

The Humanistic Psychologist

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Online First Publication, July 16, 2020. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/hum0000193>

CITATION

Sætra, H. S. (2020, July 16). Toward a Hobbesian Liberal Democracy Through a Maslowian Hierarchy of Needs. *The Humanistic Psychologist*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/hum0000193>



Toward a Hobbesian Liberal Democracy Through a Maslowian Hierarchy of Needs


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Thomas Hobbes is a mainstay in political theory, but his political philosophy is often perceived as being marred by his insistence on absolute power and the rule of one—or the few. In this article I examine how a reinterpretation and adjustment of the psychological fundament of Hobbes's systematic argument may in fact lead to a new understanding of how a Hobbesian argument could lead to the conclusion that liberalism and democracy are best for achieving order and stability. This reexamination is performed by reinterpreting Hobbes's psychology in light of the writings of Abraham Maslow. Their reputations could hardly be more different, but I show that their theories of individuals are largely compatible, and that incorporating some of Maslow's insights into Hobbes's general framework may lead to a surprisingly modern Hobbesian political theory, because individual's domination by the higher needs, when safe, may entail demands for liberty and self-determination.

Keywords: Hobbes, Maslow, human nature, liberty, safety

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) was one of the first to propose a thoroughly systematic and individualistic political philosophy. In *Leviathan* (1651), first published in 1651, Hobbes describes human nature in great detail and proceeds to deduce how society should be shaped. As a methodological individualist, the form of the state is solely derived from his conception of individuals and their nature. Despite his fame (some would say *infamy*), Hobbes's conclusions are controversial, and some might regard his recommendation of the absolutist state as proof that Hobbes is more of a relic than a relevant philosopher for modern times. Hobbes's *systematic approach* to political philosophy may be timeless, but the *building blocks* found in *Leviathan* are certainly not exempt from criticism. The building block I focus on in this article is the fundamental one: namely, human beings and their human nature. *What are the consequences for Hobbes's political philosophy, if we reinterpret the premises involving human nature?*

For any methodological individualist, psychology and other disciplines concerned with human nature are of obvious value. I shall examine how borrowing some insights from such an unlikely candidate as Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) lets us construct a *Hobbesian* argument with different conclusions from the ones Hobbes himself arrived at.

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Maslow and Hobbes are more alike than most would imagine, and Maslow's famous *hierarchy of needs*, introduced into a Hobbesian argument, has important political implications. Maslow will be our guide for reinterpreting Hobbes's conception of individuals, and Maslow also lets us discuss Hobbes's psychology in modern terminology. He will help us trace the outlines of a political philosophy inspired by, but different from, Hobbes's own—a *Hobbesian* political philosophy. I use Maslow's ideas to further develop the conception of human nature provided by Hobbes, and I do not simultaneously examine the possible consequences for Maslow's theories.

My readings of Hobbes and Maslow are not based on a fundamental reinterpretation of their texts by carefully examining the different contexts in which they lived and wrote. I am not *primarily* interested in the historical factors that influenced their thoughts or the way they expressed them. My main concern is to discover what is novel and timeless in these thinkers, by which I refer to the parts of their philosophies that still influence our thinking about politics and human nature. In so doing, I follow a Straussian approach to the history of ideas (King, 1983, p. 16). I am, however, also aware of the need for caution when I discuss and compare concepts from the present, Maslow's time and Hobbes's time (Skinner, 1970, p. 138).

I read Hobbes in a way similar to that of Rapaczynski (1987), who emphasizes the value of considering the texts of philosophers at face value, as handed down through history, as this can provide valuable insight on our societies today; this involves some loss of "narrow historical accuracy" and not being able to fully explain why the authors say the things they do, with the exact words they use (Rapaczynski, 1987, p. 12). Minogue (1973) follows a similar approach, as he considers Hobbes's philosophy to be *general*, and not exclusively the result of his times and circumstances. Eisenach (1989) encourages a break with the departmentalized nature of the highly specialized Hobbes studies, and emphasizes the value of finding *new* ways to understand the philosopher. I agree, and follow Rawls's (2007, p. 52) advice on trying to "make as much out of it [Leviathan] as you can and to try to get a sense of how the overall view might go, if you put it in the best way."

I will, however, consider the authors' context at certain points in the article. Particularly when it comes to the application of Maslow's own psychological framework on himself and Hobbes. While I show the authors to be quite similar, there are also important differences between them. These can partly be explained by context. Hobbes lived in a time of civil war and uncertainty, and writes like a man dominated by security needs. He even states that he was "born a twin with Fear," as he was born prematurely by a mother in fear of a war with the Spanish (Martinich, 1995, p. 1). Maslow, on the other hand, who himself said he lived "a very sheltered life" with all basic needs covered, focuses emphatically on the higher needs and self-actualization (Maslow, 1973, p. 273). Smith (1973) describes this aspect of Maslow's philosophy, and implicitly compares it to the Hobbesian one:

Maslow's is a psychology for the affluent, postindustrial society. The eons of protohuman evolutionary history must all have been lived mainly at the lower Deficiency levels when life was indeed nasty, brutish, and short. (Smith, 1973, p. 29)

However, why did I choose Maslow? First, I wanted to evaluate a single theorist to be able to examine a coherent theory. Also, Maslow's works are classics of psychology, and he is widely known even outside his own discipline. Maslow was, however, more than a psychologist; he was also a *philosopher* of both psychology and science (Geiger, 1973). He discusses both the nature of psychology, and the nature of knowledge and science, and the "older he got, the more 'philosophical' he became"

(Geiger, 1973, p. xvii). Students of political science, economics and management will all be familiar with Maslow and his hierarchy of needs. Maslow is also renowned, and *Esquire* magazine—in their 50th anniversary edition—named him the mid-20th century’s most influential psychologist and one of the most important contributors to the modern understanding of human nature (Frager, 1987, p. 34). The most important reason, however, is that his hierarchy of needs lets me reinterpret Hobbes’s psychological foundations, and this has important positive consequences for the relevance of Hobbesian political philosophy in modern societies.

Maslow is also an interesting counterweight to Hobbes:

He was one of the foremost spokespersons of the humanistic or “Third Force” psychologies [. . .] The book [Motivation and Personality] has had a tremendous influence in creating a positive and whole view of human nature. (Frager, 1987, p. 33)

The portrayal of Hobbes as a *negative* philosopher who views people as “evil” is highly dubious, and I will support my opposition to such a view by comparing him with a theorist with a positive view of individuals. Maslow’s theory is *positive*, as he focuses on human opportunities—not limits. His theory is also positive in that it is *optimistic* about human nature and our situation. While Kohn (1999, 2008) claims that Maslow’s positivity represents a break with the “bleak view of our species” offered by Hobbes, I here claim that they are compatible. This compatibility implies that prevailing views about both thinkers must be reappraised. Shaw and Colimore (1988) argue that Maslow started out with “Rousseau-like optimism,” and that he moved toward “Hobbes-like cynicism.” I will show that being Hobbes-like is *not* incompatible with being optimistic and positive about human nature and potential.

To present a coherent version of Maslow’s ideas, I will mainly rely on *Motivation & Personality* (Maslow, 1987), first published in 1954. I will, however, also use other sources where these add important supplemental ideas, breadth, and/or nuance to Maslow’s theory.

Despite what I perceive to be obvious and important similarities between the two thinkers, the relationship between the two is not often explored in the literature on Hobbes. Green (1993) is one of very few commentators on Hobbes who mention Maslow, and he states that several parts of Hobbes’s psychology “received support from Professor Abraham Maslow” (Green, 1993, pp. 128–129). Efforts to use Maslow to understand political development are also of interest, and Davies (1991) provides one such example, without relating this to Hobbes. Fitzgerald’s (1977) collection of essays on *Human Needs and Politics* is also peripherally related to my current undertaking.

I structure the paper according to Maslow’s discussion of the basic needs and the hierarchy into which they are grouped. My interpretation of Hobbes is interwoven in this presentation, and I analyze the similarities and differences that I see between the two philosophers. The elementary parts of Maslow’s and Hobbes’s theories of motivation are well suited for comparison as they both discuss human needs and human nature explicitly. After the initial presentation of Maslow’s hierarchy, I will turn to his general theory of human nature, and then to the parts in Maslow’s theory that I find *incompatible*, or not represented, in Hobbes’s philosophy. The differences, and not just the similarities, are important. The implications of these differences will prove to be quite significant for the construction of a modern Hobbesian philosophy of the individual *and* the state.

The Foundational Function of Hobbes's Psychology

Before beginning, a few words regarding the function of Hobbesian psychology are in order. Hobbes is considered the father of the reductionist, mechanist strand of modern empirical psychology (Hearnshaw, 2020; Leijenhorst, 2007; Paganini, 2019). Because of the constraints of an article such as this, I focus on the role of needs and motivation in Hobbes's psychology.

I will focus my analysis on Hobbes's argument in *Leviathan* (1946), as my intent is to show how a reinterpretation of parts of Hobbes's philosophy involves changes in parts linked to it. Hobbes's analytical approach involves defining concepts, constructing premises and building a logical argument that shows how society must be ordered to achieve just that—*order*.

I agree with Gauthier (1969) that Hobbes's psychology is integral to an understanding of his political philosophy. This view is also put forth by Brown (1959), as he criticizes attempts to isolate and disregard Hobbesian psychology while keeping other parts of his argument. Warrender (1957), Taylor (1989), and Oakeshott (1946) represent the approaches attacked by Brown (1959), and I here side with Brown.

Hobbes argues in favor of an absolutist, and preferably nondemocratic, state because human beings function the way they do. Hobbes does not believe that human beings are inherently evil, aggressive, or otherwise ill-inclined toward each other, as I will later show. He does, however, state that their natures are such that without a common power to bind them, there are three factors that lead them toward conflict. This is *competition* for scarce resources, *uncertainty* about the intentions of others (*diffidence*), and a desire for *glory* (Hobbes, 1946). The ultimate good is to avoid a violent death, and apart from that Hobbes believes that a state should provide its citizens with as much liberty and contentment as is compatible with the fundamental requirements for security (Hobbes, 1946). Maslow's description of security needs implies a similar focus on security *first*, but when discussing the *good society*, he describes one which "fosters the fullest development of human potentials," and allows for the achievement of what he calls *being values* (such as *truth, goodness, beauty*, etc.) and the self-actualization of its citizens (Maslow, 1973, p. 7, 147, 221). However, in his political writings, Maslow also clearly emphasizes the need for power and authority. These, he states, can be "humanistic and transcendent" (Maslow, 1977, p. 6). I will not focus extensively on Maslow's politics, as his psychology is most important for my current agenda. Furthermore, Smith (1973, p. 30) also notes that Maslow's "thought was essentially unpolitical."

As Hobbes builds his argument for a strong state on the way people are, human nature and psychology are foundational elements of his political philosophy. This notion is also supported by Maslow (1977), who states that the social and political can be derived from the psychological and individual. It is also of interest that both Hobbes and Maslow regarded *introspection* as an important source of knowledge of human nature, and Geiger (1973, p. xiii) states that it is evident that Maslow "studied himself":

We must remember that knowledge of one's own deep nature is also simultaneously knowledge of human nature in general. (Maslow, 1973, pp. 115–116)

. . . whosoever looketh into himself, and considereth what he doth, when he does think, opine, reason, hope, fear, &c. and upon what grounds; he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts and passions of all other men upon the like occasions. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 6)

The critics of Hobbes's psychology argue that Hobbes's argument rests on faulty foundations. Instead of removing the foundations altogether, I show that some work on these foundations—the aim of this article—changes and reinforces Hobbes's political philosophy, and renders it more relevant to modern society.

If we read the *Leviathan* (1946) as the construction of a logical argument regarding political legitimacy, and not as a post hoc attempt to justify conclusions arrived at independently, psychology matters. I read Hobbes in this manner, and although it might be argued that the book is more of a rhetorical exercise than an honest attempt at finding the best political system, his philosophy *can* be read as the latter. I argue that the result is *Hobbesian*, and not Hobbes's own.

Human Motivation and the Basic Needs

Maslow systematizes human beings' *basic needs* in a hierarchy, and I will follow his classification. Maslow begins with the physiological needs, followed by the need for safety, the need for belongingness and love, the need for esteem, and finally the need for self-actualization. (Maslow, 1987, p. 59)

The Physiological Needs

The foundation of Maslow's pyramid is the physiological needs, and for Maslow, these are the primary needs. Should a person be found wanting all the needs, these are the ones we assume he will focus on to satisfy first:

The urge to write poetry, the desire to acquire an automobile, the interest in American history, the desire for a new pair of shoes are, in the extreme case, forgotten or become of secondary importance. For the human who is extremely and dangerously hungry, no other interests exist but food. (Maslow, 1987, p. 58)

One interesting aspect of Maslow's theory is his theory of the needs' (needs in general—not just the physiological needs) ability to *dominate* a person. According to Maslow, we will not experience all the various needs equally strongly *at the same time*; new needs take over when existing needs are satisfied. The most pressing need at any moment can “take over” a person. “For our chronically and extremely hungry person, Utopia can be defined simply as a place where there is plenty of food” (Maslow, 1987, p. 59). All the person's goals and aspirations will revolve around food, and Maslow seems to believe that such a person will imagine eternal happiness attained, should he only get something to eat: “[I]f itself tends to be defined in terms of eating. Anything else will be defined as unimportant. Freedom, love, community feeling, respect, philosophy, may all be waved aside as fripperies that are useless, since they fail to fill the stomach” (Maslow, 1987, p. 59).

The idea that starving people seek food seems self-evident, and this is a representation of the simplest form of motivation one can provide: a Darwinian wish for, and instinct for, survival. Darwin also mentions reproduction as highly instinctual, which we might interpret as survival more broadly—survival of our genes.

We have already come upon remarks that are relevant for Hobbes's theory. Hobbes is obviously aware of the fact that food is important, and he actually mentions it several places. He mainly views physiological needs and “appetites” as natural, for example eating and breathing. Hobbes also connects these needs to the somatic, by explaining that

these needs are appetites, but mostly aversions, “from somewhat they feel in their bodies” (Hobbes, 1946, pp. 31, 32).

Hunger, according to Hobbes, is a need we share with all living beings. Animals, however, have *only* these needs: “hunger, thirst, lust, and anger” (Hobbes, 1946, p. 15). This is similar to Maslow’s observation that we “share the need for food with all living things, the need for love with (perhaps) the higher apes, the need for self-actualization with nobody. The higher the need the more specifically human it is” (Maslow, 1987, p. 99). Even more interesting is how precisely Hobbes anticipates the aspect of domination in Maslow’s theory of needs, when he discusses some animals “in whom the appetite of food, and other pleasures of sense, by predominance, take away the care of knowing causes [. . .]” (Hobbes, 1946, p. 35). While the notions are similar to Maslow’s, Hobbes does not present them as a complete theory. It appears that Hobbes views the appetites as fundamentally the same, only separated by their strength, while Maslow thoroughly separates them in his hierarchy—viewing them as substantially *different*. Hobbes also emphasizes the fact that satisfying the fundamental needs—like getting food—can in some circumstances be so time consuming that one does not get the *opportunity* to satisfy other needs. In such cases the need may be present, but other needs are prioritized (Hobbes, 1946, p. 103).

In his search for a good motivational theory, Maslow discards *hunger* as the universal basis of motivation; he also discourages animal research. Maslow points out an important connection between the focus on hunger and animal research: much of the focus on *hunger* as a primary need is the result of research on rats—an animal he believes is mainly motivated by physiological needs (Maslow, 1987, p. 59). In our modern society, people will rarely experience the extreme frustration of physiological needs, and this makes the “animal approach” to knowledge of human beings somewhat barren, in Maslow’s view (Maslow, 1987, p. 59).

Maslow inherited a broader arsenal of existing knowledge than Hobbes. This is made clear by his references to *homeostasis* as an explanation of how and why the body signals certain physiological needs.¹ Damasio (2018) emphasizes how important embodiment is for cognition, and this is now even used to make machines that better imitate human emotions (Man & Damasio, 2019). Appetites are to a certain degree likened to a direct manifestation of the body’s actual physical needs (Maslow, 1987, p. 59; Myers, 2003, p. 457). One cannot expect Hobbes to argue these matters in our modern terminology, but it appears he had also approximated this insight:

This motion, which is called appetite, and for the appearance of it delight, and pleasure, seemeth to be a corroboration of vital motion, and a help thereunto; and, therefore, such things as caused delight, were not improperly called jucunda, à juvando, from helping or fortifying. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 33)

The Safety Needs

The idea of a fundamental need for safety is extremely important in Hobbes’s philosophy. The implications of these needs are the basis of Hobbes’s whole political philosophy. Maslow describes the safety needs as consisting of the following elements:

¹ The body is automatically working towards a constant blood flow, and needs certain amounts of water, sugar, salt, proteins, etc., to achieve this.

[. . .] (security; stability; dependency; protection; freedom from fear, anxiety, and chaos; need for structure, order, law, and limits; strength in the protector; and so on; Maslow, 1987, p. 60).

These elements are obviously very familiar to Hobbes. Maslow notes that these needs also have the ability to *dominate*:

Again, as in the hungry human, we find that the dominating goal is a strong determinant not only of their current world outlook and philosophy but also of their philosophy of the future and of values. Practically everything looks less important than safety and protection (even sometimes the physiological needs, which, being satisfied, are now underestimated). A person in this state, if it is extreme enough and chronic enough, may be characterized as living almost for safety alone. (Maslow, 1987, p. 60)

The state of nature, according to Hobbes, is characterized by the *lack* of safety, as life there is an exercise in “continual fear, and danger of violent death” (Hobbes, 1946, p. 82). Whether or not a violent death is the worst of evils—as Hobbes believes it to be—may be left undetermined for now, but we should be able to assume that it most certainly *appears* to be the greatest evil for someone dominated by safety needs. Hobbes himself, as mentioned, lived in a situation of great turmoil and civil war, and with the various shifts of power he was attacked as a royalist, an atheist, and subsequently even portrayed as a traitor to the royalist cause he had been despised for being a part of (Collins, 2005). We could easily imagine that living in such a situation would lead a person to be dominated by safety needs.

Maslow goes on to explain how uncertainty manifests itself in people’s wants and goals. One interesting point is that Maslow thinks that safety needs often bring forth a strong wish for “a protector, or a stronger person or system, on whom they may depend” and an “easier acceptance of dictatorship or of military rule” (Maslow, 1987, p. 61). Hobbes’s ideas will most likely be quite attractive for such a person. Threats to safety are not exclusive to a situation of war, but consist in “real threats to law, to order, to the authority of society” (Maslow, 1987, p. 61). This would seem to encompass Hobbes’s state of nature, which does not necessarily consist only of open warfare, but of a known inclination for it (Hobbes, 1946, p. 82). Schwartz (1983) also states that there are great similarities between the security needs stage and Hobbes’s state of nature.

The similarities between Maslow and Hobbes on these points are quite extraordinary, and it seems justifiable to conclude that they would most likely agree that the safety needs are of paramount importance for any theory of human nature.

Safety needs, like the physiological needs, are rarely severely frustrated in peaceful, modern societies, according to Maslow. This leads people to downplay their importance, and “forget” how important safety is. Thus, the ideas of the person dominated by safety needs appear quite foreign, and maybe even detestable, to individuals who have moved on to the higher needs (Maslow, 1987, p. 75, 82, 179). This issue is not satisfactorily dealt with by Hobbes, as his state of nature is *not* what we would refer to as a modern and peaceful society.

The Belongingness and Love Needs

When it comes to the needs for belonging and love, the following quote from Fromm is an indication that these needs should under no circumstances be disregarded:

The physiologically conditioned needs are not the only imperative part of man’s nature. There is another part just as compelling, one which is not rooted in bodily processes but in the very

essence of the human mode and practice of life: the need to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness. To feel completely alone and isolated leads to mental disintegration just as physical starvation leads to death. (Fromm, 1994, p. 17)

Hobbes writes little about the need for belongingness; especially if it is to be considered an isolated need. However, Oved (2017) discusses Maslow's love needs, and points to the centrality of belonging and interpersonal relationships in Hobbes's philosophy. Sagar (2019) also notes that Hobbes is often associated with a "popularized caricature" of people's social needs and implies that a proper reading of Hobbes is one where the importance of human sociability is present, even though they are characterized by a "natural unsociability." Hobbes emphasizes the need for sociability in terms of mutual accommodation (Fortier, 2018). Slomp (2019) discusses Hobbes's view of friendship, which is important in his philosophy, despite Hobbes's criticism of the view that friendship is something beyond political reach.

Maslow considers these needs to be very important, and is of the opinion that we far too often underestimate, or overlook, them; "[w]e have largely forgotten our deep animal tendencies to herd, to flock, to join, to belong" (Maslow, 1987, p. 62). It is worthy of note that Hobbes discusses groups and alliances, but mainly as pertaining to their instrumental value as means to power and safety (Hobbes, 1946, p. 56).

Moving on to love (that Maslow points out is not the same as sex), the overlap of Maslow and Hobbes becomes greater; while Hobbes does not discuss these needs at length, he does emphasize their importance:

Of things held in propriety, those that are dearest to a man are his own life, and limbs; and in the next degree, in most men, those that concern conjugal affection; and after them, riches and means of living. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 223)

That conjugal affection is mentioned before riches and means of living should give us a clear indication that Hobbes recognized the importance of these needs, or feelings. It is, however, important to note that the nature and expectations of marriage was very different in the ages of Hobbes and Maslow, as marriage increasingly become a means of satisfying higher needs, while in "the marriages of yesteryear," marriage was important to satisfy the physiological and safety needs (Finkel, Hui, Carswell, & Larson, 2014).

Hobbes describes the individual in as much detail as necessary to fully explain his theory of the state, and these needs may, to him, seem less central with regard to their political implications. It is also important to note that there is little to justify a claim that Hobbes believed in *self-less* love (Crisp, 2019). Maslow, on the other hand, refers to such self-less love as *being love*. This kind of love is characterized by being "so great and so pure (unambivalent) for the object itself that *its* good is what we want, not what it can do for us" (Maslow, 1973, p. 147–8). *Deficiency love* is Maslow's term for the more practical and self-oriented kind of love that is more akin to Hobbes's approach to the concept (Maslow, 1973).

The Esteem Needs

The esteem needs are strongly represented in Hobbes's philosophy:

And from hence it is, that kings, whose power is greatest, turn their endeavors to the assuring it at home by laws, or abroad by wars: and when that is done, there succeedeth a new desire; in some, of fame from new conquest; in others, of ease and sensual pleasure; in others, of

admiration, or being flattered for excellence in some art, or other ability in their mind. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 64)

In this quote, we can see that Hobbes anticipates the dynamics that Maslow develops with regard to needs following the satisfaction of other needs. Their wordings of these issues are also quite similar:

All people in our society (with a few pathological exceptions) have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, usually high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others. (Maslow, 1987, p. 63)

Lastly, considering what value men are naturally apt to set upon themselves; what respect they look for from others; and how little they value other men; from whence continually arise among them, emulation, quarrels, factions, and at last war, to the destroying of one another, and diminution of their strength against a common enemy [. . .]. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 118)

Maslow points to “the desire for reputation or prestige (defining it as respect or esteem from other people), status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity, or appreciation” (Maslow, 1987, p. 63). He believes that many, including Freud, have missed the importance of these needs. Others, like Alfred Adler, emphasized them strongly, and Maslow saw a current strong tendency toward proper recognition of these needs (Maslow, 1987, p. 63).

Hobbes regards the needs for recognition and respect (*honor*) as so crucial that he named it one of the three principal causes of conflict (Hobbes, 1946, p. 81). Sætra (2009) has shown in some detail how a need for honor can easily lead to violence when recognition and respect is seen as lacking (Sætra, 2009, Section 2.4.6). Maslow does not connect these needs to conflict and violence, but one could perhaps claim that the severe frustration of needs in general could easily lead to such consequences.

The Self-Actualization Needs

We should never have the desire to compose music or create mathematical systems, or to adorn our homes, or to be well dressed if our stomachs were empty most of the time, or if we were continually dying of thirst, or if we were continually threatened by an always-impending catastrophe, or if everyone hated us. (Maslow, 1987, p. 49)

If people were to pick *one* of Maslow’s central concepts and use it to describe his psychology, *self-actualization* would probably be a popular choice. Maslow regards “psychologically healthy” and self-actualizing individuals as his ideal, and large parts of his works focus on achieving this. His inspiration for examining self-actualization was two of his teachers, Ruth Benedict and Max Wertheimer, whom he greatly admired (Maslow, 1973). These people are presumably gratified in all the needs discussed thus far, and are both physically and mentally safe, have a full social life, and “have status and place in life and respect from other people,” along with a feeling of self-worth and self-respect (Maslow, 1973, p. 313). Wilson (1972) describes how Maslow presents a break with traditional psychology in his insistence on studying *healthy*, instead of *sick*, people.

Maslow’s self-actualizing individuals are not geniuses like Mozart, but regular people who develop their talents and do what they are good at (Maslow, 1987, p. 200). Self-actualizing persons are creative, open and “healthy” individuals—“good animals” is Maslow’s phrase for their natural goodness; many geniuses, “Wagner, for example, or Van Gogh or Degas or Byron,” were obviously not psychologically healthy (Maslow, 1987, p. 200). These individuals are “without one single exception,” involved in some-

thing *outside of themselves*, and this is the search for *being values*—“the ultimate values which are intrinsic, which cannot be reduced to anything more ultimate” (Maslow, 1973, p. 43).

This focus on self-actualization is not reflected in Hobbes. *However*, Hobbes’s recognition of, for example, arts and sciences as fundamental reasons for founding and uniting the state, could be argued to be of importance here:

Desire of knowledge, and arts of peace, inclineth men to obey a common power: for such desire, containeth a desire for leisure; and consequently protection from some other power than their own. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 64)

Hobbes and Maslow both see the connection between peace and these “higher” activities, and deny the possibility of these things existing in any significant degree where the lower needs dominate.

The merely surviving person will not worry much over the higher things of life, the study of geometry, the right to vote, civic pride, respect; he or she is primarily concerned with more basic goods. (Maslow, 1987, p. 83)

Desire, to know why, and how, curiosity; such as is in no living creature but man: so that man is distinguished, not only by his reason, but also by this singular passion from other animals; in whom the appetite of food, and other pleasures of sense, by predominance, take away the care of knowing causes [. . .]. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 35)

The claim that war, and in particular civil war, is the utmost evil, can be justified, according to Maslow, by more than the fear of death alone—a conclusion that also seems natural to Hobbes.

Hobbes seems to realize that people have a need to unfold beyond what is required for ensuring their daily subsistence. While Maslow thinks the need for self-actualization only manifests itself when other, more fundamental, needs are satisfied, Hobbes proposes that this need is ever present in that it is in fact a reason to found the state. I will also note that Maslow sees self-actualizing—or *psychologically healthy*—people as a *political necessity*, as such people are friendly, tolerant, sociable, helping, and trustworthy. They are, he continues, necessary for “any viable political, social, economic system” (Maslow, 1973, p. 101; Maslow, 1977).

Level Dynamics

The “lower” four levels are often labeled *deficiency needs*, as they relate to physical and social survival, while self-actualization is considered a *growth need* (Passer & Smith, 2004, p. 328). When one moves upward in the hierarchy, one experiences need *progression*, but if a previously satisfied need is unsatisfied, we *regress* to the lowest unsatisfied need (Passer & Smith, 2004, p. 328). Maslow’s hierarchy has met much criticism, along with praise; self-actualization is seen as “vague and hard to measure” and the ordering can appear arbitrary; how does one, for example, account for people enduring severe physical pain, such as prisoners of war do to protect their friends and so forth? Does the thirst for knowledge only become pressing after the previous levels are fulfilled (Passer & Smith, 2004, p. 372)?

There are obviously legitimate points to be raised regarding Maslow’s theory, but Passer and Smith (2004, p. 372) points to the theory’s value as an inspiration for further thinking in various fields “[d]espite these drawbacks, by calling attention to the human desire for growth and incorporating diverse motives.” It is also worth pointing

out that Maslow's theory was meant to apply to "average people," and that exceptions, such as the starving artist, can easily be found, without this having a major impact on the theory as such (Larsen & Buss, 2010, p. 351). Much research has been done on the validity of Maslow's theory, with diverse results (Larsen & Buss, 2010, p. 352). While some support the main tenets of the theory, others, like Wahba and Bridwell (1976) find little evidence of the theory in the studies they examine (Larsen & Buss, 2010, p. 352). They are focused on testing Maslow in the *work situation*, however, and the research they examine is statistical, excluding clinical methodology (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976, p. 213).

Tay and Diener (2011) conducted an empirical study of needs, based on Maslow's theory, with a sample from 123 countries. They found "evidence of universality," and "that the needs tend to be achieved in a certain order," lending some empirical evidence to Maslow's level dynamics. As they say, "our analyses reveal that as hypothesized by Maslow (1973), people tend to achieve basic and safety needs before other needs" (Tay & Diener, 2011, p. 363). Taormina and Gao (2013) also found strong support for the "validity and reliability of all 5 needs measures" developed from Maslow's theory and also to the dynamics of Maslow's hierarchy.

The exactness of the dynamics of progression and regression is not crucial for my use of Maslow's ideas as a way to broaden Hobbes's psychology. Maslow himself noted that long-lasting frustration of a need may cause a fixation on that need, and that higher needs can in fact be activated by "long deprivation, renunciation, or suppression of lower needs" in some cases (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976, p. 214). The nonexact nature of the hierarchy is also noted by Smith (1973, p. 20). However, if some will pursue the higher needs even while lower ones are frustrated, this will, if anything, render Hobbes's original conclusions even more questionable.

The importance of the lower needs, which is generally not questioned, is in itself sufficient for the conclusions arrived at in this article. The *highest* need—self-actualization—has received more criticism than the other levels. It is also the level that is least represented in Hobbes, and I have chosen not to focus specifically on this need. Smith (1973) provides a compelling critique of the robustness of Maslow's thoughts on self-actualization, and in particular on the methods Maslow used to arrive at his conclusions on these issues.

Therefore, while I do not assume the infallibility of Maslow, I join Myers (2003, p. 458) in viewing the "simple idea that some motives are more compelling than others" as a useful framework for dealing with human motivation.

What makes Maslow's theory of motivation *dynamic* is the interaction of the various needs within individuals (Larsen & Buss, 2010, p. 334). Despite the absence of the levels in his work, Hobbes does seem to portray human motivation as dynamic, in that there will at various times be different wants and desires that motivate people; there is an important similarity between Hobbes's central concept of *felicity* and Maslow's view pertaining to the *satisfaction of needs*:

But what happens to their desires when there is plenty of bread and when their bellies are chronically filled? [. . .] at once other (and higher) needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still higher) needs emerge, and so on. (Maslow, 1987, p. 59)

Felicity is a continual progress of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the latter. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 63)

“Contentment,” Maslow states, “is for practically all people a transient state,” and a search for *permanent* contentment is useless (Maslow, 1973, p. 228; Maslow, 1973). A central *difference* between the two, is that, according to Maslow, one *systematically* changes what one seeks after satisfying one need, while Hobbes does not predict a specific pattern in this change. This provides us with the first point of major importance that will need to be evaluated: *Maslow’s individuals can be said to change fundamentally over time, with regards to desires and needs, and there is some “end station.”* For Hobbes, the continual change is cyclic and more unpredictable. Both conceptions are indeed dynamic, but the structure introduced by Maslow carries implications for Hobbes’s argument, as we will later see.

Human Nature

What was Maslow’s view on human nature? First of all, he discards the “egoism-altruism” dichotomy. Sætra (2009) argues that Hobbes does the same; Hobbesian people are self-interested, but this does *not* exclude the possibility of altruism, as they could gain pleasure from being “good”; they could gain pleasure from seeing another person’s happiness, and so forth “*Even Hobbes,*” Kohn (2008, my italics) states, is not a “strict psychological egoist.”

This is also argued by Gert (1965, 1967). McNeilly’s (1966) position is that Hobbes was inconsistent, and that he moved from something akin to psychological egoism in his earlier work to rejecting this in later works like *Leviathan*. Hobbes is at times portrayed as a proponent of the view that we are little more than selfish animals—a crude and erroneous account of Hobbes’s psychology (Minogue, 1973). Green (2019) discusses Hobbes’s “fuller” theory of human nature as opposed to the “familiar” attribution of psychological egoism to Hobbes. See also Kavka (1986) for a discussion of what sort of egoism, if any, Hobbes represents.

Hobbes and Maslow seem to agree on the fact that while people are *self-interested*, this does not imply that they are *egoists* in a negative and exclusively self-regarding sense (Sætra, 2009, Section 2.4.3, 2.6; Maslow, 1987, pp. 81, 101, 191).

If our instinctlike impulses, for instance, to love, arrange it so that we get more personal “selfish” pleasure from watching our children eat a special treat than from eating it ourself, then how shall we define “selfish” and how differentiate it from “unselfish”? (Maslow, 1987, p. 101)

Fragger (1987) quotes Maslow as saying that human history is a long story in which human nature has been underestimated: “History has practically always sold human nature short” (Maslow, 1987, p. 158). Regarding our *positive potential*, Maslow thinks that this has always been overlooked, and that a correction of this neglect is needed. (Fragger, 1987, p. 7)

For inscrutable reasons that only the intellectual historian may be able to unravel, Western civilization has generally believed that the animal in us is a bad animal, and that our most primitive impulses are evil, greedy, selfish, and hostile. (Maslow, 1987, p. 92)

Maslow disagrees strongly with this understanding of the individual—“the animal.” “Original sin” is not a term used by Maslow, and he thinks that Darwin, among others, is far too concerned with the animalistic aspects of human nature; one result of this focus on

our commonality with animals is the tendency to see competition in all aspects of human life, and to overlook the vast amount of cooperation that is equally striking.

Maslow traces this exaggerated emphasis to our tendency to do research on animals, and, somewhat uncritically, to transfer the results to human beings. By examining wolves or rats in our search for human nature, for example, it is natural to conclude that we are both mean and brutal, while we may in fact be *different* from these animals in some respects (Maslow, 1987, p. 92). This is what Koestler refers to as *ratomorphy*, and the consequences of misunderstanding humans by comparing us to animals are still being discussed (Koestler, 1967). Today, these discussions are often related to usage of the machine-metaphor for understanding human beings (Kohler, 2010; Sætra, 2020).

Shaw and Colimore (1988) portray Maslow as a contrast to Hobbes and others who view individuals as “inherently destructive.” Jastrzębski (2011) also portrays Hobbes as a *contrast* to Maslow, as he argues that Maslow’s view of human nature is based on Rousseau and Locke, while Hobbes represents a more negative view of human nature as *corrupt*. Freud, but not Maslow, he argues, can be considered a follower of Hobbes regarding human nature (Jastrzębski, 2011). I argue that such a reading of Hobbes is dubitable. However, Maslow himself was perhaps not the greatest fan of Hobbes, as he, in one of his letters, states that he, in his private world, spent time “getting mad at Locke and Hobbes,” while only *appearing* to live in the world of other living human beings (Geiger, 1973, p. xix).

Maslow heavily emphasizes that we should not call the unconscious elements of human psychology *sick, evil, selfish, or beastly* (Maslow, 1973, p. 95). The *integrated* person consists of both the conscious and the rational, and it is *necessary* that we avail ourselves to both elements (Maslow, 1973). These two elements, and traits such as *aggression*, are available in all healthy individuals, but the “*quality* of aggression changes” as we move from psychological immaturity to self-actualization (Maslow, 1973, p. 226).

Hobbes states that people do not derive joy from, for example, killing others. This goes *generally*, but exceptions do exist, and it seems reasonable to assume that Hobbes to a certain degree refers to something akin to psychopaths in his most negative passages about individuals. As we can see in the following, Hobbes is quoted as saying “some men” are like psychopaths, and there is nothing in Hobbes’s texts that implies that he assumes *all* individuals to be of this kind.

It is helpful in understanding psychopaths to assume that they have no love identifications with other human beings and can hurt them or even kill them casually, without hate, and without pleasure, precisely as they kill animals who have come to be pests. (Maslow, 1987, p. 129)

Thomas Hobbes said that if it were not for the gallows, some men are of so cruell a nature as to take a delight in killing men more than I should to kill a bird (Aubrey, 1999, p. 157).

For, that any man should take pleasure in other men’s great harms, without other end of his own, I do not conceive it possible. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 37)

It is also important to make a clear distinction between regarding human nature as evil and realizing that human nature may have “evil” consequences. Maslow was nonsentimental, and in no way neglected the evil consequences of bad people, or societies (Geiger, 1973). Maslow (1977, p. 6) even calls his political philosophy “humanistic realism at the B-level.” While Smith (1973, p. 27) criticizes Maslow for being too Dionysian, Maslow (1977, p. 6) himself criticizes the youth movement of his time for being the same. They

are, he states “too exclusively Dionysian,” and neglect the importance of rationality, power, and authority (Maslow, 1977, pp. 5–6).

Hobbes shows, in his example of the man who travels armed, locks his doors, and even in his own house locks his coffers, that we all, like Hobbes himself, implicitly say that other people cannot be fully trusted; but he is equally clear on the point that “neither of us accuse man’s nature in it. The desires, and other passions of man, are in themselves no sin” (Hobbes, 1946, p. 83). Gauthier (1969, p. 17) makes the same point when, in his examination of the war “of every man, against every man,” he shows that this is a result of people’s uncertainty in the state of nature, and their natural desire for survival; “Hobbes’s metaphor is grossly misunderstood if it is thought to show man’s natural malevolence and evil.”

It can certainly be granted by now that our knowledge is sufficient to reject any claim that human nature is, in its essence, primarily, biologically, fundamentally evil, sinful, malicious, ferocious, cruel, or murderous. But we do not dare to say there are no instinctlike tendencies at all to bad behavior. (Maslow, 1987, p. 124)

Hobbes and Maslow agree on the notion that there are *some* antisocial beings, while most individuals are not driven by “evil.” Still, even good men may be driven to competition and conflict (Hobbes, 1946). Maslow also readily agrees that one “can set up social institutions which will guarantee that individuals will be at each other’s throats” (Maslow, 1973, p. 221). In short, Maslow knew very well that “human nature generates evil without itself being intrinsically evil” (Maslow, 1977, p. 17).

Instincts, Rationality, and the Good

Instinct, which we can define rigidly as a motivational unit in which the drive, motivated behavior, and the goal object or the goal effect are all appreciably determined by heredity. (Maslow, 1987, p. 51)

Maslow views instincts as an integral part of human beings, and since instinct seems to be invariably connected to human nature, it appears that he did not view these instincts as something negative. We have examined the body’s instinctive tendency to ensure its own health, for example, during the discussion of the physiological needs above, and I concluded that both Hobbes and Maslow view such instincts as natural, and positive, for the organism in question. Maslow also points out that almost every theoretical school in “psychiatry, psychoanalysis, clinical psychology, social work, or child therapy has *had* to postulate some doctrine of instinct-like needs no matter how much they disagreed on every other point” (Maslow, 1987, p. 89). Full realization of the self, Maslow says, requires taking the “total human personality” into account, and this “includes the active expression not only of the intellectual but also the emotional and instinct-like capacities” (Maslow, 1987, p. 158).

Maslow considers the *complete human being*, and because instincts are a natural part of an individual, it is allowed the same value as, for example, *reason*. This clearly separates Maslow from, for example, Aristotle, who places human abilities in a hierarchy with rationality on top (Maslow, 1987, p. 158). Based on this, a natural dichotomy is created, where *rationality* and *feelings/instincts* are portrayed as conflicting phenomena. This, according to Maslow, is wrong, and these aspects of human nature turn out to be more complementary than conflicting (Maslow, 1987, p. 158). Reason and “instinct-like impulses” are seen by Maslow as working toward a common goal, at least in the healthy person (Maslow, 1987, p. 93). In the psychologically healthy being the dichotomy fades,

as development leads to a fusion, and transcendence, of the duality (Maslow, 1973, p. 218). Hobbes uses the term endeavor, or *conatus*, to describe the infinitesimal internal workings of our bodies, that are the foundations of such things as fear, thirst, and hunger—the *unconscious* origin of what we later perceive as our desires and appetites (Martinich, 1995). This is a natural and vital part of Hobbes’s psychology. When discussing *synergy* Maslow also speaks of *conatus*, and “the synergic working or fusing of cognition and conation” in organisms, demonstrated by, for example, homeostasis, described by Cannon as the “‘wisdom’ of the body” (Maslow, 1973, p. 219).

Maslow disagreeing with Aristotle is something we can easily assume would please Hobbes, considering his strong antipathy toward “the vain and erroneous philosophy, of the Greeks, especially Aristotle” (Hobbes, 1946, p. 398).² It is, however, mainly Aristotle’s *political* doctrine that is explicitly considered in *Leviathan*, not the opinions on instincts and reason. Hobbes never uses the word “instinct” in *Leviathan*, but he discusses *natural inclinations of mankind*—a term I claim to be equivalent to a broad usage of the term *instinct* (Hobbes, 1946, p. 465). In *De Cive*, he explains how individuals, by an “impulsion of nature,” seeks to remove themselves from death:

For every man is desirous of what is good for him, and shuns what is evil, but chiefly the chiefest of natural evils, which is death; and this he doth by a certain impulsion of nature, no less than that whereby a stone moves downward. It is neither absurd nor reprehensible, neither against the dictates of true reason, for a man to use all his endeavors to preserve and defend his body and the members thereof from death and sorrows. (Hobbes, 2005, p. 8)

Human beings naturally desire to survive, and the laws of nature—that are laws of *reason*—are the means to achieving this wherever men are thrust together; there is no fundamental conflict between instincts and “true reason” in Hobbes’s philosophy.³

Animals having strong instincts seems to be beyond debate, and this, according to Maslow, is one of the reasons for portraying instinct and rationality as conflicting. By conducting research on animals, and assuming that the same instincts we find there are also present in human beings, we are making a big mistake, especially since we are then often identifying ourselves with animals such as “wolves, tigers, pigs, vultures, or snakes, rather than with better, or at least milder, animals like the deer, elephant, dog, or chimpanzee” (Maslow, 1987, p. 92). Furthermore, Maslow claims that our instincts are far weaker than those found in animals; we are not controlled exclusively by impulses, the way some animals can be claimed to be (Maslow, 1987, p. 91). Our instincts are different from that of a vulture, and Maslow also believes them to be milder (Maslow, 1987, p. 92).

Regarding the *good*, we find many points of agreement between Maslow and Hobbes. In particular, the fundamental acceptance of the organisms’ own desires as the basis for determining what is good (Maslow, 1987, p. 102).⁴ For Hobbes, this is the very definition

² “And I believe that scarce anything can be more absurdly said in natural philosophy, than that which now is called *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*; nor more repugnant to government, than much of that he hath said in his *Politics*; nor more ignorantly, than a great part of his *Ethics*” (Hobbes, 1946, p. 439).

³ Neither is it the *same*, but, as for Maslow, there is often some complementarity involved.

⁴ “It may be objected by the technical philosopher ‘How can you prove that it is better to be happy than unhappy?’ Even this question can be answered empirically, for if we observe human beings under sufficiently wide conditions, we discover that they, *they* themselves, *not* the observer, choose spontaneously to be happy rather than unhappy, comfortable rather than pained, serene rather than anxious. In a word, human beings choose health rather than illness, all other things being equal” (Maslow, 1987, p. 158).

of the good for someone in a state of nature, and Maslow goes a long way along the road of agreement. The fact that individuals' instincts are understood as something positive—something promoting the good—leads to the recommendation of a state that ensures the best possible results from instincts being allowed to flourish; “[i]f our intrinsic impulses are understood to be admirable rather than detestable, we shall certainly wish to free them for their fullest expression rather than to bind them into straightjackets” (Maslow, 1987, p. 103).

Hobbes and Aristotle actually agree on the fact that people's own evaluations are the basis for determining what is good in the state of nature. In a state, however, the *law* defines what is good, according to Hobbes; this is because of the fact that law exists to secure the goals of the state, which are, to Hobbes, identical with men's goals (Hobbes, 1946, p. 446).

The Hobbslow Synthesis

Humans and Their Needs

We have established that Hobbes discusses human needs in detail. He also quite clearly understands that needs, when frustrated, can *dominate* a person. What we have found to be lacking is the organization of human needs in a hierarchy, and this is where the synthesis of Hobbes and Maslow really becomes interesting.

For Hobbes, the need for security is ever present, and while he portrays people's life as an endless succession of pursuits of what they desire, what they desire is assumed to be based on a desire for power as a means to ensure survival. Freedom, love, belonging, self-realization, and so forth never really take center stage in Hobbes's individuals. Maslow's individuals, on the other hand, at times of experienced security, are assumed to live almost exclusively for the satisfaction of these higher needs. If Maslow was right, what are the implications for Hobbes's argument?

The propensity of needs to *dominate* individuals, *with* Maslow's hierarchy in mind, could have important implications for Hobbes's general theory. For the moment, let us assume that people exposed to great uncertainty and threats of war or other forms of violence, would wish for, and happily accept, Hobbes's prescribed state. “Splendid idea, Hobbes! We want your Sovereign to protect us from the evils of chaos and civil war!”, people could easily be assumed to reason in the natural state. What then, when the Sovereign, with the absolute authority his subjects have happily bestowed on him, has established his commonwealth? Will the same people march to the streets, yelling “Tyrant! You fooled us! We demand liberty!”?

What people desperately long for in the state of nature—the reason they made the state in the first place and constructed it after Hobbesian ideals—is forgotten and replaced by the (sometimes desperate) desire to fulfil other, and higher, needs. It does not seem far-fetched to imagine that these individuals would now feel hoodwinked into making a bad state that focuses *far* too much (as they now see it) on security and order.

Hobbes and the Higher Needs

Hobbes's lack of focus on the higher needs leads me to propose a refinement of Hobbes's view of human nature, with a view to improving his whole philosophy. Needs for autonomy, participation, self-realization, and so forth will also need to be examined to complete the project here described, but the most decisive concept we need to deal with

is the possible “need” for *freedom*. Maslow claims that there are certain *prerequisites* for the satisfaction of all our needs:

Such conditions as freedom to speak, freedom to do what one wishes so long as no harm is done to others, freedom to express oneself, freedom to investigate and seek information, freedom to defend oneself, justice, fairness, honesty, and orderliness in the group are examples of such preconditions for basic need satisfaction. (Maslow, 1987, p. 64)

He goes on to say that “[s]ecrecy, censorship, dishonesty, and blocking of communication threaten *all* the basic needs” (Maslow, 1987, p. 65). It is a bit simpler for Hobbes: men choose survival over freedom, should they be forced to choose. Because Hobbes thinks that censorship, for example, is *required* to properly secure men’s life and health, it would be absurd for Hobbes to claim that this censorship would at the same time prevent people from feeling safe and feeding themselves. This may, however, be *too* simple, considering the fact that people *not* dominated by safety needs would not necessarily agree with, or even understand, Hobbes’s line of reasoning. One could claim that they *should* agree with it, but Maslow seems to think that the fact that people “forget” that such needs are important, once they’re satisfied, is one of the primary reasons for disorder and conflict:

I have also become convinced that getting used to our blessings is one of the most important nonevil generators of human evil, tragedy, and suffering. What we take for granted we undervalue, and we are apt to sell a valuable birthright for a mess of pottage, leaving behind regret, remorse, and a lowering of self-esteem. (Maslow, 1987, p. 179)

Do we really have a *need* for freedom? Maslow leans on clinical data when he states that people that “have known true freedom (not paid for by giving up safety and security but rather built on the basis of adequate safety and security) will not willingly or easily allow their freedom to be taken away from them. However, we do not know for sure that this is true for people born into slavery” (Maslow, 1987, p. 63n). He states the same in Maslow (1977). For our purposes, we will assume that men in modern society *have* experienced the kind of freedom Maslow describes here.

More important than the discussion of whether or not freedom is a basic human need is that men seem to value freedom higher than security in certain situations. This insight *can* be implemented in a Hobbesian theory that refines the model of human nature that serves as the basis for the rest of the argument. The implications of this revision are quite important and lead to a somewhat milder end to Hobbes’s political argument—a state that is not *as* extreme regarding security, and not quite as frivolous about *freedom* and the higher human needs (Sætra, 2009).

The Beginnings of a Modern Hobbesian Theory

The office of the sovereign, be it a monarch or an assembly, consisteth in the end, for which he was trusted with the sovereign power, namely the procuration of the safety of the people. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 219)

First of all, Hobbes states that the *end* of the commonwealth is the “good of the people” (Hobbes, 1946, p. 116, 219). Maslow might add *and to foster good people*, and if this is indeed conducive to peace, it would fit well in a Hobbesian theory (Maslow, 1977).

Hobbes states that what is *good* for men is entirely subjective. This is also an inclusive notion, implying that *everyone's* opinions matter. Maslow (1977) agrees that politics is to be informed by, and reach, everyone, regardless of education and intellectual level, and it is the role of *everyone* to provide the *values* of politics. Hobbes also assumes that *survival* and the absence of the fear for a sudden and violent death are shared by all to such a degree that they can be perceived as *objective* goods with priority.

Another crucial point to keep in mind is that Hobbes is a man with an extreme dislike for taking risks, especially when it comes to the stability of the state. Maslow (1977, p. 17) also states that while permissiveness is desirable in general, we must be “extremely firm and unyielding about ultimate and intrinsic values.” In addition, states must be built to last. And *lasting* cannot possibly be construed as “long enough to secure my own personal survival until I die of natural causes” for any single person. Hobbes believes it should be built to last *as long as mankind* (Hobbes, 1946, p. 209).

[S]o, long time after men have begun to constitute commonwealths, imperfect, and apt to relapse into disorder, there may principles of reason be found out, by industrious meditation, to make their constitution, excepting by external violence, everlasting. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 220)

This leads to the conclusion that to achieve what Hobbes perceives as the objective good—the good of the people, in the shape of a state that secures them—he may have to consider the *subjective* needs of people living in that secure state.

While the worst evil in the state of nature is assumed to be death, people living safely under the protection of the sovereign can be assumed to regard their lack of freedom as the worst evil imaginable. Such people would presumably try to improve their situations, which must lead to opposition to a Hobbesian sovereign. Should that be the case, it can easily be argued that the most secure state is *not* one that is built exclusively upon satisfying the needs felt by people in a prestate condition.

The most secure state is one that can initially handle and suppress the conflict that precedes it, while subsequently providing a condition that is bearable for those who forget the “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” condition they have perhaps never experienced (Hobbes, 1946, p. 82). Thus, we begin to see the outlines of a Hobbesian theory where liberalism, and perhaps even *democracy*, have crucial functions for the very stability and order that Hobbes so values. If Maslow was right about the political necessity of fostering self-actualization this is yet another reason for the creation of a liberal government (Maslow, 1973, p. 100). At least if we believe that self-actualization requires a certain extent of liberty, and perhaps even the possibility to take part in governing one's own society. In *Politics* 3, Maslow (1977) argues that human beings have need for involvement, expressing themselves (and being heard), as he shows how a decentralized, participatory liberal democracy is best equipped to fulfil such needs. It is, however, a *balanced* liberalism, and he is, as noted, a *realist*, acknowledging the need for power and authority, *extreme firmness* when necessary, and the need to balance liberty with what is required for the *functioning* of society (Maslow, 1977, pp. 6, 12, 17). Fortier (2018) believes that Hobbesian liberalism is a “a crucial contribution to understanding the theory and practice of liberal politics.” I argue that this is definitely the case for the Hobbesian theory I here propose, which also elucidates the *value* of liberalism.

Hobbes's prescription of monarchy as the preferred form of government was nothing but prudential, and should modern representative democracy prove to be more stable, Hobbes's stated goal for the government would lead him to choose that form of rule (Sætra, 2009, pp. 113–117, 189–197).

The difference between these three kinds of commonwealth, consisteth not in the difference of power; but in the difference of convenience, or aptitude to produce the peace, and security of the people; for which end they were instituted. (Hobbes, 1946, p. 122)

One of Hobbes's main arguments in favor of the rule of one was that he believes this secured the best alignment of interest between the ruler and the ruled (Hobbes, 1946). This phenomenon is closely related to the core of the concept of *synergy*, that Maslow adopted from Ruth Benedict. A *synergic society* is one in which the individual interest is aligned with the interest of society (Maslow, 1973, p. 210). Maslow argues that one can "set up social institutions which will encourage individuals to be synergic with each other," instead of in conflict (Maslow, 1973, p. 221). If such institutions also apply to those in power, good institutions might lead to the alignment of individual and social interests even without the rule of one. See Maslow, Honigmann, and Mead (1970) for more on Benedict's ideas about synergy.

I argue that I have presented the beginnings of a Hobbesian argument in favor of democracy. Martel (2007) has *subverted* Hobbes into democracy by examining Hobbes's use of rhetoric. My Hobbesian democracy is not the result of quests for the hidden and "true" meaning of Hobbes, as it follows simply from a slight reworking of the structure of Hobbes's original views on human psychology. In Straussian terms, Martel seeks the *esoteric* meaning of Hobbes, while here I take Hobbes at his word, so to speak, and consider his *exoteric* text (Strauss, 1952).

When discussing liberty, Hobbes clearly states that men should have as much of it as possible, provided it is compatible with peace; safety is not simply survival, Hobbes says, "but also other contentments of life, which every man by lawful industry, without danger, or hurt to the commonwealth, shall acquire to himself" (Hobbes, 1946, p. 219). As shown, this is compatible with Maslow's ideas about politics. We have shown that some freedom may in fact be a *prerequisite* for peace, so Hobbes would presumably not argue against this either, should we assume the kind of human nature we have arrived at after comparing Hobbes and Maslow.

Conclusion

This examination of Maslow's and Hobbes's conceptions of human nature and motivation has revealed both similarities and some key differences. First, it is worthwhile to point out that human nature for Hobbes, as for Maslow, is not *evil*; the extent to which conflict is natural can be debated. This may seem absurd to anyone superficially familiar with Hobbes, but Hobbes attributes *reason* to men, and his laws of nature are laws of reason and peace. These laws are what lead us to the commonwealth and the state of peace. It seems farfetched to portray men pursuing the reason they are naturally endowed with as *unnatural*. This leads us to a view of the state of nature as a hypothetical way station on the path to society.

Second, I have shown how a seemingly slight revision of Hobbes's human nature, with the introduction of Maslow's hierarchy of the human needs, could have major effects on Hobbes's political recommendations. If men "forget" that safety is everything when they feel safe, and become rebellious or hard to rule as a result, Hobbes would have to propose a state that satisfies even safe people. A state that does not consider the higher needs of individuals will *not* sufficiently preserve the internal order that Hobbes required.

A modern Hobbesian theory might have to include more political freedom, in the form of some kind of democratic institutions, and a generous *enough* provision of both liberty and welfare for the subjects. While Hobbes was concerned with not providing *too much* liberty, with a threat to peace as a result, we have now introduced a double balancing act, since we posit that *too little* liberty will also challenge the peace. A Hobbesian liberalism with a more solid psychological foundation, in particular regarding the possibilities of democracy and the value of sociability, is of great importance in a time when both liberalism and democracy face great challenges. I have proposed a Hobbesian theory that favors liberal democracy because it is most conducive to peace. Such a theory is realist in the acknowledgment of the potential for conflict and the primacy of the need to avoid this. However, it departs from Hobbes's original theory in that liberty is not just something we might enjoy if there is anything left when order is provided; it introduces liberty as one of the *requirements* for securing such order.

Finally, I return to an important point from the introduction. As I have shown in this article, people can be dominated by the needs they experience, and we should not assume that Hobbes and Maslow themselves were immune to this phenomenon. I do not want to give the impression that I am psycho-analyzing Hobbes, but there are some obvious interpretations following from the theory here developed that are too important to pass up on. The way Maslow describes the person dominated by security needs can hardly be denied to be a close to perfect fit for the Hobbes that writes *Leviathan*. The fact that Hobbes lived in an age of great conflict and threats to the state and to general livelihood behooves us to bear in mind that Hobbes's complete theory could be colored by a predominance of security needs. Maslow mainly refers to physical needs in the closing quote, but if the same holds true for safety needs, we may have found a very interesting way to reconceptualize Hobbes's political philosophy. Following the same line of reasoning, it is possible that many modern champions of liberty and individuality are dominated by higher needs, and that they forget, or are unaware of, the importance of the more basic needs—the needs that are not often frustrated in today's society. Maslow's focus on the highest needs may partly be the product of his self-admittedly sheltered life, and the zeitgeist of his own time. Either form of domination may distort the formation of a political theory.

Anyone who attempts to turn an emergency scenario into a typical one and who tries to measure all of humanity's goals and desires by behavior during extreme physiological deprivation is certainly blind to many things. (Maslow, 1987, p. 59)

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Author Note

Henrik Skaug Sætra is a political theorist with an interest in the concept of human nature. The ideas in this article first saw the light of day as a part of a chapter in his master's thesis from 2009. It has here been substantially developed, rewritten, re-organized, and turned into a self-contained argument.

Received January 2, 2020

Revision received April 14, 2020

Accepted May 24, 2020 ■