pers the letter was found (Vitoria, *Relecciones sobre los Indios y el derecho de guerra* [with two letters and two other short texts] [Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe Argentina, 1946], 27–29). Arcos's use of the term was to identify and in no way pejorative.

65. "Even by the late sixteenth century British commercial practice, and the legislation defending that commerce, were actively treating the African as a form of sub-human; a species of property, or a simple commodity." Walvin, *Black Presence*, 10.

66. James Walvin, *Black and White: The Negro and English Society, 1555–1945* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1973), 38.

67. See Reiss, "Calculating," 155–56.

68. See Vitoria's letter mentioned in note 64.

69. Juan Suárez de Peralta, *Tratado del descubrimiento de las Indias (Noticias históricas de la Nueva España)*, ed. Teresa Silva Tena (Mexico City: Dirección General de Publicaciones del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1990), 77, 78.

70. When Lord Chief Justice Mansfield settled the famous case of James Somerset by denying his colonial owner a right to seize and ship him to Jamaica for sale, he called on "positive law," which "in a case so odious as the condition of slaves must be taken strictly." Somerset could not be taken from England, since "tracing the subject to natural principles, the claim of slavery can never be supported here. The power claimed by this return was never in use here: or acknowledged by the law" (full verdict in Folarin O. Shyllon, *Black Slaves in Britain* [London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Race Relations, 1974], 108–10). Shyllon says that Mansfield was just following "mediaeval common law" (121, 123). He was not. He appealed to positive law and natural principles. This case, capping Granville Sharp's persistence in seeking a clear legal test of slavery in England, was the first legal success of the English antislavery movement. One might see Descartes and the Somerset case as bookends to two centuries in which even the law accepted racist arguments (they were not bookends to philosophical argument or popular claim).

71. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 10–11.

| 2 |

Race in Hobbes

BARBARA HALL

In this chapter I examine the question of whether Thomas Hobbes, considered the founder of modern political philosophy, was a racist. One naturally expects the political or moral theorist to embody the principles she espouses—be they noble or ignoble. And, when she does not, one tends (correctly or incorrectly) to discredit not only her but her argument also. For even though the truth or merit of a theory is logically severable from the theorizer herself, proof of an inconsistency between the words and the acts of an individual tends to diminish her in some respects. It is with this perspective in mind that I examine whether Thomas Hobbes, whose political theories advanced the ideals of justice, equality, and natural freedom, believed that certain peoples were inherently less equal and free than others.

The question "Is X a racist?" is a very difficult one to answer. The term "racist" is ambiguous. Thus, my co-worker and I may both agree that the boss is a racist, yet upon examination, it might well be that we have widely varying notions of what a racist actually is. Compounding this difficulty is the fact that the whole notion of biological race and racial classification is founded upon principles that science has long maintained are untenable. This latter concern poses no real problem, however, since there is little controversy regarding the notion that race *does* exist as a socially constructed phenomenon. Thus, it is still valid to maintain that Y is a member of race S or that some person X is or is not a racist.

As to the problem of ambiguity, I shall take a generalist approach. My aim is to determine whether or not Thomas Hobbes maintained any beliefs about the subordinate status or worth of certain people based on their racial designation. If he harbored any such beliefs, they would represent an inconsistency between his actual beliefs and his egalitarian ideology. I offer no technically sound definition of the terms "racist" or "racism." Rather, I give what I believe to be the least common denominator in the common usage of the terms: I define "racism" as the view that some groups of people are inherently intellectually, culturally, or socially superior or inferior to other groups owing to some biological or genetic characteristic they do or do not possess. By extension, a racist is anyone who

holds such views. I shall begin by examining Hobbes's early years for the possible germination of racist ideas.

EARLY HOBBES

Soon after graduating Oxford in 1608, Thomas Hobbes was hired by Lord Cavendish, Earl of Devonshire, as a tutor for his son William.[1] Hobbes and the younger Cavendish were about the same age and became friends and companions as well as teacher and student.[2] This relationship lasted for twelve years. One of William's financial investments was in the Virginia Company. In 1606, the Virginia Company (officially designated as "The Treasurer and Company of Adventurers and Planters of the City of London for the First Colony of Virginia") received a charter from English monarch James I to establish England's first permanent settlement in the New World—Jamestown. The company was founded as a profit-making venture, and it solicited for investors to become members of the company by purchasing shares.[3] The bitter misfortunes besetting these first English settlers are well documented in the history of the Jamestown colony.[4] Unable to return a profit, the company was dissolved in 1624. Hobbes had a relatively short four-year involvement with the Virginia Company. It occurred when he was still a fairly young man of thirty-four and not yet the political thinker he was later to become. Hobbes became a shareholder in the Virginia Company when William gave him one share on June 19, 1622.[5] Hobbes's single share most likely precluded him from exercising any great influence on important decisions regarding the direction and purpose of the company. However, there are two reasons why Hobbes should not be relieved of moral responsibility with respect to the business dealings of the Virginia Company. The first is that Cavendish did have substantial holdings in the company, and the relationship between him and Hobbes was such that one would be naïve to presume that Hobbes would have had absolutely no influence upon his thinking.[6]

Secondly, even if Hobbes had minimal dealings with the Virginia Company and his one share was merely a token, one may hold that an individual is still morally responsible for any deliberate support he gives to a morally questionable venture. Thus, culpability arises from the *fact* of the support more than from the degree of it. (So, for instance, those who looked the other way during Nazi atrocities may be less morally compromised than the storm troopers, but the "scales of iniquity" teeter unbalanced rather than tip over.) Therefore, if any Virginia Company business involved the slave trade, then Hobbes is to some degree morally answerable whether he owned one share or one thousand shares. So, did the company have any ties to the burgeoning market in human flesh?

As I stated earlier, the Virginia Company's goal was to establish a profitable settlement in the New World. Although the members of the company realized that there would be a very great need for laborers in order for the venture to become profitable, at this point in time the British were ambivalent about slave labor. They relied instead on the labor of indentured servants. There were several reasons for this. One was that the Spanish, who had settlements to the south, relied heavily on the labor of enslaved Africans. The British, having a great enmity for the Spanish, felt that "if that's what the Spanish do, we shouldn't do that, we'll do it differently. And, in fact, our English heritage demands that we do it differently, to prove that we're better than those enslaving Catholics."[7]

A second reason was that the Jamestown settlers were too poor to invest in slaves or servants. They did, however, make use of whatever help came their way. Thus, "when a Dutch ship shows up in the Chesapeake in 1619 with several dozen Africans whom they were unable to sell in the West Indies, they're bought and put to work in Jamestown, just the way indentured servants [from England] were being bought at the docks and put to work."[8]

Though the lot of the Virginia Company settlers was a difficult one, there is nothing to indicate that African slave labor was ever utilized during the eighteen years the company was chartered. Thus, the only known avenue by which Hobbes might have been directly linked to the slave trade (the Virginia Company) yields no such conclusion.[9] Of course the fact that Hobbes's business dealings with the company do not reveal ties to the slave trade suggests nothing regarding any racist views he may have possessed then or later come to harbor. Absent indications of a direct connection between Hobbes and the slave trade, one must look to the ideas he expressed in his works if one is to uncover evidence of racist dogma.

HOBBES ON RACE

Hobbes wrote virtually nothing concerning race. In his seminal treatise *Leviathan* he presented his hypothesis concerning the development of civilized man. When he described the state of nature and the "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" lives of its denizens, reason would lead one to assume that he was advancing a generalized theory about the social and political evolution of mankind en bloc. He seemingly did not purport to describe the condition of only *some* groups of humans, or to provide a view of how only *some* societies came about while allowing that others possibly evolved through totally different means.[10] For if he had meant to suggest this, then his theory's application would be limited and dubious without some parameters or criteria to demarcate and justify its restricted application. Assuming then that Hobbes meant for his thesis to be a broad hypothesis

about the progression of man from a condition of unrestricted barbarism to one of civil subjugation, he articulated what he took to be the standard for almost all, if not all, peoples. Hobbes began chapter 13 with the following statement:

> Nature hath made men so equall, in the faculties of body, and mind; as that though there bee found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind then 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 himselfe any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he.*[11]

Here, Hobbes articulated what can only be taken to be an expression of the fundamental equality of all men and the basic superiority of none. If Hobbes did in fact presume some qualitative differences between peoples regarding their capacities for advancement, then he was being unnecessarily disingenuous in making this claim. Certainly, he could have equally well put forth the thesis that some peoples do in fact have inferior or lesser capacities than others. At this point in history, a view such as this would likely have provided welcome confirmation to nascent ideas supporting slavery and New World conquest.

But perhaps Hobbes did make just such a claim! A bit further down in this same chapter 13 of *Leviathan* Hobbes wrote:

> It may peradventure be thought, there was never such a time, nor condition of warr as this [every man against every man]; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world: but there are many places, where they live so now. For the savage people in many places of *America*, except the government of small Families, the concord whereof dependeth on natural lust, have no government at all; and live at this day in that brutish manner, as I said before. Howsoever, it may be perceived what manner of life there would be, where there were no common power to feare; by the manner of life, which men that have formerly lived under a peacefull government, use to degenerate into, in a civil Warre.[12]

As a philosopher interested in the presociety state of man, it is surprising that Hobbes wrote so little concerning those groups whom Europeans considered the "uncivilized" peoples of the Americas and other non-European regions. This particular reference to the peoples of the Americas represents his most concrete description. And, not coincidentally, it is to this section that accusations of Hobbesian racial bigotry refer.

This particular paragraph has led to several interpretations of Hobbes's stance regarding the state of nature. Some individuals have interpreted Hobbes's words as indicating that the state of nature was not a description of an actual state of

mankind but instead a rhetorical fabrication or a heuristic device to convey to people the necessity for an authority figure.[13] The problem with this view is that Hobbes specifically refers to areas wherein there are actual "savages" toiling in the state of nature. Thus Hobbes apparently does make distinctions between groups of peoples concerning the origins of their societies. His description of life in the state of nature illustrates that such a condition represents man in his least evolved state. And Hobbes is clearly suggesting that such a horrible state did not exist in all parts of the world; some societies experienced a superior form of development—the state of nature was merely symbolic for them.[14] This was not true, however, for the "savages" in America. As Charles Mills writes:

> The non-European state of nature is thus *actual*, a wild and racialized place that was originally characterized as cursed with a theological blight as well, an unholy land. The European state of nature, by contrast, is either hypothetical or, if actual, generally a tamer affair, a kind of garden gone to seed, which may need some clipping but is really *already* partially domesticated and just requires a few modifications to be appropriately transformed—a testimony to the superior moral characteristics of *this* space and its inhabitants.[15]

Mills continues:

> So a nonwhite people, indeed the very nonwhite people upon whose land his fellow Europeans were then encroaching, is his only real-life example of a people in a state of nature. . . . [T]here is a tacit racial logic in the text: the *literal* state of nature is reserved for nonwhites; for whites the state of nature is *hypothetical*. . . . [W]e know that whites are too rational to allow this to happen to *them*. So the most notorious state of nature in the contractarian literature—the bestial war of all against all—is really a *nonwhite* figure, a racial object lesson for the more rational whites whose superior grasp of natural law will enable them to take necessary steps to avoid it and not have to behave as "savages."[16]

Mills understandably interprets Hobbes's use of the term "savages" as pejorative. Historically, the savages have all been Africans or Native Americans or other dark-skinned non-European people. There are savages and then there are respectable, cultured folks. Traditionally, this latter group has been Anglo-Saxon. So Mills correctly assumes that any group to which the appellation "savage" has been applied is not a group that is viewed as desirable by most individuals.

Anyone wishing to deny that Hobbes has cast aspersions on the natives in America must present evidence that his use of the term "savage" reflected no disapproval. This is what Tommy Lott attempts to do:

> Hobbes's view of the "savage people in many places of America" mentioned in *Leviathan* was based on ethnographic accounts available to him. But his use of terms such as "barbarian" and "savage" was influenced more by his study of the classics. . . . His reference to the Native Americans as "savages" suggests a presocial paradigm of rugged individuals living outside of civil association. He sometimes employed the term "savage" to indicate a relationship between social dissolution and the presocial condition, specifically that the social dissolution of a civil war is a return to the presocial condition. That this "natural condition" lurks beneath the artificial bond of political obligation supplies the major thrust of his argument for absolute sovereignty.[17]

He continues:

> Hobbes does not use racial concepts or terms such as "negro" and "african" in a negative fashion to imply inferiority. . . . [H]e uses the term "savage" generally to refer to groups of people that have not developed a civil society. When he refers to Native Americans in this regard, sometimes he includes the ancient Germans and the early inhabitants of other "civil countries" in the same statement. The best reason for believing the dichotomy of "savage" and "civil" with which Hobbes operated was not racialized is his appeal to these historical and contemporary examples to provide corroborating evidence of his view of human nature—a view he applies universally.[18]

Lott claims that Hobbes's "savages" are not racially determined. For him, Hobbes's use of the word seems to be essentially value neutral. The term represents a "natural condition." And certainly if European peoples can be savages, then there is no reason for believing that Hobbes's use of the term in reference to Native Americans is racially motivated. Nevertheless, the term, even if not racially motivated, is laden with negative connotations.

Savages are not simply different from people in society. They are less developed. They are lesser. Hence, they are worse and so represent an unenviable group. Thus, the fact remains that Hobbes thought Europeans were superior. This view may not reflect a racist ideology, but it does smack of an uncomfortable bias. The focus on the terminology of Hobbes, however, does not shed any light on the real problem—that Hobbes presumed that some European societies did not evolve from the wretched and lowly state of nature, while at the same time he took for granted that peoples whose social development did not mirror the Europeans' were examples of people in a real state of nature. As Matthew Kramer states:

> A credible reading of the words [quoted] would take them to imply that a sheer hell of chaotic and relentless war did precede the founding of civil institutions, but that that dreadful plight did not emerge everywhere. . . . [The] quoted words might suggest that ruthless conflicts of everyone against everyone have clearly not turned up at the origins of *all* schemes of civil life; certain schemes may originate from the occupying of lands by people who very smoothly work together, perhaps as the colonial agents of a strong mother country.[19]

So, the question remains, why did Hobbes distinguish between Europeans and non-Europeans and then decide that the societies of the former may well have not arisen from such a depraved state of nature while the peoples in the latter groups were, even at that time, still lingering in such a state? Was his attitude based on a barely disguised racial bias upon which he formulated his views regarding social evolution?

Lott attempts to address Hobbes's belief in the retarded societal growth of non-Europeans and the reasons for it. He quotes a passage from Hobbes's *Elements*, in which he claims Hobbes denies that European development in the arts and sciences indicates their superiority over the "inhabitants of divers places in America."[20] According to Lott, "[t]here is an important reason Hobbes explains this difference in terms of social development and environmental influences rather than in terms of greater intelligence."[21]

The state of nature for Hobbes, Lott argues, represents a point on the social evolutionary scale—one through which all humanity came and one into which human societies shall one day again dissolve. It may be debatable whether Hobbes believed that the state of nature (a representation of man in his least developed state) existed for all human societies but at different times for each, or whether some societies were so "civilized" that it was difficult for him to imagine them as ever having been as lowly as the different groups of non-Europeans appeared to him to be. What does seem to be clear, though, is that if Hobbes was not expressing his prejudice against non-European peoples in claiming that they and not Europeans were products of the state of nature, then his theory is, as I suggested at the beginning of this section, limited and dubious—for he does not offer any justifications that warrant such a view. Perhaps Hobbesian racial bias may be more apparent in his views on conquest.

HOBBES ON CONQUEST

It would not be difficult to suggest that Hobbes's imperialist beliefs were not based on the assumption that the conquered peoples were lesser humans than

their conquerors. There is no suggestion that he subscribed to the view that conquest was mandated by the inability of culturally, socially, and intellectually inferior natives to be self-governing, while colonization and resource appropriation benefited not just the conquerors but also the hapless indigenous population. And Hobbes did not sheath his views in the guise of religious beneficence.[22]

Racism, however, need not always be affirmative in nature. One need not always do or take some action X to demonstrate a racist attitude or disposition. Sometimes one may demonstrate such an attitude or disposition by one's failure or inaction. With this in mind, let us examine Hobbes's views on conquest.

According to Hobbes, conquest is mandated by physical necessity: overpopulation. Lands are to be targeted based on the sparseness of their populations and the vastness of their territories. This view reflected the basic European attitude regarding the settlement of the Americas. Colonies in the New World were justified and even mandated given the European perspective of these "new" lands and their inhabitants.

This mandate held (1) that the Americas were unclaimed and available territories; and (2) that European nations were entitled (if not divinely obliged) to lay claim to these areas. For example, the British crown had claimed the Virginia territory, so Virginia Company shareholders took for granted that they were entitled to it and all of its resources. The Jamestown settlers had no qualms about occupying and securing the region from the natives who were living there. Noel Malcolm writes:

> For a colonial company the most important theoretical issue was, of course, that of legitimizing the settlement and appropriation of land. The simplest argument was that the colonists held their territory by right of conquest. This appears to have been the official view of James I. . . . [However, some individuals] did not recognize that any right or title was to be gained by conquest alone. . . . Although the Virginia Company emphasized, in all its public pronouncements, the importance of its work in the conversion of Indians, its members were reluctant to claim that this was sufficient to justify conquest. . . . [I]n the end, no extensive attempt at a solution to the problem of legitimation was ever offered by the Virginia Company; there was a tendency to regard the actual colonization as a fait accompli and to justify its continuation on the grounds of converting infidels.[23]

The fervor with which these beliefs would be put into practice throughout the New World indicates that the Europeans did not deny the basic property rights of the native peoples so much as they denied them basic human rights. And there is no evidence that Thomas Hobbes found the Virginia Company's venture morally

problematic. Indeed, not only was Hobbes was not troubled by the notion of imperial conquest but he viewed it as right and necessary at times. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes gave what he believed was a justification for the conquest and colonization of foreign lands:

> The multiple of poor, and yet strong people still encreasing, they are to be transplanted into Countries not sufficiently inhabited: where neverthelesse, they are not to exterminate those they find there; but constrain them to inhabit closer together, and not range a great deal of ground, to snatch what they find; but to court each little Plot with art and labour, to give them their sustenance in due season. And when all the world is overcharged with Inhabitants, then the last remedy of all is Warre; which provideth for every man, by Victory, or Death.[24]

The only "insufficiently" populated countries known to Hobbes and others at the time were the lands in the New World. Hobbes is blatantly advocating what Hannah Arendt calls his "philosophy of power."[25] The European nations had a perfect right, according to Hobbes's theory, to capture these "insufficiently populated" lands and to push the native inhabitants onto whatever undesirable land was left. This scenario could be a script for the southeastern Indians' Trail of Tears and every other territorial usurpation imposed on the native population by the U.S. government.

The passage advocates a virtually total lack of respect for the sovereignty of independent nations in the face of an overcrowded and more powerful aggressor nation. Hobbes seemed to view sovereign nations essentially as provisional events—colonies in waiting. Lest we forget, though, Hobbes did not view the lands in the Americas as nations at all, sovereign or otherwise. They were not nations because there was no (recognizable European) form of government in these lands.[26] And there was no government because the populations had not evolved to rise up out of the state of nature. This attitude, seen in light of the increasing European and particularly British predilection for conquest, does not cast Hobbes in a favorable, egalitarian light. He did not accept the notion that the inhabitants of New World territories had a right to exist as independent and self-determined entities; he thought they were not advanced enough.

But the question I am addressing is whether Hobbes was a racist—whether he believed in the inherently inferior status of certain peoples based on their genetic heritage. So far it has been somewhat plausible to suggest that though Hobbes thought that non-Europeans were "savages" (in essence, because they did not mimic European society), that some Europeans were probably never savages, and that savages were rightfully subject to the will and force of conquering (presum-

ably European?) nations, it is still possible that his beliefs were not racially motivated. The final area of Hobbesian exposition to which we should turn in order to examine whether he held racist views is the area of slavery.

HOBBES ON SLAVERY

Slavery represents conquest: the conquest of the individual. And Hobbes recognized this. He did not put into writing his views of the African peoples or the transatlantic slave trade into which they were forced. However, in discussing the conqueror's dominion over the conquered he did shed light on his views regarding slavery.

In discussing the difference between a servant and a slave Hobbes says:

> Dominion acquired by Conquest, or Victory in war is that which some writers call Despotical . . . which signifieth a *Lord* or *Master*; and is the Dominion of the Master over his Servant. And this Dominion is then acquired to the Victor, when the Vanquished, to avoyd the present stroke of death, covenanteth either in expresse words, or by other sufficient signes of the Will, that so long as his life, and the liberty of his body is allowed him, the Victor shall have the use thereof, at his pleasure. And after such Covenant made, the vanquished is a Servant, and not before; for by the word *servant* . . . is not meant a Captive, which is kept in prison, or bonds, till the owner of him that took him, or bought him of one that did, shall consider what to do with him: (for such men, (commonly called Slaves,) have no obligation at all; but may break their bonds or the prison; and kill, or carry away captive their Master, justly:) but one, that being taken, hath corporeall liberty allowed him; and upon promise not to run away, nor to do violence to his Master, is trusted by him.[27]

Paradoxically, a slave is captured by force but is *made* only by consent. According to Hobbes, a slave is someone over whom no other person can have any legitimate authority, and this is by definition. Legitimate authority can be conferred only via the consent of the conquered person to accept the dominion of the conqueror. However, once consent is given, that person ceases to be a slave and becomes a servant. Thus, no slave can consent to serve another, for when or if he does he can no longer be called a slave. The notion of a voluntary slave is contradictory. Hobbes's views on slavery may seem somewhat confusing because of his manner of distinguishing between a slave and a servant. A slave is someone whom a conqueror captures in his conquest of a foe. Hobbes states that the conqueror should either kill this person or keep him imprisoned. For though he had the power to capture and imprison the slave, he has no power that the slave need

respect. Thus, the slave may and actually must constantly attempt to escape and/or kill his captor. The irony and source of confusion stems from the fact that though the conqueror gains power over the death of the enslaved, he has no power over the life of the enslaved, absent the latter's choice to bestow it upon him.

According to Hobbes, the slave cannot acquiesce to his condition for a moment. He cannot indicate that he values his life, because if he does, he has thereby implicitly promised service to the master for sparing his life and he is a servant. At the same time, Hobbes believes that a slave may voluntarily surrender his natural right to freedom and become a servant. What this involves is the slave's implicit or explicit agreement to do the bidding of the captor. What the slave barters with is his life, since the captor already "owns" his death. The "deal" the captive makes is to give to the conqueror his life as a servant. Hobbes states:

> There are but three ways only, whereby one can have a dominion over the person of another. . . . The second is, if a man taken prisoner in the wars, or overcome, or else distrusting his own forces (to avoid death) promises the conqueror or the stronger party his *service*, that is, to do all whatsoever he shall command him. . . . Now he that is thus tied, is called *a servant*; he to whom he is tied, a *Lord*.[28]

The conqueror is entitled to do as he wishes with the slave qua slave and with the slave-turned-servant. The difference for the slave-turned-servant is that he has consented to relinquish his freedom and he now has no rights vis-à-vis his captor, certainly no right to try to escape.

> The "servant" had no rights whatsoever and was obliged to obey every command of his lord. For disobedience he might even be killed with impunity. He could be sold or conveyed as his master wished.[29]

As a slave, he was entitled, no, obligated to exhaust all means of escape to regain his freedom. Why? Because freedom is the natural state of man and if it is not voluntarily surrendered, then no laws can restrict a man's attempt to free himself from involuntary bondage.[30]

Hobbes's position on slavery might justifiably be used both in the defense of slavery and in an argument opposing the institution. While Hobbes condemns the unnaturalness of involuntary bondage, he also denies the existence of involuntary servitude. Thus, he sees a right and duty of the enslaved to fight and even kill to regain his freedom. At the same time, he views any slave who ceases to fight or struggle for however long as voluntarily surrendering his or her freedom forever and becoming a servant.

Hobbes's view of just who can be considered a slave and who a servant is almost mechanically rigid. In the context of the African slave trade, one may rightfully claim that because Africans were forcibly enslaved, Hobbes would contend that they had the right to employ whatever means they felt necessary to regain their freedom. But, there is a problem. Hobbes's involuntary slave literally had only two choices: to fight or to die. Any hint of submission to the captor would be taken as a capitulation of the slave's freedom. Hobbes was insensitive to human need and the survival instinct that could easily have mandated employing trickery or false, ostensible subservience to bide time and assess options for escape. And certainly Hobbes would (could) not have understood the vast majority of Africans who, kidnapped from their homes and brought to an alien land, having familiarity only with their captors, did not choose to die, but certainly did not choose to be slaves, and had no choice but to submit to the will of their captors.

Hobbes's view of slavery and enslavement was incredibly facile and unsophisticated. He would most likely have pronounced African enslavement to be a system of voluntary service. It was voluntary for those individuals who did not fling themselves over the sides of slave ships and voluntary for those individuals who, terrorized, dazed, and in shock, obeyed the directions of their captors to leave the ships in chains and step up to the auction block. But does all of this make Hobbes a racist?

HOBBESIAN RACISM

Hobbes was not a racist in the startling manner of some philosophers such as John Locke or Immanuel Kant. There were no obvious or glaring inconsistencies between his writings and his life. But, as I stated earlier, not all racism or racial prejudice is affirmative or obvious in nature. Sometimes individuals harbor beliefs and preferences that when viewed in their totality, rather than individually, suggest prejudice. And sometimes individuals further racist aims by failing to confront racist institutions or policies and practices as surely as if they had positively acted to enforce them.

Thomas Hobbes wrote about the natural freedom and equality of men during a time in which the African slave trade and the European conquest of the New World were in their embryonic stages. The evidence I have examined in this chapter indicates that he said little directly for or against these trends and that he likely would have sanctioned the former while justifying the latter. In spite of explanations or excuses to the contrary, such a person can justifiably be termed a racist.

NOTES

1. Noel Malcolm, "Hobbes, Sandys, and the Virginia Company," in *Great Political Thinkers*, vol. 2: *Hobbes*, ed. John Dunn and Ian Harris (Cheltenham, UK: Elgar, 1997). He did not become the Earl of Devonshire until a decade after this.

2. A. P. Martinich, *Hobbes: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19, 27–28.

3. There were two ways a person could become a member of the company. Those who wished only to invest money in the company could invest as "Adventurers" (stockholders). Individuals who traveled to the colony and lived there were designated as "Planter" members and given one share of stock each. http://ukonline.co.uk/lordcornell/va/via.html.

4. See, for instance, Carl Bridenbaugh, *Jamestown, 1544–1699* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

5. Malcolm, "Hobbes, Sandys," 262. The consensus was that Cavendish's gift was made not so much out of friendship for Hobbes as in an attempt at "vote packing." Voting at shareholders' meetings was done on the basis of one man, one vote. Someone with one hundred shares carried no more weight than someone with one share. There was a bitter ideological divide among shareholders regarding the direction of the company, and Cavendish could depend upon Hobbes's support when issues came to a vote.

6. Hobbes would accompany and sometimes stood in for Cavendish at company meetings. Ibid.

7. See comments by Peter Wood, www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1i3054.html, the PBS website for "Africans in America."

8. Wood, www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1i3053.html.

9. In this respect, Hobbes was hardly on a par with John Locke who held quite profitable investments in the Royal Africa and the Bahamas Adventurers Companies, both of which operated as transatlantic slave-trading companies.

10. I shall discuss the debate regarding this point momentarily.

11. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (London: Penguin, 1968), 183 (chap. 13) (emphasis added).

12. Ibid., 187.

13. Matthew H. Kramer, *Hobbes and the Paradoxes of Political Origins* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 64–66.

14. Superior because not having the state of nature is superior to having it.

15. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 46–47.

16. Ibid., 66.

17. Tommy L. Lott, "Patriarchy and Slavery in Hobbes's Political Philosophy," in *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*, ed. Julie K. Ward and Tommy L. Lott (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 71.

18. Ibid., 72.

19. Kramer, *Hobbes and the Paradoxes of Political Origins*, 65.

20. Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, chap. 13, para. 3.

21. Lott, "Patriarchy and Slavery," 72.

22. For a thoughtful examination of the imperialist mind-set, see Charles Mills's *Racial Contract*.

23. Malcolm, "Hobbes, Sandys," 366–68.

24. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 387 (chap. 30).

25. Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: World, 1958), 143. This is basically the view that "might makes right"—that power is and ought to be the only justification necessary for acts.

26. There is evidence that Hobbes, in fact, was aware of governing bodies among some tribes in America.

27. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 255 (chap. 20).

28. Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive or The Citizen: Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society*, in *Man and Citizen*, ed. Bernard Gert (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), 205–6.

29. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 117.

30. The notion that one can be forced or obliged to pursue what is natural to one is somewhat oxymoronic.

[3]

Metaphysics at the Barricades

Spinoza and Race

DEBRA NAILS

Spinoza is simultaneously the philosopher who speaks least of race and racism—dead long before the systematic development of the social institution of racism in eighteenth-century Germany[1]—and the philosopher who provokes the deepest and most difficult philosophical questions about race: What *is* race? Does race exist? What *is* and what *ought* to be the right of a race? Can imposed differential treatment of a race be justified? Because the reader is required to infer the answers from Spinoza's several texts, the pursuit of his positions can be baffling and frustrating.[2] And that task is complicated by at least two further problems: (1) his two political treatises are not entirely compatible with one another, the later one abandoning his earlier notion of social contract,[3] and (2) the contemporary secondary literature on the political works has been steering in recent years away from consensus toward anarchist and global democratic readings on the one hand, and classical liberal readings on the other.

In the brief treatment of Spinoza on race that follows, section 1 provides some biographical and historical context. Section 2 recounts in schematic form how Spinoza is interpreted in influential recent work on his political theory. My aim in these first two parts is to equip readers with the overview and tools necessary to investigate further and independently the topic of race in Spinoza. The so-called *philosopher's philosopher* is as difficult as he is iconoclastic, but no philosopher repays study so richly, and his views are no less to be reckoned with now than they were when he first set them out. My own view of Spinoza on race, sketched in sections 3 and 4, takes an unusual path through the material: I privilege Spinoza's ontology rather than his political theory. It is his ontology, I argue, that undermines all forms of racism while preserving the right of a race to do what is within its power.

Friends and strangers have been generous with their suggestions and clarifications. I have attempted to identify their help where I used it below; but William Levitan, Dick Peterson, Andrew Valls, and Win Wilkinson sprinkled their help throughout.