

# A Survey of the History of Western Political Thought on Political Authority

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## Abstract

In the non-political field, authority is a social relationship based on personal needs and a psychological mechanism realized by respect. This determines that authority is characterized by fragmentation and potential (Chen, 2021). However, the inherent characteristics of authority are obviously disadvantageous to the rulers who pursue the general obedience of their subjects. Therefore, in the political field, authority must be transformed into a universal and unified political authority. Max Weber believes that authority is the possibility that a group of people will obey certain or all orders (Webber, 1978: p. 212). This also affected the academic research on political authority after the Second World War, which has never been divorced from Weber's empirical research (for instance, Frank Furedi's *Authority: a Social Study* and Richard Sennett's *Authority*). In fact, reviewing the history of Western political thought, we can find that there are many political thinkers who try to think about political authority from a normative point of view, including Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, and so on, but their understanding of political authority and the means of legalizing political authority are different. This paper believes that Hobbes' understanding of political authority is closer to its essential attribute and plays an important role in the history of Western political thought, so it is necessary to focus on it. Of course, due to the limitations of the times, Hobbes' view of political authority also has some defects, so it has been questioned by thinkers of different schools of contemporary thought. By examining Hobbes' view of political authority, Yves Simon, the representative of Neo-Thomism, reconstructed the relationship between authority and liberty, and made a strong positive defense for political authority. Based on this, this paper has three purposes: first, by tracing back to the history of Western political thought, make a normative interpretation of political authority; second, to interpret the core meaning of Hobbes' view of political authority; third, survey Yves Simon's contemporary exposition of politi-

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cal authority.

## Keywords

Political Authority, Reason, Good, Liberty, Thomas Hobbes, Yves Simon

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## 1. Introduction

We are no strangers to authority. No matter in social life or political life, there are various forms of authority. Generally speaking, the first time we experience authority is in the family in the private field. Parents have Affectionate Authority for their children. In society, authority is not limited to the family. In the social field, experts from teachers, doctors, judges, and other industries also have authority, that is, Professional Authority. There is no doubt that in the family or social field, the authority relationship presupposes a Non-Compulsory Hierarchical Structure, that is, the authority object is not forced to obey the authority subject, but the unequal relationship is recognized and acquiesced by the authority object. Therefore, based on intuitive cognition, we know that authority has the connotation of obedience, and the owner of authority has the excellent ability to meet the needs of others in a certain field. In this regard, Hannah Arendt believes that the mark of authority is Recognition or Respect for the owner of authority and his outstanding ability without questioning (Arendt, 1961: pp. 92-93). However, the authority develops in different fields, often with the characteristics of Fragmentation and Potentiality. Fragmentation can be expressed as follows: the authority of parents will not become the authority of doctors, and the authority of doctors will not become the authority of judges; potentiality can be expressed as follows: a person who has not been involved in a lawsuit has not experienced the authority of a judge, but this does not mean that he will not be involved in a lawsuit in the future, so the authority of a judge is potential. In the political field, all rulers hope to have a political authority that can be universally obeyed by the masses, so as to stabilize the political situation and effectively achieve the goal of goodness, so as to protect the long-term interests of the majority. In the absence of political authority, it is extremely difficult to achieve the above goals. Perhaps rulers can only achieve the goal by forcing the people to obey by means of violence that damages the honor and increases political costs. But the fragmentation and potentiality of authority obviously hinder the achievement of the expected effect.

In fact, throughout the history of Western political thought, we can find that many thinkers hope to solve the problem from a normative perspective. They try to legalize the essential characteristics of political authority according to different foundations. Based on reason, Thomas Hobbes believes that driven by the consciousness of self-preserving, human beings legitimize political authority through the relationship of Representation-Authorization. This paper holds that

this view is the most representative view of political authority in the age of enlightenment, but with the arrival of the democratic era, it has been questioned by many schools of thought, including Yves Simon, a NeoThomists. Through rethinking Hobbes' view of political authority, Yves Simon coordinated the relationship between authority and liberty, effectively solved the above problems, and made a strong positive defense for political authority.

Based on this, this paper traces the origin of political authority and analyzes the view of political authority represented by Thomas Hobbes in modern times, and the rethink and reconstruction of this view of political authority by Yves Simon, in order to form a comprehensive understanding of political authority.

## **2. The Origin of Political Authority: Tracing Back to Ancient Rome**

In ancient Greece, people inevitably had to face the necessity of living. Politically, "the freedom of 'good life' rests on the domination of necessity." (Arendt, 1961: p. 116). Only those who have the citizenship to participate in the public affairs of the city-state have personality, can think independently, and get rid of necessity. Therefore, when Athenian citizens participate in political life, they are neither restricted by the necessities of life nor dominated by others, because they are rulers themselves and can achieve the common good through proper autonomy. Therefore, it is difficult to form political authority for city-state citizens who do not need to rely on others at all.

The concept of political authority originated in ancient Rome. Etymologically, authority comes from the word "auctoritas", while "authoritas" comes from the verb "augere" and is translated as "augment". What is "augment" is the Foundation of Rome. At the same time, the root word "auctor" of "auctoritas" is actually translated with "author" (it also has the meaning of founder), it refers to people's spirit being integrated into the building or political system, which is the initial Foundation, thus stimulating the development of the whole community. In short, for the great glory and immortality of Rome, the efforts of the community should aim to "augment" the Foundation of the founders. In this way, the historical tradition is no longer the object of remembrance like the Greeks, the Romans regarded it as a continuous glory (Taminiaux, 2006: pp. 174-175). But as Cicero, an ancient Roman thinker, said "while power resides in the people, authority rests with the Senate." This shows that the political authority as the Foundation in ancient Rome had no "potestas" and "potentia". Here, "potestas" refers to when you hold a specific position, you have the right and obligation to exercise the "potestas" belonging to the position according to the law (Oakeshott, 2012: p. 143). "Potentia" force refers to a physical and realistic force. In this way, even though the Senate has a considerable say in political decision-making, the "augment" is only similar to a suggestion or proposal, not a command and control, and is a kind of moral binding force. At this point, the binding force of political authority is closely linked with the binding force of Religion:

In ancient Rome, religion took the form of “auspices”. “Auspices” does not predict the future, but indicate whether the Gods approve of the concrete actions of mortals, and “they ‘augment’ and confirm human, but do not guide them.” (Arendt, 1961: p. 117) Political authority comes from adding the founder’s Foundation and has moral binding force, while the role of religion is to make every action contain the past spiritual power through the creation of sanctification as the beginning, thus forming the binding force of belief. Here, in Rome, the stable legal power of the trinity of “Authority-Tradition-Religion” was formed: authority came from the Foundation of the founder, so the tradition was regarded as a great existence, and religion sanctified tradition, so that people felt great respect and piety for political authority. Here, political authority went beyond the simple relationship of demands in ancient Greece, making Rome far from being a loose alliance united for defense, nor a so-called absolute autocracy in modern times (Mommson, 2005: p. 58). Authority achieved the goal of universality in the political field without resorting to force, which also became an indispensable condition for the stable political order of Rome. Even in the Middle Ages, the secular state and the Catholic Church retained Romanesque authority, only changing the meaning of religion and creation within the trinity. Therefore, Roman political authority is a kind of faith authority with strong moral binding without resorting to “potestas” and “potentia”.

### 3. Hobbes’ New Interpretation of Political Authority

In the age of fathers of the early Middle Ages, Christian thinkers constructed two purports spiritual and secular. The spiritual purport that the church pursues eternal salvation, is the city of God; the secular purport is that the secular regime maintains order and justice and is the city of the world. In the fifth century, Pope Gelasius I interpreted this concept as “the doctrine of the two Swords”. It is, in effect, an acknowledgment of the political authority of both church and secular regimes, a moderate notion reflected in the fact that most people tend to be negative about extreme claims made by either side of the argument. The Church cannot by any other means become an independent and self-governing body or institution. The secular authorities, however, have no power to judge church members who have committed crimes and must turn them over to church courts. In essence, this kind of political authority follows the principle of “Redde Caesari quae Sunt Caesaris, et quae Sunt Dei Deo”, and people are subject to the two kinds of political authority respectively. In the late Middle Ages, with the deepening of the contradiction between the secular state and the church, in the dispute between the two powers, the monarch and the Pope claimed to be the legal representatives of their own God, and they both declared that the judgment of the good came from God’s instructions. In this way, the paradox of Theology is exposed: both the monarch and the Pope require that personal obedience is absolute, and political authority is the supreme judgment on what kind of the good to pursue. However, it is clear that a devout Catholic will not absolutely

obey the monarch, nor will the confidants of the monarch absolutely obey the Pope. When the contradiction between the two is deeper and deeper, the psychology of disobedience is pushed to the extreme, the political authority of the Trinity was gradually deconstructed, and the result was that the political order had basically ceased to exist because of the miserable religious war that lasted for hundreds of years. So how do find a legitimate basis to rebuild the new political authority? In this regard, Hobbes reconstructed political authority on the basis of reason, and gave new content to political authority.

### 3.1. The Basis of Reconstructing Political Authority: Reason

“Without the terrour of some Power, to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our Naturall Passions, that carry us to Partiality, Pride, Revenge, and the like.” (Hobbes, 1651: p. 103). In this way, human beings will fall into a dangerous state of people are like wolves face to wolves. Therefore, seeking a new legitimate foundation to build a new political authority has become the unswerving goal of modern thinkers.

*Leviathan* is undoubtedly a monument in the history of political philosophy. It is widely acknowledged by scholars that, the core question of *Leviathan* is, what makes authority possible, or what are the legitimate conditions for political authority. Therefore, understanding Hobbes’ political philosophy becomes a key link to solving the above problems. Therefore, we must start from the starting point of Hobbes’ political philosophy, that is, Reason.

In Hobbes’ works, reason is divided into several types, among which Natural Reason, Private Reason, Public Reason, and Right Reason are closely related to this article. First of all, Hobbes believes that Physical Force, Experience, Reason, and Passion are human natural endowments (Hobbes, 1996: p. 21). The reason here refers to Natural Reason, which means that every natural person has the same fear of sudden death. Under this condition, everyone will plot against each other, and daily natural life cannot be safely spent. Therefore, the first meaning of Natural Reason is to realize self-preserving. Private Reason refers to individual Natural Reason.

Hobbes believes that in the natural state, everyone’s ability to add in the two levels of body and mind is basically equal. For example, Jack is more powerful than Alice, but Alice is more quick thinking than Jack, so Jack and Alice cannot achieve the absolute advantage of suppressing each other, but the equality of reason makes both of them have a sense of conceit that “he is not as good as himself”, and the sense of conceit forms vanity driven by passion. If they want to achieve only one goal at this time, and they cannot share it, they will become enemies. Therefore, if Private Reason is used as the standard for individuals to judge things, then self-preserving cannot be realized at all. Hobbes’ countermeasure is to construct a public power, so as to transform Private Reason into an unrestricted Public Reason representing the majority. So what are the conditions for this transformation? Here, Hobbes’ fourth reason type, namely the Right Reason

son, appears.

In *Leviathan*, Hobbes believes that reason and language are inseparable. In the sense of human senses, the reason is reckoning and reasoning, which refers to adding and subtracting the sequence of universal nouns recognized as signs or indicating ideas. Here, sign refers to reckoning, and indication refers to that human beings prove reckoning through language, and then turn the results they find into a general rule called a Theoremes or Aphorismes (Hobbes, 1651: p. 28). In short, human beings not only have the ability of reckoning and reasoning in numbers, but also can spread rational reckoning and reasoning to the whole world through the power of language. This kind of reason is different from the Natural Reason for talent. It is the Right Reason, which is obtained through the hard efforts of the day after tomorrow. This needs to meet three conditions: firstly, reasoning from the established principle proved by experience; secondly, do not be misled by the senses; thirdly, language words must be clear and not ambiguous (Zhao, 2019). When reason meets the above conditions, it can draw a reasoning that everyone will recognize, and make it possible for most people to reach a consensus. Therefore, Hobbes believes that the highest expression of this correct reason is Law. Therefore, in the natural state, the Law of Nature is the Right Reason and the general rule of reason. Hobbes generally summarizes its criterion as “Whatsoever you require that others should do to you that do you to them.” (Hobbes, 1651: p. 81). Through the Law of Natural, individuals are willing to transfer their rights to form contracts, which are signed on the basis of verbal mutual commitments. Therefore, the role of the Right Reason is to provide the psychological conditions for natural individuals to reach a consensus and form public power. However, Hobbes believes that this is not enough, because “a lust for power” is the most common desire in human nature. All symbols and possessions that can become power can win the respect of others. The condition for respect is to make others obey with physical force. Therefore, if there is no strong guarantee for the contract, everyone will continue to fight for power and power, so the contract will become empty talk. The problem is that the contract formed by the transfer of rights will not form a coercive force. How to solve this problem? Here, Hobbes introduced the most critical link of his view of political authority that the Representation-Authorization Theory.

### **3.2. The Legitimization of Political Authority: Representation-Authorization**

Hobbes thinks that the premise of human being is that his words and deeds either emanate from himself or are represented by others, the former known as Naturall Person, and the latter as Artificiall Person. If words and deeds are presented by a Naturall Person himself, he is the author or owner. To represent is to act or represent himself or another. To represent someone is to assume his character or act in his name (Hobbes, 1651: p. 99). Thus, the representative relationship comes into being: when the words and deeds of the personification are

recognized by the represented, he becomes the agent, and the person who acknowledges the words and deeds of the personification is the authorized person, and the agent acts according to the authorization. Hobbes believes that, just as property rights can be controlled, his right to take any action is the authority. Therefore, authorization is always understood as the rights to do any action. To act according to authorization is to be entrusted or permitted by the person with the rights. In essence, authority means that B, as an agent, has the right to represent A, the author or owner of words and deeds, and the legitimacy of such representation comes from A's authorization. At the same time, Hobbes also believes that after the authorization is completed, A must be responsible for B's behavior. If B destroys the Law of Nature, A shall also be responsible for the consequences, and B does not have to bear the responsibility. Hobbes created political authority through a complete relationship of Representation-Authorization: in order to get rid of the natural state, the atomized individual agrees to authorize all its rights and power to the personality that can represent the majority of collective will. This behavior is not simple agreement or coordination, but to truly unify the will and judgment into the personality and acknowledge all his words and deeds, which is the sovereign. At this time, the sovereign can use all the power to achieve the universal obedience of the subjects by intimidating everyone's will, stabilizing the internal order, and resisting the external invasion. The group composed of these universal obedience subjects is the country, the immortal God, and the great Leviathan.

### **3.3. The Reversal of Ends and Means: The Subversion of Hobbes' View of Political Authority**

In fact, in the introduction of *Leviathan*, Hobbes thought that Leviathan was made by Artificiality. In the opinion of Steven Smith, Artificiality reflects Hobbes' ambition for political creation: dating back to ancient Greece, the mode of Artificiality originated from nature, and human beings were on a mission to pursue its essence. Hobbes hoped to establish a new political science, allowing us to become creators of political life through Artificiality. The highest form of Artificiality is the reason, which is related to how humans get the desired results and produce the desired utility. In this way, science becomes a tool for us to transform and dominate nature. In other words, the political authority of the creative process, whether it's authorized representative—link, or about the establishment of the order after signing the letter, or how to limit the sovereign, terminally comes from Artificiality, due to the reason is the highest form of Artificiality, thus Hobbes view of political authority is an authority of reason. It destroyed the faith-based authority of the ancient Rome, thus, the relationship between the good and power was reversed:

Ancient thinkers regarded the good as the terminal goal, which was objective, while power was only a means of pursuing the good and an accessory of the good. Since the good is objective and power is only a means, it is not necessary for political authority to resort to force. What it should do is use tradition and



belief to declare that it has the power to judge which kind of life is good. However, Hobbes believes that because of the infinity of desire, the pursuit of the most common desire which is power has become the only purpose. Therefore, the supreme good does not exist at all. The good is only a means to enhance power, and it is human's private subjective desire. Therefore, the good has become a means from the end; power has become an end from a means. Here, Hobbes transformed the good into the product of human subjectivity, which can be judged independently in the private field through human reason. Therefore, power "gets rid of the restriction of the good and becomes an independent and free thing, and human nature has become an eternal movement of power growth and decline." (Wu, 2006). In this way, tradition and belief can no longer sustain human actions in the political field, and political authority has obtained a new interpretation here, that is, in order to achieve self-preserving, human beings have legitimated the political authority with the color of force on the basis of reason through the link of Representation-Authorization. On the one hand, this kind of political authority has reversed the relationship between the good and power as ends and means. On the other hand, force is integrated into political authority, which makes political authority full of reality, and then subverts the ancient Roman faith-based political authority.

#### 4. Simon's Rethinking of Hobbes' View of Political Authority

Yves Simon is one of the three major representatives of Neo-Thomism. He is regarded as one of the most important political philosophers of the Twentieth Century. As a Neo-Thomasist, Simon held on to his nostalgia for traditional ideas, so his frequent use of words such as faith and the common good and his skepticism of modern rationalism highlighted his academic purport. But he does not reject the various values generated in the political field after the Disenchantment of the World, and has a unique understanding, pointing to our deepest concern for the modern world. Simon's defining thought is undoubtedly his deep understanding of authority, *Nature and Functions of Authority*; *A General Theory of Authority* both shows his unique thinking on authority, he tries to construct a contemporary political authority that harmonizes obedience and liberty, which provides a new normative perspective for us to understand political authority. In these two books, Simon does not mention Hobbes, but his exposition of authority undoubtedly carries on a hidden ideological dialogue with Hobbes and rethinks his political authority view. This paper argues that there are two reasons for Simon to rethink Hobbes' view of political authority: first, Hobbes destroyed Teleology, and Simon, as a Neo Thomast, must defend the legitimate position of Teleology; second, there is no clear boundary between political authority and the force constructed by Hobbes, which may lead to a certain misunderstanding, that is, political authority is force itself. In this regard, on the issue of authority, Simon and Hobbes launched a hidden and cross era ideological dialogue.



#### **4.1. Political Authority is Discovered Principle of the Good**

Hobbes believes that self-preserving is everyone's survival goal. In order to achieve this goal, we must use reason to authorize our own power to the sovereign to form political authority. At the same time, people should create politics through Artificiality, so as to become the dominator of nature. Simon believes that the well-being of the community depends on two factors: first, the legitimate boundary of political authority can be accurately defined by community leaders; second is that citizens recognize that their liberty cannot exceed a certain limit. Thus, our task that is "inquiring into the nature of this ability to delineate the boundaries of one's field of action the bound and our task lies in the nature of the ability to delimit the boundaries of the field of action" (Simon, 1948: p. 3). Whether we can use this nature depends on "the virtue of prudence" or "practical wisdom". No matter the prudence of leaders or subjects, they have to make some judgments that cannot be found by reason and are indecisive in the objective environment, but this does not meet the requirements of prudence, because "the truly prudent man, the true man of action, wants to have his prudence enlightened by principles." (Simon, 1948: p. 3). In short, the Law of Necessity is contained in contingency, and the key is that we should discover and find the principle of goodness that guides human action. Political authority is the principle of the good that can be found, which is an absolutely good thing based on goodness. Therefore, "considered in its essential functions, as identical with the prudence of society in its collective action, authority is the everlastingly good principle of the social unity in the pursuit of the common good." (Simon, 1948: p. 28). So, political authority does not originate from the Representation-Authorization relationship, nor can it be artificially created by reason.

#### **4.2. Force and Persuasion Are the Means of Political Authority to Achieve the Common Good**

Because since Hobbes believes that the good is a completely subjective judgment, the good used to be the end has become a means for people to compete for power and continuously enhance their comparative advantage, that is, power (force) has become the end from the means, and the purpose of creating political authority is to gather all people's power to achieve self-preserving. Simon holds the basic position that the good is the purpose, and believes that authority and force are different: force is the use of physical forces in Hobbes' works, such as arresting offenders. At the same time, force is the opposite of persuasion that produces moral effects, but neither of them is authority itself. Thomism holds that the premise of the existence of the community is joint action, so authority is a kind of power that can be applied to all people to take common action (Simon, 1980: p. 48), and the state can be formed from this. Simon, following the theory, believes that force is the unique characteristic of the state and is unconditional. Only in this way can universal action in the political field be guaranteed. Its legitimacy depends on whether it can help to realize the good education of human

beings: paternal persuasion can discipline people who have a tendency toward the good, but cannot discipline people who have a tendency toward the evil. At this time, we can only use forced means to prevent them from being evil. Although this means deviates from the requirements of virtue, it is conducive to its development. When the external behavior conforming to virtue becomes a habit, the good will can easily replace fear. Therefore, in the long run, the force will promote the transformation of human's "habitual automatism" to "voluntariness", thus providing conditions for mild persuasion; At the same time, persuasion can also form a kind of psychological compulsion by means of propaganda, comfort and even warning, so as to make people obey, and form common action. It can be said that force and persuasion promote each other in the case of good (Simon, 1948: pp. 51-56). Therefore, neither of them can constitute authority itself, but a means by which authority hopes to achieve common action to achieve the common good.

### 4.3. The Substitutional and Essential Functions of Political Authority

Hobbes' view of political authority is rooted in human defects, that is, the evil of human nature is not conducive to self-preserving, so it is necessary to rely on the universal power of reason to make people reach a consensus and form political authority. But if the relevant defects of human beings disappear, the authority will also disappear. Can children or people with disabilities properly govern themselves? Simon expressed negation, and believed that this logic makes authority only have "substitutional functions", and the key lies in how to explore the "essential functions" of authority. Here, Simon takes a community composed of adults with reason and complete good will, and investigates the requirements put forward by the common life of the community as the argument condition. This community is not a hypothetical natural state. It really exists in social life. For instance, if the family, in a small community, has special needs for relocation, how can family members judge where to relocate? Simon believes that there are two types of judgment. The first is the "scientific judgment" of objective things, such as rational mathematical reasoning: one plus two must be equal to three; the second is the "practical judgment" that human beings have no right or wrong in common actions. Similar to the problem of family relocation, cities A and B have comparative advantages. Therefore, there is no right or wrong in judging which city to go to. But relocation as action will be subject to the decisions of family members. However, there is no steady principle that could always ensure that people will reach unanimity (Simon, 1948: p. 16). In short, even if family members are close to each other, differences will certainly exist, and unanimous decisions are entirely accidental. However, if a person (such as the oldest person in the family) or a group (such as the group composed of a father and mother) has "one judgment will prevail" and thus forms a "leap of confidence", then he or they means having authority. Looking at the political field, groups

trying to achieve the common good through common action must have a steady principle to integrate divergent decisions to form “one judgment will prevail” and then unified action. In Simon’s view, this principle is political authority and the “essential functions” of authority. Therefore, political authority is a necessary principle for the community to achieve the common good.

To sum up, Simon believes that political authority is first discovered as the absolutely good principle of goodness, not created by reason, nor is it the relationship of Representation-Authorization. Secondly, political authority is not a physical force of force itself. The force of violence and moral persuasion are essentially meant to enhance authority. The key lies in how to coordinate the relationship between the two in the political field, so as to avoid becoming a tool used by private groups for Totalitarianism. Thirdly, political authority does not originate from some defects of human nature. It can only rely on the power of reason to reach a consensus on common action. On the contrary, it is a kind of “one judgment will prevail” in the sense of good. It can enable people to voluntarily take unified action in order to achieve the common good. Therefore, in Simon’s view, the political authority with “essential functions” is a principle to promote the common good, not evil or the low-level good. However, if we put political authority in the real political field, how to determine the best form of governance based on it?

## **5. The Theory of Political Authority Applicable to Contemporary Times**

For us in the democratic era, only by finding a theory of political authority that is applicable to contemporary times can we determine the best form of governance. Therefore, in addition to emphasizing the importance of authority, Simon always cares about the issue of liberty. He believes that human beings’ pursuit of liberty makes authority necessary, and authority can also achieve autonomy, which is also the most essential function of democratic government (Simon, 1993: p. 71). At the same time, unrestricted authority and liberty are false ideas. The fundamental task of every social community is to combine the power of authority and liberty. In short, to reconstruct political authority and make it adapt to modern democratic politics, one must deal with the relationship between political authority and liberty.

Hobbes set aside a place for liberty in the construction of political authority. Hobbes believes that human liberty in the natural state is like the mechanical movement of objects, which refers to a person that “in those things which by his strength and wit he is able to do, is not hindered to do what he has a will to.” (Hobbes, 1651: p. 129) who can do what he is willing to do without hindrance in what his power and wisdom can do. In short, human beings are liberal to move out of their own will, but one may not have the ability to achieve liberty. After signing the contract, even if the subjects are shrouded in chains, they are still liberal, because the political authority of the sovereign stems from the will of

human beings to realize self-preserving, which is formed through the relationship of Representation-Authorization. In this way, Leviathan makes up for the atomic individual's lack of the ability to realize the basic liberty that is natural rights. In Hobbes' works, the relationship between political authority and liberty is not one of ebb and flow, but a basic boundary for everyone's "negative liberty". It is true that Hobbes' understanding of the relationship between authority and liberty is not the object of Simon's writing, that is, "authority means the dispersion of liberty" or "the progress of liberty means the retirement of authority". However, in the absolutist countries that Hobbes wants, there is not much space for individual autonomy. On the contrary, autonomy is the core of Simon's construction of the relationship between authority and liberty.

Simon, following Jacques Maritain's thinking on liberty in the modern world, believes that liberty can be divided into "initial liberty" and "terminal liberty". "Initial liberty" originates from the rational nature of human beings. It can be used correctly or wrongly, and also has the right to choose good or evil. It is expressed as "perfectio mixta". If we try to improve our own good nature, we can only choose good things at this time. In Simon's view, the process of obtaining this kind of liberty is the internalization of law. Law can regulate it from the inside, so as to organically combine the good nature with legal norms. This liberty is "terminal liberty does not mean only freedom of choice, but also autonomy." (Simon, 1948: p. 16). It is a "perfectio simpliciter simplex", which belongs to God and is the supreme glory of rational nature. If we take the "terminal liberty" as the starting point, the conclusion is that "the progress of liberty is rightly identified with the very progress of man and society" (Simon, 1948: p. 42). Then, as far as the "essential functions" of authority and "terminal liberty" are concerned, they are neither the opposite state of either this or that, nor the passive inaction state described by Hobbes, but the complementary state. Here, Simon extended two principles to illustrate their complementary state: the Principle of Authority and the Principle of Autonomy. The Principle of Authority means that the well-being of the community should depend on universal and unified action, which needs to be guaranteed by higher institutions in the community; the Principle of Autonomy refers to those who can achieve the goal of proper autonomy through individuals or small associations, so the goal should be left to them to achieve themselves (Simon, 1948: p. 45). In this way, a low-level structure can achieve proper autonomy through autonomy, which is not only conducive to the realization of their common good, but also to the formation of those active citizens with spiritual temperament described by Tocqueville. At the same time, the autonomy of the low-level structure balances the political authority of the high-level structure, making it avoid becoming an absolutist state in which Hobbes' sovereigns have supreme authority. In this way, the political authority has the practical judgment that holds the upper hand to unify the universal action of the community, avoiding the potential and fragmented influence of the authority itself. At the same time, individual autonomy fills the danger that the

political authority may fall into “enslaved rule”, thus promoting the community to achieve the ideal state of the supreme good in the process of complementarity. Thus, the theory of political authority applicable to contemporary times and the resulting best form of governance were constructed by Simon.

## 6. Defects of Simon’s View of Political Authority

The best form of governance determined by Simon’s view of political authority also has some defects.

The first defect is that, in *The Moral Limits of The Criminal Law*, Joel Feinberg argues that autonomy can be divided into Autonomy as Capacity, Autonomy as Condition, Autonomy as Ideal, and Autonomy as Right (Feinberg, 1989: pp. 28-51). Therefore, Simon’s autonomy model is the Autonomy as Ideal described by Feinberg. It is the proper self-management of people after correctly choosing good. The realization of this moral ideal not only requires various conditions and abilities, but also depends on the good moral environment of the community. However, it seems difficult to explore the modern world and seek a generally good moral environment. Charles Taylor thinks that the fading of moral horizons is one of the hidden worries of modernity (Taylor, 2003: p. 6). Therefore, the autonomy model, which complements the “essential functions” of authority and “terminal liberty”, is more like a utopia.

The second defect is that, after the Disenchantment of the World, the disintegration of the traditional monistic values has led to an irreconcilable dispute between multiple values. Due to the loss of unified standards, the debates among the Gods are endless and incommensurable. Therefore, the political authority should at least provide the most basic guarantee for the diversified choices of different groups and prevent one legitimate value from overriding another. But how to provide protection? What about the specific form? What are the limits of protection? Simon did not specify. At the same time, pursuing the supreme good with the universality of political authority and declaring what is good through “one judgment will prevail” will inevitably impact people’s Authenticity, because when we obey authority, it means that authority will make decisions on our behalf at least at some time. At that time, how much room does authority leave for personal dignity? Or how to coordinate the relationship among authority, liberty, and dignity? This is an important issue that Simon left to the academic community to ponder.

## 7. Conclusion

Reviewing the history of Western political thought, there are many thinkers who have discussed the issue of political authority, such as John Locke, Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, and so on. However, it is impossible to discuss one by one, but after the above discussion, we should have formed a more systematic understanding of political authority.

Firstly, political authority originated in ancient Rome. It did not rely on “po-

testas” and “potentia”, but through the Trinity Structure of Authority Tradition Dependence, it realized the obedience of the general morality and belief of the people. However, the trinity of political authority structure was broken in the power struggle between religion and the monarch, which led to political order chaos.

Secondly, Hobbes’ political authority based on reason is the most representative of the age of Enlightenment. On the one hand, Hobbes legitimately introduced political authority, which provided a strong guarantee for the realization of universal obedience of the people. At the same time, Hobbes emphasized that political authority should not infringe on the private sphere, so as to protect personal liberty. On the other hand, Hobbes destroyed classical Teleology and regarded political authority as a means to an end. At the same time, Hobbes believes that political authority is created by Artificiality based on reason. In this way, political authority has a strong reality, and lets human beings smoothly walk out of the dangerous state between people like wolves to wolves, which is of progressive significance.

Thirdly, in the democratic era, the defects of Hobbes’ view of political authority are also obvious. First, it overemphasizes the role of reason in political authority. Therefore, “when people live only for a kind of necessity, they will no longer be completely human, but become an appendix of something dead.” (Duan, 2017) Second, the boundary between political authority and political power (force) is too vague, which may lead to a misunderstanding that political authority is power itself. Third, because the subjects can only obey Leviathan, the space for individual or community autonomy is too small in the democratic era.

Therefore, the contemporary thinker Yves Simon rethinks the authority from a normative perspective, reexamining the rational authority represented by Hobbes from the standpoint of Neo-Thomism, freeing the political authority from the necessity shackles of reason, and finding another way to discover the “essential functions” of authority. On this basis, Simon reconstructs the relationship between authority and liberty, and determines the best governance form of contemporary western politics, that is, the complementarity of the “essential functions” of “terminal liberty” and authority, which will inevitably lead to the debate about authority, liberty, and dignity. But in any case, Simon provides us with a new perspective different from the traditional one to study political authority. It can help us rethink the limits of reason, the meaning of good, and the boundaries of force in authority, which has produced great academic value.

Based on this, taking a panoramic view of the history of Western political thought and examining political authority from a normative perspective will help us form a more comprehensive understanding of political authority.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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