

Hobbes on 'The Woman Question'¹

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Abstract

The classical social contract tradition of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has come under significant scrutiny from those interested in the place of women in the philosophical canon, and Thomas Hobbes has been indicted along with John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. These philosophers have been accused of holding misogynistic beliefs and, more damningly, founding their theories on sexist and patriarchal assumptions. This paper explores the extent to which Hobbes deserves his place on the list of the condemned.

In the history of philosophy, most of the 'great' philosophers engaged with questions about women's 'nature' and the appropriate role for women in the family, society, and state. Hobbes, however, has far less to say on the subject than most, and what he does say is often ambiguous or inconsistent. It is a fundamental tenet of Hobbes's philosophy that all people are equal in the state of nature, women included; yet he makes reference to the general superiority of men as regards physical strength, courage, wit, and suitability for rule. Hobbes denies the naturalness, inevitability, and godliness of patriarchy, and he even argues for natural maternal right; however, he describes families in civil societies in terms of fathers ruling over their servants and children—leaving women out of the picture altogether. In this paper I examine Hobbes's views about gender² and, thereby, his place in the history of philosophy as seen from a feminist perspective.

Analytic philosophers have largely ignored Hobbes's views on gender. Perhaps this is because Hobbes scholars have not been particularly interested in questions of gender, and feminist philosophers have traditionally dismissed Hobbes.³ However, the role of gender in Hobbes's philosophy has attracted interest from other disciplines and traditions. Hobbes's philosophy has been subjected to intense scrutiny by feminist theorists who have been interested in reexamining the underlying assumptions of the social contract tradition. Social contract theorists, especially those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, have been roundly criticized for expressing deeply misogynist views and for grounding their theories on patriarchal assumptions. Famously, Carole Pateman claims to identify a "sexual contract" involving the subordination and exclusion of women at the foundation of classical social contract theory.⁴

Hobbes has been explicitly indicted along with other contract theorists (e.g., Locke, Rousseau, and Kant) for upholding fundamentally patriarchal commitments. Pateman argues that the Hobbesian social contract is enacted for no other reason than to secure patriarchal political right in the commonwealth, and that Hobbesian women are necessarily excluded from becoming civil individuals (1988: 44, 48–9; 2007: 213–8). Susan Moller Okin charges that Hobbes's political structure is based on "the patriarchal family," which "depends on the assumption of the radical inequality of women" (199). Christine Di Stefano argues that Hobbes articulates a masculinist position with arguments that rest on the denial of the mother and that his philosophy "embodies a gender-based logic,

epistemology, ontology and intellectual style" (634). Charles Mills makes the criticism most generally—and most eloquently—when he claims that "Hobbes ... [is] a *male* theorist in a sense deeper than [his] mere possession of one kind of genitalia" (15).

On the other hand, it is possible to draw an alternative picture of Hobbes's views on gender. We can find in Hobbes a thesis about gender egalitarianism, which commits him to anti-essentialism about gender (i.e., the denial that there is any such thing as a woman's 'nature' or 'essence') and to gender conventionalism (i.e., the thesis that gender expression and gender roles are largely a result of structural social forces and conditions). One could see these views as *protofeminist*, in a certain sense.

Hobbes on Human Nature

One historian describes the contemptuous descriptions of women in seventeenth-century England as follows:

The wisdom of the Bible in relegating women to marital servitude was supposedly borne out by their predictable daily behavior. Women were mentally inferior, irrational, often given to hysteria and superstition. Their hot, moist humors made them overly passionate and emotional, sometimes more violent and rebellious. They were chatterers and scolds, flirts, and spendthrifts. Only marriage justified their existence, providing companionship for men, a cure or moral outlet for lust, and a renewal of the species. (Nadelhaft 555)⁵

In general, the prevailing views about human nature presumed a natural inequality among various types of people. These perceived inequalities took many forms; however, on virtually all of these views, women were seen as fundamentally different from and inferior to men. The Aristotelian view that a male is "naturally more fitted to lead than a female" (I.12, 1259b) was commonplace. Even more prominently, many in the seventeenth century were committed to "patriarchalism," a view culminating in Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha*. Filmer claims that women hold a subordinate place in the family, society, and state, arguing that fathers are both the natural and the divinely ordained absolute rulers of the family. It is for good reason that feminist critics have explicitly called attention to the dominant characterization of women as emotional, subservient, passive, 'naturally' enslaved to their passions, and, therefore, incapable of rational or principled thinking. Purported features of a woman's nature were conveniently used to rationalize a diminished social status.

In stark contrast to this traditional and widely accepted view, Hobbes offers an alternative conception of human nature, grounded on a view of "the natural condition of mankind" outside of civil society. His question is: What would people be like in the state of nature, that is, if they suddenly appeared "like mushrooms" on earth in the absence of civil society or a "power to keep them in awe." His infamous description of the state of nature in *Leviathan* opens with the following lines:

Nature hath made men so equal in the faculties of body and mind as that, though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together the difference between man and man is not so considerable as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit to which another may not pretend as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others that are in the same danger with himself. (*Lev* 13.1)

Hobbes's point is simple: people are roughly equal in their natural physical and intellectual capacities, and even the weakest can kill the strongest (if, for example, they get together in a

group or plot the action in advance). Thus, no one is so strong or smart that he is invulnerable or enjoys uncontested control over people or things.

This is only a minimal sense of human equality: Hobbesian people are naturally equal in the sense that they have an equal ability to kill each other, and a corresponding equal vulnerability to being killed. Hobbes also claims that dominion (the right or power of governing) has no place in the natural condition of mankind (*Lev* 13.13), and the absence of natural dominion suggests a much more interesting notion of equality. For Hobbes, natural equality is ultimately an equality of *status*—there are no natural hierarchies or ranks and no one by nature can have authority over anyone else.

As Hobbes develops his political theory, he frequently reiterates his claim about natural equality, fleshing out some of the details in subsequent discussions. In his analyses of the natural law forbidding pride, the “ignorant men” of his time and Aristotle—“whose opinions are at this day, and in these parts of greater authority than any other human writings”—are both condemned for “mistakenly” taking “which is a better man [to] be a question of nature” when in fact it is a question “determinable only in the estate of government and policy.” He ridicules the idea that “one man’s blood [is] better than another’s by nature” (*EL* 1.17.1), as well as the specifically Aristotelian notion that the wiser are “more worthy to command” while those with “strong bodies” are fit to “serve” (*Lev* 15.21).

Hobbes makes an important further move, arguing that it would make no difference even if there were, in fact, variations in “inherent virtue” because “who hath that eminency of virtue, above others ... shall never be agreed upon amongst men; who do every one naturally think himself as able, at the least, to govern another, as another to govern him” (*EL* 1.17.1). Even if some people naturally had qualities that made them more suited to rule, agreement about who had those qualities would be impossible given men’s partial and arrogant psychology. What is important is that people “acknowledge each other as equals.” Failure to do so is pride, which is prohibited by natural law. Kinch Hoekstra has recently convincingly argued that acknowledging one another as equals is not an addendum to Hobbes’s notion of natural equality; it is the notion itself. Hobbes intends to deny the possibility that birth or even innate talents and abilities provide a basis on which to ground an account of natural relations of superiority. This is not because there definitely are no relevant differences, but because agreement on what the differences are is impossible, and entertaining the possibility leads to, or exacerbates, conflict. On Hobbes’s account, then, the doctrine of natural inequality is pernicious even if it is not necessarily false.

The Equality of the Sexes, Natural Maternal Right, and the Emergence of Patriarchy

Certainly, men and women are equal in the minimal sense Hobbes describes. Hobbes notes this entailment and mocks theories of natural male dominance. In all three of his major political works, Hobbes explicitly claims that there are no general differences between men and women sufficient to justify the subordination of women to men. He puts the point in *De Cive*:

The allegation that some make that it is not the *mother* in this case but the *Father* who becomes *Master* [of the child], because of the superiority of his sex, is groundless; for reason is against it, because the inequality of natural strength is too small to enable the male to acquire dominion over the female without war. (*DC* 9.3)

In *Leviathan* he criticizes those who “have attributed the dominion [of children] to the man only, as being of the more excellent sex,” saying that “they misreckon in it” because

"there is not always that difference of strength or prudence between the man and the woman as that the right can be determined without war" (*Lev* 20.4). In *The Elements of Law*, he says, "they therefore ascribe dominion over the child to the father only, *ob praesentiam sexus*; but they show not, neither can I find out by what coherence, either generation inferreth dominion, or advantage of so much strength, which, for the most part, a man hath more than a woman, should generally and universally entitle the father to a propriety in the child, and take it away from the mother" (*EL* 2.4.2).

Hobbes's intention in discussing domination by generation is not to deny the natural dominance of men over *women*; rather it is to deny the natural right of fathers over *children*. His views here are striking in that he affords natural dominion over children to mothers. Starting from the assumption that no person can serve two masters, Hobbes claims that dominion over a child cannot be shared by both parents. If the child is born in a commonwealth, dominion over that child follows the dictates of the relevant civil law. If the child is born outside the context of civil society, custody and authority either follow a prearranged contract between mother and father or it goes to the mother:

[I]n the state of nature every woman who gives birth becomes both a *mother* and a *Mistress* [Lord] The original Dominion over *children* therefore is the *mother's*; and among men no less than other animals, the offspring goes with the womb. (*DC* 9.3)

Hobbes's argument for natural maternal right is puzzling, and many have found it to be unconvincing. Briefly, Hobbes argues that, in the state of nature, the mother has dominion over the child because paternity cannot be known except by a declaration of the mother's will and, more importantly, because the mother provides for the child's preservation. Hobbes invokes general principles that he relies on heavily in the rest of his philosophy, namely, that all authority is grounded in consent, and that people are obligated to the one who provides for their protection. It is not clear, however, how to apply these principles when the one who is protected is an infant or child who is incapable of giving consent. He appeals to the fourth law of nature, namely gratitude, and invokes some sort of hypothetical consent on the part of the child, but he does not provide enough detail to reconstruct the precise nature of the argument (or, in fact, to make it particularly convincing).⁶ Whatever the argument may be, Hobbes stipulates that if the mother abandons the child or gives it away, she loses her natural right over it and the child is then under the rule of whoever assumes its care (*EL* 2.4.1–17; *DC* 9.1–19; *Lev* 20.1–10).

Note that Hobbes at no point invokes anything unique about *women* in this regard (besides, of course, the obvious biological fact that women are the ones who get pregnant). There is no sense in which Hobbes thought there was a natural maternal instinct, or any unique privilege that resulted from the mother-child bond. His explanation of the natural right that a mother has to her child reduces entirely to principles that are central to his account of political society. There is no expectation that a woman should want to keep her offspring, nor is there any condemnation of a woman who chooses to give away or "expose" her baby. This might seem like an unattractive depiction of motherhood and women insofar as they are mothers; but such an interpretation misses an important point. The argumentative strategy is indicative of the depth of Hobbes's anti-essentialism about gender: he never posits any kind of womanly nature or essence that would tie her to the practice of child-rearing and so to the domestic sphere. This will seem unappealing from the perspective of feminists who want to locate something special in maternity (e.g., Sara Ruddick). But it does have a certain feminist potential: it entails that there is nothing

unnatural about a woman who chooses not to have children, and it is a blatant rejection of the dominant claim, advanced by Hobbes's contemporaries, that child-rearing is a woman's duty—or her fate.

Similar themes emerge when Hobbes turns to the other way in which custody of and authority over the child are decided outside of the context of civil law: a preexisting contract between parents. He uses two examples to illustrate this possibility. First, when monarchs of two sovereign states have a child, dominion properly goes to the parent specified beforehand or to the parent who lives in the child's country of residency. This example is significant insofar as it illustrates one of Hobbes's few explicit views about gender, namely, his belief in the legitimacy of female sovereigns (an issue in much dispute at the time in Europe, where the influence of Salic law was strong). In a number of different contexts, Hobbes insists that sovereignty is gender-neutral, making declarations such as "authority does not take account of masculine and feminine" (*Lev* 52.78, 1668 Latin edition) and "though Man may be male and female, Authority is not."⁷

Second, Hobbes makes reference to Amazon women, who "did at one time wage wars against their enemies and handled their *offspring* as they pleased" (*DC* 9.3). He describes their practices saying,

We find in history that the *Amazons* contracted with the men of the neighboring countries, to whom they had recourse for issue, that the issue male should be sent back, but the female remain with themselves, so that the dominion of the females was in the mother. (*Lev* 20.4; see also *DC* 9.3 and *EL* 2.4.5)

Notice that he treats the existence of the Amazons—fierce, independent warrior women organized into matriarchal societies—as a matter of historical fact, rather than as a piece of mythology.

By contrast to the state of nature, in civil society authority relationships between men, women, and children are set by civil law; and Hobbes recognizes that this generally favors men. He starts with a relatively gender-neutral principle:

[In a commonwealth] if a *woman* gives herself to a man to share her life with him, on the terms that power be in the hands of the *man*, their common *children* belong to the *father* because of his power over the *mother*. But if a *woman who holds power* has *children* by a *subject*, the children so belong to the *mother* And in general if the relationship of a *Man* and a *woman* is a *union* in which one is subject to the power of the other, the *children* belong to the *partner with power*. (*DC* 9.5)

But Hobbes soon makes it clear that he thinks most political societies will be patriarchal. His explanation is frustratingly brief.

In commonwealths this controversy [over children] is decided by the civil law, and for the most part (but not always) the sentence is in favour of the father, because for the most part commonwealths have been erected by fathers, not by the mothers of families. (*Lev* 20.4)

Once he establishes the emergence of patriarchy, women almost drop out of his picture altogether. Families are described in terms of men and their children and/or servants. Women appear only briefly when they are mentioned as queens or exempted from military service. Nowhere is there an explanation of what happened to mothers; they simply are not mentioned again. Some scholars have tried to fill in this gap in Hobbes's narrative by noting that Hobbes says that women give up maternal right by submitting to men either for protection or as a result of coercion. As such, maternal right becomes paternal right, which then gets codified by marriage laws in civil society, and women cease to play

a role in theory. In Hobbes's 'just so' story of the origins of the commonwealth (either historical or theoretical), men gain the upper hand and move into the political state as the heads of households.

Unsurprisingly, this 'just so' story has drawn much attention from feminist critics. These critics are aware of what Hobbes says about natural equality and maternal right; but they nonetheless condemn Hobbes because they see him as justifying and reinforcing patriarchy, not as simply explaining it.⁸ Of course, there is a way in which a patriarchally organized society *is* justified on Hobbes's account. If the people in positions of authority are keeping those they rule safe, then their rule is justified. Hobbes sees *de facto* power as justified. Clearly, from a feminist perspective, this is an unappealing part of Hobbes's theory; however, it is important to note that he does not give a justification of patriarchal power *as such*. If women were in power, they would rightfully rule as well.

Hobbes's discussion of the right of succession is also revealing. In considering who should inherit the throne if the sovereign dies without specifying an heir, Hobbes says:

Among children, males are preferred to females; at first perhaps because usually (though not always) they are better equipped to manage great affairs and especially wars; but later when it has become a tradition, as a matter of not going against the tradition; hence the *Father's* wishes are to be interpreted in their favour, unless a different tradition or other sign explicitly counters it. (*DC* 9.16; see also *EL* 2.4.14 and *Lev* 19.22)

To rephrase: in the beginning maybe males were usually, but not always, better at ruling especially when it came to warfare, but now male children are preferred because it is a tradition. The 'fact' that political societies have mostly been formed by men is invoked a number of different times to explain the dominance of men in the civil state (e.g., *DC* 8.6). This is not exactly a ringing endorsement of patrimonial succession or male rule. Moreover, while he says here that "males are preferred to females," recall that the opposite is true for the Amazons who insist on keeping their female offspring but relinquish the male. Hobbes, thus, recognizes that the choice of a male heir to rule rather than a female heir is merely a matter of custom (cf. *Lev* 19.21).

Hobbes on Sex, Marriage, and the Construction of Gender

While Hobbes's immediate endorsement of any conventions that have been entrenched as law leads him to sanction patriarchal right in most civil societies, this principle has further consequences that are far more interesting. Consider, for example, his views on marriage. The traditional patriarchal marriage between one man and one woman, with the woman taking a subservient role, was the convention with which he was most familiar. However, he denies any basis for this practice in natural or divine law, and he readily acknowledged that marriages (and other sexual relations) could take a variety of other forms, all equally legitimate by nature. He insists on the moral legitimacy and lawfulness of polygamy (*Lev* 21.18) and pagan marriages, where a couple committed for only one year (*DC* 14.10). Unsurprisingly, these statements caused great dismay among his contemporaries (e.g., Hyde 88). Behind this view of marriage lies an even more radical picture of human sexuality.

Hobbes claims that, in the state of nature, "all sexual unions were licit" (*DC* 14.9) and that people's relations were governed only by "natural lust" defined as "love of persons for pleasing the sense only" (*Lev* 6.1). We have no reason to assume that monogamy would be the norm in such a condition; and, moreover, there is no reason not to suppose that in the state of nature, women would be just as sexually autonomous and free *by nat-*

ure as would men. This latter claim gains further confirmation in noting that the images of Amazon women are of sexually independent agents. The former claim gains further support from Hobbes's insistence that paternity will not be known in the state of nature unless the woman reveals it.

Both the rejection of any natural normative constraints on sexuality and the radical conventionalism about sexual morality seem to be at least consistent with—and more likely to follow from—Hobbes's basic philosophical commitments, specifically from his insistence that goodness and badness do not inhere in objects themselves.

The desires and other passions of man are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions that proceed from those passions, till they know a law that forbids them—which till laws be made they cannot know. Nor can any law be made, till they have agreed upon the person that shall make it. (*Lev* 13.10)

No desires or actions are morally praiseworthy or condemnable until the law makes them so. Thus, while Hobbes seems to assume natural heterosexuality, describing the "indefinite desire of the different sex, as natural as hunger" (*EL* 1.9.15), he also admits the possibility of homosexual erotic attraction, characterizing Greek homosexuality as conventional, referring to it as "the use of that time" (*EL* 1.9.17). Hobbes seems compelled by the logic of his own principles to recognize appropriate sexual behavior (like appropriate family structure) as a matter of custom. We should note both that custom was not necessarily normative for Hobbes (but was so only if implicitly sanctioned as law by the sovereign), and that this view was in marked contrast to condemnations of homosexuality, polygamy, etc. in his day (and ours) that were putatively based on natural law and/or scriptural authority.

This is not to say that Hobbes thinks that there are no gender differences, or that men and women are interchangeable for all interesting purposes. In fact, on a number of occasions, he invokes stereotypes to suggest that men are generally stronger, braver, and more fit to rule. Consider the two most egregious examples:

- (1) Men are naturally fitter than women for actions of labour and danger. (*Lev* 19.22)
- (2) Generally men are endued with greater parts of wisdom and courage, than women are ... Not but that women may govern, and have in divers ages and places governed wisely, but are not so apt thereto in general as men. (*EL* 2.4.14)

These remarks seem to suggest that Hobbes harbored beliefs about the inherent superiority of men. The first passage is unequivocal in this regard, while the second passage indicates a general tendency—a kind of displacement of the bell curves that is compatible with many women being superior to many men. What are we to make of this kind of textual evidence?

To begin with, such claims appear relatively infrequently and they are often qualified. As we saw above, in his explanation of male succession, Hobbes seems to emphasize the contingent nature of the preference for male heirs: it was *in the beginning* that men *might* have been taken to be *generally* better than women at *one particular aspect* of ruling, namely, warfare. Moreover, many of the additional stereotypes that one might expect to see in this regard are, somewhat surprisingly, absent. There is no hint that women are incapable of rational thought or moral virtue, concerned only with gossip and other trivialities, fit only to serve the domestic and sexual needs of men. Hobbes also rejects the possibility of witchcraft, so he never even entertains the idea that women have supernatural evil powers. In fact, he rarely references the feminine, or qualities of women. Indeed,

he only makes two explicit claims about the qualities of women as such: "dangerous duty" (i.e., going to battle) is not expected of women, and women tend to weep more often than men.

A careful look at this latter claim is instructive. In his long catalog of the passions, he says,

Sudden dejection is the passion that causeth *WEEPING*, and is caused by such accidents as suddenly take away some vehement hope, or some prop of their power; and they are most subject to it that rely principally on helps external, such as are women and children. (*Lev* 6.43)

This may seem at first glance to indicate that Hobbes viewed woman's nature as most of his contemporaries did, seeing women as overly emotional. However, for Hobbes, the reason that women tend to weep more is best understood as a result of their social position rather than as an inherent quality. He says that it is because, like children, they are dependent on others for their well-being; that is, they "rely principally on helps external." But it is clear that Hobbes does not attribute this property to women *naturally*: women in the state of nature do not come across as dependent or weepy (consider their Amazonian incarnation). Unlike children, who cannot help but depend on external help, the fact that women must do so is, and must be, a contingent matter. Of course, Hobbes does not seem to appreciate the depth or the radical nature of his own commitments to the social construction of femininity. Nevertheless, such commitments are implicit in many of his discussions and seem to follow from his general understanding of human psychology. Adopting the starkest form of empiricism, Hobbes explains that our minds are originally like "white paper" ready to be imprinted by education and custom (*EL* 1.10.8). This suggests that whether one is prone to crying or to daring is quite possibly a result of what we might now call socialization. More importantly, something that was (and perhaps still is) regarded as natural may be explicable in terms of the organization of social and political power.

It seems, then, that Hobbes has resources with feminist potential, though he may not recognize them as such. Ultimately the picture we get from Hobbes includes an image of natural woman, independent and strong, exemplified by the Amazons. We get no images of what women are like in civil society, save the occasional reference to queens and this association with weepiness, which for Hobbes is not a natural quality. But, on Hobbes's account, the invisibility of women, like their weepiness, is itself a contingent matter: the result of social structures that have emerged out of a historically contingent situation (i.e., "for the most part" fathers not mothers founded commonwealths).

Still, we must not read too much into Hobbes; he simply does not give us enough to go on to determine whether or not he believes that there is a biological basis for sex differences and if so what they are. He clearly denies that the Aristotelian and natural law traditions provide a plausible foundation for differences between the sexes. However, this does not rule out some other mechanistic explanations for sex differences that are general enough to be significant. Importantly though, it would not matter on his account if there were such differences. Recall that his thesis about the natural equality of status among people does not depend on denial of such differences, and he insists that *acknowledging* others as equal is a law of nature. Moreover, the kinds of talents and abilities that Hobbes suggests are more often found in men—physical strength and courage in battle—might explain their rise to dominance in the state of nature where one must always be ready to "contend by battle" and "force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues" (*Lev* 13.8, 13). But by the seventeenth century, sovereigns are no longer in need of these capacities; and the qualities that Hobbes identifies as being important for ruling well—the ability to

make and enforce laws directed at the public good, a predisposition to resist flattery and corruption, prudent judgment concerning the appointment of counselors—are not ones that Hobbes thinks predominate in men. According to A. P. Martinich, Hobbes thought very highly of Queen Elizabeth and many of his laudatory remarks about female sovereigns might have been motivated by the “memory of Elizabeth’s glorious reign” (311). But Hobbes’s clear admiration for Queen Elizabeth does not seem to be in spite of, or because of, her female sex. For Hobbes, most of the differences between men and women will be explained by socialization; biological differences between the sexes, even if they do exist, would simply not be relevant to his views about effective sovereignty.

It seems fair to say, then, that, even accounting for Hobbes’s occasional invocation of gender stereotypes, his portrayal of women is a far cry from the dominant view of women in seventeenth-century England: women as naturally inferior and subordinate, inherently emotional and irrational, properly only used for their domestic and sexual services. Moreover, at a minimum, many of his views on gender are such that they fit well within a feminist framework (at least one of the liberal variety), and this is surely an aspect of his theory that makes him more attractive (or at least more interesting) from a contemporary perspective.

Short Biography

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Notes

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¹ Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments.

² A note on terminology: I do not use the word ‘gender’ in a technical sense. That is, I am not using it deliberately in a way to differentiate it from biological sex.

³ Among philosophers and intellectual historians who specialize in the study of Hobbes, there is surprisingly little time devoted to his views on gender. For example, most of the major books on Hobbes published in English in the past forty years do not even have an entry in their index for women. Of course, nothing follows immediately from this fact, but it is indicative of a general trend in the literature. While some take note of Hobbes’s unusual and seemingly progressive remarks about women, and a few devote a paragraph or a couple of pages to the subject, the vast majority of work on Hobbes does not attend to gender. Hobbes does not say very much about gender, but time has been devoted to interpreting topics on which he says far less. Hobbes has also been largely ignored in the growing body of work by analytic feminist philosophers on major figures in the history of philosophy. To give an example, Genevieve Lloyd’s 2002 well-known anthology, *Feminism and the History of Philosophy*, has no paper devoted, even in small part, to Hobbes. The few exceptions to this trend will be referenced in my discussion below. Note also that The Pennsylvania State University Press is putting together a volume called *Feminist Interpretations of Thomas Hobbes*, edited by Nancy Hirschmann and Joanne Wright.

⁴ Pateman's canonical work is her 1988 *The Sexual Contract*, but she also develops the central idea in a series of articles and most recently in a book she coauthored with Charles Mills entitled *Contract and Domination* (2007). Much of the early work on Hobbes on gender—which takes its cue from Pateman, Okin, and the like—treats him as sexist pure and simple, and there are many who still follow in this vein, including Pateman herself. As the body of scholarship on the topic has developed, however, a number of more sophisticated and nuanced (but still very critical) analyses have emerged. For especially good examples, see Hirschmann 2008, Schochet 1998, Smith 2002, and Wright 2004.

⁵ Of course, how gender was understood in this period is complicated and nuanced, and regional, religious, and class variations need to be taken into account; however, this generalization is useful in seeing the ways in which Hobbes wrote about gender set him apart from his contemporaries.

⁶ For nice attempts to reconstruct this argument on Hobbes's behalf, see Hirschmann 35–44 and Schochet (1975) 225–43.

⁷ *Considerations upon the Reputation, Loyalty, Manners, & Religion of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury Written by himself*. By way of LETTER to a Learned Person. London: Printed for William Croom, 1680, 40.

⁸ For example, Hirschmann has recently claimed that, "The fact that Hobbes eschews the naturalistic patriarchal arguments offered by James and Filmer, but nevertheless ends up in a place similar to such patriarchalists in terms of the form of the state and of marriage, suggests that he believes that such forms are good, but must be constituted manually and forcibly maintained" (72). Also see Coole 193–7, 201–7 and Schochet (1967) 427–45.

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