they were indeed among the first targets of lordly retaliation following the counter-revolution and their influence, in some cities in particular, never fully returned to pre-revolution levels.

[73] The first level of lower nobility, Knights were traditionally seen as part of the noble class by the commoners and as part of the lower classes by the higher nobles. As such, knights of the land often felt the need to stick together to advance the interests and positions of landed and landless knights, occasionally siding with the nobles or the lower classes. The Common Man's Revolution made more than a few knights – such as Gotz of the Iron Hand, Franz von Sickingen, and the above-mentioned Florian Geyer – into folk heroes, some of whom are still remembered today in songs and plays.

[74] In the long run, this sustained political exclusion has had a devastating effect on the peasant. The famed jurist Johann Jakob Moser observed of the 18th century German-speaking peasant that many existed "in a kind of slavery … [and] don't live as well as the livestock of some other regions" (quoted in Blickle, 1997: 67). Though the relation becomes somewhat questionable over many centuries, Engels thought that by mid-19th century the Prussian government and nobility were still purposefully keeping their peasants "uneducated and unenlightened" for fear of their uprising (Engels, 2010: 6). It is likely that Engels is exaggerating the extent to which the 1525 trauma still determined policy by 19th century; it seems more probable that once cast out the peasant was left out for centuries.

(Sreenivasan, 2001: 40). Though serfs were not paying taxes and thus are not found in tax records here, the legal records for the same village document dozens of peasants, some free farmers with their own land (*Bauern*) forcibly enserfed as punishment for their 'crimes' during the uprising (Sreenivasan, 2001: 60). This process was repeated throughout the rebellion area for thousands of communities, all of which were diminished in similar ways.

There were several policies of considerable importance enacted by the League during and after the uprising. I will deal with the two most central which have had the greatest effect in shaping the new conception of the subject and his relationship with the political authority. Both of these two sets of laws were introduced, as I argued above, as part of a determined drive to quash the material bases of the uprising. Those were: the invention of the individual subject, and the conflict settlement methods which dictated the relationship between the authorities and their subjects in times of disagreement. Both of these changes aimed explicitly at curtailing disobedience by removing or at least substantially diminishing the avenues for organizing resistance and minimizing the space for subversive political agency.

First and perhaps the most important of all counter-revolutionary measures was the legal invention of the insulated individual: the legal and political rights of communities were redefined, and in some instances completely taken away, to effectively dissipate them into individuated subjects. This particular change also had a major impact on the policies governing the treatment and rights of the poor and the enserfed, effectively legalizing certain practices of forced enserfment which were illegal and had led to numerous uprisings in the past. In the years following the revolution's failure, this set of policies created a class of destitute slaves in all but name by essentially isolating a large swath of the population which were severed from their long-standing, traditional structures of support, robbed of all political and legal rights, and made into a lord's

property. When Luther asked for unconditional obedience from slaves in 1529, slaves were being made all around him.

The second set of laws I am looking at were aimed at the targeted redefinition of conflict settlement policies between political authorities and their subjects. These new regulations for legal avenues mirrored the tactics deployed by the League during the rebellion which were interpreted by "almost all historians of the Peasants' War" as "insincere ruses, designed to gain time" until the lords' armies were ready (Sea, 1999: 89-90). Post-rebellion, these same policies were geared towards pacifying discontent through the creation of widely available and accessible legal channels which masked labyrinthine legal processes occasionally taking generations to conclude (Sea, 2007; Blickle, 1997). Blickle identifies these policies as having informed centuries of legal practice; it was during the uprising that they were invented out of a desperate need to gain time. Proving very effective they were later institutionalized after the revolution's defeat (1981: 169).

Of course, the policies of the counter-revolution were not limited to these two sets which I will explore below. Though I will not delve into it here, one particular regulation – the appointment of priests – is also worth mentioning briefly as it speaks to the centralizing impulse which has dominated the counter-revolution against all rival demands. Before the revolution the centuries-long standing practice was appointment of all priests by bishops and church officials, largely perceived to be agents of Rome. The counter-argument of the revolution, selection and appointment of priests by the parishes which they will serve, was also an ancient one: from Wycliffe to Hus many church reformers championed a similar alternative. It was a central demand of the Carinthian uprising in 1478 as well as the successive *Bundschuh* uprisings from 1493 onwards. Instead of these alternatives, lords of the League simply took upon themselves "to take care to see that the parishes are supplied with pious, honorable priests who (...) admonish subjects

to act with brotherly love, to uphold the honor of God, and to obey the secular ruler" (Blickle, 1981: 184). Put otherwise, the revolution gave the lords the opportunity to grasp away this power from Rome to themselves.

Though this new understanding of the lords has not immediately translated into policy it is still worthwhile underlining the importance of this new regulation before moving on to the invention of the legal individual and the new conflict settlement rules. This is important on two central levels. First: years, even decades before churches were submitted to state control to become 'national churches' in England, Sweden and elsewhere, lords of the *Swabian League* thought of using them as tools of and bastions for political authority as part of the counter-revolution. Second: to ensure obedience from their rebellious subjects the multi-confessional lords of the *League* rejected both Rome and the *Communal Reformation* to take over this most key institution, effectively anticipating the Peace of Augsburg.

3.1.   The sites of resistance: The Swabian League against Communities

Just as the counter-revolution is best understood as part of a continuity of increasing centralization and oppression, their motives are best contextualized within an ongoing struggle for continued obedience with communities. In this protracted conflict the landed elites of the land displayed a remarkable level of class solidarity against their subjects: despite confessional differences (which would later divide them) and a fierce competition for land and resources among themselves, the members of the Swabian League made dealing with disobedience their highest priority. On the other hand of the conflict were various communities whose greatest weapon were ancient and well-entrenched traditions of political and judicial autonomy and what we can simply call communal bargaining by riot; the use of disobedience as a political tool of negotiation.

As I have already argued, the true strength of the uprising was not the peasant or even the common man; the 1525 uprising was of, by and for the autonomous communities, and the lords were painfully aware of the power inherent in this ready-made political association. Though up until the uprising they largely remained isolated in their own politico-legal boundaries, even then the "characteristic mode of political behavior [for communities] was not obedience but assertion of their rights and resistance to all who threatened those rights" (Blickle, 1997: xii-xiii). The community's role in resisting authority was an old one too: the Old Law recognized it as a legal entity and embedded legal continuity in communal representation of subjects. Accordingly, the legal consciousness of the peasant was "oriented to the future (…) in which the current generation accepted great burdens for the sake of future generations" with the knowledge that they also would be bound by the same laws (Schulze, 1980, quoted in Blickle, 1997: 65).

Until the Divine Law of the Communal Reformation offered a revolutionary alternative, the Old Law of the communities was based on an interpretation of law which dictated that "law arises not from innovation but from custom" (Blickle, 1981: 4). This understanding effectively constrained the communities into inherently conservative struggles, constantly trying to defend whatever they were left with. Put otherwise, powerless to alter the laws to their advantage and epistemically constrained to not invent new laws, the communities lost more and more with every adjustment and each new law. The relatively new arrival to the scene of the top-down spread of the Roman law only exacerbated the situation by rendering the law into a field of technical expertise in which the peasant had no chance to compete with the lords who commanded all the resources necessary. Though communities consistently sought shelter in their belief that laws "could [only] be discovered and modified only through the consent of all those subject to [them]" (Blickle, 1981: 4), in practice they were losing ground fast on all fronts.

Consequently, over a few short generations in one century both the rights of and properties held by the communities and individuals within those communities shrank dramatically. Conscious of fighting a losing battle and unable to fully elaborate their state of unfreedom with the epistemic tools available to them, the lower classes were getting more and more desperate. As I discussed above, it was this desperation which, in the absence of any other outlets, was manifesting itself in more and more uprisings. Almost without exception these uprisings ended in the rebels' defeat: all lords, even those who lacked the resources to put down their disobedient subjects, could – and often did – count on other lords for support.

Despite clear asymmetries of power and structural limitations, what made these communities into such potent sites for resistance was a tradition of communal autonomy that far surpassed anything else the European Middle Ages had to offer. Since Karl Siegfried Bader's seminal 1962 work, *Dorfgenossenschaft und Dorfgemeinde* ('Village Communes and Cooperatives') comparative historians have "confirmed in all subsequent studies" that the area of the 1525 revolution has had the highest development in regard to its communal autonomy: so much so that the political powers – legislative, executive and judiciary – deployed by some of these communities were far beyond anything that could have been found in similar communities in other parts of the Empire, France, England or Spain (Blickle, 1992: 158-167). Moreover, despite material losses and diminishing rights, at the time of the revolution this autonomy was at its peak. The point is conclusive: "The village court decisions and ordinances [in the rebellion area] are more numerous for the fifteenth century than for any other time in their thousand year span" (Blickle, 1981: 84).

Many towns and villages elected their mayors, council and even judges.[75] Those elected officials managed communal properties, from fields to forests and fisheries, regulated village life, settled disputes, legislated laws and, for most ecclesiastical lordships and many isolated villages, collected and commanded resources to enforce security. When communal action against the lords was required, it was almost always decided in meetings attended by all landholders and often cottagers.[76] "The regions where the revolt so often began" were consistently where "village autonomy reached its most developed form" (Cohn, 1979: 15). For these communities the self-consciousness as an association capable – and frequently in need – of taking political action resulted in a political agency and communal self-government that occasionally rivaled and sometimes even defied and replaced lordly authority.[77] More than any individual right or resource at their disposal, it was this communal autonomy and political agency which made the communities dangerous. Ultimately it was this autonomy which found its revolutionary expression in 1525.

A central part of this autonomy was the explicit, negotiated nature of obedience to political authority. It was, if anything, a contractual bond. In cities as well as villages, peasants, burghers and others had *yearly oaths*, binding themselves as subjects in obedience to a particular lord or

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[75] Of course I do not mean to say that all communities had all these rights: some communities had a greater degree of control over their elections while others forwarded their selections to the lord for approval and some could only decide on issues of low justice while more centrally located others had no elections for judges…

[76] Landholders were free peasants with their own land while cottagers were renters of the land. In almost all cases the land had to be rented from the lord. These types of agreements came attached with numerous conditions and often bound the supposedly free renters to lords' fields. We must also acknowledge, once more, that these communities were never monolithic entities; they were subject to their own power struggles.

[77] For larger, urban communities such as the Free Imperial City of Memmingen these powers ascended to unprecedented levels in explicit defiance of lordly authority. For instance Memmingen city council legislated in 1403 that any serf who became a citizen of the city for one year without his lord seeking his return will be accepted as freed from his bonds (Blickle, 1992: 158). An identical law was passed in Nuremberg around the same time (Höfert, 2003: 68). Though these particular laws were also partly to attract rural population to the city following the great plagues that decimated the urban population, many larger communities consciously acted as shelters, as oases in a sea of feudal oppression.

city council. This communal oath to remain obedient to the leaders was taken on a specific day: *Schwörtag* (literally, oath day) (Rublack, 1984: 32).[78] The wording of this oath was quite regularly subject to negotiations and its yearly nature made these negotiations all too common. As such, disobedience, and in particular selective disobedience, was often a clear strategic choice for a community: it was chosen not to truly rebel but to hold obedience hostage as part of negotiations, as a central tool in the strategy of collective bargaining by riot. In other words, the *promise of obedience* and *obedient behavior* were two distinct, explicitly acknowledged political acts the provisions of which were subject to negotiated conditions. It was commonplace for villages to delay renewing their oath of obedience to a new lord, sometimes for years, and keep that all-important declaration of allegiance as a central negotiation tool.[79]

For the legal spirit of the age, and for all subjects from the lowest to the highest this explicit acknowledgement of subjection constituted both the legal and legitimate basis of authority. The most powerful weapon in a community's arsenal was the rejection of this oath, effectively nullifying the lord's hold over the community. All rebellions started first by *Huldigundsverweigerung*[80], i.e. the public withdrawal of this oath, emancipating the once-subjects and setting them as free agents. The standard description used by the Swabian League documents

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[78] I should also flag, here, the clear connections of such an oath to social contract theory. Western political theory has very largely assumed the origins of such a practice in the Monarchomachs; the French Huguenots of mid sixteenth-century. Here is yet another important point which was missed along with the ignored revolution: I have not seen a single work on social contract theory which mentions this practice.

[79] One example here would suffice. When Lenhard Widenmann was elected abbot in 1508 for the monastery of Ottobeuren he asked the peasants for their allegiance. Sreenivasan writes: "the peasants tactfully replied that they would 'gladly' accept the new abbot as their lord and swear loyalty to him, 'but they still had a grievance with His Grace and His cloister regarding wood [use rights], as His Grace knew, and added that they hoped that His Grace would therefore come to an agreement with them about this'. The abbot took the hint … and promptly concluded an agreement guaranteeing his subjects access to wood" (2001: 51-52).

[80] 'Huldigung' is a difficult concept to interpret: it means to bow down, to show respect and honor to a rightful authority, whether a feudal lord, monarch or God. Combined with 'Verweigerung' (which means denial), *Huldigundsverweigerung* amounts to the refusal of recognizing an authority as such. The recognition of an authority, in other words, was bound strictly to a promise to obey.

to describe rebellious peasants also hints at how literally the contractual nature of this oath taking was understood: "in disregard of vow, oath and duty" (Sea, 1999: 95, 96; also Sea, 2007; Blickle, 1981; 1984; 1997). It seems, from this definition, that the League was making another point: as far as the lords were concerned these oaths were permanent. The peasant rejection or retraction of the promise to obey is not acknowledged or recognized; to the League all disobedience was illegal.

Quite cognizant of the epidemic effect of rebellion, the landed elite reacted to all disobedience as a single body. Few things explain the overall purpose of the League better than their own words: the League proceedings record that "their duty as rulers [was] to aid in the *suppression of disobedience among the subjects of other rulers* in order to maintain the basic principles of political authority" (Sea, 1999: 99, emphasis added). This is worth underlining: to the lords' alliance constant obedience was the basic principle of political authority and it was this principle which guided the actions of this main actor of the counter-revolution after the suppression of the revolution.

This principle did not apply to the lords themselves however. Though the League was technically subject to the courts and the mandates of the Emperor, with a combined military might (1800 horse and 11,000 footmen) far beyond anything comparable in the larger region, "no one dare[d] apply the law to them" (Strauss, 1971: 182). As such, in their dealings with disobedient subjects, lords of the land did not hesitate to ignore court orders and even disobey the direct mandates of the Emperor. In one such instance[81], the League documents record the lords'

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[81] This incident concerns a refusal to obey by several villages in Kempten under a lord-abbot in 1491-1492. The peasants took their lord to the Imperial Chamber Court (*Reichskammergericht*) over complaints of forced serfdom of free peasants. Though the court issued an injunction, the League nevertheless continued to amass forces to assist the lord who requested its involvement. Afraid for their lives, the peasants turned to the Emperor who issued a mandate to the League forbidding any and all action against the peasants. Defying the Emperor (and the court), the League armies invaded the villages and extorted ransoms from the peasants in return for their lives, houses, and property before forcing them at sword point to renew their oaths of obedience to the abbot (Sea, 1999: 99-100). After this

motivations quite clearly: "if the poor [peasants] are allowed to do this [disobedience], it will go hard with all rulers and will in the future bring all sorts of insurmountable disadvantages, breaches, and damages" (Sea, 1999: 99-100). To the League nothing was more important than continuous, unbroken obedience in the land and nothing, not even the Emperor's orders, could stop them from acting on this principle. Once more, it was this drive which was at the foundation of the League that dictates and explains its role and actions in the counter-revolution.

The lords' actions in 1525-1526 was conditioned by years of continuous uprisings which led them to take increasingly stronger measures. At its foundation in 1489, the League's Constitution promised all subjects who wished to seek their arbitration to "hear both sides against each other" in the Common Assembly (meaning in front of all the lords). Though this meant that the League as a whole got involved with all instances of disobedience, it also amounted to an explicit recognition of communal rebellion as a valid bargaining strategy. However, the rise in rebellions in the quarter century before the revolution pushed the League into harsher and stricter and more exclusive directions. Over three Constitutional reforms in 1500, 1512 and 1521 the League became increasingly more exclusive and much harsher. It started first by excluding the poor and those most vulnerable, and forbid any serf or bondsman (*Leibeigeine*) from appealing (Sea, 1999: 101).

Ultimately, the 1522 constitution of the Swabian League fully incorporated the arguments the Bishop of Wurzburg voiced in the discussions in 1521: "To guarantee disobedient subjects a hearing against their rulers before the League Council was to encourage them in their disobedience" (Sea 1999: 107). By 1522, a blanket ban on disobedience was introduced:

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forced settlement, from 1492 to 1525, "twelve hundred tenants were forced into serfdom" (Scott and Scribner, 1991: 73).

> The communes and subjects belonging to us, the members of the league, shall in no way withdraw from their lords their *Oberkait*[82] and obedience, but shall render them at all times according to their obligations and past tradition. If it should happen that said communes or subjects rise against their *Oberkait* or withdraw their obedience, and the *Oberkait* brings a complaint before the League in the matter, the communes or subjects shall be formally summoned, and if they are found to be in the wrong, after hearing their complaints, the *Oberkait* shall be helped. If, however, the proceedings of the *Oberkait* are found to be unjustified, the common assembly of the League shall have the power to negotiate with it in the interest of a just solution (Sea, 1999: 107-8).

It is important to note here that in ruling all disobedience completely illegal the lords still clearly recognize the place and role of communal disobedience as a common tactic for their subjects. The intent of this measure, then, seems to be to effectively rob the communes of their main tool of negotiation. With that new measure, by refusing obedience communities would be closing all channels of negotiation and almost guarantee violent retributions; on the other hand, remaining obedient meant they would have nothing with which to negotiate with. In other words, the only avenue the League left communities was a submissive plea; a humble appeal to their lords. There could be no accompanying disobedience as a bargaining tool. The lords, on the other hand, could bring all complaints to the League Assembly which doubled for a summons for help. In the unlikely case that the lord was to be found 'unjustified,' then the League took it upon itself to negotiate with its member for 'a just solution' to his subjects' complaints.

In practice these measures looked even bleaker for the subjects: as long as their appeal lasted they could do nothing else but remain obedient or risk violent retribution with worse consequences. If it came to it, they would be offered one deal, sometimes literally at sword's point, and rejection would be considered disobedience. In short, prior to the revolution the lords clearly recognized the place of disobedience in their subjects' life and had an explicit agenda to deal with

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[82] Another difficult concept to translate, Oberkait meant both 'rightful authority' and the 'obedience/recognition due to a rightful authority'; both meanings are used here. The contemporary word is *obrigkeit*.

it. Over time and following increasingly more threatening uprisings this agenda was fixated on quashing all disobedience for good.

Unsurprisingly, the League was "a favorite source of support for its members," in particular those who lacked the resources to deal with their own disobedient subjects (Sea, 1999: 93). Moreover, just like its numerous predecessor institutions since the 14th century, the League was also providing avenues for lords to coordinate and trade advice and know-how with each other. Consequently, once a new 'technology' of domination was successfully put to use in one place, it quickly spread to other villages and territories. Within the space of a few years monasteries all over Swabia started purposefully obscuring legal documents to use their absence against the peasants (Sreenivasan, 2001); monks in different monasteries under different abbots were explicitly instructed to defraud the peasants out of their leases (Cohn, 1979); military expenditures as well as occasional expenses – such as repairs, hiring and salaries of new priests, etc. – were passed on to the villagers by lords who knew when to expect them.

Two clear political consequences followed from the role of the autonomous communities as primary sites of resistance. First, and crucially for the lords, any and all means available to the common man to fight back against the encroaching power of political authority was reliant on the community to some extent: from the simplest petition to the lord, to pursuing legal-civil avenues, from partial or full stoppage of work to ultimately taking up arms, very little could be accomplished by individuals acting alone. Second, whether these communities were socio-economic urban groupings, such as the 'journeymen', or rural ones, such as farming villages or mining towns, the political agenda that united the "peasant and urban movements" was "a common goal of greater communal autonomy" (Hans Buszello quoted in Blickle, 1981: 8).

Put otherwise, in the uprising area, against the constant expansion and encroachments of the centralizing political authorities, autonomous communities pushed back with attempts to preserve their political autonomy. The uprising's revolutionary agenda flowed naturally from these struggles: greater communal autonomy, self-taxation and self-government. The lords' response also developed naturally from this continuity. Their agenda, as could be read from the documents and proceedings of the bi-confessional Swabian League, was to end disobedience and dismantle the main sites of resistance where that disobedience was always already in the making.

3.2. Laying the groundwork: legal labyrinths as pacifiers

Despite the ever more obvious signs, the size and intensity of the 1525 revolt initially caught the lords off guard both logistically and militarily. When the first castles were being looted "no one was prepared to answer, either militarily or through more peaceful means" (Sea, 2007: 219). While part of the surprise and disconnect was due to the unprecedented nature of the rebellion the other part was surely epistemic. All the signs indicate that, initially, the lords were simply unable to grasp the depth of the normative shift the rebels experienced and failed to understand the scale of the reaction. Used to small-scale, conservative uprisings, in reaction to a new law or measure and grounded in the Old Law, the lords could see no reason or justification for their subjects' actions. The first meeting of the Swabian League to address the uprising revealed the extent to which the lords were nonplussed: "The nobles all denied that any novelties had been introduced at all. From the lords' perspective, their policies were perfectly in accord with ancient tradition and territorial custom" (Blicke, 1981: 92).

The conflict-settlement policies that would inform post-rebellion laws were born in this moment of weakness. Though unprepared, the League members nevertheless "were determined to suppress the rebellion by force whatever the cost, both to preserve their ruling positions and to

maintain proper political and social order in a hierarchical society" (Sea, 1999: 90). During the six months it took the lords to amass and field their armies they consistently stuck to delaying tactics: lords whose territories and castles were conquered, from the highest to the lowest, swore allegiance to the Twelve Articles and promised to uphold the provisions decided by the revolutionary parliaments. Where lords had relatively more power, settlements were struck with rebel armies on almost all issues with promises of further negotiations: various lords agreed to liquidate serfdom, abolish or reduce tithes, concede full access to commons and so on.

None of these promises were kept after the rebel defeat. [83] But to understand why the legal measures were so central to the counter-revolution it is important to note how these promises were reneged on: despite decisively vanquishing the rebels and restoring themselves fully to power, the lords did not simply ignore their promises. Instead, they used laws and official negotiations. On the one hand, of course, these were ideal avenues as common men were woefully underequipped to navigate them; but we should also not underestimate the value ruling classes genuinely placed on due process and legal measures. So, instead of being ignored outright, these agreements "were buried, article by article, under an avalanche of proposals, counterproposals, and counter-counterproposals" (Blickle, 1981: 176). Indeed, by using only legal means and official avenues "not once did the princes and lords fulfill the assurances given during the uprising" (Lotz, 1962: 16).

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[83] The only exception to the rule was the 'Waldburg Settlement'. Lord Truchess of Waldburg remains perhaps one of the most interesting figures of the rebellion: celebrated by the Emperor as the military hero of the Swabian League, Lord Waldburg led the League armies throughout the rebellion area from one end to another, and defeated all armies it encountered – though as I said it did not encounter all armies. After completely defeating the rebels, Lord Waldburg agreed to a majority of his peasants' demands in his territory and unburdened his subjects: the death tax was lightened; peasants were given more rights and, maybe most central, the 'Waldburg Settlement' remains the only document from the era which established the gradual dissolution of serfdom.

Before their victory, in their moment of unprepared defenselessness, these negotiation tactics must have looked like ideal solutions and they were deployed to great strategic effect. Several peasant armies were convinced to either disperse or simply move on after receiving promises which were reneged on later in the negotiation table by endless, labyrinthine processes that required substantial resources and expertise to navigate. Those tactics, which were deployed precisely with these goals in mind, were so successful that they largely "anticipated the methods of dispute settlement developed after the Peasants' War to prevent further rebellion" (Sea, 1999: 89-90). After the war was done, it was simply impossible for the common men to cope with the endless obstacles and keep up with the cases that continued indefinitely.

Indeed, we can trace their very first deployment with strategic purpose to the early stages of the confrontation, when lords were helpless and surrounded. Authorities of the land very quickly realized that in diffusing crises and preventing uprisings, civil methods for dispute settlement were much more effective than virtually anything else (Sea, 2007: 236). They were easy and cheap to deploy, and created a potent illusion.

Designed as interminable, labyrinthine processes from the start, the new dispute settlement methods gave subjects very little chance of achieving anything substantial while providing seemingly open avenues for addressing grievances and resolving conflicts. Indeed, having learned this lesson, "territorial states waged a campaign in the following decades and centuries to entangle subjects in a complex administrative and legal system, thereby cutting off rebellion at the root, making it impossible as the last resort of social behavior" (Blickle, 1981: 169). The effectiveness of the labyrinth was precisely in the ingenuity of its construction: very easy to enter, excessively difficult to get anything out of.

Sea thinks that "in the long run, realization by princely and Imperial officials that more effective peaceful means for handling peasant grievances would prevent new uprisings may well have resulted in the establishment of more accessible legal channels of complaint for the peasants to use" (2007: 236). Schulze takes it further: "The argument about the 'juridification' of social conflicts in the Holy Roman Empire can draw upon a wide range of empirical evidence" (1984: 82), the strongest of which is the Supreme Court decision of 1555, coinciding exactly with the Peace of Augsburg, securing the subjects' rights to sue their princes. In the wake of this decision there were an immense number of lawsuits launched by peasants some of which lasted for generations, exactly as intended. These legal inventions were instrumental in the development of the German legal system.

In fact, 19th century German legal experts were very much "aware of the significance of the outcome of the Peasants' War for the emergence of the judicial Constitution of the Holy Roman Empire" (Schulze, 1984: 82-3). There are more than a dozen studies from that time tracing the subject, some of which are surprisingly insightful in their analysis: "One particular study (from 1818) stated that the peasant war meant a 'forcible warning not to drive the peasants to despair'." (Schulze, 1984: 82). I have already underlined, however, how despair had little to do with the revolution. Their desperation was a quasi-permanent feature of life, as Lukes and Gaventa suggested for lower classes in other contexts. The revolution was triggered by the epistemic breach: it was the hope of a new world which mobilized peasants. That being said, the point stands: the lesson learned was to open up illusory avenues for peasants using the law.

To briefly summarize once more my argument: one substantial leg of the counter-revolution was the invention of new legal avenues. This was done with the intent of providing illusory avenues the malcontented peasants could prefer over rebellion. To this end access to these

legal avenues was universalized quickly, reversing the previous momentum which until 1521 was increasingly exclusionary. Just like its other parts, the legal part of the counter-revolution also had profound, long-lasting results, effectively playing its part in the development of the German juridical constitution. Yet, despite that, the most profound impact of the lordly leg of the counter-revolution was the advent of the individual as the submissive subject.

3.3. Laying the groundwork: the invention of the legal individual

Whereas the new conflict-settlement methods essentially resulted from momentary weakness, the politico-legal individuation of subjects was conceived exactly when the lords started to plan for the future. It is at the turn of the tide, on 11 January 1525, as their armies were taking the field, that the lords of the Swabian League met and discussed issues central to their survival: troop deployments, financial issues, and plans for the future.

In this meeting, Sebastian von Breitenstein, the lord-abbot of Kempten, played a crucial role. Just like thousands of others, seventeen communities under the monastery's rule had also taken up arms following decades of legal struggles against the abbot's rule. Defending his rule against his peasants' accusations of widespread forced enserfment – charges which were true[84] – the lord-abbot pointed at the community as the primary cause of all rebellion. To him, it was obvious that "communal assemblies conduce more to disturbance than to anything good or fruitful" (Scott and Scribner, 1991: 77). According to the lord-abbot, by imposing communal action, those assemblies forcibly lured innocent peasants into rebellion and obfuscated the true troublemakers. So, he argued, "the League should consider only the complaints of those peasants who came forward individually, rather than concerns of his peasants as a group" (Sea, 1999: 95). This

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[84] See footnote 18.

suggestion was agreed to in the same meeting though it would take a few decades in places be fully institutionalized. Effectively this meant the isolation of subjects as right-less legal individuals with no system of support in front of their lords.

As I already underlined, communities were at the heart of almost all resistance, legal and actual, against the lords. Besides the centuries-long traditions of communal behavior on the part of the common men, the nature of these struggles mandated communal resistance as well. The material resources required for one legal case alone, often lasting decades, were tremendous and very much beyond the reach of any peasant. Of course, active resistance also required numbers; the type of resistance which was most threatening and costly to the lords was the uprising. In short, to fight back against the lords' domination the peasant had four distinct options, all of which relied on the community to some extent: petitioning the lord; legal-civil avenues; partial refusal of obedience on one or few select issues; and finally rejection of the lord, often coupled with violence or threats of violence.[85] There is no doubt peasants acted with considerable strategic acumen and cunning in deciding their course of action; but even the most individual of these actions relied on the support of the community.[86]

It must have been fairly obvious to the lords that this solution, forcibly individuating the peasant and cutting him off from his community, would dramatically diminish disobedience and possibly eliminate the thorniest cases of resistance. It was, from the lords' perspective, a fantastic defense. Rather than having an entire village act collectively over each and every infraction, to

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[85] To be precise, there is no reason to assume the absence of 'everyday forms of peasant resistance,' as James Scott described them in *Weapons of the Weak* (1985). However, such mundane forms of peasant resistance are a far cry from collective political action as understood here and nothing at all like an uprising.

[86] For example, in one instance, four brothers from Tannheim fought the claim of the abbot of Rot an der Rot on their dead mother's clothing in all the courts of the land and then even in Rome (Blickle, 1981: 53). To do this they had to rely on the resources of their community, eventually financially devastating them as well.

demand, negotiate and disobey, or, even worse, several villages band together and fight back, the lords would have to deal with the rare individual peasant who would have the courage and the means to stand up to his lord.

In defending his rule, the abbot also demonstrated how this new system would work: "It will not be found that anyone has been made a serf against his will or contrary to his own good," he argued. If that were true, he asked, let the persons come forward individually and identify themselves rather than the entire community besmirching their lord's good name (Scott & Scribner, 1991: 73). The annulment of serfdom was the most central demand of the uprising for which 300,000 common men in thousands of communities took up arms. As the lords knew full well, it was a universal condition which grieved the peasants more than any other. With Von Breitenstein's new solution, this issue over which all communities under the abbot were in an armed uprising was effectively being reduced to a series of individual grievances, belonging only to those who could muster the resources, courage and a somewhat naïve belief in the process. In practice, enserfed peasants who lost all freedom were asked to step forward individually, afford the costs of the entire process and identify themselves in front of all the lords, believing that it would ultimately result in their freedom. Thus, in effect, all avenues of peasant resistance were flattened to the humble petition.

Besides the individuation of their subjects, this defense was also innovative in that arguing against it would have been exceptionally hard for a common man. Even if, despite the 1522 League Constitution forbidding appeals from the poor, these impossible conditions were somehow met and a bold peasant dared challenge his lord in person, then this individual would have had to prove that he was enserfed '*against his own good*.' The abbot's qualification, 'for his own good,' was not an idle one: it was a fundamental assertion concerning man's freedom. With this argument the

learned abbot Von Breitenstein was very likely drawing from the dominant understanding of the body politic and Thomas Aquinas's definition of the freedom of a subject: "To be governed for your own good was to be free" (Ryan, 2003: 52). The abbot was thus claiming, for all the learned members of the audience, that his subjects who were enserfed, forcibly or otherwise, were *actually free* in all cases: they either chose serfdom freely by their own will[87] or it was chosen for them for their own good by their rulers, again implying their freedom.

The theocratic political theory abbot Von Breitenstein was drawing from saw the political body as analogous to a real body: those endowed with reason [*ratio*] would be the head; peasants and artisans would be the arms and feet; and the clergy would be the soul of the body. This conception also goes some way in explaining the perception of peasants as beasts without reason who have to be led at all times. Aquinas uses a very similar analogy: the head, for him, represents the rulers whose duty is to maintain peace and justice in the land [*pax et iustitia*]. The main quality which helps the rulers in their duty was their unrivalled ability to understand the common/proper good [*bonum commune/proprium bonnum*] and act to achieve it.[88] Thus the abbot's rearticulation of this major principle of governance was likely nothing new to the assembled lords: rulers know best.

Faced with a system-wide assault on one of the main pillars of feudalism, the Catholic abbot argued, just like Luther would in two months, that "serfdom is not contrary to divine or human law" (Scott and Scribner, 1991: 75). The twist, however, was the innovative expansion in

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[87] It is imperative to qualify how Kempten peasants chose serfdom by their own will. In 1525 there were "over four hundred complaints of degradation of status" against the abbot of Kempten, "many carried through by the use of imprisonment, coercive penalties, fines, and overt threats of violence" (Scott and Scribner, 1991: 73).
[88] The famous frontispiece of *The Leviathan*, then, is essentially Hobbes's secular reinterpretation of an otherwise old and established analogy of the body politic as the human body. I will touch on this issue again in the next chapter.

the practical interpretation. Beyond his general defense of the principle, the abbot's argument shifted the level of the challenges that could be brought to the system from a communal one – with the traumatizing consequences it had led to – to an individual one. It is difficult to overstate the tremendous impact this had: when the Supreme Court decided, in 1555, that subjects could sue their princes, it was recognizing the individual's right – independent of the tremendous inequalities which made most these cases foregone conclusions. Very much like the new Lutheran principles and structures of governance, this change also took hold surprisingly quickly and had a lasting formative effect in the juridification of social conflicts, first in the Holy Roman Empire and later in Europe. Again very much like the Lutheran changes, this one was also in reaction to the overwhelming threat to the feudal order of domination posed by the communal uprising. This unified reaction on the confessionally divided lords in defense of the system goes some way toward explaining the 17th century unity of absolutist thinkers over the confessional divide.

As we have seen, Luther legitimized the exact same conditions for the serfs on other, much more restrictive, grounds. Thus, while Luther's defense of slavery was the inner freedom of the slave and the perfect, Christian equality in the realm of God, Von Breitenstein's argument implied that even in cases of forced enserfment, freedom is preserved since rulers have their subjects' good in mind. Despite the remarkable differences which were theologically central, in practice both Lutheran and Catholic reasoning amounted to keeping peasants in forced serfdom; either for their own good, thus implying their freedom, or because it does not matter since they are already always free where it matters. The revolution's drive for political emancipation and worldly freedom was thus defeated and supplanted with a freedom which is always out of reach for good: either in the inner world of all Christians or in the rulings of the lords.

4.   Conclusion

The counter-revolution of the lords was in part a continuance of a decades-long push for a centralized type of authoritarianism and in part a response to the strengths of the revolution. The changes it brought about shaped the emerging western state in unparalleled ways. While the confessionally-mixed lords' alliance collectively redefined the politico-legal structures governing the relationship between subjects and political authorities, Luther attacked the revolution and took a strong, guiding hand in establishing new, strictly authoritarian norms which defined the new practices of governance.

Luther's political theory, which became most explicit during the Revolution, was built on the channeling of subjects' agency towards complete obedience to political authorities. This much is clear in all of his 1525 works including *De Servo Arbitrio* (On the Bondage of the Will), collectively understood to be one of his most important. These works, and many that came later, were all influenced by the Revolution of the Common Men which has had a profound formative effect on Luther's theory and theology. Luther's political theory, developed in and after 1525, effectively substituted God with the lord and described unconditional obedience to political authority akin to faith in God. England's James I said, very much on point: "The state of monarchy is the supremest thing on earth; for kings are not only God's lieutenants on earth, but even by God himself they are called gods" (Hill, 2002: 43). On the other hand, the ideal Christian subject Luther described was an isolated and unconditionally obedient slave, chained in reality as well as in his mind, happy to be a martyr to the exploitation and oppression of tyrants. It is precisely these ideas which were picked up from 1525 to 1530 by numerous preachers of highly influential standing in European courts and put to use almost immediately.

Just like Luther's inner freedom that rendered actual freedom an already irrelevant goal impossible to reach, the settlement methods developed by the Swabian League and spread to the land provided alternatives to rebellion that were not really alternatives and served only to obfuscate other venues. Exactly like the 'inner' equality of all, the settlement methods were also available to all in that not-entirely-real way. Perhaps more central from the lords' perspective was the dismantling of communal modes of representation and political agency in favor of the individuation of the subjects. The goal of these two measures, achieved to some extent, was to pacify the subjects and lock them into immobility, replacing their demands with illusions of what is demanded and flattening their options for resistance to a labyrinthine legal process taking decades to navigate.

Ultimately, the counter-revolution succeeded in shifting the conception of obedience to political authority from a communal promise negotiated collectively, that could have been and occasionally was withdrawn, to an individual obligation always already assumed to be owed to the state, now a proxy of God. With Lutheran norms and principles, the institution of political authority became the object of faith in its own right. Luther's interpretation of the ruler as the mask of God functionally rendered the entity behind the mask obsolete; the mask, now the ruler, effectively assumed the qualities of God when it came to demanding obedience from subjects.

This new, obedient subject was conceived of as individuated, silenced and solitary against an increasingly powerful, centralized and authoritarian state precisely because the momentous uprising that immediately preceded the inception of that state was one by autonomous communities with clear and explicit demands for a new world. When early territorial states with centralized power structures emerged from the aristocratic networks of the feudal era, now "widely recognized to be the building blocks of the state in late medieval and early modern Europe" (Ocker, 2006: 11),

these new authoritarian measures were part of the framework to ensure the uninterrupted provision of obedience. These new practices, which were designed and undertaken purposefully, constituted a clear and radical departure from the political culture of the day where collective disobedience and bargaining by riot were common political practices.

The turn towards Lutheran principles of governance in Europe was not as pacific as it was mostly thought to be. Similarly, the motives of political agents driving this change were not purely material or undecipherable. Traumatized by the greatest and most threatening uprising of the Middle Ages, the lords purposefully designed a counter-revolution and Luther quite consciously adjusted his positions and political theory to accommodate the lords' need for a new, obedient subject. As the new power structures rose on these frameworks subjects were already isolated and disarmed vis-à-vis the new political authorities already becoming the strongest of their type. Despite the later perception of Luther as the leader of the resistance against the Catholic Church, it is also crystal clear that he played a very strong role in pacifying the revolution, establishing the foundational qualities of the coming absolutisms, and ensuring obedience to these.

Exceptions to this rule, communities which stubbornly resisted in keeping to the old ways, became anathema. Minor sects such as the Anabaptists – with their emphasis on communal existence and rejection of authority – were ruthlessly hunted down despite their marginal size and later ideological apoliticism. This was not because their numbers were alarming or they had important political weight: to the contrary, they were few and fully exiled themselves from the political order. Skinner notes (1978) that the entire Anabaptist movement barely counted 11,000 members throughout the 16th century; barely half the number of one of the many peasant armies of the revolution. Decades after the 1534-1535 Munster rebellion and the embrace of pacifism by an overwhelming majority of remaining Anabaptists, they were still violently persecuted.

Wootton notes that "throughout Europe, Protestant and Catholic rulers united in hunting down and killing Anabaptists, whose beliefs, they held, were destructive of all political order" (1996:93). In other words, the threat of the Anabaptists was the revolutionary ideal from whence they sprung; their persistent allegiance to an alternative existence that authorities sought to wipe out for good. A similar case can be made for the 'separatists' under England's Elizabeth I, who were the only other group persecuted besides Roman Catholics due largely, I believe, to their alternative organizational methods as autonomous communities of protestants existing outside the State Church. To the lordly gaze, this stubborn allegiance to communitarianism was enough to pose an existential threat independent of their numbers or political impact.

Through the combination of the Lutheran Reformation and the politico-legal measures put in place by the lords, the subjects were constituted devoid of political agency in explicit contrast to the rebelling communities which were inherently agentic and swift to rise up. For the new individuated subject obedience to authority became the default condition, the exception to which was increasingly unthinkable; and faith in God's Will, that all-defining axiomatic belief of the Middle Ages, became a proxy for obedience to political authorities. Those were the principles of obedience on which the newly emerging territorial, absolutist state was to rise on. In the next chapter I will continue to trace the struggle between popular agency and communal principles of autonomy and economic justice as they resurface in familiar but unique forms during the English Civil War in 'the revolution that never happened' (Hill, 1982).

Chapter 5: The Revolution That Never Happened: The Birth of a New Struggle

1.   Introduction

The previous chapters covered the defeated Revolution of the Common Man: the 1525 uprising of the communities which threatened the entire feudal order and the ensuing counter-revolution. The strength of the Revolution, I argued, was based on the political communities which were the agents of the revolution and foundational actors of the new political system which ruled the land for almost a year. Their attempts to build a better world were based on popular demands for democracy, economic fairness, and social equity. Though these principles were clearly inspired by an emancipatory interpretation of Christianity – the Communal Reformation – they were well grounded in long standing discontent about the increasingly oppressive feudal system. These communities shared long standing traditions of autonomy and communal disobedience which they deployed strategically. Their discontent eventually exploded in a revolutionary form availed by the epistemic breach created by the Reformation. After the military defeat of the uprising, the counter-revolution of the lords sought to disperse the communities by dismantling them and legally and normatively atomizing the subjects vis-à-vis political authorities, rearranging the threatened feudal structure into an early model of absolutist governance. Perhaps the greatest point of strength in that endeavor was Martin Luther who wrestled the reformation out of the revolutionary track the communities put it in, and steered it towards the authorities as a tremendously potent tool for increased control. It was also during the revolution that Luther's trademark conception of individualism found its political application in the atomization – the legal and social isolation – of the subjects vis-à-vis authorities. I traced the spread of Lutheran ideas on individual, unconditional obedience to all authorities precisely between the years 1525 and 1530, laying the normative groundwork for the justification of absolutisms to come. Along with his Scandinavian peers and

numerous European lords, the English monarch Henry VIII was particularly receptive to Lutheran ideas on obedience and the subjugation of the church to temporal authority.

In the upcoming two chapters, I turn to the English Civil War, and the revolutions of that time, which bookends the period I focus in this dissertation. Between 1640 and 1660, in England, there were two revolutions. The one that succeeded, though initially supported by the common people, was a revolution of and by the prosperous gentry and rich merchants. It was a revolution because it conclusively destroyed the instruments of despotism in England, broke down the power of the king and the church, established the primacy of parliament in politics, shifted political power from the king and the aristocracy to the rich gentry and merchants, openly rendering political authority into an extension of property and wealth, represented in and by the House of Commons. Liberty and political rights were redefined to become conditional upon owning property, limiting its applicability solely to the ruling classes. As a revolution of the rich and the propertied it was unique – "so unique as to have been practically no revolution at all" (Brinton, 1965: 19). It was the result of a conflict between members of the ruling classes divided roughly into: the king, the church establishment and higher nobles against parliament, merchants and some lower nobles. Though the conflict effectively revolutionized the political order, both sides were very careful in ensuring the preservation of the social order and their privileged position within it. The Commonwealth which succeeded the Civil War has pushed state centralization and power in England to unprecedented levels.[89] What emerged with the Restoration in 1660 was an institution of governance which was closer to the early modern state than anything before. As one of the most

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[89] This was, of course, a natural continuation of the centralizing tendencies which started with James and only gained strength with Charles I. Brinton notes: "In the years of personal rule Charles, aided by his two great supporters, Stafford and Laud, did his best to organize the government of England in accordance with notions of efficient centralization and expert rule which were the chief political heritage of the Renaissance" (1965:72).

important eras in English history, and because of his substantial relevance to liberal thought, this period has been studied extensively (Aylmer, 1968; Hill, 1948; 1949; 1955; 1982; 2002; Dow 1985; Manning, 1978; 1986; 1996; Richardson, 1998; Skinner, 1965; 2006; Walzer, 1965; Wootton, 1990; 1991; 1996; Macpherson, 1962; Pennington and Thomas, 1978). However, that substantial literature has yielded no "overall agreement on [its] origins [or] the aims and methods of the protagonists" (Dow, 1985: 1). Indeed, opposite opinions still clash on virtually every major aspect of the Civil War and while some talk of revolutions, others reject the premises entirely, talking just of a Civil War (Roper and Gowing, 2006).

At the same time, there was another revolution: that of the radicals.[90] The radical revolution never really happened though at times it has emerged as a real possibility, threatening to topple the socio-political order. The radical project aimed to revolutionize the socio-political order in its entirety: a more inclusive, representative democracy with wider suffrage and individual rights; communal access to enclosures and privatized land; the dismantling of the state church and institution of full freedom of conscience and religion. There were also demands, relatively less strong, for a reconstitution of economic relations on principles of fairness and Christian equality. During the vacuum of the Civil War distinct groupings of radicals emerged as viable alternatives in hundreds of localities and considerable support by the common people shifted from parliament to these dispersed groupings which were united in their championing of religious tolerance, political equality, economic fairness, and democracy. Using also the emancipatory language of

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[90] Some go as far as distinguishing three revolutions. David Underdown writes: "As always in the English Revolution, we need to know which revolution we are talking about: the moderate constitutional one of 1640-2; the more violent one of 1648-9 in which Parliament was purged and the King executed; or the abortive democratic one yearned for by Levellers and sectaries, but which never materialized" (Pennington and Thomas, 1978:186). Calling the 1640-2 changes a 'revolution' is stretching the definition more than I am comfortable with. In fact, Underdown himself calls it "a disturbance within the elite" later on (Pennington and Thomas, 1978:187).

Christianity the sectarians added to the radical arsenal, these men and women attempted to revolutionize the socio-political order based on egalitarian and democratic principles. Their endeavors brought to the fore radically new conceptions of politics, including new understandings of equality, liberty and legitimacy, "advances" which "were not matched until the 1760s" (Dow, 1985: 8). In contrast to radical ideas it was revealed, for instance, that "when members of Parliament spoke in defence of 'liberty and property' they meant something more like 'privilege and property'." Their revolution, then, was in no small part to institutionalize the protection of these privileges from the King whose need for money was among the triggers of the conflict. With the radicals "liberty 'in a general sense'," became an issue, illustrating for the first time "the [existing] antithesis between liberty and property" (Hill, 2002:46).

In this chapter I focus on the failed revolution of the radicals, exploring its origins, its actors and their demands in an attempt to establish pertinent facts in so far as they are essential to lead the way to the analyses provided in the following chapter. Radicals in the English Civil War are subject to a considerable amount of controversy. Even the simplest issues, such as the identities and motivations of the parties, are intensely debated between historians on various sides of the issue: while some, like Hill, Dow, Aylmer, and Manning point at a large variety of democratic ideas, ideals, and groupings, "others went as far as to deny that some of the sects ever existed" (Roper and Gowing, 2006:1). My goal in this chapter is twofold: first, to establish that the radical revolution arose from the widespread discontent with the increasingly oppressive socio-political conditions. The alternatives provided against these conditions emerged from within hundreds of parishes, churches, towns, and cities, forming the loose framework upon which the radical revolution was to be formed as a distinct third side in the conflict. Second, and following from the first; I argue that what gave cohesion and purpose to these dispersed movements and pulled them

together onto the national stage as a distinct third party was the epistemic breach provided by the combination of the power vacuum of the Civil War, and the hold on a large swath of the population of the various sectarian interpretations of Christianity. These two points are instrumental to explain how, for most of the radicals, religious salvation and political emancipation were inextricable.

Below, I start first by covering the history of the revolution, demonstrating that it was a true case of history from the winners' perspective, either covering the radicals as mad villains and ignorant fools or outright dismissing them. This debate remains far from over and historians continue to argue over every major aspect of the conflict. I then turn to establishing the radical presence, covering the reasons behind their emergence, their diversity and their agendas. I present the radicals as a distinct third party that never really managed to bring forth the revolution they wanted. I also show that their presence and agendas were well known by the others, including the King and parliamentarians, and feared for their potential to revolutionize the system. I conclude the chapter by bringing all these together and move on to the next chapter.

2.   The Radical Revolution

In this section I start with a literature review to demonstrate that the discovery of radicals as a genuine force has been a struggle that remains far from complete. I first cover the historiography which, for the very large part, either downplayed, dismissed or, lately, denied the radical presence in the war. In the second part, I move on to countering this body of literature and, drawing from the recent work on radicals present them as a strong movement with roots in the existing social discontent. I argue that widespread class tensions and anti-clericalism were approaching a boiling point decades before the war, leading to the creation of various alternatives which further fueled radicalism throughout the country. The Civil War acted as the epistemic breach which turned these dynamics into the revolutionary movement: the general *bouleversement*

of the established order revealed new possibilities. The radicals were partially responsible for these new openings and they took advantage. However, as a movement of the lower classes – bound to obedience – the radicals were treated with great suspicion and hostility by both sides of the Civil Wars.

2.1.   The Radical Revolution: a history of conflict

Was there an identifiable radical movement in the Civil War; if there was, did they really matter; if they did, in what ways? These questions remain pertinent as historians continue to disagree over almost every major aspect of the era, which is both one of the most important and among the most controversial in English history. Ronald Hutton says: "the Civil War has raged on paper even since the blood stopped flowing" (quoted in Richardson, 1998: 1). In the eighteenth century, David Hume noted the same: "it seems almost impossible, in the controverted parts of history, to say any thing which will satisfy the zealots of both parties" (1778, Vol.5: 547). In *The Debate on the English Revolution* (1998), R. C. Richardson summarizes: "historians continue to disagree about the causes and consequences of the English Revolution" with new research "on the one hand undermining old myths and on the other … reinforcing old prejudices" (1998: 8).

However, the inclusion of the place and role of the radicals in this debate is a marked improvement from the general state of the scholarship until the mid-twentieth century. Until then the radicals were either completely ignored or depicted as "at best an insignificant minority, at worst a lunatic fringe" (Dow, 1985: 1). Andrew Sharp notes that even the Levellers, the most famous radical party of the seventeenth century, "died … in 1649 … and stayed dead in human memory until the 1880s" (2004:xii). Wootton agrees: "do they deserve a central place in the history of political theory? This question, which no one would have paused to ask before Brailsford's birth [in 1873] … has became inescapable within a few decades of his death [in 1958] (1991:417).

Though Wootton, like many others, ignores the remarkable contributions of Catherine Macaulay, the first historian ever to cover the Levellers and the Diggers in a favorable light, to depict their contributions to the cause of liberty (see below).

If not dismissed as inconsequential, radicals were described in the most negative terms as agents of destruction and chaos. With very few exceptions, new studies acknowledging the more prominent roles played by radicals emerged only after the Second World War and have introduced new controversies. At that time, the belittlement and dismissal of radical agents and agendas was so typical that these new attempts were treated by many historians as an "alarmingly radical way of looking at the past" (Richardson, 1998: 7). The rise of the literature on radicals is countered, most recently, by the revisionists who ascribe the entire era of the Civil War to a perfect storm of failing institutions, and conflicting personalities and events. For the revisionist historians, a radical agenda with genuine roots in society is at best historical anachronism and at worst deliberate fiction.

Note, as an example of this debate, the role radicals played in the New Model Army (NMA) – the army formed by Cromwell and the Parliamentarians during the Civil War. The only point of agreement concerning the strength of the radicals is that they were present in the NMA. Beyond that, all else remains controversial. Dow, for instance, argues that "no historian of the political ideas can afford to deny the radicals a leading part" due to their success in mobilizing support from the common people and the endurance of their ideas (1985: 9). On the revisionist side, Kishlansky refutes even the most central assumptions espoused by Dow. He argues that the NMA was not the radical force others believed it to be and whatever radicalism can be read from the army's behavior is the consequence of a short-lived coincidence. The soldiers' concerns, Kishlansky argues, were more about their pay and the common soldier's distrust of parliament momentarily aligned their

interests with those of the Levellers. That the Levellers knew to take advantage of that moment to take over an already divided parliament does not make radicals out of the common soldiers (1979: 273-290).

In his rejection of the radical case Kishlansky is a moderate voice, recognizing radical actors but arguing that their strength was much less than argued. Others are much stronger in their refusal of the radicals. A case in point is Alastair MacLachlan who writes of the leftist "discovery" of a revolution and the "invented tradition of an English Revolution" (1996:1), putting a large portion of the blame personally on the "Leninist-Stalinist agenda" of Christopher Hill, denouncing his work as "orthodox party essay" (1996: 55). He further dismisses the Levellers, Diggers and Ranters as "the vanguard that never was" who were cast as "supposed victims of the emerging bourgeois state" (1996: 5). John Adamson's recent work *The Noble Revolt* (2007) summarizes the revisionist case: the war was the result of a power struggle triggered by a small group of nobles, led by the Earl of Essex, who tried to take advantage of Charles I's weaknesses and take over the government; the radicals were hardly worth mentioning in what was simply another case of power struggle among elites. In this contested field, even simplest definitional issues are subject to intense debate and are used with widely differing purposes. For instance, while Conal Condren challenges the use of the term 'radical' as an intolerable anachronism (Burgess and Festenstein, 2007), Melinda Zook applies the term liberally to a wide political spectrum, depicting the radicals as pioneer liberals, and completely subsuming them into the Whig tradition (1999). In short, to claim, as I do, that the radicals should be conceived of as a distinct third party with coherent political agendas is a controversial statement made into an already very conflicted field. Thankfully, it is not an unprecedented one.

2.2. The Radical Revolution: history writing as ammunition

The writing of the revolution's history was part of the war even before it started. Hobbes says: "it were a war before, yet there was no bloodshed; they shot at one another nothing but paper" (1839:188A). Of course, Hobbes means pamphlets; but the writing of history was also a central part of the conflict. Corinne Weston covers in great detail how differing interpretations of English history provided ammunition to different parties throughout the seventeenth century, before and during the war. She describes, for instance, parliament's discovering of its traditional privileges – "ancient and undoubted … independent of the King" – and the royalist pushback that the King's extending these privileges to parliament "is an act only of manners" (1991: 377-379). Precedent, continuity, tradition and history were sources of legitimacy and establishing the 'correct' history for one's argument translated into superior legitimacy for the argument, and thus one party, over the other. Perhaps even more to the point, the absence of such a claim to tradition and precedence devolved one's argument into an innovation, a revolutionary mindset that parliament was quite unable to get into until late into the war.

Consider on that point the case of Sir John Eliot who, for defending parliamentary privileges and rights, was imprisoned by the King after the dissolution of parliament in 1629 and left to die in the Tower of London. Yet, even he found it impossible to break with the tradition and innovate: his treatise *De Jure Majestatis* (Of the Rights of Sovereignty), fully completed in prison, is almost indistinguishable in its arguments from the most devout royalist pamphlet of the 1640. Hill summarizes: Eliot argues that "there is no contract between King and people; bad kings must be obeyed, lest greater evils result. Any liberty granted to subjects is without prejudice to royal sovereignty". This latter, in particular, reveals the disconnect between what Eliot fought for and what he could justify; it was in part Eliot's resistance to precisely this argument, when Charles I

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tried to get it stated in the Petition of Rights, which caused his imprisonment and eventual demise. Eliot's treatise notes that "subjects cannot share sovereignty; and in England, since Parliaments can be summoned only by the King, he is sovereign." (Hill, 2002: 62-3). This, then, is most telling: Sir John Eliot who died for defending parliament's authority is not only unable to express his cause in theory but, when he tries, can only fall back on the most central absolutist arguments. The establishment of precedent was of such key importance that, even in the middle of the war, parliament's Sir Simonds D'Ewes would spend days in the London Tower looking for precedents to justify the House's position.

The search for precedents to justify one's position was only one of the aspects of the war of words Hobbes describes. In line with the idea of writing of history as ammunition, historians clashed during the war too with alternative takes making the case for one party or the other. Thomas May's two works published in 1647 (*History of the Parliament of England*) and 1650 (*A Breviary of the History of the Parliament of England*) made Parliament's case already during the war itself. He was countered almost immediately in 1648 by Clement Walker's *History of Independency*. While the Commonwealth era largely championed the cause of Parliament, the twenty years following the Restoration saw an increase in the royalist responses condemning the previous literature and authors. These two periods shaped and defined much of the discourse for the next hundred and fifty years. It is telling of the nature of this debate that, in late eighteenth-century Hume wrote to James Oswald in his personal correspondence: "I am convinced that the history of England has never yet been written … such is the ignorance and partiality of our historians" (Richardson, 1998: 55). Hill claimed, albeit with some exaggeration, that "for two centuries nothing was written on the events of 1640-60 that could improve the comments of contemporary observers" (1948:130).

For the royalist/Tory side, the themes which stood out during that time were: the unjust and unjustifiable rebellion to the legitimate authority of Charles I; the evils of selfish, greedy parliamentary leaders; and the tremendous damage done by religious fanaticism spread by uncontrolled sects. While figures such as Archbishop Laud and the Earl of Strafford acquired martyrdom along with almost saintly qualities, rebellious people in general were described as either misled by scheming, malicious parliamentarians and sectarians or in error due to the unprecedented liberties they were given and, as important, their ignorance of matters clearly beyond them. For the Tories, the Presbyterians and Puritans were the most heinous of criminals for misleading good people into rebellion.

On the parliamentarian/Whig side, the themes were similar, but opposite. Parliamentarians were champions of the people who fought for liberties spiritual and temporal; Charles I was a tyrant whose incompetent leadership was only matched by the evils of his malicious and cruel advisors, Laud and Strafford. They stood in contrast to the Puritans who were men of great piety and patriots true to the interests of the country and the wishes of God. The English Revolution was thus "a necessary defence of the ancient constitution and of the Englishman's civil and religious liberties" against an underhanded attempt to establish an arbitrary government collecting all powers to itself (Richardson, 1998: 46).

An overwhelming portion of the work produced from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century followed these lines; exceptions were very rare.[91] "Only a few histories,"

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[91] One outlier of great import to the above division is *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), James Harrington's work of political philosophy. *Oceana* is famed for its argument that political stability depends on "the balance of power in a nation reflect[ing] the balance of economic power" and that the cause of the Civil Wars was "the commons lack[ing] power commensurate with their property" (Worden, 1991: 451-3). Though his work was difficult to place at the time and caused his imprisonment under both Cromwell and Charles II, Harrington espouses a lighter economic determinism which based all politics on economic lines. To him, the explosion of the war and the collapse of the monarchy was "as natural as the death of a man" (Richardson, 1998: 18). He writes: "Charles I's

MacGillivray notes, "reveal no political associations or leanings or reveal them so imperfectly that one cannot be confident in identifying the histories with the name of any political faction" (1974: 1). For instance, the French Huguenot Paul de Rapin Thoyras wrote "the King and the Parliament were both very much in the wrong"; similarly, Bishop of Peterborough White Kennett praised the defenders of traditional liberties while also arguing that Charles I and Archbishop Laud never really intended to overthrow them. Nevertheless, they were quickly categorized by their peers into one camp or the other and viciously attacked by their respective opponents (Richardson, 1998: 43-52).

The bipartisan writing of history does not diminish the importance of some these works, and a few truly stand out. *The History of the Rebellion* (1701) by the Earl of Clarendon Edward Hyde, is among the most important studies of the Civil Wars and is still praised for its enduring quality. Due both to the strength of his work and the political climate, "for the century and half after the Restoration," Hill notes, "it was Clarendon's view of the great rebellion that prevailed." Clarendon summarizes his position: "the civil war had been a regrettable 'frenzy of the people,' in which all the most sacred institutions of the ruling class – crown, church, peerage, property – had been threatened" (Hill, 1948: 131). The conclusions he drew as a royalist notwithstanding, Clarendon's descriptions of the personalities and events remain unrivalled in their value.

In the same vein there is, of course, Hobbes's *Behemoth, the History of the Causes of the Civil Wars in England* (1681) of which I say more in the next chapter. Though it was never

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intentions had not been sinful. He had seemed a tyrant only because the commons had lacked power commensurate with their property" (Worden, 1991: 451-3). Of the very few of its kind, the *Oceana* is the most important exception to the sharp divide between Royalists and parliamentarians in the debate. His arguments are seen as part of English Republicanism mainly because it is difficult to place him elsewhere and partly because republicans of the time, such as John Milton and Algernon Sidney, made use of Harrington's arguments to tread a middle path between what they saw as the excesses of both sides, the king and the commons (Worden, 1991: 459).

perceived to be as influential (or even as historically informative) as Clarendon's work, Hobbes's work of political philosophy still carries influence. Ever the advocate of undivided sovereignty, Hobbes was even more vocal than Clarendon in his belief that "Parliament destroyed the peace of the kingdom; and … by the help of seditious Presbyterian ministers and of ambitious ignorant orators, they reduced this government into anarchy." (1839: 188). More important than *Behemoth*, perhaps more important than all others mentioned here in terms of its historical influence, is Hobbes's *Leviathan*. This wildly influential and enduring work of political philosophy is, in essence, Hobbes's polemical weighing in on the discussion of politics during the Civil wars. *Behemoth* can be seen as the political application of the arguments put forth in *Leviathan*: an absolute ruler against whom rebellion is never justified; to prevent civil wars the only solution is to gather all power (from church and religion to universities) in the hand of the sovereign. This argument is further fleshed out in the last section of the next chapter.

Clarendon's and Hobbes' works perfectly exemplify many other works which lay the blame for the destruction and disquiet on the parliamentary side: "the first and general cause was the Sins of the People" wrote the 1654 the anonymous author of *Brittania Triumphalis*; for Peter Heylyn, the author of the 1668 *Life or Archbishop Laud*, the culprit was the business interest of the rich who hid their "covetousness, sacrilege, and rapine"; Clement Walker pointed at the people who were corrupted by a long period of peace and prosperity brought about by kings James I and Charles I. William Dugdale's *Short View of the Late Troubles of England* (1681) is fairly representative of the Restoration view of parliament: traitors who "willfully misled the people, and, for no good reason, contrived the downfall of the monarchy" (Richardson, 1998:20-4). This tradition, which focused on demonizing parliamentarians, either completely ignored radicals or presented them as the worst of the worst.

It is very easy to see, in these works, dismissals of the common people and blame put on revolutionary leaders identical to 1525. Parliamentary leaders are greedy and evil people who always meant to mislead the ignorant and the innocent, unconscionably using higher ideas and ideals for their selfish ends. In these accounts the common people are, once more, abandoned in obscurity: they never were genuine political actors, only tools used by others; their ideas were not sophisticated political projects but wild dreams which were never serious. Thus, just like the revolutionaries of 1525, the English radicals were never worthy of the attention of the serious historian; they had nothing to contribute to the story other than just another lesson about the overall foolishness of the common people misguided by evil men.

2.3. The Radicals: villains and fictions

Indeed, until after the Second World War, the radicals were often depicted as mad zealots who were, at best, an unstable element. Just like the 1525, this was another case of history writing from the victors' perspective. The Levellers were often acknowledged in the persons of their leaders, Lilburne, Walwyn, and Sexby, who were depicted as out of control fanatics. Even when an author acknowledged one of their ideas as a valid one (like Clarendon sympathizing with the arguments on religious freedom), they were held responsible for ruining it with their uncompromising, anarchical ways. Clarendon points to the Levellers, and Hobbes acknowledges them implicitly, as a great problem: a natural enemy of the realm and obstacles to peace and moderation. Their blind disregard for the good of the realm, these authors argued, was partially responsible for the damages brought about by the wars. Hobbes's *Behemoth*, in particular, had some choice words of condemnation for the sectarians, arguing that it would have been much better to commit "a great massacre" and kill all "those seditious ministers … before they had preached" the "seditious doctrine that … [people] may lawfully rebel" (1839: 178). However, it is Hume

whose condemnation in his tremendously important *The History of England* (volumes 5 and 6,

published in 1760-1) best captures the mainstream view of the radicals up until the 1940s.

To Hume, the Levellers, alongside the Fifth Monarchists and millenarians with whom they

were described together, were at best anarchists championing the dissolution of all authority, and

at worst religious madmen driven by supposed inspiration to suspend even natural laws and core

principles of the nation. They were dangerous fanatics within the army and would never have

relinquished the "sweets of dominion" they experienced bringing anarchy and confusion (1778,

Vol 5:513) had they not been suppressed at the last moment. He writes: "found on supposed

inspiration, not on any principles of human reason, had no means, besides cant and low rhetoric,

by which it could recommend itself to others. The Levellers insisted on an equal distribution of

power and property, and disclaimed all dependence and subordination" (1778, Vol 6:3-4). They

were responsible for bringing about illegal violence and were culpable for Cromwell's despotic

government which emerged from that violence. His description of the NMA, though lengthy, is

worth reproducing in its depiction of a group of barely controlled madmen who were beyond law

and obedience required of their social status:

> the only solid support of the republican independent faction, which, though it formed so small a part of the nation, had violently usurped the government of the whole, was a numerous army of near fifty thousand men … which was actuated by a spirit that rendered it dangerous to the assembly which had assumed command over it. Accustomed to indulge every chimera in politics, every phrensy [*sic*] in religion, the soldiers knew little of the subordination of citizens, and had only learned from apparent necessity, some maxims of military obedience. And while they still maintained that all those enormous violations of law and equity, of which they had been guilty, were justified by the success with which Providence had blessed them; they were ready to break out into any new disorder, wherever they had the prospect of a like sanction and authority. What alone gave stability to all these unsettled humours was, the great influence both civil and military acquired by Oliver Cromwell (1778, Vol 6:5).

Yet preventing disorder grants Cromwell no reprieve from Hume's criticism, which is

harsher than any other, including Leveller leaders. For instance, while Lilburne is dismissed as a

"promoter of sedition and disorder in the commonwealth," who was thrown into prison for

"dispersing seditious libels" (1778, Vol 6:3-4) Cromwell is criticized mercilessly, described both as a master schemer and a religious zealot: "transported to a degree of madness with religious ecstasies, he never forgot the political purposes to which he might serve. Hating monarchy, while a subject; despising liberty, while a citizen; though he retained for a time all orders of men under a seeming obedience to the parliament; he was secretly paving the way by artifice and courage, to his own unlimited authority" (1778, Vol 6:5). In short, right before the French Revolution, one of the most respectable pens in England saw in the NMA an instrument of chaos without any meaningful political project, that forcibly seized power and only prevented from breaking down into complete anarchy and disorder by a scheming, power hungry Cromwell who was bordering on religious insanity while planning his despotic takeover. It was, in every way possible, a collection of unstable villains.

The first historian who presented the radicals as a distinct third party also saw the demise of her career precisely because of her embrace of radicalism. Catherine Macaulay, whose *History of England* was published between 1763 and 1783, is also the only historian who, until late 1940s, paid any real attention to the influence and role of radical ideas in the English Civil Wars.[92] For her peers, Macaulay's work initially rivalled Hume's in attention to detail, seriousness of research and argumentation (Richardson, 1998: 56). A radical herself, Macaulay was the first person to do genuine research into the radicals and present Winstanley's works. She unambiguously presented the Civil Wars as "England's finest hour" when "sacred characters … set up banners of liberty against a tyranny which had been established for a series of more than 150 years". In comparison to this uprising for freedom against the Stuarts, 1688, to her, was simple

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[92] Catherine Macaulay has no relation to Thomas Babington Macaulay, the famous nineteenth century historian whose book is also named *History of England*.

factional friction and an enduring source of corruption. Macaulay denounces James I with "hatred and contempt" and sees in Charles I "a rash imperious monarch" who ruled the country as "a conquered province". It was her radicalism, put forth boldly and clearly, which alienated her readers who once took her for the champion Whigs needed against Hume's 'Tory history' (Richardson, 1998: 55-8). Yet, in the end, rather than succeeding in shining light on the radicals, Macaulay's unrepentant radicalism ultimately condemned her work to relative obscurity alongside them.

The discussion on the radicals was thus inherited from these debates on the subject: a lunatic fringe with no support other than an army and no political project other than anarchy. With those qualities well established by repeated expositions, radicals no longer merited the attention of the serious historian, at least no more than what was absolutely necessary. Macaulay's dismissal speaks precisely to this point: because she argued for the radical cause that she was no longer seen as a serious historian. This dismissal and the unwillingness to entertain the radical ideas and causes for their prevalence locked the debate, intense as it was, on a decidedly shallower, bipartisan level: the Civil War was now treated as if it was waged between individuals of the two sides whose motives, agendas and actions took on qualities that outshone all other considerations. The discussion was narrowed down to the characters and qualities of a few individuals and understanding these characters became the primary concern.

The sustained and detailed research following the Second World War which has established the radicals as a third party is countered, most recently, by the revisionists who resumed the above tradition. The revisionist take on the era rests on three legs: the conservative nature of parliamentary politics; the general conservatism of localities; and the elite infighting in the court under Charles' personal reign. With these three areas of concentration, revisionists abandoned the

search for long term economic and socio-political causes. By focusing on narrower events, short-term political developments, individuals with particular roles and agendas, and numerous localities, the revisionist take misses the main factors which led to the explosion of lower and middle class discontent. Instead of describing "large sections of those outside the elite [who] may have responded with enthusiasm and commitment to the severing of the bonds of the old order" these historians of the late twentieth century instead painted a picture of "widespread popular neutralism and disinclination to become involved in a nationwide, ideological struggle" (Dow, 1985: 1).

In their studies, revisionist historians found no sign of radicalism. Locality studies found no evidence of an ongoing, deep seated struggle over liberty or constitutional ambitions for emancipation; the notables, local gentry and clergy, were not concerned about higher concepts such as liberties or the rights of subjects.[93] Modern historians of parliament, such as Conrad Russell, found no real opposition in parliament before the war, meaning the opposition group in the House of Commons which emerged during the war did not oppose the crown in defense of the liberties and even those who did, like Sir John Eliot, were conservative enough to justify the argument for a unified, cohesive parliament. Russell and others thus described these struggles as "spillover of faction fights at Court" (Dow, 1985: 3) which were disguised in terms much higher than was warranted. Kishlansky's work, for instance, speaks precisely to this point by describing the army's takeover as the result of a momentary weakness on parliament's part.

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[93] One point of interest that emerged in the last few decades with greater attention to the localities is the discovery of the Clubmen Associations: profoundly conservative groupings of middle and lower class people with a strong emphasis on active neutrality.

Similar to their colleagues, revisionist historians who studied Charles's personal reign also pointed at the apparent conservatism – contra revolutionary ambitions – of parliament and explained parliamentary resistance as directed to the 'innovative' nature of the period of personal rule and the seemingly aggressive expansion of powers and reach of his advisors. For revisionists, even the execution of the King was an attempt by the moderates to prevent the complete takeover by the Army, the sectarians and the Levellers. Worden (1974) argues that the revolutionary actions of Parliament (such as the regicide, the abolition of the monarchy) were undertaken not by revolutionaries but by moderates and conservatives to keep the radicals in check. Those who somehow still did not fit these 'rational' explanations were, then, "lunatick revolter" as the Royalist press of the time identified (Hughes, 2006:192). All these approaches have "underlined the essential moderation and conservatism of Charles's future parliamentary opponents" (Dow, 1985: 3) as well as the local gentry. They thus concluded that the radicalism discovered by later authors was at best imagined, as Kishlansky assumed, and at worst fabricated, as MacLachlan argued. Over a few centuries the radicals thus moved from being lunatics and villains who are rarely mentioned to non-actors who need no acknowledgement. So, one way or another, the common people were never really political agents of importance; they never had a distinct political agenda of their own; English and European history was written by the elites, the Kings, the nobles, and the clergy.

3.   Radicalism: economic inequality, religious reformation, and the common people

In this section I argue, against the literature above, that the radicals were a strong undercurrent already before the war and, during the war, managed to present one of the most central threats to the system's continuing existence. Most of those who were to join radical

movements and sects came from the groups whose poverty, or, more accurately lack of riches, normally prevented them from participating in politics and even conceiving a possibility for such participation. Beyond the power struggle between the elites, the radicals wanted to revolutionize the system, shattering traditional social hierarchies and restructuring the political system on egalitarian grounds. Theirs were well-rooted movements: widespread class tensions, anti-clericalism and demands for religious and political reforms were approaching a boiling point already before the 1640s. By early 1640s, and before the conflict started, hundreds of small movements were emerging in the towns, with sectarians and common people setting up alternative, egalitarian societies, often based on new interpretations of religious principles.

When the conflict started and Parliament decided to call on the common people for their assistance, this was the energy that moved them to do so. The Civil War provided the epistemic breach, turning these disparate dynamics into the revolutionary movement, or, more accurately, several movements with revolutionary aims, a few of which managed to rise to the national scene. Far from the purposeless band of anarchists they were described as, distinct groupings of radicals had sophisticated political agendas, elaborated in numerous documents which were spread throughout England. Radical actors initially backed parliament but their ideas and goals were distinct enough to set them aside as a separate side. They were also universally seen as such: a most dangerous third party which threatened the entire socio-political system in the vacuum of the civil war. In fact, they were a constant worry for both sides of the war, and a strong consideration in the formulation of their strategies. I thus establish radicals as the common men who were motivated by real life woes based on massive economic inequality, widespread anticlericalism, and a clear desire for a better socio-political existence. These motivations made them a distinct third party and the only one with genuinely revolutionary intent. This from Hill: "Once the unity

of the Parliamentary class was broken, social revolution would be possible. That is why responsible leaders on both sides were so anxious to get what they wanted without war" (2002:104).

This section also contributes to the answer of the question raised in the previous one: were radicals really a force in the war and, if so, how important were they? By contrasting two historians with strongly divergent views, Hill and Davis, Wootton presents the problem of the origins of radicalism in the English Revolution as follows: "the question is presented as lying in a choice between [Hill's] account of their views as having 'an underground existence before 1640, so that the novelty is only in the freedom to express them'," or, as Davis argues, "seeing them as 'novel ideas, the product of novel circumstances'." Both historians, however, agree that these ideas were indebted to a form of religious heresy (1990: 656). To be sure, religiously inspired radicalism is not a uniquely English phenomenon. A specific type of emancipatory 'Christian heresy', from Waldo to Wycliffe, from Hus to 1525, championed the equality of believers, unmediated preaching of the Bible, championing poverty and rejection of the privileged socio-political role of the church in society. Parts of this tradition was certainly well known to many English sectarians and radicals, and even if they were unaware of the 1525 rising, the heritage was alive and well during in the English Revolution. I argue below that various shades of radicalism were present in society before the war started but they became a distinct third party only after the conflict started. Despite their early alliance with parliamentary leaders, their agenda for revolutionary change in society dates from before the beginning of the war – in the most dispersed, unorganized manner.

Wootton traces the "uncompromising political radicalism" to before the war and notes that already in 1642 "it was soon clear that a significant group on the parliamentary side would not settle for anything less [than revolution]" (Wottoon, 1990: 654). Trying to shift the focus away

from radicalism coming "from below or from religious sects", Wootton focuses on parliament and makes it clear that parliamentary radicals were not an isolated fringe. Wootton says "radicalism appeared as soon as the war began, not because" and it strengthened precisely because parliament looked too undecided to carry the revolutionary ideals embraced by parts of society.[94] "The transition from rebellion to revolution," for Wootton, occurred in the winter of 1642. Manning sees a similar picture of a bottom-up revolution emerging from "the rank and file [who] projected their cause onto the leader" and, when later these leaders deserted the cause, threw "up leaders from their own ranks" (Manning, 1996: 5). By interpreting the emergence of radical leaders from the common people as the first instance of radicalism, conservative and revisionist historians have missed the dynamics which led to that point. Indeed, the Leveller leader Lilburne was imprisoned already in 1638 by the Star Chamber; another Leveller leader, Walwyn, wrote his first pamphlet in 1641, indicating a much earlier radicalization. To put it simply, it is inconceivable that such sophisticated agendas for political revolution emerged suddenly, with no prior existence or base in society, simply because the elite infighting became apparent. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that social, political, and economic conditions have already created radical agendas and groupings and when the infighting began among the elite these groups managed to step onto the scene. John Walter summarizes, arguing "for the existence of a pre-revolutionary popular political culture … [and] the temporary emergence of a citizenry of free-born Englishmen (and, for some, free-born women)" (2006:171). The war, then, was both the opening necessary for these agendas to step to the national scene and the breach which made them into a genuine alternative for so many.

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[94] He thus points at the constitutional conservative public statements from parliamentarian leaders not as evidence that there was no radicalism until 1646 but as a reason radicals finally took off on their own.

Beyond Hill, Manning, Robertson, Aylmer, Walter and others who argue as much explicitly, I see Wootton's reading as consistent with this take too. Wootton points at the clear constitutional conservatism of Parliament before 1646 not as proof that radicalism was nonexistent before but as the reason why radicals had to step up from among the common people (1990: 655). He thus suggests a third, radical, party that had no illusions concerning the conservatism of parliamentary leaders from the beginning but could only step in leadership roles after these were vacated by parliamentarians clearly unwilling to carry out the task. So, radical democratic ideas existed before the war: in rural areas, separatist and independent sectarians provided schools for democratic behavior while common people started pushing for electoral rights before 1640s; in London, notable Puritans were asking for radical religious and political reforms as early as 1640 and the people who were to become the Levellers were already printing pamphlets in late 1630s.

Yet, the epistemic breach which turned these disparate impulses into revolutionary movements was created by the socio-political upheaval of the Civil War. The war provided the opening for the wider dissemination of these ideas and new interpretations of old ones. The war, Hill says, was as if "the people saw a door opening out of their own sphere, and rushed through it" (1982:60). These ideas revealed, only in the few years between early and late 1640s, the narrowness of the struggle that was being waged between parliament and the king. It illustrated, for instance, a contrast between liberty demanded by the revolutionary common people, a conception much closer to modern understandings, and liberty defended by parliament which ultimately turned out to mean something closer to propertied privilege. The ruling classes which were divided over the civil war, nevertheless reacted similarly in their fear and distrust of the common men in suppressing, dispersing and ultimately pacifying these revolutionary ideas. Cromwell who, during the war, presided over the Putney debates and even publicly promised to

abolish tithes (Hill, 2002:164), in victory, was harsher to the radicals than the royalists ever were. In fact, no other party has used the Levellers so aptly, and repeatedly too, only to completely crush them once their usefulness expired. The struggle over the concepts of liberty, equality and, most important here, authority, obedience and mastery in politics ended with the victory of the rulers over the ruled. The rulers, here, were the propertied and the rich who won the war against the King and defeated the radicals.

Nothing makes the argument for the victory of the propertied from 1640 to 1660 over all others as the importance rightly attached to one particular piece of legislation. It is the act of Parliament named 'Wardship and Court of Wards' which speaks to this point beyond all others. The act was issued three times from 1640 to 1660: in 1646 by the parliament of War, in 1656 by the Commonwealth Parliament, and in 1660 by the first parliament of the Restoration. The act solidified the victory of the propertied over all others: it took all lands from the King and transformed them into freehold, not just freeing their rich owners from having to transfer to land to the King in death, and to pay death taxes to enrich the crown, but also giving these "landowners whose rights in their estates had hitherto been limited, an absolute power to do what they would with their own." This included, most notably, "unconditional ownership and transmission of landed property", the exact right which was explicitly denied from the copyholders (Hill, 2002:146). With this act in 1646 the landed rich effectively secured their property from the King, removing themselves from under the King's feudal authority, but explicitly instituting these exact rules between themselves and their tenants, denying from them the very rights they secured against the king. The act in 1656 only further demonstrated the dominance of the propertied class over all others, this time underlining the lack of rights of the copyholders under the propertied. Perhaps louder than all others was the last confirmation: the very first act of Parliament under Charles II in

1660, immediately after the Declaration of Breda (pardoning all crimes committed during the War and the interregnum) was to confirm this piece of legislation.

Of course, the act did not go unnoticed. Indeed, in 1649, Gerrard Winstanley of the Diggers spoke precisely to the Wardship and Court of Wards act, telling parliamentarians: "if you found out the Court of Wards to be a burden and freed lords of manors and gentry from paying fines to the King … let the common people be set free too from paying homage to the lords of manors" (Hill, 2002: 147). Later on, in 1656, a Major-General who served in the NMA introduced a bill to check enclosures which were only increasing in number and intensity, robbing the common people of whatever common land was left to their use. In response, the Commonwealth Parliament not only rejected the General's bill but confirmed the Wardship act in a land without King, further underlining that the target of this affirmation was the common people. Finally, the confirmation of the act in 1660, under Charles II "specifically provided that it should not benefit copyholders". Hill quotes from Perkins its unparalleled importance: "this was 'the decisive change in English history, which made it different from the continent; from it every other difference in English society stemmed'" (2002: 147). Blackstone agrees, arguing that "this Act is a greater boon to property owners than Magna Carta itself. In no sphere was the defeat of the radical movement more decisive than this" (Hill, 2002: 147). So, the radical ideas, which for a brief moment threatened the social order during the Civil War, were thus decisively defeated with the Commonwealth and this defeat was only strengthened with the Restoration.

Below, in making the argument for the existence and strength of the radicals during the war, I go through three central points: the economic inequality; religious issues; and the common people which are the ultimate source of the radical cause. In the part on the common people I also touch upon the Levellers and the Diggers, two radical groups which are closer to liberal/social

democrats and socialist communitarians respectively. Though I try to cover these three aspects – economy, religion, and the common people – separately, there is a distinct sense of inextricableness between them. Despite my best efforts, sometimes it is simply impossible to separate the political from the religious or the economic. Indeed, the argument for rebellion to an established authority which is systematically impoverishing its subjects was often a religious one. Furthermore, in numerous instances, the political demand for equality under the law and consent of the governed was almost directly transplanted into the political from the religious: Puritan sectarians which argued for the latter either also argued for the former, or convinced others that this is the Christian way, leading them to demand democratic governance. Religious sectarians acted as political radicals and churches as schools of democratic governance; common people went to the church and left arguing that the King is an unnecessary burden. When the famous tract *Tyranipocrit Discovered* demanded reformation in August 1649, it spoke of the reformation of the House and of the Church in the same sentence. Thus, it is important to note that these distinctions, which I am imposing on the subject here for intelligibility, were mostly not present for the people of the age.

3.1. Radicalism: economic inequality

Despite their many strengths, revisionist studies miss both these sources of radicalism and the common men, the main actors of radical ideas and agendas, due to their myopic focus. Whether they look at localities, the court, or parliament there are inherent limitations to revisionist studies preventing them from successfully capturing the true scale of the widespread economic discontent, the anticlericalism, and the subtly growing response to these by the common people throughout England. For instance, precisely because they are exclusively and closely focused elsewhere, these

studies cannot capture, and sometimes do not even attempt to reveal the central insight Hill provides succinctly:

> As prices rose during the sixteenth century, the purchasing power of wages had fallen something like two-thirds. Since the number of those permanently depending on wages was increasing, the number of those on the margin of starvation is likely to have increased too. This fall in real wages was catastrophic for those who sold or were evicted from their plots of land and became entirely dependent on earnings. The real earnings of a worker born in 1580 would never exceed half of what his great-grandfather had enjoyed (2002:24).

Indeed, putting the common people over several decades at the heart of the inquiry – rather than the ruling classes in court, parliament or localities – results in a much different picture. Instead of local or national notables who respect traditions, expect obedience and are predisposed to obey their superiors and, overall, have a vested interest in conserving the social order, we encounter "large number of popular disturbances" (Dow, 1985:5). These include enclosure riots, price riots, attacks on the rich and considerable popular agitation further inflamed by widespread anticlericalism and, on a lower scale but still of substantial importance, extensive attempts to reform the church both nationally and locally. Moreover, we can observe these disturbances, often mixed with religious motives, going back decades before the war and increasing in number and intensity as 1640s approach. Indeed, from the very beginnings of the seventeenth century, popular discontent was on the rise in a clearly noticeable way and more and more uprisings were being put down by force:

> So, although it would be wrong to think of any body of organized discontent, there is a permanent background of potential unrest throughout these decades. Given a crisis – a famine, large-scale unemployment, a breakdown of government – disorder might occur, as it did in 1607, when there were 'Levellers' in Northamptonshire and 'Diggers' in Warwickshire. In 1622 Gloucestershire unemployed went in groups to houses of the rich, demanding money and seizing provisions. There were revolts in the south-western counties in 1628-31, and anti-enclosure riots over large areas of England in 1640-3. There was no police force in Stuart England, no standing army. The substitution of fire-arms for bows and arrows had the effect of disarming the people: gunpowder and cannon could be monopolized by the state. Those entitled to bear arms – the armigeri – were the landed class. The gentry, said Sir Walter Raleigh, 'are the garrisons of good order throughout this realm'. A naked basis of force underlay social relations. The prevention of peasant revolt was thus the monarchy's job; in this it had the support of the propertied class. Problems arose only when royal policy hit the pockets of those on whose behalf law and order were being maintained. So, there was a steady undercurrent of fear of 'the many-headed monster' (Hill, 2002:27).

Beyond the revelation of the 'permanent background of potential unrest' from the lower classes, a focus on the elite also misses the very real impact tremendous economic inequality had on the common people's lives over a few decades. Consider, on the issue of focus: "seventeenth-century laborers had no organizations to protect them. Employers had: wages were fixed by Justices of Peace, themselves members of the employing class." (Hill, 2002: 24). Revisionist historians have no possible way of catching the increasing misery of the lower classes and the malcontent which was at boiling point already before the war precisely because they focus largely on the people who were Justices of Peace, the notables, the gentry, the employers and landowners. It is also important to note that, during the conflict years, economy only went from bad to worse, in certain places reaching starvation levels with "people selling their bedding and clothes" (Hill, 1982: 21)

With "the poor [being] treated as utterly rightless" (Hill, 1982: 25) and parliament declaring "he that hath no property in his goods … as unfree" (Hill, 2002: 44), the economic downturn has only exacerbated an already difficult situation for a very large part of the population. As can be expected, things only got worse during the war: "The years from 1620 to 1650 were bad; the 1640s were much the worst decade of the period. On top of the disruption caused by the civil war came a series of disastrous harvests. Between 1647 and 1650 food prices rose steeply above the pre-war level; money wages lagged badly behind, and the cost of living rose significantly [and] taxation was unprecedentedly heavy … in December 1648 … copyholders had to hire themselves out as wage-labourers or shepherds." (Hill, 1982:107-108). To make it clearer: from 1600 to 1640 food prices almost doubled while wages for unskilled laborers remained the same; things got expectedly worse between 1640 and 1649 and by the end of the decade the poor and the unskilled were mostly unable to support themselves (Hill, 2002:320).

Yet, with or without the war, the poor and the impoverished middle classes were not among the concerns of the ruling classes. This became clearer as the war progressed and the radicals distinguished themselves from the other two sides, which were acting in similar hostility to the common men's cause. The Leveller pamphlet *The Mournfull Cries of Many Thousand Poore Tradesmen* (22 January 1648) wrote plainly: 'Is not all the controversy, whose slaves the poor shall be?' (Exclassics.com, 2018). The famous pamphlet *Tyranipocrit Discovered* sums up many points: it denounces "the rich thieves" who, "through the instigation of the devil," "make a combination and call it law, to hang a poor man if he do steal, when they have wrongfully taken from him all his maintenance [and] make themselves thieves by Act of Parliament". *Tyranipocrit* presents the need for an overhaul of the entire system, political and religious, and notes: "a reformation [of the 'Senate-house'] that will establish tyranny and slavery, and make the rich richer, and the poor poorer, that is the reformation that the devil would have." The anonymous authors of this pamphlet argue that the property of rich should be divided among the poor, just like God commanded the children of Israel (Exclassics.com, 2018).

The view from parliament (or, of course, the palace) did not include the common people, their concerns, or considerations in any way except ensuring that the lower classes would remain obedient. As such, the economic hardships faced by the common people did not concern parliamentarians. Quite the opposite: the Lower House spoke for and was composed of the prosperous gentry and the richer merchants which, together, "represented a unified class". Indeed, in 1641 Sir Thomas Ashton, an MP, said: "the *Primates*, the *Nobiles*, with the *minores nobiles*, the gentry consult and dispose the rules of the government; the plebeians submit to and obey them" (Hill, 2002:45). The divisions which marked the beginning of the Civil War were not between gentlemen and townsfolk but within the ruling class." For the members of the ruling class in the

court and parliament, "the problem of early seventeenth-century politics was to decide where the king's rights and privileges ended and those of his free subjects began: the majority of the population did not come into it" (Hill, 2002:45). The free were the propertied. On this point, there is no doubt: those without property were not only explicitly considered unfree, they were subject to different laws. Conscription, flogging, burning of the hands, and similar punishments were only for the unpropertied, just like particular types of misfortune such as eviction, loss of employment and unemployment, and loss of livelihood and land. The debate between parliament and the King was precisely on the preservation of these privileges: the untouchable quality of the property of the rich. As can be expected, these were not the issues that were of great concern to the overwhelming majority of the common people who were either property-less or were at the mercy of a landlord in a time of widespread evictions and enclosures. Their concerns, which were many, profound, and well-founded, were ignored and disregarded by parliament which was waging its own struggle. Nothing evidences these as plainly and strongly as the parliamentary acts on Wardship and Court of Wards (see above).

Sir Thomas Smith's words about the Elizabethan era remained valid for the reign of James I and Charles I: "'Day labourers, poor husbandmen, yea merchants or retailers which have no free land, copyholders and all artificers … have no voice or authority in our commonwealth, and no account is made of them, but only to be ruled." (Hill, 2002:45). Indeed, elections excluded "eighty to ninety percent of the rural population" who were freeholders, copyholders, cottagers, leaseholders, servants, and paupers. Wage workers, who were experiencing increasingly unbearable hardship, were completely excluded as well. Thus, "the ninety county members [of the Lower House] were invariably drawn from the leading landed families". Some freeholders with more than £40 of annual income were allowed to vote but, Richard Baxter tells us, "'ordinarily

choose such as their landlords do desire them to choose'." (Hill, 2002:45). Indeed, with no rights to protect them from the landlord, voting against him would have meant certain destitution. For the ruling classes, the common people was there to be ruled.

However, this order of things created more and more friction in the seventeenth century. In parallel with the rising manifestations of discontent, it was being increasingly challenged in various ways from 1620s onwards. While the elites discussed parliamentary privileges, king's powers, and the sanctity of private property, issues were much different for the common people. The political struggle for the common people was primarily the one that occurred in their town halls: "the freemen of the towns were more concerned to assert their right to vote in municipal elections, and were more interested in the distribution of power between the mayor, the corporation, and the townsmen at large" (Manning, 1978:140). In other terms, revisionist historians are right in this: grand concepts such as 'liberty', 'freedom', and 'equality' that occupied parliamentary leaders were mostly alien to the common people, certainly in the forms and meanings they were used by parliamentarians. However, they were present in their lives in a concrete way and there was rising discontent as people acted to claim their liberties and political rights.[95] Thus, lower classes were starting to get involved with politics where it mattered in their lives, forwarding their candidates in the elections, and challenging the traditional dominance of the landed elites. Politics, through town hall meetings and elections, was an entry point for many of the disgruntled: "the common people ('men with no shirts', a disgruntled royalist called them) took an unusually active share in elections for the two Parliaments of 1640, on the anti-court side – often introducing an element of class hostility as well" (Hill, 1982: 21). In 1640, the number of

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[95] Indeed, how can these concepts not be present?

disputed rural elections where lower classes challenged the results for a candidate they put forward was six times what it was in 1604. (Hill, 2002: 44).

The challenge from the lower classes was not just to the secular power structure either: "the issue which more directly, and perhaps more deeply, concerned the common people … was the distribution of power in their local church between the minister, the squire, and the congregation" (Manning, 1978:140). This latter, in particular, harbored tremendous revolutionary potential and was the single most central issue that greatly worried local gentry and nobles alike. This is also how, in a great many cases, democratic impulses spilled over into the area of civil government.

3.2. Radicalism: anticlericalism and churches

Churches were the social and political hubs of all rural settlements from the parish to the middling town. They acted as the foundations of social order everywhere, except perhaps the largest cities where they still played key roles. Beyond its importance in daily life which is truly hard to exaggerate, the church was also the doorway to the spiritual salvation of people. Manning quotes from Cartwright: "the consequences of giving the people no say in the choice of their pastors were worse than giving them no say in the choice of members of Parliament or town councilors" (Manning, 1978: 146). While one was responsible for the wealth, commodities, and good governance of a town, the other was in charge of the everlasting salvation – or damnation – of everyone's body and soul. Yet, the clergy who oversaw that most crucial task was more unpopular among the populace than virtually any other group. Put otherwise, the economic woes of the common people were intertwined with a widespread anti-clericalism which was possibly even stronger, and as much rooted.

Already before the turn of the century, *Admonition to the People of England* (1589) notes "the loathsome contempt, hatred and disdain that the most part of men in these days bear …

towards the ministers of the church of God". In 1615, Thomas Brightman notes the same phenomenon that "hostility to the [Church] hierarchy is now favored by much of the people and multitude". Instances of daring commoners expressing their contempt were all too common: in 1630 an oatmeal-maker on trial said to his judges that he "would never take off his hat to bishops: 'as you are Privy Councillors, I put off my hat; but as you are the rags of the beast, lo! I put it on again'." (Hill, 1982: 29). A commoner by the name of Joan Hoby was put on trial in 1634 for saying that she "did not care a pin nor a fart for my Lord's Grace of Canterbury … and she did hope that she should live to see him hanged".[96] Indeed, there are numerous reports of attacks on priests and churches – altars destroyed, rails pulled down, statues destroyed, documents burned, pigs and horses baptized, and so on – from the 1630s and 1640s. The reforms by Archbishop Laud, which, besides numerous theological changes, brought back ceremonies, altars and railings to the church only aggravated these feelings. One reason for the strong pushback to Laud's reforms was precisely that: as grassroots movements for equality in the church were appearing everywhere, the most visible aspect of Laud's reforms was to physically separate priests from the congregation, elevating them over their flock. Overall, there is "a great deal of evidence for unpopularity of bishops and parish clergy in the 1640s" (Hill, 1982: 31). Hooker writes: "men … think that herein we serve the time and speak in favour of the present state because thereby we either hold of seek preferment" (Hill, 1982: 29).

Hooker's observation was correct, and widely shared for good reason. Charles I was known to have said that "religion is the only firm foundation of all power". He was far from being the only one making the connection explicit. Bishop Goodman said: "the church and state do mutually

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[96] It is not known whether Joan Hoby managed to get her wish and see Archbishop Laud hanged in 1645.

support and give assistance to each other" and Hugh Peters put it in even more instrumental terms: "the state pays them [the clergy], and thus they have dependence upon the state". "The function of a state church," Hill summarizes, "was not merely to guide men to heaven: it was also to keep them in subordination here on earth" (1982:95-98). When, in April 1640, Charles I dissolved the Short Parliament, he kept the Convocation, the assembly of the clergy which was a part of parliament until then. The Convocation "accepted a series of new canons which ordered the clergy to preach up the Divine Right of Kings" and "also granted the King £20,000 as a 'benevolence' from the clergy" (Hill, 2002:13). This was in direct opposition to parliament's previous vote withholding supplies from the King. The church was always on the side of the king but with this move the most powerful group of clergy in the land stepped up as instruments of the crown against parliament. As it was on the national level, so it was on local level where ministers were nominated and paid by a gentleman who owned the tithes. While the Convocation was but one actor in the larger drama, the place of a church in a parish was of unrivalled importance in everyone's lives and the impact of the parish priest was much stronger, and much more immediate, on the lives of the common people.

As such, nothing brought forth radicalism like the issue of power distribution in the church: the election and upkeep of the priest, the issues of discipline, and the priest's accountability to his congregation were all tremendously important issues with major social and political implications. Above all else, however, was the issue of tithes. Manning notes: "the question of tithes was potentially the most revolutionary issue of the English Civil War because it could unite the economic grievances of the mass of small farmers with the religious programme of the separatists" (Manning quoted in Hill, 2002:163). Tithes were normally paid to the gentry who passed on to the priest they hired whatever they deemed adequate, often leading to tensions with the common

people (Manning, 1978:140). Hill relays: "The reasons for preserving a national church were social as well as religious. In 1650 Alderman Violet, in a report to a Parliamentary committee on the decay of trade, proposed as remedies, 'First, to settle able and godly ministers in all churches throughout the nation, that will teach the people to fear God, to obey their superiors'." (2002: 163-164).

Alderman Violet's advice to the Commonwealth parliament, immediately after the end of war (and the execution of the king) underlines the enduring importance of religion to the ruling classes: as a tool of stability and instrument for engendering obedience the Republican parliament was as quick to seize on it as the King was before. Indeed, Manning notes: "the gentry … were more concerned … that the parson should teach obedience to social superiors and established authority" (Manning, 1978:140). Thus, few things alarmed the rich and the propertied as much as a discussion of tithes: it was a solid source of income, a foundation of social stability and order, and, not least, a handpicked priest whose support is guaranteed at all times. Any change in the tithing structure would have resulted in substantial social, political, and economic consequences. Sharp notes, for 1646, that "Parliament was more interested in preserving tithes to their owners than with the financial problems of the state" (2004:65). Beyond demonstrating the central importance of tithes for the gentlemen in parliament, this also goes some way to show parliament in 1646 was thoroughly uninterested in change of such revolutionary potential. The issue of tithing can very well be seen as the main dividing line between those who aimed for a social revolution and those who resisted it: despite pursuing their own conflicting agendas all members of the ruling party, from parliament to the King, from Cromwell to local notables, were dedicated to preserving the tithe structure. Numerous radical groupings of common people, on the other hand, united in their demand to completely or partially abolish it.

Already in numerous places financial difficulties and lack of maintenance resulted in practical congregational independence: individual donations from the common people were required to hire a lecturer, effectively allowing some localities to choose their own ministers, even of temporarily. One of the changes Archbishop Laud brought to the church administration was to put an end to this practice since he believed that priests, parsons or lecturers hired this way "by reason of their pay are the people's creatures and blow the bellows of their sedition" (Hill, 2002:88). Laud says, here, two very important things: first, that he wanted to keep the priests not as 'people's creatures' but as the gentry's, the only other source of pay for a parish priest; and second, and even more important for my argument here, is that the people, when they have a chance, go for congregational autonomy and sedition from the state church. Considering Laud acted against lecturers in the middle of his reforms in late 1620s and 1630s, this goes quite a long way establishing the malcontent of the common people and their general desire to break away already a decade before the war. Furthermore, if Laud was right in his analysis, the behavior, which points at the clear desire for autonomy, was universal.

Against the establishment was arrayed a group of reformers who "all made a central point of giving people a voice in the choice of their minister" (Manning, 1978:147). For some, like the Presbyterians, that choice was a simple one in either approving or rejecting the minister after his appointment through the usual channels. For the non-separatist Puritans, mostly priests lower in church hierarchy who advocated remaining within the Church establishment, a more congregation centric approach from within the ranks of the church was warranted. Others went much further. "One of the essentials of the sectarian position was that the sermon should be followed by discussion: that worship was not a matter of passively hearing the Word preached by a learned minister, but participation by the congregation after a gifted member had opened up a subject for

discussion." As part of this radical change, Baptists institutionalized discussion to all services, 'for it was their custom to give liberty in that kind'." The administration's reflex has always been to fight back against the loss of control in the churches: already during the reign of Mary "disrupting services had been made a secular offence by an Act of Parliament" (Hill, 1982:104-6), demonstrating both the state ownership of the church and the value rulers placed on these sermons and their social effects. The other tension which reveals itself here, barely hidden in the discussion on religious conduct, was one between democratic behavior – largely favored by the sectarians – and the authoritarian impulse of the rulers afraid of relinquishing control to the people, particularly within the confines of the church which used to be the bastions of order as defined by the lords.

Beyond their behavior within the church, all radicals were united in their demand for congregational autonomy: that congregations elect and pay their ministers who would, as Laud noted, preach as demanded. On the sectarian side, the Independents were defined by their argument that the choice of the minister should belong to the congregation, amounting to considerable independence for every church; moreover, they asked that the power of discipline – until then exercised by the Bishop or the Archbishop – also belong to the congregation, much like the Anabaptists and the Familists were doing in their often-secret gatherings. On the political side, the Levellers replicated the argument for congregational independence in the third and final Agreement of the People. The Diggers, in George Winstanley's writings, argued for the same point: complete independence and full religious toleration. Quite plainly, any of these reforms would have made impossible anything other than full religious independence and toleration, as it already had in places with financial difficulties. Some Puritan sects had already acted on their belief, undermining the established social system "by opting out of the state church, so closely modeled on the hierarchical structure of society [and] so tightly controlled by parson and squire."

Instead they organized independent religious-political communities, often located in towns, providing social services for their members as well as deserving poor[97], immigrants, the destitute and the homeless (Hill, 1982:42). They have thus established, quite consciously, alternative centers competing with the existing hierarchical structures.

Since many sectarians, just like the Levellers and the Diggers after them, championed an egalitarian take of Christianity, a change in either the tithe structure or the establishment of rival religious centers led by these sects would have turned into a social revolution originating from a thousand different centers. In all likelihood, this was precisely the danger Archbishop Laud was worried about when he decided to act against roaming lecturers and preachers for hire. Indeed, in 1642, radical preachers and sectarians in England were quoting John Ball, the famous Lollard priest of the 1381 Peasants' Revolt, leveraging Christianity into radically egalitarian ends: "When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?"[98] (Hill, 1982:35). Most notably, this is the identical sentence the revolutionaries of 1525 preached in their attempt to revolutionize the social order through an egalitarian interpretation of Christianity: "Als Adam grub und Eva span, Wo war denn der Edelman?".

Hobbes writes, in *Philosophical Rudiments*, that "under the pretence of religion the lower sort of citizens … do challenge [liberty] to themselves" (1651: 79). There was, of course, no pretense; the sectarians as well as the common people who followed their teachings were sincere. In the egalitarian interpretation of Christianity, they simply discovered what they always knew to

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[97] The concept of 'deserving' poor requires some clarification: as is well known Puritans always put a strong emphasis on hard work and discipline. The deserving poor would be people who have lost their living to social conditions, victimizes by their landlords, or honest and sober people who became unable to work. The puritans were not as sympathetic to vagabonds, drunkards or laziness in any form.
[98] John Ball's famed 1381 sermon, to the revolting peasants.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/voices/voices_reading_revolt.shtml

be the true. God would not condone such inequality and suffering; it was the rich and the propertied who were rebels against God's order. Stephen Marshall's now-infamous sermon to parliament in 1641 included the following: "The *vox populi* is that many of the nobles, magistrates, knights and gentlemen, and persons of great quality, are arrant traitors and rebels against God" (Hill, 1982: 34). Indeed, everywhere around the country radical sects were educating common people on the meaning of 'Christian equality', which translated into economic and social equality, and consent of the governed. Sectarian churches were acting as genuine schools of democracy, teaching participation, deliberation, and discussion. Jeremiah Burroughs, a famed Puritan orator, said this in 1643: "a Christian is not bound to obey a government 'that he no way either by himself or others hath ever yielded consent unto…'." (Manning, 1978:145). As we have seen in previous chapters, this was a radical departure from Lutheran and Calvinist teachings and much closer to the interpretations deemed heretic by these reformers; it was revolutionary in every sense of the word.

Walzer, in his *Revolution of the Saints* (1965), puts forth an argument that is essential for my purposes: "the Puritan insistence on inner discipline was unthinkable without the experience of masterlessness. Their object was to find a new master in themselves, a rigid self-control shaping a new personality" (quoted in Hill, 1982:42-3). The Puritans, and through their teachings the common people throughout England, were detaching themselves from their local and national masters, demanding and establishing alternative societies based on an emancipatory interpretation of Christianity. The following is an important indication of how far and how wide sectarian ideas have taken over the common people: "the lower classes of Chelmsford" are documented in their beliefs that "Kings … are burdens. The relation of master and servant has no ground in the New Testament; in Christ there is neither bond nor free … The common people have been kept under blindness and ignorance, and have remained servants and slaves to the nobility and gentry. 'But

God hath now opened their eyes and discovered unto them their Christian liberty'." (Related from Brun Ryves in Hill, 1982: 37).

The God of the radicals, Puritans, sectarians, and also the Levellers, had been democratized; it emerged as the destroyer of social hierarchies and the ultimate social equalizer. Through this God, radicals had put down hundreds of seeds for an alternative society based on equality and fairness. And, "inevitably, utterly inevitably, discussions among separatist congregations spread over from religion to politics." (Hill, 1982:37). In fact, it is hard to argue that there ever was a clear distinction. Already before 1640, throughout England, there were communities which embraced, and were themselves results of radical agendas. That these were radical projects which had the potential to revolutionize the socio-political order might have been unknown even to them; but they were blossoming nevertheless. They were in reaction to crushing economic inequality and widespread anticlericalism. There was no body of organized resistance but the energy to resist was present and ready spread throughout England. This is the energy, which had already produced radical agendas and communities, to which parliament appealed at the dawn of the conflict. At the start of the conflict "parliament itself was calling the common people to political action for the first time in history" and they responded much stronger than anticipated (Hill, 1982: 34). That it was already there, already making itself known, is part of the reason why parliament called on the common people for the first time in history; and that it was already there, strong and ready is the reason that when "Preachers on the Parliamentary side called on ordinary people to fight for God's cause, and got ultimately rather more enthusiasm than they bargained for" (Hill, 1982:96).

Contextualizing these tectonic shifts in the beliefs and attitudes of the common people, and their incremental move towards radical ideas and behavior already before the war, allows us to

make better sense of the common people's behaviour during the Civil War. For instance, a few years into the Civil War, the lower classes were replacing in the city councils and town hall meetings the 'moderate' rural elite and, sometimes forcibly, taking over the governance of their towns and county militias from the gentry (Hill, 2002:124). Another example is the protests already in 1641 around parliament by the common people "with swords by their sides, hundreds in companies … and shouts of 'Down with the bishops – Down with the Antichrist'" which lasted several days and even turned violent when guards came to disperse them. 30,000 asked the House of Commons to "remove the bishops from their places in the House of Lords" (Manning, 1996:34-5). The radical energy, then, was present and strong before the ruling classes violently turned upon each other; radicals had clear political demands and they pursued those in an organized and persistent manner.

We can now place the beginnings of these attempts in clear acts of defiance and resistance decades before the first shot was even fired: the common people were challenging the elections, rejecting appointed parsons, protesting bishops in parliament, building their own churches and community centers and, more and more, resorting to violence. In late 1640s, groups of ten, twenty, or thirty people simply started stopping merchants and robbing them (Hill, 1982: 107-108). Of course, these were acts of outright banditry and robbery. But they were also the continuation of the pushback which started earlier in the century; a result of the decades-long struggles against the rich who deliberately profited from the suffering of the poor. Just like the radicals, the poverty and the anticlericalism which gave rise to these radicals, these acts of defiance did not suddenly come into existence because of the war either; they were present before the war in myriad forms. This is precisely why the ruling classes were so anxious about the involvement of the common people into

politics already before 1640, and why numerous leaders warned parliament not to involve them in the struggle.

3.3.　Radicals: the common people

"When we look for the essential revolutionary party in England of the 1640s," Underwood writes, "we find ourselves with too many candidates for the role. The Puritan 'Saints' … the godly bourgeoisie, and the Levellers of several hues have all been cast singly or together as its central component" (1978:187). I have argued, above, that the bourgeois revolution was distinct from the one attempted by the radicals. The radical cause was indistinguishable from the struggles of the common people. The energy to which parliament appealed to at the dawn of the conflict, the energy that has already yielded disparate radical agendas and actors was the common people's. An overwhelming portion of the radical actors were men of lesser backgrounds and throughout the war they were also seen as such. The very few gentlemen who embraced radical causes – which, in their case was unexceptionally republicanism – were seen as treacherous by their peers for their 'abhorrent' views.[99]

To parliamentarians, they were the "common people", those of "the meaner rank" (Hill, 1982: 34). To Royalists, they were the multitude, "men with no shirts", "the basest sort of people" (Hill, 1982: 21, 28). To the ruling classes, they were the '*beste farouche*' and to many actors on both sides of the war they were more threatening to the social order than the war itself. A concern often voiced in parliament, from early 1642 to the end of the war, reflects the great uneasiness of the ruling elite about a social awakening: "once servants were trained as soldiers they would

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[99] One such gentleman, Henry Marten, was covered by Clarendon who found his ideas abhorrent. To his peers, Marten's "treachery of republicanism" and his "other, dangerous heresies" made him "a worrying anomaly" (Williams, 1978: 118-138).

become unruly and unwilling to continue to serve their masters in proper subordination" (Hill, 1982: 20).[100] Parliamentarian leader Sir John Potts wrote to fellow parliamentarian Sir Simonds D'Ewes: "all right and property … must cease in a civil war, and we know not what advantage the meaner sort also may take to divide the spoils of the rich and noble among them'." The King's warnings to the supporters of parliament capture the same worry on the royalist side. Before the war started, Charles I voiced the shared concern for preserving the social order: "the common people may set up for themselves," Charles I warned parliamentary leaders, "call parity and independence liberty … destroy all rights and properties, all distinction of families and merit'." (Hill, 1982: 24). Hill later adds: "many observers feared that the common people, those below the rank of yeoman, would set up for themselves as a third party" (1982:24). Consider the central importance of this point: both sides of the war are deeply aware that while they are infighting there is a genuine danger of the rising of the common people.

The fears of the elite on that subject were well grounded. They originated, as can be expected, from the climate of rising discontent and insubordination from before the war. Existing grievances against the rich, rising demands for reform in the church and in the political system, and the widespread anti-clericalism found their outlet in the epistemic breach that came with the war. Once more, just like 1525, the social awakening is accompanied by that odd hybrid of righteous religiosity and a budding sense of class consciousness. Stephen Marshall's sermon, accusing the nobles of rebellion to God is almost identical to the opening lines of *the Twelve Articles*. The social insubordination, a clear sign of the new-found class consciousness, was universal. In 1641, the Mayor of London was shouted at by a waterman that "it is Parliament time

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[100] It is quite telling to see precisely this wording – soldiers becoming unruly – echoed later in Hume.

now," and that "the Lord Mayor is but their slave". In 1642, a secretary in Northamptonshire cried "What do you tell me of birth and descent? I hope within this year to see never a gentleman in England". In Essex, "one of the 'rude vulgar people' threatened to 'tear the gentlemen to pieces'." Richard Dowdeswell, a rich landowner from Gloucestershire, remarked that "such kind of people as the tenants are do now take no small liberty over their betters. They that see it cannot believe it" (Hill, 1982: 20-24). One of the best examples of this kind comes from John Hotham, a leader in Parliament who defected to the royalist side in 1643. Counseling moderation to both sides, his argument says it all: "'No man that hath any reasonable share in the commonwealth can desire that either side should be conqueror' lest 'the necessitous people of the whole kingdom will presently rise in mighty numbers and … set up for themselves to the utter ruin of all the nobility and gentry'" (Hill, 2002:124).

Indeed, these fears were justified: once the war started, the common people did set themselves up as a third party, further strengthening the fears of the upper classes about the collapse of the socio-political system. In 1644, George Wither proposed the confiscation of the estates of royalist gentry; in 1646, the demand was extended to all nobles and a proposal to institute an upper limit to the landed property anyone can hold was tabled (Hill, 1982: 50-52). What Gerrard Winstanley wrote in 1649 in *The Law of Freedom* comes from these open expressions of rebellion against the elite: "the rich," he writes, "generally are enemies to true freedom". Indeed, as the war progressed, the awareness that increasingly permeated the common people was that it was not just the king but the ruling class as a whole which was not on their side. So, more and more, the pamphlets and demands were supplanted with arms and uprisings of the common people against all others.

In 1645, "groups of countrymen all over western and southern England took up arms to oppose royalists and parliamentarians alike" (Hill, 1982:24). Those were the independent groupings of Clubmen. The Clubmen, it seems, were people with a strong provincial identity, formed in numerous places to restore order in their localities and resist the damages brought by war. John Morrill, a revisionist historian, presents the Clubmen as evidence that this so far omitted social group is further proof of the general conservatism of the country; resistant to change and desirous of order and stability (Dow, 1985: 6). Morrill's argument is certainly strong. There is, however, more to what he unravels that he does not explore: first, that there are indeed groupings of tens of thousands of common people that were missed from all accounts until late twentieth century. Second, common people in various places independently demonstrated remarkable organizational skills and taken up arms to protect their area against all outsiders, no matter what banner they held. In some areas, the clubmen associations achieved such numbers that it was impossible to disperse them militarily until the NMA (Dow, 1985:6). Because their cause was to preserve and conserve, Morrill disregards the potential implications of these organizational skills commoners demonstrated in such a short time span.

These are the same skills, I argued above, radical groupings across numerous localities deployed. In most cases, these were most likely smaller groupings, organized around parish churches and social housings. But not always. For instance, a Birmingham blacksmith named Tinker Fox, "led popular forces against the royalists in the early years of the war" (Hill, 1982:25). His band, successful beyond all expectations in their campaigns, were viewed with great suspicion by parliament and ended up distancing themselves from both sides, eventually being dispersed by the NMA troops. These examples speak not only to the common people's ability to organize quickly and widely but also, and very centrally, the complete disconnect they were feeling from

both sides of the war. The conservative clubmen did not support the royalists; Tinker Fox's band remained unsupported by parliament. The common people and the elites on both sides viewed each other with great suspicion.

In this environment, it was truly inevitable for more radical groupings to emerge in various localities and those that were already present to gain in strength and influence. Consequently, there were radical groups with the same name and similar agendas which never made contact with each other, just like there were groups with widespread presence and more centralized agendas. To call this diversity merely unexplored, however, would be generous. In fact, until the twentieth century, all of these groups were described as 'The Levellers'. Hill, just like many others, complains about the difficulties of sorting these groupings from each other. Records from the time – pamphlets and newspapers – describe all radicals as Levellers, describing Digger colonies as Leveller groupings, Ranters as Leveller breakaways and so on.

This is precisely the reason why even in late 1970s Underwood (above) still describes the revolutionary radicals as 'several hues of Levellers'. Nevertheless, groupings such as the Levellers, the Diggers, the Quakers, the Fifth Monarchists, the Familists, the Seekers, the Ranters, and many others, must be seen as natural results of the general political climate. Indeed, independent of their political power and effect, these groupings managed to attract tens of thousands to their various gatherings, talks, and demonstrations. Even more signed their petitions. The Levellers and the Diggers had clearly identifiable leaders and published pamphlets stating their demands and agendas. Others, like the Quakers, had identified leaders such as Fox and Nayler whose talks and pamphlets were seen as authoritative declarations of their positions. There were still others; strictly religious grouping like the Familists, the Seekers and the Ranters had no fixed political programs beyond religious freedom and no authoritative declarations. Their leaders were many and often

local. In some cases, like the Familists, they had good reason to hide despite being present since late sixteenth century. In other cases, leaders were identified in hindsight, because they were found to play influential roles at important junctures.[101] Yet, even those looser organizations still counted many thousands among their numbers.

4.   Conclusion

The radicals were present in England already before the Civil War started. Dozens of groupings with various radical agendas attracted common people in parishes, towns, cities, forests, and wastage areas. What brought people to these alternatives was the widespread discontent with the increasingly oppressive socio-political conditions: economic exploitation and inequalities which accompanied those were getting worse every year; religious sects organized independently in numerous localities, amplifying demands for religious reformation, already inflamed by strong and well-rooted anticlericalism against the establishment; democratic principles and ethics were practiced in churches and poor houses, transplanting egalitarian ideas and practices into daily life, creating further expectations for political reform. Gradually, people were questioning the current system and their place in it; more and more people were getting more and more active in their congregations, elections, and local assemblies. For most, if not all, religious salvation and political emancipation was inextricably linked and the socio-political system was under increasing pressure from both ends.

The rulers, on both sides of the conflict, were profoundly aware of the threat of a rising of the commons and the social revolution which would accompany it. It was indeed their conflict

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[101] A good example is, William Erbery, "The Champion of the Seekers". Though his political agenda was that "men … should sit still, in submission and silence, waiting for the Lord to come and reveal himself to them" he nevertheless asked that the NMA cleanse the power of King from the land (Hill, 1982:192).

which eventually turned these energies into the true revolutionary force that it became. The radicals, dispersed and under control as they remained, nevertheless proved themselves to be a distinct part of the conflict and they were treated as such too. Indeed, the treatment of radicals after the war was indistinguishable from that of the revolutionaries of 1525 – ignored, dismissed, and, when covered, they were either painted as insane villains or ignorant fools. In these ways, the political agendas of the radicals, and the social revolution which they demanded was obfuscated.

In the next chapter, I turn to the analyses of the themes that have emerged. I make three main points which follow from the previous chapters, tying them all to the overarching argument about the historical constitution of obedience.

Chapter 6: The Constitution of the Obedient Subject

1.   Introduction

In the previous chapter I covered the radicals' uprising: the revolution that never happened. Describing its origins and causes, I pointed to widespread grievances in society, present years before the war started, that revealed themselves in disparate yet similar ways. I argued that a combination of the power vacuum of the Civil War and the sectarian interpretations of Christianity acted as the epistemic breach, giving unified purpose to these distinct radical forces and bringing them to the national stage. The radical movement, separate as its different branches were, was of and by the common people, those of the meaner rank, who were normally bound in obedience to their betters. Their goals included religious toleration, a more (or sometimes fully) inclusive political system with democratic ethics and principles, individual rights, and, for some of the radical groupings, economic fairness. Those were the essential elements to establish before moving on to the analyses and arguments in this chapter.

In this chapter, I make three central points derived from the previous chapters, tying them all to the overarching argument about the historical constitution of obedience. First, I argue that the English radicals occupy a critical juncture embodying both the last manifestation of a long-running tradition of communal resistance to authoritarianisms and the first manifestation of a new, liberal, tradition of resistance with the Levellers who are its pioneers. The emergence of this latter already signals the conclusive defeat of the communal tradition which remained active – and nevertheless threatening – during the civil war, in particular with the Diggers. This, however, is a complicated legacy with aspects of unfreedom woven into it from the very beginning. Second: their defeat is due in large part to their adherence to the ideas and ideals perpetuated by the counter revolution of 1525. These are responsible for the aspects of unfreedom which are embedded within

the liberal tradition as its constituent parts: atomization, individual self-discipline, and submission to authority. These ideas were unquestionably dominant in England in 1640s and we encounter them as easily in parliament documents arguing for property and privilege, as well as the theory of political liberty championed by the Levellers in their pamphlets and the Putney debates. More than anything else, the Leveller struggle is about transforming the atomized subject into an individual citizen with rights framed as individual properties. In that way, at the foundational aspects of the early modern state and the liberal tradition of emancipation, I observe the counter-revolution of 1525. Third, and finally, I trace a particular authoritarian argumentation from Luther to Hobbes, further substantiating the continuities I perceive between 1525 and 1640.

To flesh out these points in this chapter, I start by going over the agendas of two radical groups, namely the Levellers and the Diggers, the two strongest radical groupings. I cover both the individualist liberal tradition which emerges with the Levellers and the dying communal tradition which the Diggers communities were the last representatives. I thus establish this period as a juncture that witnessed both the last incarnation of the long-standing tradition of religiously inspired popular resistance to authorities and the first incarnation of the liberal tradition which reformulates the struggle on individual grounds. With these two points, I argue that the Lutheran conception of the individual was instrumental in the defeat of the radicals, by setting the definitional terms, dramatically undermining the radical imagination, and qualitatively diminishing their demands. Throughout, the conception of political liberty espoused by the Levellers is identical to the one championed by parliament: rights as property for the already-propertied individual. Despite its radicalism, this conception nevertheless matches the Lutheran ideas and constitutes a marked weakening of the struggle of emancipation in what it demands and seeks to accomplish. The failure of the Leveller movement in late 1640s coincides with the rise of

the Diggers who, perhaps in response to that failure and lack of genuine alternatives, reproduce the ancient tradition of communal resistance, posing a genuine threat to existing hierarchies for a brief moment. Finally, I turn to Hobbes, elaborating his thought as a continuation of Luther's in very explicit ways. The continuity between Luther and Hobbes, so far almost completely unexplored, further fleshes out the ways in which the ideas and norms of the counter revolution of 1525 has taken hold. The chapter ends by bringing all these insights together.

2.   The Radical Agendas

I covered the great diversity of radical groupings in the previous chapter. This diversity notwithstanding, not all these groupings were equally important in their political reach and impact. Some, like the Familists, with relatively wider membership and a presence rooted in society since the sixteenth century had only the loosest political agendas. For the Familists, for instance, this amounted to barely more than a demand for freedom to preach and practice.[102] But others, like the Levellers and the Diggers were mainly political groupings. As such, they had sophisticated, well elaborated political agendas spread far and wide by pamphlets, meetings, and speeches. Indeed, certain of the Levellers' pamphlets reached the parliament floor. They also had a public appeal unlike any other: from London taverns to waste areas in Surrey, these were the groupings which defined and influenced the conversation. Of course, some groups were stronger in particular localities or among particular people. For instance, the Fifth Monarchists whose program emphasized class consciousness were strong among craftsmen and clothiers (Hill, 1982:96). There

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[102] Considering the practices of the Familists were denounced universally for their exceptionally liberal approach to Christianity, this was a strong demand nevertheless. The Digger Winstanley, for instance, writes: Some "say 'It is true freedom to have community with all women, and to have liberty to satisfy their lusts and greedy appetites'. But this is the freedom of wanton unreasonable beasts, and tends to destruction". (The Law of Freedom).

were strong, and not yet fully fleshed out, connections between others – Diggers and Levellers were often confused with each other; wherever Digger colonies flourished and subsequently destroyed by authorities, there followed strong Quaker activity; the Fifth Monarchists and the Levellers worked together among London cloth workers, and so on…

In this section, I present the most important of these agendas by focusing on two of these radical groups: the Levellers, which are the most well-known group of radicals for very good reasons; and the Diggers who had the most revolutionary agenda with the most radical economic demands. It was their agenda which, Hill argues, would have presented the greatest threat to the system (see below). I will also show, in this exposition, that the reason Diggers were seen as the more revolutionary – and more threatening – party is precisely because their focus was still communal. Unlike the Levellers, this focus allowed the Diggers to advance both a new theory of liberty and demand reconstituted economic relations. The Leveller agenda, on the other hand, was defined, and I say weakened, by the political individualism they espoused which defined and determined their conceptions of liberty as well as economic fairness. In defeat, however, their writings turned decidedly more radical and surprisingly more communitarian, even though the communal aspects remained underdeveloped.

2.1. The Levellers, the New Model Army and the Putney Debates

A substantial amount of study was conducted on the Levellers in the last decades (Robertson, 2007; Aylmer, 1975; Gregg, 2000; Holstun, 2000; Woolrych, 1987; Sharp, 2004; Mendle, 2001). So, while there is clearly more work to be done, in particular on their organizational history and methods, as well as their relations with other radical groups, they are in no way unknown. As covered in the previous chapter, they were, in fact, the first and only radical group to have gotten any recognition in the century and half immediately following the Civil War. This

was for a very good reason: none of the other associations of the common people were even close to the impact the Levellers had during the Civil War era. The Leveller leaders were political activists already before the war and their pamphlets circulated widely from the late 1630s. Their popularity with the common people was remarkable.[103]

Of all things associated with the Levellers, however, nothing can match in importance their influence on the New Model Army and their role in the Putney Debates which took place following, and in response to, the 1647 Leveller declaration *The Agreement of the People for a firm and present peace upon grounds of common right*, known as the *first Agreement*. This text and the ensuing debate are so central to understanding the Levellers that, knowing full well of their existence as a political movement before 1647, Wootton is still perfectly justified in writing that the "Levellers were a political movement united around the programme of the first Agreement of the People (3 November 1647)." This text "is the first proposal in history for a written constitution based on inalienable natural rights" (1991:412).[104] The declaration was meant to be the inclusion of the common soldier to the larger constitutional debates happening between the king and the officers of the New Model Army.

After the 'Self-Denying Ordinance' of April 1645 banned parliamentary members from military posts, and established the NMA, it took the field in May and immediately changed the course of the war in the famous Naseby battle in June. From its inauguration, the NMA acted like

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[103] Lilburne, in particular, was very popular among the common people in London where he was apprenticed in 1630; tried, whipped, and imprisoned by Star Chamber in 1638. His defiance in standing up to the court gained him many admirers. When he was tried for treason in late 1649, his acquittal was cheered for by the public for hours, including his guards.

    [104] I have argued in the previous chapters that this statement is simply inaccurate; the 1525 revolution had an actual constitution which relied on inherent equality and political rights. Again, however, this does not diminish the importance of the first *Agreement*.

a magnet for radical ideas and actors, and only exacerbated the demands for revolutionary change.[105] The Levellers were a powerful presence within the army, and they often "boasted of 'The New Model, wherein there is not one lord'" (Hill, 2002:125). Indeed, the New Model Army explicitly declared itself as "'no mere mercenary Army'; [but] the common people in uniform" (Hill, 1982: 24-25). It acted as such too. Alongside and among the Levellers in the NMA were sectarians. Army chaplains, often hailing from strong sectarian backgrounds, were among the most radical voices. In 1646 chaplain Hugh Peters suggested that the army should be used "to teach the peasants to understand liberty". The sectarian understanding that Christ wishes "not only … submission, but [also] consultation, debating counselling, prophesying, voting" took hold of the common soldier through army chaplains, such as the author of this line, John Saltmarsh. Another chaplain, William Dell said in 1646: "the power is in you, the people; keep it, part not with it" (Hill, 1982: 55-59).

The demands of the army chaplains and soldiers ranged from deliberative democracy based on religious principles, to the extension of the existing system to a genuinely representative model. Indeed, soldiers were reported to have said: "It will never be a good world while knights and gentlemen make us laws, that are chosen for fear and do but oppress us … it will never be well with us till we have Parliaments of countrymen like ourselves, that know our wants" (Hill, 1982:60). These soldiers were the common people, similar to those who attended sectarian

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[105] It has always been difficult to get an accurate estimate of the numbers serving with the NMA. This from Sharp: "The NMA had great difficulty pressing infantry ('scum', said an officer) and dragoons ('middling sorts'). The horse, volunteering themselves and equipment, remained fairly stable from the spring of 1645 to the summer of 1646 (5,000 to 6,500) but the foot and dragoons varied from 6,500 to 18,000. Only one of every two pressed men arrived at the front. Perhaps 40,000 men were recruited during the period to keep the army's strength at the low 20,000 mark. Desertion was endemic, especially after the victory and the chance to escape with loot. The core of the faithful was maybe 11,000." (2004:48). Most likely, a large number of this 'faithful', as Sharp calls them, were radicals.

churches, who pushed back against their exclusion from the elections, who defied their social superiors. In short: while some were radicalized in the army, others joined the army precisely because they were radicals. Thus, the NMA was a hotbed of radicalism and many important positions in the army were held by the Levellers.

Perhaps because of their independent power of arms, or because of the budding class consciousness and the accompanying framing of the relationship between social classes as one of oppression, army members of lower ranks also behaved independently at crucial times. One of the best examples which demonstrates the clear radicalism of the soldiers, and the position of the radicals as a distinct third party, is the capture of Charles I by George Joyce, a mere cornet (equivalent to a 2nd lieutenant) in the NMA. On his own initiative and with no orders from his superiors, Joyce assembled a band of 500 soldiers and secured the King, forcibly taking him away from parliament's custody into the army's. "This," Hill reports, "seems to have come as a shock to all involved". The moment he heard the news, "Fairfax immediately dispatched a Colonel to take command" (1982: 61). This instance also goes some way to underline the democratic nature of the NMA structure: officers, being elected by soldiers, had as much power as was consented to by rank and file. Hence, while some high-born officers were having the hardest time establishing discipline, a low-ranking officer such as Joyce could gather a force much bigger than his rank commanded and take over the custody of the king on his own accord. In this way, soldiers forced the higher ranks to adjust to their wishes and actions.[106]

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[106] Kishlansky, for instance, argues that because Joyce has acted after parliament's decision to disband part of the army without paying their arrears, it was a retaliatory act, instrumental in nature. Surely, this must have been a consideration. Another consideration which must have further alienated the common soldiery from the high-ranking officers as well as parliament was the conservative nature of the parliamentarian party, where "most men of high social rank … feared too decisive a victory" (Hill, 2002:124). If we read Joyce's actions alongside the many other indications of radicalism in the NMA, it is difficult to see how Joyce and his troops alone would have remained untouched by the radical idealism shared by so many and acted out of pure instrumentality.

The democratic nature of the NMA was created in part by the Self-Denying Ordinance which left higher positions open to men of lower social backgrounds; men whose political and religious zeal allowed them to rise through hard work and merit. The influence of the Levellers on the Army was evidenced clearest in the *The Case of the Army Truly Stated* which preceded the Putney Debates (see below). This declaration, which included the first *Agreement of the People*, was signed by 16 regiments including those of four generals. It was this document which, after an initial resistance from Cromwell and his officers, led to the Putney debates, one of the most enduring of all radical texts from the era.[107]

It is difficult to fully capture the importance of this momentous debate. The debates ended abruptly when Cromwell forcibly terminated the discussions three days after Charles I escaped custody. Regiments who displayed dissatisfaction with the termination of the process were subdued and one agitator – a representative elected by soldiers – shot. Nevertheless, the impact of the Putney debates was profound and long-lasting. "The Levellers", Wootton writes, "were not merely seeking to establish in England freedoms that existed elsewhere … but to establish for the first time freedoms which … never had existed, and were not to come into existence for over three centuries" (1991:412). Geoffrey Robertson has a similar take: "Today's single most important political principle, the right to live in a participatory democracy, comes down to us not from the slave-owning societies of Athens and Rome, or from the pleasant estates of France where Rousseau and Montaigne envisioned the 'general will', but from buff-coated and blood-stained English soldiers and tradesmen" (2007: vii-viii). Though C. B. Macpherson's *The Political Theory of*

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[107] There is evidence suggesting that Cromwell and Ireton first suspected outside hands (such as that of Henry Marten, the MP) and did not want to read the '*The Case of the Army*'. However, they were soon convinced that regular soldiers supported the pamphlet (Sharp, 2004: 92).

Possessive Individualism (1962) provided a "healthy corrective" account of the Levellers' democratic credentials and "won a grudging acceptance", they nevertheless remained, even for Macpherson, more or less the first democrats in the modern sense (2012).[108]

Though his description is prone to some dramatic exaggeration, Robertson is not unjustified in his enthusiasm and he is most certainly not alone. The *First Agreement* was essentially a constitutional proposal. It demanded dissolution of the existing parliament and biannual elections; argued that the power of parliament should be inferior only to the people who choose them; asked for the rule of law with no exemptions or exceptions based on birth or tenure; and pressed for religious toleration. Furthermore, it said: "these things we declare to be our native rights" and, accordingly, described the people as "the freeborn people of England" (Sharp, 2004: 52-55). It was, as argued above, the weighing in of the common soldier into the debates going on between the elites concerning the governance of the nation. It was tabled in explicit response to the *Heads of Proposals*, the declaration by the leaders of the army to the King, asking the King to share more power with the existing parliament. Its existence alone indicated the strength of the radical party within the NMA: a group of common soldiers strong enough to intercede in the discussion between parliament, the generals of the army, and the King. Beyond all other indications, this action was sufficient for the generals to look at the radicals as a distinct third party in the Civil War.

Of course, despite its central place, the *Agreement* was not the first time the Levellers put forth their principles. Many of the principles argued for in the first *Agreement* were already stated

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[108] Macpheron's earlier text argued that the Putney Debates (see below) are "misread as a clear issue between a property franchise and manhood franchise" while, in reality, we are simply unable to infer from anything in the texts – except Ireton's attacks on the Levellers – "that the Levellers were demanding the franchise for all non-property owners, including servants and alm-takers" (1962:120). I delve into this discussion later on in the chapter.

in a series of pamphlets from three Levellers leaders: William Walwyn's *Toleration justified* on January 1646; Richard Overton's *Divine Observations*, again on January 1646; and in June 1646, John Lilburne's *Freeman's Freedom*. Combined, those principles were closer to modern democracies than anything else before. While its timing and the quality of its authors made it remarkable, there was nothing new in the Agreement that was not present in a Leveller pamphlet before: natural equality of all men; government by consent; and full religious toleration.

The Agreement of the People was all that. It was a new constitution for a country which has lost its unity and its principles; it was a document stating the foundational principles of a new country. Hill's summary is identical to Sharp's above: "It demanded the dissolution of the existing Parliament, redistribution of the franchise, biennial Parliaments, and the absolute sovereignty of the House of Commons, limited only by the reservation of religious toleration and freedom from conscription as absolute rights. There was to be complete equality before the law, law reform and an indemnity for all who had taken part in the Civil War" (2002:128). Wootton has a very similar analysis, summarizing the three principles he sees in the text: first, extension of the franchise to the poor; second, supreme authority of the elected parliament and accountability of all bodies to the people; and third, equality before the law, including freedom of conscience and freedom of expression. Most important, according to Wootton, was "an ultimate right of revolution: if the people's representatives betrayed their trust, the nation as a whole could reassert its ultimate sovereignty" (1991: 412). Capturing the essence of all this is Sharp: "my own view is that it is not all that misleading to describe them as liberal democrats … in conditions where to be one … was a standing temptation to rebellion and mutiny" (2004:xiii). Sharp's analysis, however, is far from uncontested. Indeed, as we will see, it is more than a generous stretch to call the Levellers liberal democrats. If they were that indeed, then they hid it very well.

The Putney debates, where the constitutional proposals of the Levellers were to be debated, turned very largely on the theory of political liberty, encapsulated by the issue of suffrage. Indeed, Skinner sees the main axis of the conflict between all parties in their theories of political liberty, distinguishing between the free-born and the free-man allowing us to explain some of the more glaring contrasts in the Levellers positions (2006). The extension, or otherwise, of the suffrage was tied to all the other issues definitionally: freedom of the subjects; consent of the governed; and economic dependency all required a solid definition of who could legitimately demand these rights. Despite the occasional indication that some of the Levellers at least were for full suffrage and saw all men free, the Levellers overall never argued for such an ambitious position. In fact, some of the Levellers and parliament were very close on their theories of political liberty, as was evidenced repeatedly before, after, and during the Putney debates.

An example that was often used by both sides was the case of the wage-laborers. The generally accepted wisdom of the age was that these people were not free and could not vote independently as they were subject to the economic control of the rich; very much like the freeholders who, barely allowed to vote thanks to their meagre properties, often voted as their landlords wished. This was the Leveller position: "servants – apprentices and labourers as well as domestic servants – were represented by the head of the household no less than were his womenfolk and children," and, naturally, were not to be allowed to vote (Hill, 2002:129). At the Putney debates, Colonel Rich of the Grandees expanded the argument in a different direction, once more revealing the fear of the propertied from the common people: 'You have five to one in this kingdom that have no permanent interest. … If the master and servant shall be equal electors, then clearly those that have no interest in the kingdom will make it their interest to choose those that have no interest. … There may be a law enacted, that there shall be an equality of goods and

estate'." (Hill, 2002:130). Thus, the discussion of the suffrage was tied to property which remained sacrosanct and unchallenged; indeed, the Levellers rejected until the very end the accusation that they mean to level properties and privileges for all. The conception that the political power of the poor would immediately pose a threat to property was one that was never challenged by the Levellers.

Indeed, we can gauge the Leveller position on the suffrage, and by extension on political liberty, with some accuracy, mainly because the of the consistency between the first and the third, and final *Agreement of the People* published in May 1649. This latter was "a final, uncompromising declaration of principles" (Wootton, 1991:430) by the four Leveller leaders – Lilburne, Walwyn, Prince, and Overton – while they were imprisoned and their movement collapsed fast around them. It was written explicitly to be their legacy and its authors make it explicit as such. Defending themselves once more against the accusations that they meant to level properties and privileges of all, the four Leveller leaders argue that suffrage should be extended to "all men of the age of one and twenty years and upwards (not being servants, or receiving alms, or having served the king being disabled for ten years only)" (Sharp, 2004:168). The exclusion of the servants and alm-takers, defined broadly to include all wage-takers, is in fact identical to the Leveller position at the Putney debates – at least as voiced by the majority of the Levellers at Putney.

Despite this large an exclusion, the Levellers wanted to effectively double the franchise. Nevertheless, Wootton says that "on this basis, well over half the adult male population would have been excluded from the vote." Based on this, and contradicting Sharp above, Wootton argues that the Levellers "not only did not call themselves democrats, but were not democrats in our terms." (1991:430). Indeed, the Achilles' heel of the Leveller position has always been their

blindness to economic conditions and their unwillingness (or, perhaps, inability) to prioritize it. Even in their most radical, for instance, they have never asked for anything more than the cancellation of the most recent enclosures. Once the issue of economic prosperity was linked to suffrage, as it was done deftly by the Grandees during the Putney debates, the Levellers remained trapped in their inability to link these two and instead abandoned the poor, the servants, those who were kicked out of their homes, and forests, and wastage areas to themselves. Despite numerous accusations to the contrary, the inviolability of property remained a core part of the Leveller principles; this much is evidenced by numerous documents throughout their existence.

Nevertheless, some Levellers still spoke "as though they were in favour of manhood suffrage". Based on their positions, however, as well as the arguments made in the general debate, Hill seems to have enough justification in calling Colonel Rainborough's very famous words "simple rhetorical flourish": 'The poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he, and therefore … every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government' (2002:128). Hill's dismissal might be unfair to Rainborough who may have meant exactly that (see below). His clear statement notwithstanding, and despite other contradictions voiced by other Levellers – like Captain Lewis Audley who argued for 'the right of every free-born man to elect' (Skinner, 2006:161) – the overall Leveller position put forth in the Putney debates indeed excluded 'the poorest he that is in England', and even many who are simply poor and dispossessed, from having a say in the election process. In an era of enclosures and expansion of the lands of the rich and the propertied, this amounted to an ever-increasing group of people numbering well over half the population. It also completely ignored the ongoing impoverishment of those at the lower end of the social scale.

This tells us, rather clearly, that the Levellers, at least the moderate constitutional wing that Lilburne and Wildman led, was invested in the existing relations of property and thus were unwilling to address the tremendous inequalities caused by those. They were fully aware of the political unfreedom caused by widespread economic dependencies and, rather than pushing back against those, incorporated them into their arguments to exclude from political processes those most disadvantaged by economic inequality. This may have been a strategic move for the sake of political expediency form a party already seen as dangerously radical and Robertson suggests as much. Indeed, the Levellers had to fight throughout their existence the accusation that they aimed to level people's property and redistribute it. However, a holistic reading of the Leveller pamphlets and documents from 1645 to 1649 reveals that, in fact, they were unable to separate property from rights, using the two interchangeably, just as parliament did (see below).

Skinner proposes that what would explain the Leveller position is an exposition of the theory of liberty they espoused. According to Skinner, some Levellers, such as Reade, Petty, Overton, Lilburne and others believed, just like Ireton and Cromwell, that there was a difference between free-man and free-born (2006: 162). Indeed, while Lilburne championed free-born rights for all Englishman, in the Putney debates he never once asks for full suffrage, adding weight to the Marxist interpretation (found in the early works of Hill and partially in Macpherson) that he perceived the right to vote as a civil and not a natural right. Reade's argument at Putney is in complete harmony with Ireton's take: the people living in a state of "voluntary servitude" were "bound to the will of other men" and thus 'dependent' rather than fully independent. This, Reade explicitly suggests, is "the reason why we exclude [from the suffrage] apprentices, or servants, or those that take alms" (Skinner, 2006, 163). Skinner goes further: both Petty's and Reade's positions are in explicit agreement with Ireton's and "echoes that of the parliamentarian writers

who had similarly rejected the right of the bishops to vote in the House of Lords": because they will simply reflect their master's will (2006:163).

There were, of course, Levellers who championed full manhood suffrage. It seems impossible to reject Hill's argument that there were different factions within the admittedly loose organization of the Levellers. Lilburne, Wildman, Prince, Walwyn, Reade, Overton and Petty were decidedly the moderates and the real power holders: they wrote the pamphlets, controlled army regiments, socialized, liaised and negotiated with MPs, nobles, and generals, as well as most of the sects, and personally commanded the public's affections. On the other hand, there were a few others, the radicals of the radicals, who had some influence, if only because their egalitarian ideas spoke to the masses and were difficult to refute without seeming hypocritical. Rainborough, Audley and Sexby were among those. Indeed, in the Putney debates, Sexby's position is strongest of all:

> There are many thousands of us soldiers that have ventured our lives; we have had little propriety in the kingdom as to our estates, yet we have had a birthright. But it seems now, except a man has a fixed estate in this kingdom, he has no right in this kingdom. I wonder we were so much deceived. If we had not a right to the kingdom, we were mere mercenary soldiers … I shall tell you in a word my resolution. I am resolved to give my birthright to none. Whatsoever come in the way, and whatsoever may be thought, I will give it none. If this thing be denied the poor, that with so much pressing after they have sought, it will be the greatest scandal (Robertson, 2007: 84-85).

Compared to the overall tone of the debates, and even among the Leveller statements, this is such a strong statement that it leads to one of the very few instances when Cromwell breaks his seeming neutrality to condemn Sexby: "I confess I was most dissatisfied with what I heard Mr. Sexby speak" and guide the assembly to move on to issues that will be "for the safety of the kingdom" (Robertson, 2007:88). It is, nevertheless, in line with similar statements made by Rainborough and Lewis Audley who has demanded "the right of every free-born man to elect".

Since the other Leveller spokesmen never really comment on these positions it is difficult to fully gauge their exact position. From their silence Macpherson, Hill and Skinner all deduce the

same: "they seem to have accepted that it is possible to enter into a state of voluntary servitude" and thus sacrifice one's independence. In this way, Skinner suggests, they were also believed to have sacrificed one of the most fundamental rights they had: "full property in yourself," and the ability "to act independently of the will of anyone else". In his words: "the loss of liberty we suffer when we acquire a master is thus equated with a loss of self-ownership" (2006:164-5). The paradox of voluntarily placing one in servitude and forfeiting one's liberty by a free choice of will, later rejected in full by Rousseau, seems to not have occurred to the moderate Leveller leaders.

2.2.   The Levellers and Political Individualism

Both in their many pamphlets and throughout the Putney debates, the Levellers display a profound inability to conceive of their struggle in terms beyond the individual. As I have already argued, in their case, this seems to be a radically emancipatory project meaning to enhance the atomized subject with natural rights and liberties, thereby turning the right-less individual before the state into a legitimate stakeholder in all debates on governance. However, the Lutheran individualism which has now become a constituent feature of politics is also interwoven with aspects of unfreedom already built in. Skinner's exposition of the Levellers' theory of political liberty, above, demonstrates the impoverishment of political imagination which plagues the Levellers, inescapably condemning them, alongside parliament and the Grandees, to conceive of individuals *voluntarily* submitting their liberties, freedoms, and selves, into subjection. Unable to conceive of the structural character of oppression, the Leveller leaders see individuals somehow choosing in full freedom a life of dependence and subjection –unable to theoretically distinguish 'the poorest that is he in England' from the Bishops in the House of Lords.

Unlike the Diggers or the Fifth Monarchists, both of which demonstrate something akin to class consciousness, the Levellers show a profound inability to understand (or, at the very least,

elaborate) how the property of some inescapably translates into a lack of liberty for others. Whether in their pamphlets, or in the overall positions defended at the Putney debates, the Leveller leaders do not distinguish 'rights' from 'property'; in fact, they seem to believe that these two are two manifestations of the same natural phenomenon. This conception gives rise to one of the most memorable exchanges in the Putney debates, immediately succeeding Cromwell's interruption of Sexby. Against Sexby's arguments that liberty is his birthright and cannot be parted with under no conditions (and Rainborough's addition that it is real purpose of the NMA), Ireton responds thusly:

> For my part, rather than I will make a disturbance to a good constitution of a kingdom wherein I may live in godliness and honesty, and peace and quietness, I will part with a great deal of my birthright. I will part with my own property rather than I will be the man that shall make a disturbance in the kingdom for my property; and therefore if all the people in this kingdom, or the representatives of them all together, should meet and should give away my property I would submit to it, I would give it away (Robertson, 2007: 84-85).

Ireton's equivalence of the freeborn rights – 'birthrights' – and letting go of his property is not an accidental one, nor it is an attempt of demagoguery. It is also not an equivalence purely in his mind. If anything, this is a common definition all sides have agreed on quite publicly. The equality Ireton sees between rights, liberty and property was set by the Levellers themselves in one of their most celebrated documents: *An Arrow Against All Tyrants and Tyranny*, written by Overton on October 12, 1646. This document, brought to Parliament by MP Henry Marten and read to the assembly, is quite well known to all including, of course, Ireton. Even Sexby's position, the most radical of all expressed, is thoroughly embedded in the centrality of the individuality in politics, in this instance embracing an atomized, property-based conception of the individual which he wants to further strengthen with rights.

From the very start this text sets the discussion of rights as one of property: "to every individual in nature is given an individual property by nature not to be invaded or usurped by any. For every one … has a self-propriety, else he could not be himself" (Sharp, 2004: 55). Despite the language that is clearly anticipative of Locke's later use, *An Arrow against Tyranny* is better known

for its argument that "the sovereign power is not originally in the king" but extends "from the represented to the representers" (Sharp, 2004: 63). It was certainly received as such by a parliament eager to hear that message. However, it also quite explicitly equates rights with property derived from Adam and God (Sharp, 2004: 57). Overton also argues, just like Lilburne does in many other texts, that "the safety of the people is the sovereign law".[109] What Ireton points at, then, is this equivalence and this claim: since rights are property and the kingdom's safety is the sovereign law, is it not right and proper to let go of one's property in order to serve the kingdom's safety? Since, at this stage with the King in custody, parliamentarians emerge as the ones denying full liberty and rights, Ireton also argues that 'the representatives' have the full right to take away the property of some – as they had already done to many who supported the King – to keep the peace. This is also fully in line with the understanding, agreed upon by both the Levellers and parliament, that parliament is representative of the entire nation.

It is stunning, to say the least, to see that, that early in the discussions of individual rights, political authority already resorts to the argument that public safety and peace requires individuals to sacrifice their rights. This suggests, at the very least, that already from its conception 'individual rights' is perceived as inferior against the communal good, in this case, communal safety. The concern for the communal good, now left uncontested in the care of parliament, supersedes individual rights and property.

This was not all. Hill summarizes:

> Ireton further asked by what right the vote was demanded for all Englishmen. If by natural right – taking up the Levellers' point that all should be free who could freely dispose of their own labour – then Ireton could see no reason why men had not as much natural right to property as to the vote (for the vote had hitherto gone with particular forms of property; extension of the franchise would in effect

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[109] There is some debate as to whether it may have been Lilburne who authored the piece and passed it onto Overton who was imprisoned at the time. Based on its tone and similarities with other texts, Sharp believes that Lilburne may have written at least parts of the text (2004:60).

expropriate existing voters). 'The liberty of all those that have the permanent interest … that is provided for. And liberty cannot be provided for in a general sense if property be preserved.' A doctrine of natural rights would lead to communism (2002:129).

Two key and intertwined insights emerge from this point. The first is universality: Ireton challenges the Levellers to admit that their principles embody an impractical universality. Since liberty is property, if *all* people should be free, how to avoid the natural extension of this principle to the rest of the issue of property? Thus, we see, ultimately, the complete subjection of liberty to property. Effectively, the result is precisely how Ireton puts is: liberty is a property to be had; its full acknowledgement for all would lead to its annulment. Since the Levellers have, from the beginning, framed their theory of political liberty by casting rights in terms of property, the annulment of property was genuinely inconceivable to them. If the most radicals among them – like Rainborough and Sexby – were indeed able to differentiate the two on the spot, they remain silent.

Indeed, the Levellers (or, at least the moderate wing) never truly intended to take away or equalize anyone's property in any way. It is possible that presenting birthrights as inalienable individual property might have seemed the right way to go. A later Leveller manifesto, aptly named *Manifestation*, published on 14 April 1649 by the four imprisoned leaders make clear this point. "We never had it in our thoughts," say Lilburne, Overton, Prince, and Walwyn, "to level men's estates, it being the utmost of our aim that … every man with as much security as may be to enjoy his property" (Sharp, 2004:161). In fact, the *Manifestation* decries the deliberate misrepresentation of their arguments. Indeed, both during the Putney debates and after Levellers continuously had to defend themselves from accusations that they meant to destroy all property and equalize everyone in the realm; even in parliament, Cromwell accused 'those not of the army' within the army 'who drive at leveling and parity' (Sharp, 2004:xxvii). Indeed, when True Levellers, i.e. the Diggers, came forth and actually demanded the levelling of properties, the defeated Leveller leaders worked

hard not just to differentiate themselves but also to condemn the Diggers (Hill, 2002:129). The *Manifestation* is published two weeks after the Diggers started their first colony on St. George's Hill, right next to London. Defeated and imprisoned, the four Leveller leaders nevertheless stand up for the property of the rich against the poor Diggers' attempts to make it communal. Their sincerity and idealism is beyond doubt as is their commitment to the principles of property over equality and liberty.

This is all in line with the Leveller position throughout. After the Putney debates but before their imprisonment, on 11 September 1648, the Levellers published the *Humble Petition of divers well-affected persons*, gathering in two months over 40,000 signatures (Sharp, 2004:xxviii). In it the Levellers argue, once more, that they are against "abolishing property, levelling estates or making it all common" though they have argued for making open recent enclosures and other commons (Hill, 1982:119). So, from the Putney debates to the end of their political movement, the Levellers constantly and continuously underlined their respect for existing relations of property with only the most modest changes in the economic system, namely the reversal of the most recent enclosures. In fact, until after their complete defeat in 1649, the Levellers "failed even to take a clear and decisive stand in favour of security of tenure for copyholders and against enclosure" (Hill, 1982:119). Throughout their existence, including after their incarceration, the Levellers' main tool of communicating their arguments to parliament was petitioning. It is worthwhile to remember that the 'humble petition' was the least of the tools in the communities' arsenal back in 1525, and it occasionally signaled the upcoming deployment of other methods of resistance. As a radical movement, the Levellers never thought to challenge the central axis of the system and when it was challenged stood up in its defense. Their conviction and commitment to property was

unshakeable; their conception of liberties as individual property was a natural extension of this commitment.

One interpretation that could lend further strength to this reading is Macpherson's description of 'possessive individualism', detailed in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (1962). There, Macpherson describes a particular assumption shared by numerous seventeenth century political thinkers and actors from Hobbes to Locke, including most notably the Levellers. Macpherson describes possessive individualism as a "conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them … The individual … is free inasmuch as he is proprietor of his person and capacities. Society consists of relations of exchange between proprietors. Political society becomes a calculated device for the protection of this property and for the maintenance of an orderly relation of exchange (2012:3). I understand this reading to show similarities with Skinner's later description of the Leveller political theory, covered above, as one that understands liberty as "full property in yourself," and the ability "to act independently of the will of anyone else" (2006:164-5).

Yet, even though our analyses are quite similar for that underlying principle of liberty espoused by the Levellers, Macpherson attributes this to a market-oriented mindset, indicative of a society ruled by market principles. My understanding, however, is that these are symptoms of a larger normative inheritance from Luther and Calvin: a political individualism transplanted into socio-economic and socio-political landscapes from the religious one. As I repeatedly underlined its initial purpose was the disempowerement of the individual, and not its empowerement against and protection from political authority. This latter interpretation was given to it by the early-liberal struggle of emancipation, partially emerging from a position of defenselessness. Consequently, I believe these aspects that Macpherson and Skinner also identify to be the remnants of the

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normative unfreedom that was woven into the foundations of these principles of political individualism. Macpherson traces the ultimate abandonment of these aspects to Rousseau while I argue that they were constitutive, essential aspects that never disappeared but instread remained latent and dormant. I speak more of this below in the conclusion of this chapter and the conclusions chapter.

2.3.   The fall of the Levellers

With their position on property aligned to parliament, let alone threatening, the Levellers became useful tools. Indeed, on 4 January 1649, Parliament declared 'the people are, under God, the original of all just power' (Sharp, 2004:xxviii) – seemingly accepting the Leveller position set forth in *An Arrow against Tyranny*, all the while ignoring the issue of suffrage, and imprisoning the Leveller leaders. In February of the same year parliament dismissed the House of Lords as 'useless and dangerous' and effectively made official the reality: the sole power in the land was parliament. In the previous pamphlet *A Remonstrance of Many Thousand Citizens*, published in 1646, the Levellers thusly attacked the House of Commons: "Ye have long time acted like the house of peers than the House of Commons. We can scarcely approach your door with a request or a motion, though by way of petition, but ye hold long debates whether we break not your privileges" (Sharp, 2004:42). By 1649, parliamentary privileges have carried the day, the propertied and the privileged have conquered the government at all levels, and all opposition to them was crushed.

It is at this point that the Leveller leaders, defeated beyond doubt and captive, timidly discovered the communities and society, notably shifting the emphasis from the individual to the society. *A Manifestation* (see above), starts by placing the individual in the society to which he is responsible: "Since no man is born for himself only, but obliged by the laws of nature (which

reaches all), of Christianity (which engages us as Christians), and of public society and government, to employ our endeavours for the advancement of a communitive[110] happiness of equal concernment to others as ourselves, here we have labored … to produce out of the common calamities such a proportion of freedom and good to the nation…" (Sharp, 2004:158). Thus, only after they were deserted by their supporters and their cause lost, did the Levellers contextualize their struggle for the 'individual' as part of a societal quest for happiness commonly shared by the community. Even if this interpretation, a change of priorities at the end, is the correct understanding of their text, it was too late to discover let alone elaborate an argument for communal self-determination.[111]

What exactly brought the end of the Levellers is still a matter of discussion. What seems beyond debate, however, is that they were used in the political maneuvering of Cromwell and the generals, shelved in the aftermath, re-fielded briefly by Cromwell when needed, and then crushed for good. In March 1649, the congregations withdrew their support from the Levellers; with the NMA numbers reduced by half, surviving radicals also either deserted, or were let go. Once their usefulness was over, "the Leveller leaders were arrested, the radical regiments provoked into unsuccessful mutiny, which was crushed at Burford in May 1649. Army democracy was finished. So, effectively, were the Levellers" (Hill, 1982:70). With expert political maneuvering "the Grandees contemptuously exploited and then cast aside the Levellers." Sharp echoes the consensus that the Grandees, including Cromwell, Fairfax, and Ireton, never truly intended to entertain the democratic ideas put forth by the 'Case of the Army', but they needed to keep control over the

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[110] Sharp translates this as 'Common among a community'
[111] It is possible that their target was in fact the Diggers who were trying to achieve communal autonomy. The Leveller position from the beginning was that anything above and beyond the individual was in the care of parliament. The Diggers' attempt to disregard property and establish an agricultural commune on communal land would have been against societal harmony whose care was in parliament's hand.

process (2004:92-93). Indeed, Fairfax reportedly said to his chaplain, precisely on this issue, that "that which I call to the people for is but a quick and regular motion in their own sphere" (Hill, 1982:57). It is very telling that "The first administrative act of the [English] Regicides was to silence the Levellers" (Brinton, 1965:168). Cromwell shouted at Lilburne, in March of 1649 during his questioning about authoring seditious books, that there is "no other way to deal with these men but to break them in pieces" and he "succeeded in doing just that" (Sharp, 2004: xi). Unable to set their struggle in communities, or establish anything above loose, issue-based alliances, the Levellers' were not difficult to shatter.

Partly through choice, and partly through political momentum, the Levellers invested their political future into the NMA. The end of their movement thus came at the hand of Cromwell and his generals who outmaneuvered them over the control of the army and even managed to use whatever meager resistance was offered to further their own power. Hill sees a clear purpose on the part of the Grandees and Cromwell: "the Generals feared that the Levellers might capture the Army; then the many-headed monster would acquire a single head. Hence their forcible dissolution of the Army Council" (2002:130). Wootton puts it matter-of-factly: "the Levellers knew from the beginning that no matter what support they could muster among the rank and file of the army, the officers distrusted the egalitarianism of their constitutional proposals. Yet they never prepared effectively for a trial of strength with the officers … The Leveller movement never acquired any independent military strength," and their defeat at the hand of Cromwell came rather easily after unprepared uprisings which turned out to be much more convenient for Cromwell's consolidation of power than the Levellers (1991: 415).

2.4.   The limits of the Levellers' Political Theory

The Levellers present us with difficult dilemmas. For instance, how could we account for their clear wish to revolutionize the socio-political system but, at the same time, respect so many of its essential aspects like economic relations, conceptions of property, and parliament elected on the existing franchise as the ultimate authority? Similarly: how could the most powerful radical movement in an era of Civil War fail to acquire independent organizational strength? As a movement with a sophisticated political agenda and clear public appeal and support, how should we understand of their inability to create, or even try to create, genuine alternatives?

These are not ahistorical or anachronistic questions: as we will see in the next section, other radical groupings did all those, criticizing both the economic and socio-political settings that oppressed so many and providing alternative spaces and systems in an attempt to actualize the ideals they champion. In exploring these questions, I conclude that though the Levellers had revolutionary goals, they were, in essence and behavior, reformers. Had most of their goals been achieved, they would have brought about a revolution more profound than Parliament's; they failed in that precisely because they were not revolutionaries. The exchange at the Putney debates speaks to this point: when Ireton challenges their arguments for universal liberty by contrasting it with the property of the rich, the Leveller conception fails. This, then, points directly at the limits of the Levellers' political theorizing. As I have been arguing, these are the limits placed on the movement by the conceptualization of the counter-revolution of 1525 which they inadvertently internalized. At its core, the Leveller political theory never challenged the relationship between the state and the individual. If anything, their conception of individual rights guaranteed as property by the state only bound individuals to the state even more strongly than before. In that,

their conceptions have only furthered the asymmetry of that relationship and contributed to their usefulness to those who vied for political authority.

To simplify, we can argue that there are two intertwined reasons which explain the Levellers' overall failure, both of which derive from the counter-revolution of 1525: their commitment to political individualism and relationships of property which thoroughly defined and limited their political struggle; and their submission to and championing of the system, evident in their methods and dealings with authorities. Combined, those factors effectively acted as hard limits set in the way of their imagining and elaborating genuine alternatives to the system. Of course, this does not to mean that the Levellers were not a radical movement for emancipation, but rather that they are better conceptualized as among the first emancipatory movements which were the product of the ideas, ideals and norms perpetuated by the counter revolution of 1525. The Levellers acted more like a political party in parliament. As such, even when they struggled for emancipation from oppression and greater rights for individuals, they have contributed to the strengthening of the socio-political system. To fully develop this argument and further analyze how the Levellers were limited by their adherence to the principles perpetuated by the counter-revolution, however, we must now turn to the communitarian movement of emancipation: the Diggers, also known as the "True Levellers." Only after that exposition can we fruitfully elaborate the limitations of the Levellers and how these reveal the success of the counter-revolution.

3.   The Diggers

The New Model Army was a hotbed of radical ideas and acted as a short-lived school of democracy. Likewise, many sectarian churches acted as incubation chambers for democratic ideas and practices. Meanwhile, longer lasting schools in both economic and political democracy were operating throughout England in commons, wastes, and forests. Unsurprisingly, all of these venues

were intensely contested: Grandees, the Anglican church, and local lords, respectively, sought to either take over and bend these to their will, or outright ban them. These latter areas were where the Digger, or the True Leveller, movement flourished. If the Levellers are to be understood as liberal or social democrats – a point still up for debate – the Diggers show clear signs of agrarian socialism and communitarianism, if not outright communism. They were active almost exclusively in rural areas though often fairly close to urban centers; the first Digger colony was on St. George's Hill, a wastage area just outside London. These colonies were fairly widespread: "from Notthinghamshire and Northamptonshire to Gloucerthershire and Kent, Digger influence spread all over southern and central England." [112] Through their particular brand of class consciousness, they had some influence in intensifying ill-feeling between landlords and tenants (Hill, 1982:124).

They are also credited with infusing the Fifth Monarchists and the Quakers with class consciousness. Hill presents evidence suggesting a relatively smooth transition of people from the Diggers to the Quakers: in places where Digger settlements were attacked, persecuted, and suppressed by landlords the Quakers flourished almost immediately after (1982:128). From the confiscation of the properties of the church and nobles to the communal cultivation of the land, from the autonomous, community-based organization throughout England to the larger, federalist ideal they championed for England, the Diggers were both the direct inheritors of the Revolution of the Common Men and clearly anticipated of some of the major democratic thinkers of the

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[112] Work on this point is still ongoing. It is difficult to pinpoint precisely how many Digger colonies existed and where for several reasons: the Diggers were often confused with other sects, making it hard to establish which radical sect had a presence in which area; local lords and Justices of Peace had a vested interest in hiding their presence to use a free hand in dealing with them and obscuring it later. In 1989, Andrew Hopton found 12 colonies. Hill suggests up to 20 coexisted in 1649.

Enlightenment and later. Indeed, if moderate, constitutional Levellers like Lilburne and Wildman were looking forward to Locke, the Digger agenda looks forward to Rousseau and Marx.[113]

In his writings, Winstanley encourages people "to employ their reason and industry" not to increase production but "to the beauty of our commonwealth" (Hill, 1982:138). Setting him apart from almost all others of that time, he saw God as reason incarnate. In a much more revolutionary vein, Winstanley deemed property a bloody and thieving power sustained only by the power of the sword. To Winstanley, the laws of the land were but tools of domination in the hands of the propertied; they should have been cut off along with the King's head. Consider, not just in response to the Levellers' individualism and description of rights as property, but also in parallel to Rousseau's famous quote from the Social Contract,[114] this line from Winstanley's *True Levellers Standard Advanced: Or, The State of Community Opened, and Presented to the Sons of Men* (1649): "pleading for property and single interest divides the people of a land and the whole world into parties, and is the cause of all wars and bloodshed and contention everywhere … But when once the earth becomes a common treasury again, as it must, … then this enmity of all lands will cease" (Marxists.org, 2018). There are also substantial parallels in the pamphlet to Marx: it opens by declaring that "true commonwealth's freedom lies in the free enjoyment of the earth". Consider further from the same pamphlet, also in parallel to Marx: "True human dignity would be possible

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[113] Also of note is that the third chapter of The Law of Freedom, authored by the Digger leader Gerrard Winstanley, is entitled "Where began the first original of Government in the Earth among Mankind" and, as can be gathered, goes into a discussion into the origins of government. Therein Winstanley unites a mild Hobbesian take ("the original root of magistracy is common preservation") and adds an Aristotelian argument ("it rose up first in a private family").

[114] At the beginning of the second part of 'On the Origin of the Inequality of Mankind', Rousseau famously writes: "The first person who, having enclosed a plot of land, took it into his head to say this is mine and found people simple enough to believe him was the true founder of civil society. What crimes, wars, murders, what miseries and horrors would the human race have been spared, had some one pulled up the stakes or filled in the ditch and cried out to his fellow men: 'Do not listen to this imposter. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to all and the earth to no one!'"

only when communal ownership was established, and buying and selling of land and labour ceased" (Marxists.org, 2018). It was these ideas – the abolishment of private property and wage-labour – which marked the Diggers as True Levellers. Their agenda was one of economic and political revolution, emerging from self-governing, self-sustaining communities of which they have established at least a dozen throughout the English countryside.

Furthermore, Winstanley's anticlericalism was "much more drastic, surer and more systematic than any other writer during the Revolution" (Hill, 1982:140). *The Law of Freedom* notes: "What is the reason that most people are so ignorant of their freedoms, and so few fit to be chosen commonwealth's officers? Because," he writes, "the old kingly clergy … are continually distilling their blind principles into their people, and do thereby burse up ignorance in them" (Marxists.org, 2018). As we have seen, many others were deeply aware of the function the church and the priests played in the upkeep of the social order; but Winstanley's critical outlook remains unparalleled. He took things further: rather than the promise of paradise in the afterlife with which all poor people were being fooled, Winstanley said, the promise must be achieved here and now. *The Law of Freedom* cites: "Oh ye hearsay preachers, deceive not the people any longer by telling them that this glory shall not be known and seen till the body is laid in the dust. I tell you, this great mystery is begun to appear, and it must be seen by the material eyes of the flesh: and those five senses that is in man shall partake of this glory. Heaven is here in this world" (Marxists.org, 2018).

In this way, knowingly or otherwise, Winstanley responds to Luther's claims that a Christian's freedom and equality is otherworldly. It is indeed remarkable: Luther developed his argument in response to the rising of the communities which were leveraging Christianity in their attempts to emancipate. Winstanley's response comes from another agricultural community, fairly

similar to those of 1525, founded in an attempt to emancipate the common people. His analysis of the totality of the system is indeed outstanding and, to my knowledge, truly unique: to him, "Kingly power, clergy, lawyers, and buying and selling were all linked: 'if one truly fall, all must fall'" (Hill, 1982:133). As already stated, he was far from alone in that assessment; some of these issues were linked for many people. But while others such as the Levellers only tried to improve parts of the system without changing the economic relations. However, Winstanley is crystal clear on their connection which, to him, are instruments of domination deployed in concert to preserve the theft of land by sword from the common people. Through their wholesale destruction heaven on earth can be achieved. All of this was summarized in the last line of the Diggers' song: "Glory here, Diggers all!".

The Diggers thus reproduced the political project of the Revolution of the Common Men. Heaven on earth could be achieved by working the land communally, abolishing the privatization of land and the selling of labour, subjecting everyone to equal laws, and establishing egalitarian relationships between self-governing communes. The Diggers' were consistent in that they attacked the system as a whole instead of attempting to alleviate its more problematic aspects. For instance, they agreed with the Levellers that wage labourers were unfree, and "drew the conclusion that wage labour should be abolished" (Hill, 2002: 129). However, despite the remarkable clarity of their systemic criticism, and the fact that the Digger philosophy looked ahead to Rousseau and Marx, the particular practice they chose to achieve this goal – establishing a series of agricultural communities – seemed unresponsive to contemporary needs, falling far short of answering the demands of merchants, traders, skilled workers, and others.

Indeed, the Diggers put their ideas in practice very much in the same way the communities of 1525 did; their attempt to establish economic democracy to achieve political equality was

embedded in agricultural communities. Winstanley's argument in *The Law of Freedom* is that the only way out of exploitation, oppression, and hypocrisy was to set "the earth free from all kingly bondage of lords of manors and oppressing landlords," and make "the whole land the common stock" wherein all will have "common freedom". It would not be a big stretch to conceptualize Winstanley's arguments as a hybrid of Marxist and Rousseauian thought, put in practice in revolutionary ways. In their establishment, Digger colonies first "order[ed] the lords of the manor to stop cutting down 'our common woods and trees ... for your private use'," (Hill, 1982:130) and then claimed commons, forests, waste areas and the like as communal cultivation grounds. They thus attempted to overthrow the traditional hierarchies and the relations of economic exploitation that came with those.

In their principles and methods, the Diggers were surprisingly identical to a revolution that most of them had likely never heard of. Some of the Digger colonies had as many as five thousand people who simply relocated their lives to these alternative political gatherings. By 1649, with the Levellers dismantled and their leaders in prison, these colonies posed the greatest threat to the system. Hill summarizes the profound danger the Diggers managed to create:

> The Digger "proposals would bite deep into existing property relations. The danger from the Diggers was that they called on the poor to organize themselves for practical action. A series of collective communities, if they had lasted, would have overcome the dispersion of forces which bedeviled the Levellers: they would have been for the True Levellers [i.e. the Diggers] what the New Model Army might have been for the Levellers; and they could have extended all over the country" (1982:131).

The Diggers' challenge to the relationships of property also revealed, as clearly as it could be, where the Levellers stood: in June 1649, the imprisoned Lilburne published a repudiation of "the erroneous tenets of the poor Diggers at George Hill" (Hill, 1982:119). *The Manifestation* of April 1649 – covered above – within which the four Leveller leaders asserted they "'never had it in our thoughts to level men's estates, it being the utmost of our aim that ... every man with as

much security as may be to enjoy his property'" was published two weeks after the start of the Digger colony on St. George's Hill.

The presence of these colonies was dangerous beyond their mere occupation of the land. They were a standing challenge to the system: as self-sufficient groupings of the poor and lower classes, they exemplified life without lords, without oppression and exploitation. They served to demonstrate to the people of the area genuine alternatives to the domination of lords. These examples stood stronger than any other message could have. A good example of how deeply the Diggers have influenced the people in and around their various colonies, and how lasting their influence was can be gleamed from this instance: "in 1653 … a Kingston jury [where a Digger colony existed in 1649] … found Lord Chandos guilty of manslaughter (in a duel), notwithstanding his claim to privilege of peerage: he was sentenced to be burnt in the hand" (Hill, 1982:112). A jury of the common people sentencing a lord like he was a common person by ignoring his noble rights to privilege is a clear indication that the Digger radicalism impacted in a lasting way not only the poor and the unemployed but also the freeholders which were entitled to sit on a jury. The choice of the punishment itself – the burning of a hand – further underlines the strong political message of equality before the law sent by the jury. In 1653, the Commonwealth was seemingly strong and stable, and the Levellers and Diggers long gone. Thus, the most likely explanation for the radical behavior of the Kington jury is that they were genuinely convinced of the Diggers' message of equality, and may even have developed a class consciousness just like the Fifth Monarchists, and the Quakers before them.

To the Diggers, overturning enclosures was of primary import. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Winstanley first appealed to parliament when they first passed the Wardship and Ward of Courts Act: "let the gentry have their enclosures free from all Norman enslaving entanglements

whatsoever, and let the common people have their commons and waste lands set free to them …
If you found out the Court of Wards to be a burden and freed lords of manors and gentry from
paying fines to the King … let the common people be set free too from paying homage to the lords
of manors" (Hill, 2002: 147). Once this method failed, Diggers simply started occupying enclosed
land, building their communes and ordering the lords out of the communal land. The Diggers thus
posed the only challenge to this tremendously important legislation deemed by Blackstone,
Perkins, and Hill as *the* decisive change in English history. "They argued that no statute deprived
the common people of their rights in the common lands, 'but only an ancient custom bred in the
strength of kingly prerogative'" (Hill, 1982:55), and they started to assert these rights by direct
action, reclaiming private land for communal use. Once more, exactly like 1525, the communal
resistance was the only real obstacle to the expansion of lordly power. And, once more, it was this
confrontation which inevitably brought the end of the commune.

Beyond the challenge they posed to lordly properties, these communities would have had
the potential to radically transform their localities; as in Kingston, a colony's existence in a locality
for even a few months seems to have transformed the political consciousness of the locals,
including the freeholders and the propertied, for many years to come. This explains both Hill's
above assertion concerning the existential threat the Diggers would have posed, and why local
lords and Justices of Peace fought the Diggers so strongly. The Diggers' end came simply because
they were too late to establish their presence. By the time Digger colonies were starting up, the
Civil War was over, the Levellers dispersed and their leaders imprisoned, radical sects largely
pacified, and the lords of the land safe in their social, political, and economic dominance. Though
they made a good start and extended throughout southern and central England – areas with strong
parliamentary support during the war – these communities did not last. All Digger colonies were

ended by a combination of powers arrayed against them. As could be expected, local lords were a source of constant conflict leading to continuous harassment, raids, and isolation. Justices of the Peace always ruled against the colonies in numerous court cases branding them alternatively Ranters, Levellers, Fifth Monarchists, or outright thieves of private land. In a few cases, they were subjected to armed intervention by Cromwell's troops either with or without a court order to that effect. Precisely because they were the last remaining threat to the system that all these forces could have been easily arrayed against them to terminate each colony individually.

Yet, in their brief existence the Diggers managed to mount one of the most central threats to the socio-political order by aiming for systemic change brought about by widespread, grassroots, popular movements. This, they achieved by creating alternative spaces and alternative ways of being which bypassed the existing socio-political and economic constraints. They challenged and actively attacked the foundational qualities of the system: property, social ranks, and political relations were all trampled by Digger colonies. Thus, without firing a shot, or ever needing an army, The Diggers' threat to the system was at least as big, if not bigger, than the one the Levellers presented. Part of the reason is also evident in their condemnation by the imprisoned Leveller leaders: the Levellers' allegiance to the foundational qualities of the system of private property was genuine.

4.   The English Revolution and the Revolution of the Common Man: the tradition and the break

The failed revolution of the radicals – 'the revolution that never happened', as Hill calls it – was the result of a quasi-spontaneous outbreak of democratic behaviour and practices. It emerged from churches and wastage areas, forests and cities, taking form in various radical groups. In those groups were people from the lower ranks of the social order, normally bound to obedience to their

betters: peasants, laborers, copyholders, soldiers and others, all of whom we can call the common men. Their numerous grievances with the existing economic and socio-political order, until then unable to find proper elaboration, came bursting out in the opening provided by the combination of popularly embraced egalitarian interpretations of Christianity, the power vacuum caused by the Civil War, and the possibilities that suddenly opened with the breaking down of the usual socio-political order. The radical agendas elaborated by the more prominent groups were sophisticated and well argued for in various pamphlets and debates; they were nothing like the wild thrashings of the many-headed beast the nobles thought the common people's rising would be.

4.1.   The English Revolution and the Tradition of Communal Resistance

However, despite the almost exclusive focus placed on it in hindsight as the precursor of the liberal tradition, the English revolution was not the first spontaneous outbreak of democratic ethics and behaviour, nor was it the first time that common people had leveraged religious conceptions in an attempt to achieve a fairer world. In fact, certain groups and aspects of the English Revolution could be easily, and correctly, conceptualized as the last leg of another long-lasting tradition: embedded within daily struggles, influenced by emancipatory interpretations of Christianity, and arising from communal action, this tradition is one of popular resistance against the control exerted by political authorities over society. Just like the English Revolution and the Revolution of the Common Man, the political demands arising from this tradition often takes on democratic, egalitarian, and representative forms. Indeed, the dynamics, grievances, goals, agents, and arguments of the failed English revolution display substantial similarities to others also part of this tradition, such as the Waldensians, the Lollards (aka Wycliffites), and the Hussites. Not coincidentally, these other examples are also associated with the reformed branches of Christianity

and the disparate followers of these schools of religious thought all eventually linked up with either Lutheran or Reformed churches.[115]

Of course, the tradition to which the English radicals belong goes beyond an affinity with the reformed and Protestant branches of Christianity. Since the impulse to reform Christianity is an inescapably and profoundly political endeavor, this tradition is also marked by attempts to transplant religious laws and ideals into politics, and turn the Bible itself into a political argument against the inequalities and oppressions of the existing system. For instance, in their leveraging of Christianity into a force of worldly emancipation, the sectarians of the English revolution are fully in line with the Waldensians, the Lollards, the Hussites, and of course the Communal Reformers of the 1525 Revolution. In their transplantation into political life of egalitarian ideals from the conception of universal priesthood, they follow the path previously taken by the Hussites and the common men of 1525. In their attempt to supplant overarching religious institutions with congregational autonomy, they were identical to all these movements, just like their condemnation, on religious grounds, of the church's involvement in politics and self-enrichment at the expense of the people. Similarly, all these movements were persecuted. Declared heretical by ecclesiastical authorities, and persecuted by temporal ones, their leaders were imprisoned, tortured, and executed and their followers hunted, exiled, and killed. All are also associated with armed uprisings in varying sizes and effects by the common people in an attempt to leverage their religious message into a fairer, more egalitarian society. The politico-religious appeal of this tradition to various communities of common people cannot be exaggerated.

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[115] For instance, the followers of the twelfth-century Waldesians eventually connected with Genevan reformers. Luther declared Jan Hus's thought as close as possible to his own; Hus is known to have drawn from Wycliffe's teachings.

Though this tradition dates back centuries, English radicals are closest to the common men of 1525. Part of this argument is that, contra the prevailing opinion, radical politics did not originate with the English Civil Wars or even the French Huguenots before it.[116] Indeed, the English radicals and the revolutionaries of 1525 were common people who attempted to restructure the socio-political order on democratic and equitable grounds, based on and fueled by popular interpretations of Christianity – interpretations that emphasized equality, fairness and democratic ethics. In fact, these two uprisings are very close to each other in the way they transplant Christianity into politics: Puritans' insistence on democratic ethics and practices is closer to the Communal Reformation than it could ever be to Luther. The material causes underlying their grievances also show numerous parallels, from the expansion of political authorities to issues of tithing, from the suppression of popular religious ideas to the economic grievances with privatization of land and enclosures. Underpining all of this, in both eras, is the widespread, communal nature of that religious struggle which fuels the struggle for emancipation.

All in all, it seems that we have very good reasons to look at the English radicals, at least parts of the radical movement, as the incarnation in this age of a series of religious and political ideas, almost always deemed heretical by temporal and ecclesiastical authorities, uniting spiritual salvation and worldly emancipation to create a fairer, and more democratic political system. In this era, just like 1525, this attempt takes the form of economic, religious and political attempts for subsidiarity; in economic fairness, congregational independence, and democratic and

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[116] See, for instance, Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints, A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (1965). After a passing mention of Luther and the German Princes, Walzer looks at the Calvinists: the French Huguenots as the point of passage from the traditional to the early-modern and then points directly at the English Puritans of 1640 as the origin point of radical politics. F.D. Dow makes a similar, though more nuanced, argument in his *Radicalism in the English Revolution* (1985), pointing at the Levellers and the Diggers as breaking ground in almost every aspect of political radicalism. I believe to have demonstrated, however, that this argument is only partially accurate.

representative principles of governance, these two seem closer than all others. This may be because both failed revolutions are drawing from popular interpretations of the Reformation; it may also be that they occupy a particular historical juncture where political authorities were in the process of transforming to their next form. What seems clear, however, is that a particular formulation of reformation ideals, emerging from and responsive to the socio-political inequalities and oppressions experienced by the common people, has manifested itself in both these cases in forms that are closer to each other than any other uprisings in the same religious tradition of resistance.

In their demands for representative politics, congregational autonomy, and embrace of democratic ethics, some Puritan orators and sectarians are much closer to the preachers of the Communal Reformation than they are to either Calvin or Luther. Hill notes: "For the Puritans, the object of worship was to rouse men to think and act about the problems of this world". Of course, this was very much contrary to Luther's intentions. Luther thought – and wrote – exactly like the royalist Duke of Newcastle: "'There should be more praying and less preaching,' he wrote, 'for much preaching breeds faction, but much praying causes devotion'." (2002:81). As we have seen in previous chapters, Luther's solution to the most oppressive of political conditions, including slavery to the Turk, was a detachment from the world, a turn towards the inner world and inaction in favor of prayer. Common men thinking about the problems of the world, and then acting on them in ways that would be compatible with the egalitarian principles of Christianity was very much against the political positions Luther championed between 1525 and 1530. It is, however, quite in line with the Communal reformation. Despite the apparent conservativeness of the Puritan political positions, the focus on political thought and action from the common men is nevertheless anathema to Luther's hierarchical conceptualization of the world. In short, the sectarians of the

English Revolution appear undeniably closer to the Communal Reformation than they are to Luther.

In an almost poetic turn of history, with the sectarians of the English revolution we witness the revolutionary impulse and the drive to change the world for the better effectively emerging back from exactly where Luther has locked it: from inside the churches. Against the *Twelve Articles* of the peasants which championed Christian equality as a fundamental political principle, Luther argued that these are notions not of this world. Christian equality, according to Luther, had no place in politics; in fact, disregarding his own transplantation of religious concepts into politics, the Reformer wrote that precisely because 'equality of believers' was a Christian ideal that it should have no place in politics. Calvin's take on Christian equality was more nuanced than Luther's clear-cut lines. But his concern was also to preserve equality of the believers and to protect morality within the institution of the church, which he imagined as a potent tool for governance. With the English sectarians, the very same ideas concerning equality and democratic ethics emerged back from the confines of the purely religious and spilled over to politics. Indeed, the principles championed in the Twelve Articles – equality of believers, deliberative politics, unfairness of tithes, congregational autonomy, and economic fairness – are all centerpieces of the radical agendas in the English revolution. The closest the English Revolution seems to 1525 is, of course, with the Diggers. In their demands, methods, and wholesale attack on the socio-political system, as well as their method to revolutionize it through communal working of the land, the Diggers can be easily characterized as secular inheritors of the Revolution of the Common Men.

What distinguishes the English revolution from the others of that tradition are the principles we find embodied by the Leveller thought: political individualism, the acceptance of existing political authority as its ultimate form, and the Calvinist principle of self-discipline. The Levellers

never considered as viable alternatives the communities, which were in previous risings the natural foci of political organization and resistance, and organically availed communal autonomy and alternative political spaces. The discussions by the Levellers, as we saw, revolve around whether the representative bodies of the early state are representative enough, in what ways should individual rights be conceived of and recognized by the political authority, and how inclusive the existing system had to be to increase its legitimacy. Put otherwise, the Leveller emphasis is on improving a system which is already accepted, in large part, as legitimate.

The impact of these factors on the Leveller thought and agenda is more evident in contrast with the Diggers. The same problems of the socio-political world were perceived in dramatically different ways: where Diggers see a concerted system of exploitation wherein laws, priests, parliament, and nobles cooperate, the Levellers see issues of economic dependence and political representation; where Diggers attempt thorough systemic restructuring, the Levellers aim for gradual reformation and incremental inclusivity; where Diggers envision autonomous, self-sufficient communities of equal citizens, the Levellers' ideal is expanding the existing system or property and rights to a larger number. A case in point is the wage-earners: from the Putney debates we can understand that for most of the Leveller leadership, they are individuals who have voluntarily signed off on their political independence and implicitly agreed to the consequences of this surrender. Those aspects which set apart the Levellers from the Diggers and the previous incarnations of the popular traditions of resistance – the focus on the individual and the impulse to reform an otherwise accepted system of governance – is also why the Levellers are seen as the pioneers of liberalism.

4.2.   The English Revolution and the liberal story of the genesis of democracy

The traditional, mainstream story of liberalism looks upon the failed revolution of English radicals as the first step of the eventually successful quest for emancipation through which individuals gained greater rights and freedoms, redefining the relationship between the individual and the state. Robertson and Wootton, quoted above, are good examples. To repeat: Robertson sees "Today's single most important political principle, the right to live in a participatory democracy" coming down to us from "buff-coated and blood-stained English soldiers and tradesmen" (2007: vii-viii) while Wootton sees the Levellers as trying "to establish for the first time freedoms which … never had existed, and were not to come into existence for over three centuries" (1991:412). Wootton, in fact, draws a causal line of influence from Levellers to the American Revolution and beyond: "Hobbes may have paid attention to them, and Locke was almost certainly influenced by them, as Tom Paine was by Locke. Eventually whole societies were to acknowledge the principles of the Agreement of the People, principles born out of second-hand scholastic philosophy combined with the practice and, equally importantly, the theology of sects (1991:412)" The Levellers and the sectarians are thus seen as the pioneers of a long and ultimately successful tradition of emancipation which brought about liberal democracies and the rights associated with them.

The liberal story, then, is one where right-less, atomized subjects of absolutisms gradually emerged from the pre-modern conditions of oppression and suffering, increasingly becoming closer to the ideals of free citizens of democratic polities largely embodied by contemporary Western democracies. The 'march of freedom', or the 'unstoppable progress of equality' mentioned by numerous liberal thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries starts, as Robertson notes in his romanticized description, with the Levellers and the egalitarian theology of

sects. Their emphasis on natural, inalienable individual rights, wider suffrage, and religious tolerance define key liberal values and rights. Indeed, some key Leveller texts – such as *An Arrow Against all Tyrants*, or *A Remonstrance of Many Thousand Citizens* employ language clearly anticipative of Locke. These texts champion inalienable individual rights framed as natural properties; representative politics and consent of the governed; a central, almost sacred, place for individual property, and other core aspects of liberalism.

In this intepretation of the past, the Lutheran and Reformed denominations have a deep connection to democratic ethics and principles, contributing to the advent of democracy by first introducing and then championing political individualism. The central liberal idea of equality before the law emerges from the Lutheran and Calvinist acceptance of the fundamental equality of all believers before God. This much is practically uncontested. Thus, Wootton captures the consensus when he writes of "a natural affinity between Calvinism and representative and participatory forms of government" (1996:94). The liberal story of democratic genesis, however, is not the only story. When we flip the focus of the story from the liberal values of representation and individual rights to the authoritarian value of obedience, and preservation of societal order, another story can be found in the Levellers, and the advent of political individualism appears in a much different light.

4.3.   The early origins of proto-liberal ideas

The right-less, atomized subjects of absolutisms which the early liberal tradition attempted to save, were actually brought about by the innovation of the very same concepts on which the Levellers built their political project. Indeed, far from laying the groundwork for a democratic ethos of governance between individuals and political authorities, Luther's goal was precisely to demolish the communitarian democracy established by the 1525 Revolution of the Common Man.

As we have seen, Luther's own application to politics of his principle of individualism was an attempt to atomize the subjects, and engender unconditional obedience. His championing of unconditional submission to all authorities is only rivaled by Calvin's Geneva. Since for both reformers disobedience to authority was the original sin and the cause of humanity's downfall, it was in all cases unacceptable to disobey political authority, the earthly manifestation of God's will. Both saw the spiritual salvation of mankind passing through total governmental control maintained through faith and fear, and advocated for repression in government at every turn.

The 'natural affinity' Wootton perceives between Calvinism, Lutheranism and democracy is thus in need of unpacking. It hides more than it says. Specifically, there are three points that need addressing. First, taken without further qualifications, it is misdirecting: the emergence of individual freedoms and rights associated with democracies were later additions to Luther and Calvin's political theories, and completely contrary to the principles they championed when they were alive. Wootton, of course, fully recognizes that: "the main thrust of both Lutheran and Calvinist teaching was … deeply conservative" mandating that believers "must accept established authority without dispute" (1996:94). This affinity emerged later, when religious minorities under attack (first Lutherans, then Calvinists, but also Catholics) needed to justify their defense against authorities which sought to violently annihilate them. The early conceptualization of these ideas revolving around consent of the ruled, responsibilities of the rulers towards their subjects, and the possibilities for resistance to and deposition of tyrants were developed in a cooperative fashion by thinkers from all these denominations. Wootton notes how "Catholics imitated Protestant classics … and Protestants also learned from Catholics" (1996:94). Robert Kingdon (1991) and Francis Salmon's (1991) works on Calvinist and Catholic resistance theories, respectively, further

document how these theories were built in an almost cooperative fashion, ideas being developed and improved on in a cross-denominational fashion.

This is also the period where we encounter the initial conceptions of 'the state of nature': Protestant writers George Buchanan (who was James I's tutor) and William Reynolds, writing under the nom-de-plume Gulielmus Rossaeus, both described a 'State of Nature' in their works (Salmon, 1991: 227-230). Before them, the Spanish Jesuit Luis de Molina uses the actual term 'status naturae' (Salmon, 1991: 238; Skinner, 1978: 155). A very similar case of development in a cooperative fashion applies to the conception of 'the social contract' too: the Huguenots (namely Francois Hotman, Theodor Beza and the anonymous author of the vastly influential *Vindicae Contra Tyrannos*) are seen as the originators of an original contract between the King and the originally sovereign people of the realm who might, if the ruler acted tyrannically, depose of him. We have also seen, however, that decades before the Huguenots, communities in the Holy Roman Empire had a yearly communal day of social contract – Schwörtag, literally 'oath day' – where they swore to be obedient to the authorities provided these authorities respected laws laid down by their ancestors (Rublack, 1984:32). True to the conception, this oath was publicly withdrawn at the start of every rebellion by these communities. This was exactly how the four communities in Lupfen in the Black Forest initially triggered what became the Revolution of the Common Man in 1525: a public declaration that nullifies the contract between them and their lord. This suggests that the conception and practice of a contract binding rulers and the ruled, and the subsequent possibility of nullifying the contract to depose of the ruler, predates the Monarchomachs – the French Huguenots – by at least a half century. By moving this actual conract into the theoretical realm, where all individuals with reason would always already have agreed to, later theorists have effectively, albeit unknowingly, participated in the disempowerment of the subjects.

Underlying the unwilling cooperation which led to the development of all these concepts that the Levellers were to draw from implicitly or explicitly, lies the reality of defenselessness: Protestants, Huguenots, and Catholics all experienced periods of profound distress where rulers of the land sought to exterminate them through violence. The language of the contract, the search for a justification to overthrow tyrants, the quest to arm subjects with inalienable rights all emerge from this position of powerlessness, wherein right-less subjects found themselves at the mercy of a malevolent authority. Luther's hesitant acceptance of self-defense – albeit only by lords – against the Emperor in 1531, and the first Calvinist justifications in late sixteenth-century by Theodore Beza and Pierre Viret of resistance to a malevolent tyrant by "legitimate magistrates" rose out of instances of genuine threats of complete extermination by the ruler who was owed absolute obedience.

That this defense, even in these extreme situations, can only be led by lords and magistrates speaks to the reality that the very position of powerlessness was precisely where both Calvin and Luther thought common subjects should be in against their rulers. Put otherwise, the obstacles Protestants, Huguenots, and Catholics tried to overcome with their work were relatively recent innovations put there by Luther and Calvin: right-less, atomized individuals vis-à-vis political authorities whose tyranny only suggests a wroth God demanding unconditional submission, to the death if necessary. Oakley writes "Forcible resistance to the princes and potentates of this world has rarely been an occasion for moral anguish among late medieval Catholics. But Luther's rejection of it as sinful transformed it for the remainder of the sixteenth century and a goodly part of seventeenth" (1991:173). As we have also seen numerous lords and kings throughout Europe eagerly picked up on Luther's ideas of non-resistance. The causal direction from Luther's ideas on obedience and political authority is crystal clear in the case of England where Henry VIII had

explicitly drawn from Luther. There, first the Protestants under Mary I and later Catholics under Elizabeth had to develop theories of resistance to justify their self-defense against an all-powerful political authority bent on exterminating them.

What turned Lutheran and Calvinist political principles from atomizing tools of oppression into mortar for democracies, and eventually consolidated within the emerging liberal tradition, was the attempt to escape this very situation of complete powerlessness, brought about in the first place by these very principles. Moreover, none of these theories of resistance, including the Huguenots who suffered attempts at mass extermination like the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572, actually conceived of the individual as a notable source of power. Sommerville writes: "[The French Huguenot Claude de] Saumaise vested original sovereignty in the people as a whole, and not in individuals. *Most theorists likewise denied that individuals had ever held political power* (1991:363, emphasis added). Even in this case of total defenselessness, Huguenot theorists whose very lives were threatened did not conceive of the individual as a source of political power. Individualizing the subjects thus was a very direct, very clear attempt to rob them of all power.

This is also exactly what animated the Levellers: they hoped to arm subjects with rights, and subject authorities to limitations imposed on them by the people conceived of as the original sovereigns. This is how the arguments and principles that transformed Lutheran and Calvinist political individualism eventually consolidated into the liberal tradition. The affinity Wootton points to here is, in reality, a shorthand for approximately a century of struggle, both actual and normative, to redefine and reinterpret into instruments of emancipation what were explicitly designed to be and used as instruments of repression, and transform the political individual invented to serve authoritarian purposes into the centerpiece of a representative, democratic ethos of governance.

The second point follows from that conclusion in a straightforward way: if, alongside Robertson, Wootton, Sharp and others, we accept the Levellers and their sectarian contemporaries as the pioneers of liberal democracies, then there is little doubt that the contemporary liberal democratic tradition indeed comes from a place of genuine adherence to Lutheran and Calvinist principles of individualism and self-discipline. Indeed, for the Levellers, the lens of the struggle for emancipation is decidedly fixed on the individual. They believed in parliamentary representation and wanted more individuals to benefit from it; they believed in individual property and its inviolable nature and sought shelter for the individual in that concept by defining rights as such. The Levellers saw in the way the system worked for parliamentary elites – their properties, rights, deliberations and involvement in decision making – an ideal formulation of politics, and wanted to expand these to more people, though not all of them. In short, when the liberal story of emancipation fixates its gaze on the Levellers as the initial visionaries who thought of transforming the powerless, right-less individual into the centerpiece of democratic practice and ethos, it is quite accurate. Yet it also omits how this kind of individual was first conceived in the first place.

A final point concerning Wootton's claim about the affinity – between Calvinism, Lutheranism and democracy – is equally important: Wootton assumes that the contemporary form of democracy is its only possible form. He thus inadvertently obfuscates precisely what was silenced by Lutheran atomization in the first place: a communal form of democratic existence. The affinity he mentions is thus a natural, consequential connection between the two Reformers and a specific, individualistic, form of democracy that was directly predicated on the emancipatory interpretations of their political theories. What he misses is the other, communal democratic tradition. What was eventually forged in resistance into the foundational ideas of one form of democracy were originally transplanted into politics in order to terminate another form of

democracy which found its final form in 1525. The way Lutheran equality is turned into political equality for all is a case in point: Luther not only explicitly argued against the political deployment of Christian equality, he condemned it as Satan's work. A century later, devout Puritans were championing political equality and principles of communal democracy.

Put together, these points indicate a central argument of this dissertation: from Luther and Calvin in early sixteenth century to the Levellers in mid-seventeenth century, there was a substantial shift in conceptions and evaluations of the qualities of resistance to authorities and struggles of emancipation. The ideals, overall, moved from communal to individualist, placing the individual rights and properties at the heart of these struggles. Our evaluative lens has shifted alongside, placing emphasis on individual qualities and looking for indications of freedom in their emergence. Though not without merit, this latter shift has also been partially misleading: it removed the focus from the original intention behind the political deployment of these concepts which were later transformed into democratic ones. Their original intention, however, was to *engender obedience*. And political individualism has served this intention very well, even in the early liberal democratic forms it has been deployed in by the Levellers. We find aspects of unfreedom built in the conceptual and normative framework of the Leveller political theory precisely because that is exactly where they were built in.

5.   Political Individualism and aspects of unfreedom

The Leveller focus on the individual marks a qualitative diminishment in the quest for emancipation: the focus of the fight for emancipation moves from the political association – with all its inherent advantages – to the individual, conceived of as solitary, powerless and right-less, and accepted as such for almost a century by even the most radical theorists of resistance. As a natural consequence of this, the struggle for emancipation now focuses on points of individual

improvement rather than systemic and structural issues of oppression which was the foci of communal attempts at change. I ascribe this qualitative diminishment and the impoverishment of political imagination to two factors. First: the rising strength of the early-modern state. Throughout Europe centralizing political authorities slowly but surely reduced the space available to their subjects to explore, create, and establish alternative political existences, connections and associations, quantitatively – and, I would argue, qualitatively – limiting possibilities available to people. In that period, both the extensive powers and intensive reach of the state institutions increase tremendously, allowing greater social control, deeper penetration of daily life by authorities, and, unprecedented levels of ideological conditioning and disciplining. This process, explored quite extensively in the state-formation literature, is clearly observable in its emergence in England from the reign of James I to the Commonwealth under Cromwell (Brinton, 1965).[117] Even though England presents possibly the toughest challenge to Marxist and Bellicist state-formation theories, there is broad consensus that the period between 1640-1660 was an exceptionally prolific one for the expansion of state powers in England. I do not explore these factors here, except for the social-discipline angle (see below). It is, however, important to keep in mind that this is the period which coincides with the rise of the early modern state in England and the associated increase in the powers of central and centralizing authorities to control and discipline their populations.

The second factor, which is central for my thesis, is the lasting effect of the counter-revolution of 1525 and the hold taken over the mid-seventeenth century English society by Lutheran and Calvinist ideas on obedience, mastery, and discipline, all of which are conceived of

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[117] I contextualized and covered these theories, and more, in the introduction in greater detail.

in individual terms, obfuscating numerous alternatives inherent in that tradition of resistance some English radicals inherited. Put otherwise, we find well-rooted in England key aspects of the counter-revolution of 1525, acting against it throughout. This factor is interdependent with the first, in that the emerging early-modern state rises on these qualities put in place in part by the Reformation. In the combination of these two factors we find the seeds of the unfreedom which permeates the conception of the political individual, imagined by Luther and the rulers of the era as atomized, powerless, and obedient. These aspects are present in and weigh on the Leveller political agenda, undermining it already from its conception and setting the definitional terms and qualities of the political struggle.

5.1.   An Individual Struggle

Perhaps most important among those qualities is the shift in the nature of the default conception of political obligation, and, consequently, the actors around which the struggle for emancipation is waged. As local lords and fiefdoms transform into centralized governance structures, the 'political community', which in 1525 fought for autonomy, communal rights, and auto-governance, is replaced by the 'moral individual' whose political quest is ultimately transformed. The communal goal of creating autonomous spaces, connected horizontally on egalitarian terms, has left its place to an individual's responsibility of finding the ideal master to give his obedience. For that individual, a political association which was once his natural starting point, and the rights and political power which comes with that association is now a goal to achieve. The conceptualization of this goal and the attempt to achieve it require substantial work and sacrifice to achieve, not to mention license to act in politics which was denied to most all individuals, and economic independence.

Political rights which were once inherent to the community are gone and the individual is bereft of those, both in theory and reality. When they reappear for the individual in the Leveller vocabulary, they are transformed into individual properties whose acquisition are conditional upon economic independence. That independence is also evaluated on individual terms, divorced from the structures which bring it about. Put otherwise, the normative struggle here is at the same time groundbreaking – transforming atomized subjects into individual citizens, and by necessity conversational with, if not dependent on, the frameworks already deployed by the elites in their struggle against the King, i.e. inviolable property. What creates the commonality of purpose between the Levellers and parliament is this framework. Where they diverge, and irreconcilably so, is the Levellers' attempt to expand the privileges associated with this framework to a larger population. The definitional aspects of the new, liberal, struggle for emancipation are indebted to the victory of the rulers over the previous struggle.

The impact of the individual conception on the struggle went beyond changes in conceptions of rights. The individuality of the struggle was the primary determinant of its demands too. Consider, for instance, how the focus on the individual affects demands for change in the two failed revolutions I argue are closest in kind. Drawing from the Bible, both the English radicals and the common men of 1525 consistently point to the fact that the relation of master and servant has no grounds in the New Testament: there is no bondsmen in Christ and, because they are all good Christians, there should be none in the country either. Indeed, both revolutions use the exact same line to symbolize this point: when Adam delved and Eve span, where was the nobleman? Further speaking to the tradition of religiously inspired struggle for political emancipation, we encounter the first use of this line to underline equality in the Lollard uprisings of the fourteenth century. It is conceivable that the English radicals were aware of the Wycliffite heritage (less so

for the German speaking peasants) but what led all three to the same conclusions using the same slogans are the similarities of their struggle.

However, it is very telling that while both the Lollards and the communal reformers of 1525 used this point to argue for a complete annulment of serfdom and servitude, abolishment of lordship and even feudalism in its entirety, the English sectarians and Levellers leveraged this point into demanding some political and civil rights for more individuals than currently allowed. Actual servants and bondsmen, including the famous 'he that is poorest' mentioned in Colonel Rainsborough's passionate speech, were in fact never really considered for these rights, except possibly by the Diggers. It is precisely here that we can observe the great success of the counter-revolution in individualizing the subjects and qualitatively diminishing the quest for emancipation. This substantial shift in the terms in which the struggle is elaborated transforms it from a communal one targeting systemic change to an individual one targeting incremental improvements and reform. Notably, despite the widespread opposition to the concept of 'lordship', and even the description of kings as parasites as evidenced by the numerous public outbursts documented above, the only demands for systemic change come from the Digger colonies.

The struggle is now redefined: the tradition of communal resistance is over, and the liberal tradition of emancipation starts. At the moment when the old, communal tradition is abandoned and the new one starts on terms defined by the elite, this change constitutes a clear qualitative diminishment of two kinds. The first is the dissolution of political associations, armed with rights and resources of the community, to individuals who seek defense in the terms of the ruling class. The second is losing sight of the structural, systemic nature of the domination exercised by the ruling class. Overall, the new struggle no longer contests the mastery of political authority over

the individual or rethinks alternative political spaces. The isolated individual has substantially less power and possibilities than the communities from which they are now separated.

Already conceived of as a powerless creature, with no political voice, no rights to defend herself against the encroachments of local or central authorities, and bereft of the network of social and political support once at her disposal, the individual either seeks to escape away or inwards seeking to improve the self, and attempt to discover the paradise within. The escape into one's inner self is precisely what Luther advocated for the slave. Similarly, Calvin described rigorous self-discipline as a sign of spiritual elation and a mark of the elect. Now Luther's prescription has become the only viable avenue for many, and Calvin's a genuinely embraced guide for personal conduct. Both Calvinist and Lutheran thought are exceptionally conducive to self-discipline, turning individuals into willing, and even eager, cooperators in their own disciplining under political authorities which are now equipped with the full range of the disciplinary mechanisms available to the church. Faced with individuals eager to seek improvement in their inner, spiritual worlds, the combined institutional power of the church and the state can deploy a level of social discipline that "monitored and disciplined everyday life-conduct, penetrating into the last house in the most isolated village" (Schilling quoted in Gorski, 1999:159).

5.2. Disciplined Individual

In 1641 John Milton, by then a radical republican, wrote approvingly of the Puritan conception of discipline:

> There is not that thing in the world of more grave and urgent importance throughout the whole life of man than is discipline. The flourishing and decaying of all civil societies, all the movements and turning of human occasions are moved to and fro upon the axle of discipline … Nor is there any sociable perfection in this life, civil or sacred, that can be above discipline; but she is that which with her musical cords preserves and holds all the parts thereof together … Discipline is not only the removal of disorder, but if any visible shape can be given to divine things, the very visible shape and image of virtue (Quoted in Parker and Campbell, 2003:216).

The effect of social disciplining in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was so profound, and so transformative that Gorski compares the role it played in the formation of the early modern state to those played by military competition and capitalist development (1999; 2003). This effect is indeed a widely recognized one.[118] He writes: "The structure and strength of early modern states was also shaped by another factor: the process of confessionalization (*Konfessionalionalisierung*) and social disciplining (*Sozialdisziplinierung*) unleashed by the reformation." It was this process which "stimulated the creation of a new infrastructure of social and moral control that allowed states and state rulers effectively to regulate the everyday conduct of ordinary people for the first time in history" (1999:147-8).

He argues, convincingly, that the infrastructure of control and norms of discipline that were put in action by the cooperation of the state and church was unprecedented. Indeed, this cooperation was championed by both Luther and Calvin who were the original inventors of social discipline as it was deployed by state institutions for over two centuries. This latter, in particular, has instituted in Geneva a collaboration of such intensity that the church and the state interpenetrated to a degree where they became difficult to tell apart – with Church elders playing administrative roles and administrative roles taking over spiritual duties. Gorski argues that the result of this collaboration throughout Europe, and primarily in Calvinist states of Netherlands and

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[118] For a good summary, see Robert van Krieken's *Social Discipline and State Formation: Weber and Oestreich on the historical sociology of subjectivity* (1990). Besides Gorski, there are three primary contributors to the discussion on discipline, though each have a different emphasis. Gerhard Oestreich (1982) sees discipline in Lukesian terms, something the ruling class imposed on the common people as part of their political project; Norbert Elias's magnum opus *The Civilizing Process* (1969) traces how disciplining is used as a social-psychological process to be internalized by the common people to create pacified populations susceptible to political control. And, of course, there is Foucault's take on disciplining as a diffused, decentralized process spreading through polymorphous mechanisms of social control, part of a network of relations irrigating society.

Prussia, was "a thoroughgoing disciplinization of social life, a veritable disciplinary revolution that gave rise to powerful forms of social control and political domination" (1999:160).

In the context of the English Civil War, I would add to Gorski's argument that what we witness with the sectarians of the English Civil War is a degree of self-discipline that produced individuals complicit and eager to participate in their own submission, all in the name of religious ideals of virtue and purity. As I noted above, Calvin viewed the "growth of 'voluntary' and 'inward' obedience to the law as a key sign of spiritual election" (Gorski, 1999:160). Obedience thus became not only an internal responsibility of the individual, but also a mark of the elect, those destined for salvation. In the absence of worthy authorities, obedience turned inward to a set of principles and regulations the individual followed for her spiritual salvation. Hill notes that, indeed, English Puritans strictly regulated their days to minimize avenues for sin, and kept moral logbooks to keep track of their spiritual progress (Hill, 1967). Furthermore, individual discipline was not only congruous with social discipline but also conducive to it too: "In Calvin's Geneva … religious discipline was first and foremost social discipline" (1999: 163). Of course, self-discipline was also a crucial element of Luther's teachings.

This was a world view which acted to diminish and cripple political imagination. Hill relates from Walzer: "[the] Puritan insistence on inner discipline was unthinkable without the experience of masterlessness. Their object was to *find a new master in themselves*, a rigid self-control shaping a new personality. Conversion, sainthood, repression, collective discipline, were the answer to the unsettled condition of society, the way to create a new order through creating new men." (1982:47-8, emphasis added). Put otherwise, in the middle of a political vacuum where society's future has become an open invitation to be reimagined, the Puritan self-discipline dictated that, as individuals they shouldered the responsibility to impose discipline on themselves first, find

a worthy master, and discipline the society later. The ideals for self-governing communities have been transformed to self-disciplining individuals and part of this discipline was to find a master for the individual. The responsibility of the individual thus became finding an appropriate master to obey. To be sure, this is not to imply that this consideration was the only political motivation; it was evidently not. Yet, we must underline that the self-disciplined individual's responsibility to obey the right master became and remained a constituent part of this constellation of norms which also brought forth the Mayflower compact, the New England town halls and so on.

The Puritan project was a disciplinary one on all levels: individuals were responsible for their self-discipline which included constant obedience; at the local level a parochial church discipline was to be imposed by the elders drawn from the propertied (the group represented in parliament); and nationally, social discipline would be imposed by the state and church acting hand-in-hand until the state cannibalized these mechanisms for social control for itself. Cromwell was the embodiment of this ideology: disciplinarian first to himself, then to the army, and then to the entire nation. Cromwell repeatedly mentioned how the self-discipline of Puritans made them exceptional fighters and officers. They were also uniquely obedient to their betters.

Just like Lutheran theology, Calvinist theology taught "the mass of mankind was sinful: unless preached at and disciplined by their betters they were bound to go astray" (Hill, 2002:167). During the Commonwealth there was no aspect of daily life that was left untouched, from sports to alehouses, all was regulated by the state for the individual's salvation. The Puritan project, then, engineered individuals who would act as their own priest and disciplinarian in very rigid, and regimented ways. This project was supported by a church discipline, which stepped in to discipline individuals when necessary. And all this arrangement was overseen, if not organized, by Oliver Cromwell himself, the chief disciplinarian to the nation. It was precisely this period that saw the

greatest expansion of state institutions, powers, and reach in England in the seventeenth-century, followed only by the era immediately succeeding the Glorious Revolution (whynationsfail.com, 2018).

Lutheran and Calvinist conceptions of social discipline, then, greatly intensified state power and "unleashed processes of social disciplining and identity-formation that dramatically increased the capacities of states and state actors to regulate and mobilize subject populations" (Gorski, 1999:174). This intensification was so strong that its effects on the growth of state power could easily, and accurately, compared to the other two main causes identified in state formation theories: military competition and capitalist development. However, this was not all. The manifestation of that very process of social-discipline on the individuals was self-discipline, which turned the individual's gaze inwards, personalized her focus for improving the world, and severed her quest for emancipation from structural and even political causes. The self-disciplining individual's primary political quest became to find the right master to obey – turning obedience into an inescapable responsibility inherent to the individual.

5.3. Defeated Individual

As briefly mentioned above, one of the very decisive consequences of the turn to individualism reveals itself in defeat. Hill and Manning separately argue that the radical utopianism embraced by certain actors was instrumental in their defeat. Upon the early realization that their political goals were unachievable, radicals had no choice but to surrender to the order of things, seeking emancipation in non-political avenues. They thus draw a causal relation between the utopian nature of the radical cause and its inevitable defeat. By focusing on how the radical cause is expressed through and for individuals, I add to their arguments. Above, I have already made the point about how the individual conceptualization of the radical cause was instrumental

in its defeat. Here, to further underline the hold of Lutheran and Calvinist individualism over the radicals, I point at their refuge: personal apolitical transcendentalism – an emblematic Lutheran formulation – to which they turned after defeat.

Though there are many examples to substantiate this point, perhaps the best one remains John Lilburne's conversion into Quakerism, which ended in his self-admitted political irrelevancy and release from prison by Cromwell. The sincerity of Lilburne's conversion to Quakerism, which managed to convince even Cromwell despite the suspicions he naturally carried as to this once dangerous enemy, was only possible because this most radical voice of the revolution was already thinking and elaborating of his struggle in profoundly individual terms. Lilburne's nickname 'Freeborn' was given to him due to his devout championing of individual rights to protect them from the oppressiveness of political authorities. Despite the radicalism of his position – in demanding natural rights for all English – his goal was always to emancipate individuals within the system rather than a change of the system. In defeat, he simply reduced the size of his quest to personal emancipation; it was the same struggle, only more achievable.

Here we, once more encounter the Lutheran formulation of transcendence: an escape from the world into an inner world as the only avenue of emancipation available. Inside, the oppressed could have all the freedom that matters while not caring about the outside world and abandoning it as irrelevant. Luther's was the idea of a perfect, spiritual or otherworldly, freedom which renders worldly freedom irrelevant. This apolitical conceptualization of inner freedom which locked individuals in their internal worlds at the expense of political struggle is the ultimate consequence of a conscious and explicit attempt by Luther, and later Calvin, to divorce these essentially political concepts from the world. We encounter its full political application here, at the defeat of the

English radicals, as they retreat into their inner world. In Lilburne's argument to Cromwell that he had abandoned politics in favor of his spiritual enlightenment, we encounter Luther's victory.

Another strong example of the same phenomenon comes, once more, from Milton, following the defeat of his political ideals after the Restoration. In one of his most famous works, *Paradise Lost* (1667), he captures the individual's surrender into political irrelevance for personal escape into spirituality: "A Paradise within thee, happier farr". Read in contrast to the Diggers' political project to establish "heaven … here in this world" (Hill, 1982: 150), the internal paradise reveals itself as something much more than the belief of a spiritual person; the refuge of a defeated radical who has abandoned the political struggle and retreated into politically irrelevancy.

Indeed, after the defeat, radical sects "gradually concluded that Christ's kingdom was not of this world" (Hill, 1982: 169), abandoning the political struggle altogether. This is, of course, in stark contrast to the explicitly identified goals of both the revolution of the common men and the English radicals who wanted to achieve worldly emancipation, fairness, and representative systems based on the equality of Christians described in the Bible. The conclusion that 'Christ's kingdom is not and cannot be made of this world' echoes Luther's admonishment of the rebels: a Christian knows not to look for equality in the world and accepts suffering, turning to his inner world for freedom in a world of oppression. Similarly, by 1659 the 'Good Old Cause', as the collection of Republican ideas were known to its supporters in late 1640s, was thoroughly abandoned. Even soldiers who once fought for the New Model Army now refused to take up arms "for nothing" and instead proposed that officers fight each other in a ring if they were so dedicated to their causes (Manning, 2003:183-4).

In the struggles of the English radicals, we see that the invention of the political individual has diminished the quest for emancipation in two distinct ways. First, the shift from communities

as natural political associations to right-less, powerless individuals has substantially increased the asymmetry of the struggle, leading individuals to seek improvement in the inner sphere, or to run away. Second, the isolated individual became much more susceptible to processes of disciplining and ideological control, mechanisms the emerging early-modern state either recently created or cannibalized from the church. A crucial aspect of the disciplinary mechanisms deployed was to turn the individuals into their own disciplinarians, presenting self-discipline as a central virtue to be incorporated into everyone's life. Part of the self-discipline was an individual quest to find the ideal master to obey, or, in the absence of such master, create one. For the disciplined individual obedience to the 'right master' thus became a central need. Third, and as a consequence of the first two, was the expectation of and readiness for defeat. The individual, once set against seemingly insurmountable odds, could now be increasingly motivated to seek improvement and even emancipation in her inner world.

Combined, these changes dramatically transformed the conceptualization of obedience from a relationship regularly negotiated between political authority and a community with its rights and expectations to one internal to each individual always already shouldering the responsibility to find a master to obey, and seek improvement of life in her inner world. Few things represent the qualitative diminishment of the quest for emancipation better than the contrast between the Diggers' motto and the one Milton made famous 18 years later. While the communal enterprise of the Diggers sought 'heaven here in this world', the defeated individual's artistic self-expression preached to the world that 'a paradise within thee, happier farr': a fall from heaven in politics.

From the story of the early US, we know that the rejection of the Divine Right absolutism inoculated these early forms against absolutisms and the hallmark Puritan principle of individual equality strengthened their political conception against incursions by such. As I stated already in

the introduction, however, was not the whole story. That same constellation formed around the political individual also contained, embedded in its fundamental aspects, conceptions of atomization, self-disciplining for obedience, and a thoroughly individualized understanding of the relationship with political authorities. This latter, in particular, is what contained the germs of totalitarian authoritarianisms that would thrive on atomization of the defenseless individual, disciplined to obey a master. An imperfect analogy to capture that individual's relationship with political authorities would be that of a sliding scale: the relationship contains all the components that are needed for political authorities to gradually erode whatever rights and freedoms were acquired by the individual, revert to its early atomized forms and exert a stronger and stronger influence over her. In fact, the more a political authority gained ground over the individual, the easier it would become to gain further ground. At the one end of the sliding scale we find the Lutheran, counter-revolutionary conceptions which provide such fertile ground for totalitarian dystopias.

If my arguments above are accurate, we should indeed detect more and stronger lineages of authoritarian thought between Luther and the era of the English Civil War. Considering in particular the sliding scale analogy I introduced, we should see that the constellation of norms and practices of obedience in the English Civil War is capable also to produce forms of control and authoritarianisms that are distinctly Lutheran. To conclude this chapter, I will now turn to one of the most defining figures of the era to demonstrate how the continuity of this particular authoritarian thought manifested itself in Hobbes's works.

6.   The Lutheran Heritage of Hobbes

I have argued that when it comes to engendering obedience and instituting centrally administered mechanisms and structures of social control, there is a particular continuity ranging

from Luther to the Restoration. As perhaps the most influential political philosopher of that era, Hobbes was not an exception in taking part in this continuity. Quite the contrary, in fact. In this section I argue that Hobbes's convictions concerning obedience to political authority follow from Lutheran ones in explicit and clear ways. The continuity between Luther and Hobbes, so far almost completely unexplored to my knowledge, further fleshes out my argument because it speaks to the normative and conceptual continuity from 1525 to 1640, seeking to atomize the subjects and ensure perpetual obedience to all authorities. Beyond its importance to my argument, this section also adds to our understanding of Hobbes whose importance in western political theory cannot be exaggerated.

There are, of course, numerous differences between Luther and Hobbes. However, the arguments concerning obedience to authorities are identical *in effect*: engendering unconditional obedience due from an individual to an absolute authority with a direct relation to God. Whether because Hobbes was a devout Christian who wanted to make Christianity more acceptable to a new age (Lloyd, 2003; Martinich, 1999) or a political thinker who believed, as many did at that time, in the need for an absolute ruler who is owed unconditional obedience, Hobbes essentially secularizes Luther's positions on obedience to political authority in his works, from 1640 (*Elements of Law*) and possibly before, all the way to the end (*Behemoth*). With Hobbes, Luther's ideal moral Christian, whose morals, ethics, self-discipline, and fear shape him into an unconditionally obedient subject, is transformed into a self-interested, rational individual who chooses unconditional obedience of his own autonomous decision to escape the state of nature – also described by Luther, albeit in less elaborate terms, as a world without authority, government, or order, a world of "only murder and bloodshed" (1525a:32).

Below, to advance this argument, I first establish Hobbes's substantial expertise on and open admiration of Luther which is evident in his repeated and always positive references to the Reformer's works. This latter in particular is unique for the Englishman famous for his refusal to quote others. Yet, Hobbes's knowledge of and attitude towards Luther were, and are, largely ignored due to the widespread perception of Hobbes as an atheist, leading many to disregard his religious references as insincere and opportunistic. I then point at the numerous parallels between Hobbes's arguments on obedience and Lutheran ones, highlighting practical similarities which become more remarkable as they increase in number and importance in the overall delivery of the argument. These similarities, effectively championing the same kind of obedience to very similar kinds of authorities, are unlikely to be all coincidences. Independent of Hobbes's religious beliefs and sincerity in quoting Luther, his clear expertise on the subject and the obvious similarities in their descriptions of political authorities and obedience to them justify the assumption that Hobbes draws from Luther and his argumentation is a secularized version of Luther's.

6.1.   Hobbes – the admiring expert on Luther

Considering the tremendous amount of work on Hobbes it is remarkable that there is very little produced on the parallels between Hobbes and Luther, and only a handful on the Lutheran inheritance in Hobbes. Mitchell, in 1991, timidly notes that "notwithstanding his indebtedness to reason, Hobbes's thought is within the protestant orb" (1991: 676). Overhoff, one of the very few political theorists who explicitly recognizes the 'Lutheranism of Hobbes' notes: "a comprehensive assessment of the ideological reasons, authenticity and role of Hobbes's explicit adherence to Luther's teachings is missing up to this day" (1997: 607). He points also to the political philosopher

Klaus-Michael Kodalle who underlines numerous interesting similarities between the two.[119] More recently, Wright pays closer attention to Hobbes's religious ideas and discovers numerous parallels between him and Luther (2006). Indeed, Hobbes's take on Luther and Lutheran ideas is rarely and often only tangentially mentioned while the similarities between the two have received scant attention.

Hobbes has a number of theological treatises, and even engaged in several high-profile discussions with renowned theologians of his time like John Bramhall, the Bishop of Derry and Ralph Cudworth, Master of Christ College at Cambridge, accumulating admirers and opponents. In these debates Hobbes consistently and constantly points to Luther as his closest ally in theological issues (Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity and Change: 47; 48), and repeatedly uses Luther's works to defend his positions and refers to the Reformer as 'the most learned doctor of the Church' whom he has "never slighted but always very much reverenced and admired" (QCLNC: 212). He faithfully reproduces the Lutheran argument for predetermination (rather than the almost manichean Calvinist version), only quoting from Luther and Melanchthon to support his position after he sets the argument in his own words. As can be expected, alongside the Lutheran argument for predetermination, Hobbes also replicates the trademark Lutheran argument *Sola Fide*, again without needing to refer to Luther: "But to the question how they shall prepare themselves that shall at all prepare themselves; I answer it shall be by Faith, when God shall give it them" (QCLNC, 177). Later, he draws from the Erasmus-Luther debate and liberally quotes from *De Servo Arbitrio*.

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[119] Unfortunately, Kodalle's work is not translated from the original German: 'Sterbliche Götter: Martin Luthers Ansichten zu Staat, Recht und Gewalt als Vorgriff auf Hobbes', in *Hobbes oggi*, ed. A. Canziani (Milan, 1990), pp. 122–42.

Hobbes's arguments and appeal to Luther are so conclusive that, according to Overhoff, Dr. Bramhall implicitly admits to "the authenticity of Hobbes's Lutheranism" and treats him, in Cudworth's words, as a 'Scholastic Divine' (1997: 620-622). When Cudworth weighs in to this discussion, he focuses his polemic with Hobbes on the way Hobbes draws from Luther without, remarkably, in any way faulting his knowledge of the subject. Cudworth distinguishes, quite rightly, Hobbes's secular determinism from Lutheran predestination and attacks Hobbes on this angle, accurately depicting him as a materialist. For Cudworth, Hobbes should not use the spiritual arguments of Luther in defense of his positions as he seems to rob them of all spirituality. This is critical: once Hobbes 'defeats' Bramhall, Cudworth steps in and his criticism of Hobbes is that *Hobbes secularizes Luther*. The charge is, of course, correct. It is important to note, however, that Hobbes's secularization of this central a concept is done with such skill that until the Master of Christ College at Cambridge intervenes, his opponents take him for a 'Scholastic Divine' and he attracts quite the number of admirers, including nobles, in awe of his religious knowledge (Overhoff, 1997). In short, his expertise on Luther as well as his ability to make Lutheran arguments his own is evidently exceptional. Moreover, he is known to secularize Lutheran arguments.

Also of note is the unique treatment Luther gets in Hobbes's works. Hobbes's repeated quotations from Luther's works and his unerring deference stand in stark contradiction to his general stance toward the 'ancients' against whose works he held a substantial amount of suspicion. He writes in the conclusion of *Leviathan*:

> That I have neglected the ornament of quoting ancient poets, orators, and philosophers contrary to the custom of late time … proceedeth from my judgment, grounded on many reasons. First, all truth of doctrine dependeth either upon reason, or upon Scripture; both which give credit to many, but never receive it from any writer … There is scarce any of those old writers, that contradicteth not sometimes both himself and others; which makes their testimonies insufficient. [Conclusion:15]

Indeed, his admiration of Luther seems unique in its enthusiasm and continuous recurrence. Overhoff concurs: his "magniloquent praise of Luther's deeds and doctrines was therefore a formidable exception to his otherwise astonishing neglect of some of the most distinguished writers of the past" (1997: 605). Thus, it appears quite certain that Hobbes was exceptionally knowledgeable on Luther's works and ideas, enough to come off as a scholastic divine himself; and he held a particularly strong admiration of Luther, distinguishing him from virtually everyone else.

However, despite all this, "only a marginal part of the commentators of his religious views have taken his self-proclaimed adherence to Luther seriously" (Overhoff, 1997: 606). The primary reason for this neglect seems to be that for many "the references Hobbes made to religion and theology were 'only opportunistic ones, and that he had no real interest in these matters'." (Overhoff, 1997:606).[120] In fact, Hobbes's reputation on religious matters was much worse than an opportunistic dabbler; despite his denials, his contemporaries have treated Hobbes "as an actual or virtual atheist" (Aylmer, 1978:39). Dr. Bramhall, with whom Hobbes had a decade long theological discussion has early on accused him of 'atheism and blasphemy' (QCLNC: 262); Richard Baxter denounced the frontispiece of *Leviathan* as a "temptation from Satan" (Aylmer, 1978:39). Indeed, Hobbes has somehow become a symbol of atheism and "defenses of religious belief and attacks on atheism [in the] 1650s to 70s are almost all in some measure responses to Hobbes" (1978:36). Wootton similarly notes that "after Cromwell's death and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Hobbes's views were universally attacked by all respectable intellectuals".

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[120] The classical interpretation by Leo Strauss is that Hobbes's religious comments are a smokescreen, designed to make himself appear "a good Anglican", masking his aim of creating a "a-religious or atheistic society" (1950;198-9).

If part of this was because of Hobbes's secularization of traditionally religious ideas, the other part was certainly due to his "attack[s on] the traditional teachings of the Church of England" (1996:98).

It seems safe to assume that what explains the general dismissal of Hobbes's deference to Luther is this attitude towards Hobbes's religiosity which originates with his contemporaries. Of course, the discussion of Hobbes's confessional identity is far from a uniquely seventeenth-century one.[121] Thankfully, my argument here does not necessitate engaging this debate or even assuming one way or another. It helps to recognize, however, that above and beyond the discussion on Hobbes's religiosity, the dismissal of his religious expertise and its possible consequences has led to the disregard of other connections between Luther and Hobbes which are perhaps more substantive and important. For my point it suffices to establish that Hobbes was indeed quite the expert on Luther, very well versed in his works including *De Servo Arbitrio*, and unerringly paid great respect to Luther contrary to his treatment of virtually every other 'ancient'. Even more centrally, he was accused, quite rightly, of secularizing Luther's arguments; making Luther's points through fully materialist arguments.

6.2. Hobbes and continuity

The argument for continuities from medieval, religious thought to the secularism of the Enlightenment and beyond is in no way a novel or a controversial one. There is a well-established tradition demonstrating numerous continuities in thought from medieval precedents of the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the seventeenth century and beyond.

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[121] Indeed, contemporary writers fervently defend positions on this topic which range from depicting Hobbes as an Orthodox Christian (see, for example, A.P. Martinich's *Hobbes: A Biography* (1999)) all the way to arguing that he was an atheist who explicitly rejects the existence of any God (see, for example, E.M. Curley's excellent article *Calvin and Hobbes, or, Hobbes as an Orthodox Christian*, (1996)).

Many of these continuities concern the secularization of essentially religious ideas and arguments.[122] Brian Tierney convincingly argues that much sixteenth and seventeenth century political thought has medieval roots (1982). Oakley (1991) points at the Waldensian, Hussite, and Wycliffite heritage of Reformation thought, painting a socio-political message of equality and economic fairness intertwined with changing understandings of religion and politics through time. Kingdon (1991) traces the Calvinist resistance theory from early sixteenth century to the late seventeenth, documenting how it changes in response to political events and increasingly sheds its religious underpinnings, becoming a discussion on the limits of political authority with adherents and proponents on both sides of the confessional divide. Skinner's *Foundations* traces a great number of ideas as they morph and change throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

There are numerous examples within the specific context of seventeenth century England as well. Of course, Calvin and Luther – themselves inheritors of a long heritage – are obvious examples from the sixteenth-century defining political discussions of the Stuart period England. They are not, however, the only ones. Wottoon points to the constitutional republicans to provide a prime example of the secularization of a purely religious idea. He argues that "from [Machiavelli in] 1517 to [the Glorious Revolution in] 1688 radical constitutionalist arguments thus replicated the conciliarist arguments of the later Middle Ages" (1996:93).[123] These examples can be multiplied with ease.[124] These influences naturally extend to Hobbes.

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[122] As discussed in the introduction, Carl Schmitt has taken this argument to the extreme, arguing that all significant concepts of the modern age are secularized theological concepts.
[123] Conciliarists were theologians originating during the Great Schism of early fifteenth century when there were three claimants to Papacy. They claimed that the authority of the Church – as wielded by a General Council of bishops assembled for emergencies – can control, restraint and even depose Popes. Indeed, the General Council was instrumental in ending the Great Schism by appointing Martin V and denouncing the other two. Notably, this argument relied on an ongoing debate in Christendom concerning the democratic nature of individual chapters and to what extent corrupt bishops could be reined in by their chapters.
[124] Blair Worden's tracing of *English Republicanism* (1991), or Corinne Weston's masterful display of the importance of continuity and tradition in Stuart England (1991) are just two studies. Skinner is always a good source

Hobbes's thought formation, Wotton argues, starts with Machiavelli's Prince, includes the theories of Grotius and is strongly informed by a combination of wars, notably the French Wars of Religion (1562-98), the Dutch Revolt against Spain (1566-1648), and the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), before being shaped in their final form by the Civil War. As such, for the first formulation of the ideas in *Leviathan*, Wottoon points at 1640, to *The Elements of Law*, and wonders whether they may even go as far back as 1620s to a series of anonymous essays which were possibly authored by Hobbes himself.

The royalist ideas Hobbes defends in both *Leviathan* and *Behemoth* are indeed old ones. Even his methods of doing so predate him. In 1621, Robert Bolton wrote "'Take Soveraignty from the face of the earth, and you turne it into a Cockpit. Men would become cut-throats and Canibals one unto another … We should have a very hell upon earth, and the face of it covered with blood, as it was once with water'." (Sommerville, 1991:350). In 1643, royalist pamphleteer Dudley Digges "posited an original state of complete liberty in which we all had 'an unlimited power to use our abilities, according as will did prompt'." Very much like Hobbes would do in eight years, Digges argued that "the misery of this condition would soon persuade people that it was rational to renounce their native liberty by agreeing 'not to resist publique authority'" (Sommerville, 1991:364). So, both the ideas in *Leviathan* and the methods by which they are argued for were voiced by others before 1650s.

Indeed, Sommerville writes ""With very minor alterations the doctrines of Leviathan could be made to look quite traditional" (1991:363). Wootton partly agrees that Hobbes's philosophy was "a response to a number of intellectual problems that his generation had inherited from the

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to revisit these issues; his *History and Ideology in the English Revolution* is a good primer for issues of continuity and the historical embeddedness of arguments (1965).

religious conflicts of the previous century" and he "intended to defend many of the central claims made on behalf of royal authority". What was groundbreaking was that, with *Leviathan*, Hobbes intended to "do so relying not on religious but almost entirely on secular arguments" (Wottoon, 1996:95). The conventional reading of *Leviathan* is thus an exclusively secular justification for political absolutism. Replicating the essence of his argument in *Leviathan* for the subjection of religious authority to secular authority, the second, much-less-read, part of *Leviathan* is thus seen in this light, in Alison McQueen's formulation, as 'a scriptural handmaiden to a secular argument'.[125] Hence, also, the unending charges of atheism.

6.3.   The Lutheran Heritage of Hobbes

In all these arguments tracing particular lineages of thought and acknowledging Hobbes's place in a continuity, the absence of a connection between Luther and Hobbes is conspicuous. This is all the more puzzling since Hobbes himself repeatedly and explicitly points to Luther to explain and defend his positions. Hobbes was singularly preoccupied with issues of obedience and peace, and worked possibly harder than anyone to refute arguments that God's law allows for rebellion. *Elements of Law*, written in 1640, tackles the problem of divided allegiance and 'solves' it, using a Lutheran solution. In *De Cive*, written in 1642, Hobbes notes that considerations on "the right of Government and of the due obedience of citizens" forced him to complete that work (Tuck, 1998:13). In these concerns and motives, Hobbes was closer to Luther than virtually anyone else, including Calvin. Moreover, these are not coincidences: Hobbes was fully aware of these parallels.

His estimation of the peace-inducing effects of Lutheran thought and theology is evident in *Behemoth: the History of the Causes of the Civil Wars of England*. Indeed, in *Behemoth*, Luther

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[125] (personal conversation, WPSA 2017).

is credited with preventing rebellion in the reign of Henry VIII, as it was "by a great many men of the greatest judgment so well received" (2011:117). He also, quite explicitly, links the collapse of the order before the war to the distractions from the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformation, and, very notably, the deviations from "church philosophy (for religion is another thing)" of Luther and Calvin. Of course, it is no surprise that Hobbes, like many others of his time, was profoundly aware of the role the church played in keeping the social order; here, however, he makes the connection specifically between the Lutheran and Calvinist philosophies and, pointedly, *not* the religion. Those distractors and deviations resulted "with a great number of sects, as Brownists, Anabaptists, Independents, Fifth-monarchy-men, Quakers, and divers others, all commonly called by the name of fanatics". Those fanatics were "Cromwell's best cards, whereof he had a very great number in the army" (2011:210).

Hobbes famously points at the English translation of the Bible which led "every man, nay, every boy and wench that could read English" to cast off "the reverence and obedience due to the Reformed Church," which Hobbes has already distinguished from religion.[126] Hobbes is explicitly arguing, then, that deviation from the teachings of Luther and Calvin, and disobedience to the church's philosophy is what led to the civil war. It is remarkable that *Behemoth* mentions Calvin only twice and both times as "Luther and Calvin", while it references Luther often, always in affirmation. It seems evident that for Hobbes peace in England, whether in Henry VIII's time, or under Charles I, is dependent on the teaching of Luther and obedience to Reformed Church.

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[126] He has great anger for these 'fanatics' who destroyed the peace and advocates that "a great massacre" would have been better: "had it not been much better that those seditious ministers, which were not perhaps 1000, had been all killed before they had preached" their seditious doctrine that people may lawfully rebel? (2001:177)

The commonalities far surpass Hobbes's own claims of adoration and adherence to Lutheran principles. When Hobbes tackles the problem of divided allegiance, both his problematization o and his solution is oddly similar to Luther's. Obedience to God, in Hobbes, needs not manifest itself in action. In *Element of Law*, Hobbes considers the situation of a Christian who finds himself under an infidel ruler who demands that his subjects violate God's laws. His solution for that Christian is to remain obedient to civil authority in perpetuity and never disobey by internalizing obedience to God. In this instance, Hobbes writes:

> …in innumerable places both in the Old and New Testament, God Almighty declareth, that he taketh the will for the deed, both in good and evil actions. By all which it plainly appears, that the divine law is dictated to the conscience. On the other side it is no less plain: that how many and how heinous actions soever a man commit through infirmity, he shall nevertheless, whensoever he shall condemn the same in his own conscience, be freed from the punishments that to such actions otherwise belong (Chapter 18.10).

He later repeats that God "who taketh the will for the deed" will see the good intentions of his subject as righteous. Obedience to a heathen lord, then, is never in conflict with God's law. This is similar *in effect* to Luther's advice to the Christian enslaved by the Turk. Luther dictated obedience because disobedience to the Turk slaver would be a sin and endanger the Christian's salvation; Hobbes dictates obedience without endangering the Christian's salvation. Both, however, prescribe obedience in perpetuity to all rulers, even the infidels who may have enslaved the Christian and forces him to violate God's laws.

These positions are later reproduced almost exactly in *Leviathan*. Though he does not name Luther, we find here, in *Leviathan*, one of the strongest indication that Hobbes draws from Lutheran conceptions. First, he argues that Christian virtue consists in two main aspects: faith and obedience (Leviathan 42.3) and later repeats the "will and deed" argument he has used in the *Elements of Law* (42.4). Now with these distinctions fully fleshed, he comes to the heart of the divided allegiances problem: the lawful prince who commands disbelief in God. Hobbes easily dismisses this problem as "belief and unbelief never follow men's commands. Faith is a gift from

God, which men can neither give nor take away by promise of rewards or menaces of torture" (42.11). He then takes the problem to the next level: "what if we be commanded by our lawful prince to say with our tongue, we believe not; must we obey such a command?". To this Hobbes responds in a manner identical to Luther:

> Whatsoever a subject, is compelled to [do] in obedience to his sovereign, and doth it not in order to his own mind, but in order to the laws of his country, that action is not his, but his sovereign's; nor is it he that in this case denieth Christ before men, but his governor, and the law of his country (42.11).

In 1526, when Luther defended soldiers who tortured and murdered the peasants of the 1525 uprising, he wrote that in obedience to authority "the hand that wields this sword and kills with it is not man's hand, but God's; and *it is not man, but God, who hangs, tortures, beheads, kills, and fights*. All these are God's works and judgments" (Luther, 1526: 218-219). With Luther, of course, political authority is an extension of God so when Hobbes points to the sovereign as the true doer of the deed, Luther points to God who placed the sovereign there. With this, almost cosmetic, difference aside, their argument is identical.

Hobbes repeats the same argument later in Leviathan with the example of a sovereign who orders his subjects to worship him as deity. No one, he argues, would infer from a Christian's obedience to that command that he approves is but "that he doth it for fear and that it is not hic act, but the act of his sovereign" (45.22). So, Hobbes goes to the exact same place Luther goes to remove the struggle of a moral man who is ordered to do an unconscionable act, or a religious man who is commanded to deny his faith: obey no matter what, the responsibility lies with the command giver. This, obedience is guaranteed in perpetuity in all cases and under all conditions.

Already before the Civil War, in 1640, Hobbes states his goal in tackling the problem of divided allegiance clearly: "to take away this scruple of conscience concerning obedience to human laws, amongst those that interpret to themselves the word of God in the Holy Scriptures"

(Elements of Law, 25.3). In this endeavor he finds his ally in the exact same place he always looks: Luther's works. The theological section of *Leviathan*, which, despite being often disregarded, is the longest theological essay Hobbes has ever written[127], uses Luther's argument – without naming him this time – to back up the exact point the first half of the book makes using secular arguments: unconditional and constant obedience to an absolute political authority.

Finally, it is also noteworthy that underneath his attempts to ensure obedience, Hobbes's understanding of disobedience from a religious perspective mirrors that of Luther's and Calvin's, though this time he makes his point using the Calvinist vocabulary of 'the elect'. Men risk their salvation and are punished in the afterlife for two reasons: "through their incredulity and disobedience" (Leviathan, 38.14). With faith so clearly in the hands of God to gift, for Hobbes too, disobedience stands as the primary sin that brings about punishment in the afterlife. As we saw before, for both Luther and Calvin disobedience is the primary sin and the cause of man's downfall from heaven.

The parallels between Hobbes's secular and religious attempts to engender obedience and Luther's theory are numerous and can be expanded beyond what I presented here. For instance, Hobbes's elaborate definition of the state of nature where men live with no authority over them is almost identical to Luther's earlier, and vaguer, descriptions of men living without authority, a definition repeatedly reproduced by royalist pamphleteers before Hobbes in more and more articulate terms. Peace on earth, in both, is possible only through complete submission to a fearsome, overawing political authority which in Luther is the mortal mask behind which God

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[127] In fact, McQueen notes the "vast increase in focus on religious questions over time" by Hobbes from the 1640 *Elements of Law* with roughly one-fifth set aside for religious issues, to 1642 *De Cive* with two-fifths, and then more than half the book in *Leviathan* in 1651. (2017, WPSA presentation).

hides, and in Hobbes, the Mortal God. In other words, in the inevitable necessity of their submission to an absolute temporal authority, the self-interested rational individuals described in *Leviathan* are essentially secularized versions of Luther's inescapably sinful people. Indeed, from a practical standpoint, the two conceptions are very similar in many ways: the need for the power of the sword for protection from the danger that comes from the nature of man's social existence; the seeming absence of alternatives besides complete subjection to an overawing authority in whatever form or shape; the divine qualities of authorities; and, the resulting unavoidable need for complete submission regardless of cost or the tyrannical nature of authorities. I contend that these numerous similarities are no coincidence; in fact, they point to a continuity that has been largely ignored in political theory. The proto-liberalism of Hobbes makes use of the atomized subjects of Luther.

It seems obvious to me that the connections between Hobbes and Luther are much stronger than so far believed, to say the least. There is a clear need to further flesh out these connections and unravel the full extent of Hobbes's Lutheran heritage, which I believe is substantial. If Hobbes is indeed drawing from Lutheran arguments, as I argued here, then by removing the religiosity of Luther's positions and secularizing his arguments he effectively couches those in rational assumptions, explanations, and dictates. While older, purely religious norms – such as those championed by Richard Baxter – increasingly lost their strength, Hobbes's conception embodies this new spirit, already voiced by many others for several decades, with tremendous efficiency. There is no doubt whatsoever that Hobbes's theory, at least, occupies a place of primary importance in understanding the early modern state. Thus, this connection further strengthens my argument about the continued prevalence of the ideas and norms of obedience the counter revolution of 1525 has championed to engender perpetual obedience.

7.   Conclusion

The failed English revolution is a critical juncture in the continuing quest for emancipation. On the one hand it is universally hailed as the beginning of the ultimately successful liberal tradition of emancipation, resulting in individual rights and freedoms, representative politics, and key principles of democratic ethos. This was the story of success and progress often told in liberal theories: the transformation of atomized, right-less, powerless subjects into citizens with a legitimate claim concerning the direction of their body politic. In this story, the focus is on the individual and progress is evaluated with that lens. On the other hand, the failed revolution also marks the ultimate defeat of a religiously inspired communitarian tradition of resistance against political authorities, vying for communal autonomy, self-governance, fairer economic relations, and principles for another type of democratic ethos. It is only by completely omitting this particular tradition, its principles, and its demise that we are able to focus purely on the successed and advantages of the former. The introduction of this latter tradition to the story changes the focus from the individual with his freedoms and rights to the submissive individual as the raw material for authoritarianisms. Indeed, the latter is the explicit reason both Luther and Calvin championed individualism in politics. Naturally, with the change in the focus, the role played by these two also changes dramatically from unwitting contributors to democratic principles to willing masterminds of repression – a role for which their political theories are much better suited.

What underlies and defines the failed revolution in England is this political individualism created by Luther and Calvin to break resistance constantly and consistently offered by communities and engender unconditional submission. The community, a naturally existing political association which was the natural focus of resistance as well as the first line of defense is shattered, and the struggle transformed to be reformulated between the rights of the individual

against the state. However, the new form of the struggle for emancipation never fully negated the effects of the previous defeat; the change in focus from 'obedience' to 'individual' has rendered it invisible. Put otherwise, the conflict between communities and political authority has decidedly settled with the defeat and dispersion of the communities and the mastery of the state over atomized subjects. This is where the liberal story of the Levellers starts: in their attempt to turn that subject into the citizen.

Coupled with the hold of the emerging early-modern state and the tremendously potent tools of social discipline it has come to command, this conceptualization dramatically limits the avenues for emancipation imagined by the radicals. Indeed, underlying all discussions on parliament, elections, suffrage and consent, the issue that lies at the heart of the Leveller struggle revolves around the qualities of the relationship between the state and the would-be-individuals. Perhaps the single most enduring radical line from the era, Colonel Rainborough's famous 'the poorest he that is in England', squarely points at this: the conditions of an individual's relationship with and his treatment by the authority. Political authority is conceived from the eye of the individual for whom the struggle is to acquire greater returns for his almost guaranteed obedience. Indeed, with alternatives to 'individual consent' so few, unrealistic, and so impotent, mastery is no longer contested; only conditions of submission are.

I point here, at the end of this era and the beginning of the English Restoration, as the conclusion of the period wherein the fragmentary transformation of the constellation of norms and concepts concerning political obligation have assumed a new form, became normalized and were embedded in political life to become invisible and natural. From Luther to Hobbes, from the counter-revolution of 1525 to the English Restoration these developments have substantially reshaped our norms and understanding of obedience, authority, freedom, and legitimacy among

others. Put otherwise, what emerges with the Restoration is a new relationship of political

obligation: the foundations of obedience by the individual to the state, the most powerful

political authority in history.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

1.   Summary

This dissertation was an attempt to critically problematize the concept of political obligation, or, obedience to political authority. I asked why we obey; what keeps people in submission vis-a-vis political authorities? The answer to that question, I argued, could only be found in the historical constitution of obedience as we understand it: the formation over time of the constellation of norms, structures, and practices that define and govern our understanding of obedience to political authority, manifesting in the form familiar to us as due from an individual to the state. I thus engaged in an exploration into the origins of that relationship of individual obedience to the state: the gradual emergence, during the dawn of the early modern state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of the groundwork of the conception of political obligation as we understand it. As the state came into existence, it brought forth a completely new form of obedience – due from an individual to a state; understanding the historical constitution of that form was essential to answering the question 'why we obey'.

An essential aspect of this form, the individualization of obedience, emerged in large part in response to the threat posed by the previous, communal, form that threatened to annihilate the feudal system in the Holy Roman Empire in 1525, in the Revolution of the Common Man. In this uprising, approximately 300,000 people overthrew the domination of their ecclesiastical and temporal lords, rejected lordship in its entirety, and established a new system of governance based on the popular interpretation of the principles of Christianity, known as the Communal Reformation. Theirs was a revolution of communities which restructured politics on egalitarian, deliberative, and representative principles; it brought forth parliaments, instituted universal equality before the law, and established economic and political democracy.

The counter-revolution of the lords, in return, sought to dismantle and destroy the communities which were the primary actors of the revolution. What followed the counter-revolution were new structures and norms championing legal, political, and normative individualism defined as atomized subjects vis-à-vis political authorities that were already becoming the strongest of their kind. The reason *explicitly stated* behind these changes that substantially transformed the political culture of the age was to pacify the troublesome communities and ensure perpetual obedience. At the forefront of this transformation stood Martin Luther. Luther was enraged and horrified by the revolution, partly due to its attempt to reinterpret the Reformation along principles different than his own, and partly because disobedience was anathema to his theology.

Obedience, for the communities which led the revolution, was an entirely different affair than the form that followed. In the pre-Reformation Holy Roman Empire, obedience was due from the community as a whole to individual lords based on public and regularly-repeated negotiations resulting in public oaths of allegiance, analogous to a contract between the ruler and the ruled. Furthermore, the promise of obedient behavior (the public swearing of an oath) and the actual act of obeying the lords' commands were two distinct phenomena that communities used quite strategically in their quest to create for themselves space for autonomous behavior. Faced with increasing oppression and worsening economic situation, communal disobedience was a constant reality and had various strategic uses for communities. Thus, refusals to promise obedience, disobedience to some or many commands, refusals to recognize the lord as legitimate, and armed rebellions were all different types of resistance commonly deployed by various communities.

Lords, in return, were deeply troubled by the constant resistance offered by their communities and made clear and concerted efforts to fight back – violently and otherwise – and

ensure perpetual obedience. The counter-revolution, for them, was the realization of this project: the legal, social, political, and normative destruction of communities and isolation of subjects into atomized individuals. As political, economic, and social associations were forcibly disbanded, geographical communities were legally dismantled into their constituent parts: individuals. In that project, it was again Martin Luther who defined the new norms governing political individuality with the political application of his trademark conception of individuality. His was a carefully tailored application: individuality before God was transplanted into politics as individuality before political authority. Equality, despite being a central Christian ideal, was interpreted to be a quality of the next world, one which should not be sought socially, economically, or politically in this world. Opression, and outright tyranny was interpreted as a reality that should be gladly welcomed by all Christians who, even in actual enslavement, were not to consider disobedience.

In the space of a few decades the new Lutheran norms of individualism and obedience became the dominant conceptions, thanks in particular to the lords and kings of the land who immediately perceived the advantages of a political theory which dictated unconditional and unbroken obedience even in the face of the worst tyranny. The Reformed Protestantism of Calvin, though notably different in various aspects, preserved these values almost identically, manifesting itself in a repressive theocracy in Geneva governed by a true intermingling of the church and the city in the service of complete social control and discipline. Following the condemnation of all disobedience as sinful by both reformers, it took decades for theorists from all the three main denominations to collaboratively develop a new theory of resistance that would justify their self-defense under various rulers who sought to exterminate them through violence. Yet, the right of resistance these theories painstakingly sought to justify was given only to magistrates and other

lords, leaving 'the people' at best as theoretical holders of sovereignty and almost always conceiving individuals as powerless subjects.

In the failed English Revolution of 1640s, Calvinist and Lutheran norms were thoroughly embedded in daily life, and manifested themselves fully in various political agendas except, possibly, the Diggers who embodied a communal tradition of resistance. Political individualism and self-discipline became the norms of the day. Radical and emancipatory agendas redefined based on these principles were markedly diminished signaling the success of the counter-revolution. This weakening was all the more obvious in comparison to the last representatives of the communal tradition that still managed to pose a genuine threat to the socio-political system. Radical parties in the English Civil War also attempted to restructure the society and politics based on a democratic ethos, embracing principles of equality and representation as centerpieces of their struggle. However, here, the main actor of politics around which the new struggle of emancipation was waged had already become the individual, now bereft of political power, right-less, and despite all accepted as the independent author of his condition. The political agenda of the Levellers, the radical political party celebrated today as the pioneers of the liberal tradition, was thus to strengthen the atomized individual with rights, and expand the representativeness of existing political structures.

In their struggle, the Levellers fully shared the conceptions and understandings espoused by parliament which overwhelmingly represented the propertied elites of the land embroiled in a civil war over the protection from the King of their privileges and properties. Unlike the role they played in the war against the king, the Levellers' relationship with parliament was, overall, one of submission marked largely by petitions – the lowest form of resistance deployed by the communities of 1525. Borrowing parliament's concepts, the Levellers conceived of individual

rights as property and tried to bestow on these rights an inviolability identical to the one parliamentary elites championed for their property ownership. The Leveller argument for freeborn rights for all Englishmen were very similar to the much later conceptualization of universal human rights, further substantiating their place as the originators of concepts the liberal tradition has come to embrace as indispensable.

Thus, the liberal tradition justifiably sees in the Levellers heroes who spearheaded many of the later political conceptions now accepted as essential aspects of the political system. Similarly, Calvin and Luther are seen as having an inescapable – though largely involuntary – connection to the liberal democratic ethos. For the dominant liberal tradition, then, these are invaluable improvements from what came before: right-less, powerless, atomized individuals left defenseless against political authorities. This tradition, however, reaches these conclusions precisely because it omits, and obscures what came before: the Revolution of the Common Man and the ensuing counter-revolution. It thus ignores the ways in which Lutheran and Calvinist conceptions embraced by the Levellers were tools of a successful counter-revolution meant to destroy an existing tradition of popular, communal resistance. This resistance sought to establish wide-ranging democracy demonstrably stronger in many ways than the ideals championed by the English radicals.

Again, with the exception of the Diggers, the last representatives of the communal struggle, obedience for the English radicals was strictly conceived of in individual terms, due from all individuals to political authority. This individual is indeed atomized: she is no longer naturally part of a readymade political association – the community equipped with traditional rights and resources to engage in resistance occasionally and as needed. Without communities, disobedience is no longer normal and daily, and cannot be deployed as a strategic tool for negotiation. In fact,

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obedience is now a personal responsibility for each individual who must find a master to obey. These conceptions are spread far and wide by a political authority that is the strongest of its kind partly due to the new mechanisms of discipline and social control initially resulting from the alliance of the church and the state. Yet, already in the seventeenth century England, the states could be observed cannibalizing these structures, practices and norms of obedience from the church and incorporating them into its body. Beyond the bringing of the church under state control, one good example of this process is the subtle taking over by the state from the church, and God, the tithe collection rationale during Cromwell's reign. Yet another is the dictation of church sermons by first the king, and later Cromwell. Thus, as the liberal tradition of emancipation emerges with the Levellers, we can observe embedded within daily life – in norms, practices, and state structures, the principles of the counter-revolution which destroyed traditional communities, and replaced them with atomized individuals bound in obedience to the state.

In summary, during this century and half we witness one of the most profound changes underlying modern Western political norms and behavior: the passage from the political community with its long-standing traditions and rights to the individual which, for many decades, remained naked vis-à-vis political authorities which were already the strongest of their kind in reach, power, and control over their populations. Because this individual is now endowed with inalienable rights assumed to exist naturally, we tend to look on the English revolution as a remarkable step forward for emancipation even in its failure: this is where, after all, these rights were first advocated. However, precisely because our lens has been fixated on the individual that we have missed in what ways the shift from the community to the individual was a blow to that very struggle for freedom, exactly as it was meant to be. The new conception of obedience to political authority – automatically due from the individual who has a responsibility to obey – is

where this blow was strongest. This effect, I argue, remains buried but not gone: before liberal individualism were atomized subjects and thus, in a specific sense I have been describing, disempowerment of subjects underlies individualism. In fact, when we turn our attention to the global downturn towards authoritarian practices and loss of rights today, we witness an attempt by many authoritarian leaders to politically disempower individuals by intensifying assaults on participatory, associative bodies of citizens. By dismantling these associations authoritarianisms seek to create isolated, atomizes individuals who are easily disciplined and incorporated into the larger body of the state without intermediaries: the transplantation of Luther's hallmark principle of individualism into politics. In her isolation and inability to access independent political organization, this individual has the characteristics of the ideal mortar for authoritarianisms. Consider, once more, Arendt's notes from the Eichmann trial:

> The contrast between Israeli heroism and the submissive meekness with which Jews went to their death—arriving on time at the transportation points, walking under their own power to the places of execution, digging their own graves, undressing and making neat piles of their clothing, and lying down side by side to be shot—seemed a telling point, and the prosecutor, asking witness after witness, "Why did you not protest?," "Why did you board the train?," "Fifteen thousand people were standing there and hundreds of guards facing you—why didn't you revolt and charge and attack these guards?," harped on it for all it was worth. But the sad truth of the matter is that the point was ill taken, for no non-Jewish group or non-Jewish people had behaved differently. Sixteen years ago, while still under the direct impact of the events, a former French inmate of Buchenwald, David Rousset, described, in "Les Jours de Notre Mort," the logic that obtained in all concentration camps: "The triumph of the S.S. demands that the tortured victim allow himself to be led to the noose without protesting, that he renounce and abandon himself to the point of ceasing to affirm his identity. And it is not for nothing. It is not gratuitously, out of sheer sadism, that the S.S. men desire his defeat. They know that the system which succeeds in destroying its victim before he mounts the scaffold . . . is incomparably the best for keeping a whole people in slavery. In submission [The New Yorker, 2018].

It was not that in a dozen years the Nazi totalitarianism created from scratch all the tools required for engendering unconditional submission from individuals up to and including compliance with their own execution. Instead, once the gains made by the liberal tradition of emancipation were reversed – as they are being reversed now in places, individuals were once more left naked and powerless before the political authority of an overawing power: ready to be

shaped as submissive individual members of a homogenous mass. In this example I see the continuity I was attempting to flesh out. This requires more elaboration.

2.   Obedience in the twentieth-century authoritarian state: the continuity

With the Reformation and the counter-revolution, we witness once more one of the central insights brought forth by the renewed attention to peasants' revolts in the last decades: the writing of the history by victors following a war is often a continuation of that war by other means. It is a reaction to what came before, a response to the forces that threatened the socio-political system. In that way, a successful revolution for democracy by the common people is repainted as an aimless rising by the ignorant and the greedy peasant, whose simplicity availed him to be misled by evil people to misinterpret higher notions that he was incapable of understanding in the first place. That story was written, as I hope to have demonstrated, to engender obedience. The provision of obedience was the battleground between communities and the lords, and the constellation of norms, structures, and practices which were brought forth by the counter revolution were in explicit response to disobedience. These were the norms that I found again in the English Civil Wars in forms that were nevertheless familiar despite the century that passed.

I do not argue, of course, that this is precisely what we find again in the twentieth century. An embedded normative continuity from Luther to Eichmann, however, seems conspicuous to me. Indeed, I pointed at the buried conception of the obedient individual throughout the centuries, identified by various political theorists. I noted Tocqueville's warning about the "orderly, gentle, peaceful slavery" of the isolated individual, "withdrawn into himself" and shaped individually into the desired form by the powerful grasp of political authority (1969:691-3). I noted also Nietzsche's later analysis that nothing in Europe is as carefully cultivated as obedience, and his anger at the 'average man' who now *needs* to obey (2008:110). Elsewhere, he writes of the 'slave' who is happy

losing himself in the masses, sacrificing his being to the whole. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883), he defines the state, almost capturing it in motion as it moves from the Lutheran conception I described on its way to the totalitarian versions of the twentieth century: the state, Nietzsche writes, "swallows and chews and re-chews them [the 'many-too-many', the masses]" and tells them "On earth there is nothing greater than I: it is I who am the regularing finger of God." He concludes: "Everything will it give you, if you worship it, the new idol" (Chapter 11: The New Idol).

The state as the regulating arm of divinity is indeed an apt image and one, I believe, that unites numerous conceptions I covered here. The connections Luther draws between God and political authority are explicit and clear. In Calvin's Geneva we encounter the ultimate disciplinarian political authority that regulates all aspects of individual life based on the image of a pure, Christian life. Cromwell's Commonwealth is, if possible, even more strongly disciplinarian than Calvin's, regulating every aspect of individual life with capabilities for social control beyond anything else that came before. I noted, above, how the expansion of state powers and institutions under Cromwell, the unprecedented incorporation into the state's body of disciplinary mechanisms still puzzles the theorists of state-formation. There, the state is still carrying out the dictates of God, but the leader now unites the qualities of the chief disciplinarian, the zealot of purity, and the ideal for all to emulate. It is here, both Gorski and Hill note, that we find structures of social control over individual that reach "the very last house in the most isolated village" (Gorski, 1999:159).

In the twentieth century totalitarianisms, we encounter some of these qualities in forms that are not difficult to recognize. The Fuehrer of the third Reich, for instance, is the ultimate disciplinarian, dictating the precepts of racial purity. Individuals under the state are disciplined from childhood into the ideals of the race, and dedicated in body and soul to the state which embodies this purity. The control exercised by the state is essentially similar to the one exercised

in Calvin's Geneva: everything in an individual's life is regulated by that highest body on earth. To be sure, this is not to say Luther sets the ground for a Nazi takeover: simply a similarity of commitments to norms we find originating with Luther.

To be more accurate, the individual is disciplined into regulating his behavior based on various forms of these essential principles. Marx's analysis of Luther – that he managed to create widespread bondage based on individual conviction (1994:34) – is not an idle one. In Eichmann's complete abandon of his being to the service of the state, we can identify Lutheran principles with ease: all that is done in obedience, even if it is murder, and torture, is done by the hand of that higher power. The carriers of these atrocities, meanwhile, indeed present themselves as martyrs who sacrificed their principles, and morals on the altar of the state. They sought shelter in their inner life which remained pure and untouched despite all their actions. Once more, this is not to say these perpetrators, or their masters, were directly influenced by Luther. These norms I just idenfified, however, are the ones we first find with Luther: unquestioned, unconditional obedience to authority at the expense of the self and an inner world where the obedient individual can remain pure and pristine, seeking refuge from the horrors he had to commit in obedience.

Indeed, there are far too many parallels which suggest, to me at least, that we are looking at principles which were embedded deep within the foundations of the modern relationship of obedience. As such, they can be, and are uncovered when individuals are once more atomized, isolated, and robbed of their rights against political authority. When these conditions are met, and individuals are left right-less and defenseless vis-à-vis the disciplinary mechanisms of an immensely powerful political authority, we discover once more the relationship Luther idealized; the relationship that was buried deep within that particular form of obedience, due from an individual to a state. To better place this argument, consider once more the Milgram experiments.

Milgram notes that the people selected for his study were unquestioningly obedient long before they stepped foot in his lab (Miller, 1995:8). He revealed that they lacked the social, political, and psychological tools to resist orders even when they deem them immoral. I believe only this form of the relationship of obedience can bring about these aspects of obedience that I identified as problematic. And indeed, it has. The historical connections, I argue, are clear.

Finally, a word about individual rights and freedoms. As I noted, they represent the new form of the struggle of emancipation that we witness in the Reformation era in another form. Just as the Levellers tried to empower the powerless individual against an all-powerful state with freeborn rights, we rediscovered the undeniable value of universal human rights following the revelation of the horrors of the Second World War. Faced with the dangers of the state's naked power against rightless individuals, it is natural and right to seek these defenses. To repeat: these rights and freedoms are the manifestations of that same struggle for emancipation against political authorities when they turn malevolent, oppressive, and dangerous. I do not deny their value, nor challenge their place.

What I point at, however, is that even equipped with those, the modern individual remains less free in her disobedience compared to her feudal ancestors, and dramatically less able to offer resistance. The tools they habitually and easily deployed in defense of their autonomy far outnumbers ours in number, reach, diversity, and maybe even impact. Furthermore, the frequency with which these communities made use of these tools far surpasses ours. Perhaps in a way that is evocative of Aristotle, in the absence of such practice we remain less able to develop the tools required for resistance, and when we do, they remain less impactful. Overall, it seems to me that while our feudal ancestors still waged the battle with political authorities for mastery over the public space, this battle is now long settled with the victory of the state.

This conclusion brings forth a number of points that I tackle below. First, I answer the question 'why we obey' by fleshing out the central arguments of the thesis. I then move on to some secondary arguments which emerge from the dissertation and outline the possible contributions of my work to the field. It is important to note, here, that part of the argument I put forward in this work is that political science in general and political theory in particular has missed one of the biggest revolutions in Europe, easily comparable to the French Revolution. I hope it will make sense that the consequences that follow from an attempt to integrate this momentous event into our histories are justifiably substantial.

3.   Conclusion: Why we obey?

It appears that the right-less atomized subjects who were defenseless vis-à-vis all-powerful political authorities were engineered by the same sources from whence the principles of liberalism were drawn. Thus, if we look at the liberal story of progress not as one of representation – incidentally, also binding the subjects to political authority ever more strongly – but as obedience, we see a darker picture: a process that is designed to, and largely succeeds, in engendering submission. The individuation of the subject, her isolation from others, her disciplining and self-disciplining are all meant to create individual subjects for whom obedience to political authority is the unquestioned norm. Thus, when consequences clearly demand disobedience, the individual is woefully unequipped to mobilize the resources required for such action. Put otherwise, when it comes to disobedience and resistance to political authorities, premodern and early modern subjects of empires and lords were much less constrained, and freer, than the citizens of early-modern and modern states. This is one story that was lost.

This mastery of political authority over the individual is no longer questioned: it is accepted in very large part as necessary, obvious, without alternative, and a progress over what was before.

Instead, the negotiation, to the extent one is possible, concerns the conditions of that submission; what the individual is to receive in return for endorsing the status-quo as ideal. Put otherwise, the legitimacy of the state is now a discussion of what that state provides to individuals in return for their submission; the state appears quasi-permanent and obedience to it natural. Moreover, what is received in return – basic rights and rudimentary mechanisms of representation – only further binds the individuals to political authority, as they are often conditional to the existence of said authority.

The rights received in return also seem to be in constant peril. Despite the theoretical arguments concerning their universality and inviolability, in practice they remain grounded in law – subject to constant adjustments by the state. Indeed, one needs only remember that the Holocaust was perpetrated thoroughly legally, without breaking any laws. This is, of course, similar for slavery, apartheid, segregation and so on: the protections provided to individuals by law are peeled away in the same manner – by law. We see that even in the oldest democracies where these rights are thought most stable they could be removed through various measures and justifications at the whim of the political authority. We need not fixate on populist authoritarians for examples: British Prime Minister Theresa May declared, in June 2017, that "if human rights laws stop us from doing it [pass tougher terror legislations], we will change those laws so we can do it" (Mason and Dodd, 2018). May's statement speaks to the danger I have attempted to underline: at the heart of the relationship of the individual and the state lies a project of total control and repression which starts with the atomized individual precisely in order to ensure obedience. Of course, since its conceptions I covered here, this relationship has been improved dramatically: centuries of struggle for emancipation and freedom have added layers upon layers of protection. Indeed, individual rights and freedoms are notable improvements introduced to protect the individual precisely from the arbitrary use of political power. These rights which were later added, however, can be and are

taken off of the individual like layers of clothing until the relationship slides back to its original conception.

So, why do we obey? In its shortest form: because the state is a successful project of control engineered to engender obedience. In a longer format the argument of this dissertation emerges as the following one: from the counter revolution of 1525 to the first emergence of the liberal ideals in forms familiar to us, there has been a substantial shift in our conception and evaluation of the relationship between political authorities and their subjects. Once conceived of in terms of communities, communal action and rights, the individual came to occupy the central role. Our evaluative lens has shifted alongside, placing emphasis on individual qualities and looking for indications of freedom in the presence of these. Though not without merit, this latter shift has also been misleading in that it obfuscated the original intention behind the political deployment of these concepts: to *engender obedience*.

Political individualism has served, and continues to serve this purpose, as evidenced by the early liberal democratic forms it has been deployed in by the Levellers in their pioneering of a new tradition of the struggle for emancipation. What the Levellers sought to gain for the individuals, and what that tradition later gained for them – individual rights and freedoms – serves also to further bind them to the recognition of the state. Thus, we find aspects of unfreedom built in the conceptual and normative framework of the relationship of obedience between the individual and the state because this is exactly where they were built in. These aspects may even help to make sense of the prevalent feeling of being under siege, and the hopelessness that we encounter in many thinkers in the twentieth-century – the designed powerlessness inherent in the isolated individual vis-a-vis an unassailable system.

4. Other Contributions

4.1. Theories of State Formation

Oddly, engendering perpetual obedience as a central motivation of the rulers seems to have been omitted by all accounts of state formation. The institutionalist, Marxist and Bellicist accounts all imply some type of instrumentality inherent behind the formation of the state, yet none goes as far to mention obedience as a central motivation. These omissions speak both to the embedded, normalized nature of the obedience and the widespread acceptance of it as a default orientation. Gorski's recent criticism of the field and his additions come closest to my points. Gorski criticizes all accounts of state formation for not paying enough attention to the role of religion and confesssionalization, underlining that Calvinism in particular but also Lutheranism has triggered a revolution of social discipline, adding mechanisms of control and disciplining to the state's arsenal. Yet, even Gorski omits the political motivations behind the Reformation's advent of these structures and the reasons so many rulers so eagerly embraced these changes. I present here that engendering obedience was a central motivation for rulers plagued by constant disobedience. Whether their need was to mobilize their populations, exert control and consolidate power, increase monetary gains, or a combination of all those an obedient population is primary to achieving all these goals. Though our accounts have missed this, I very much doubt that the rulers have. In fact, I wonder if the obviousness of this proposition played a part in its omission by others.

4.2. Transcendence as a tool of oppression

In the conclusion of *The End of Progress* (2016), Amy Allen points at Adorno who says that in all propositions for transcending our condition we should suspect authority. My argument overall, in particular in the last chapter which covers the defeatist escapism into an 'inner paradise', provides substantial evidence for Adorno's suspicion.

Indeed, to the Christian enslaved by the Turk, Luther provides only one avenue: transcendence of his conditions. This transcendence is a personal, inner one, that Christians should at all times cultivate. This is, in fact, no different from his earlier recommendations to the rebellious peasants that they should not care about their physical conditions of oppression and abject poverty, focusing instead on what matters: Christian transcendence. With the individualization of subject, this avenue only becomes easier to take. The ease with which defeated radicals such as John Lilburne were transformed into pacifist sectarians, or Republicans like John Milton retreated from politics praising an inner paradise as 'far better' evidence that point. The Leveller John Lilburne's transformation to pacifist Quakerism further evidences the solipsism of the defeated radical.

One of the important consequences of this transformation was to make individual escapism, physical or spiritual, into a more viable alternative than organized disobedience and a much more likely occurrence than communal escape. One only needs to contrast the radical political proposition of the Diggers who, just like their predecessors of 1525, tried to establish 'heaven here in this world' with the transcendental proposition of Luther: complete pacifism and submission to replace political activism. As Adorno suspects, transcending one's physical conditions to turn towards the 'inner world' is a potent tool for pacifying resistance, in particular for subjects who are already individualized and isolated from the communal nature of the political struggle.

4.3. Social Contract

Though the conception of a social contract is associated with Hobbes and then Locke, many authors sought to discover the origins of social contract theory in events of the late sixteenth-century, and largely in the French wars of religion of the second half of the century. Huguenot theorists, accordingly, posited an original contract between the king of Aragon and his subjects which suggest that people are the original source of sovereignty, and that rulers likewise have

responsibilities towards their subjects the non-compliance of which would justify rebellion against and even removal of the King. Yet there is clear evidence from the communities of 1525 that there was indeed an actual, yearly contract binding the rulers to the ruled and vice-versa in mutual responsibilities that were, in some cases, explicitly negotiated.

Furthermore, the non-observance of this contract was used by both sides as a justification for either rebellion or violent reprisals. In cases of perceived or actual breach of this contract, subjects publicly gathered and withdrew their oaths of allegiance and obedience; quite notably this is how the 1525 first started – with a public gathering to retract the oath to the Count of Lupfen. Similarly, there is plenty of evidence suggesting that the rulers themselves took the oath as seriously, often noting in their proceedings that their subjects are engaged in acts of disobedience despite their oaths to remain obedient. Though details obviously vary, it seems quite clear that the presence of a contract binding rulers and the ruled in mutual responsibilities and rights predate the Monarchomachs by at least a half century, if not more. Speaking to the point above, the presence of an actual social contract binding the rulers also suggests, in fairly clear terms, that such a contract requires the presence of a community that can hold the ruler to his obligations and follow with consequences in case of non-observance.

4.4. Hobbes and Luther

To my knowledge, there is only one other political theorist, Jurgen Overhoff, who considers the possibility of a specific continuity of thought from Luther to Hobbes (1997). However, I perceive more than a few connections between the two which strongly suggests the need for a reconsideration on the possible influences on Hobbes's thought. Indeed, the disregarded fact that Luther also witnessed a civil war that has had a profound formative effect on his thoughts may be among the less important parallels between the two. Hobbes demonstrates a clear admiration for

and expertise on Luther's works and thoughts, acknowledged even by his opponents. He also has a clear habit of secularizing Lutheran arguments, often drawing from them explicitly and implicitly, and going as far as saying that he considers Luther his closest ally in religious discussions.

With all that established, I believe we have clear grounds for reading Hobbes's thought in continuity with Luther, and reanalyze his authoritarian arguments as secular extensions of Luther's. Indeed, their arguments are common in many crucial ways: the individuation of subjects, the expectation that these subjects will behave in certain destructive ways, that without authority the world will be bloody and awful, the necessity for an absolute authority that will rule with fear for total control, that authority's explicitly stated link to God, and so on. To me, it seems evident that there is a connection, or, at the very least a clear need to explore these parallels and further discuss their implications.

5.   Further Research

My argument concerning the historical constitution of the obedient subject relies on an historical analysis of the period spanning from the Reformation to the Restoration from the Holy Roman Empire to England, touching very briefly on the developments with the Huguenots in France. Though I believe this is indeed the crucial period to focus on, there is considerable appeal in extending the analysis in time both backwards and forwards.

Obedience to authorities under empires might prove a particularly fruitful area of research. I regret not having the time or space to engage in a detailed analysis of the Free Imperial cities of the Holy Roman Empire. These entities, many of which joined the revolution in 1525, have their own methods of governance which often brought them into normative conflict with the lords,

notably including individual rights which seems to have originated in a particular form in these cities in the late sixteenth century.

Similarly, I believe there are substantial benefits to extending the analysis and further trace the transformations and reproductions of, as well as the challenges to this particular conception of obedience between the individual and the state. Indeed, the analyses of the Haitian Revolt in the eighteenth century, the Paris Commune in the nineteenth-century, and even the socialist revolutions of the twentieth-century provide very promising avenues for future research. Another promising case, possibly even more intriguing, is the early US risings such as the Whiskey rebellion and the Shays rebellion both of which caused the new US government to respond with great force. How did this conception of obedience that was established in the seventeenth century evolve? How was it hidden? How did the struggle for emancipation adapt and in what ways was it crippled by what seems to me to be foundational defects? The eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries will prove invaluable in providing answers.

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