

**NOEL MALCOLM**

**(University of Oxford)**

**‘Hobbes and Sexual Desire’**

**Monday 5 November, 5 p.m.: Old Combination Room, Trinity College**

**The speaker**

Noel Malcolm is a Senior Research Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford. A General Editor of the Clarendon Edition of the Works of Thomas Hobbes, he has edited two of the texts in that series: *The Correspondence* (2 vols., Oxford, 1994) and *Leviathan* (3 vols., Oxford, 2012). He has also published a collection of essays on Hobbes’s life and works, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford, 2002) and a short book about a hitherto unknown work: *Reason of State, Propaganda, and the Thirty Years’ War: An Unknown Translation by Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford, 2007).

**The paper**

A long-standing tradition, started by anti-Hobbesian writers in the seventeenth century and perpetuated by literary critics in the twentieth, portrays Hobbes as intellectually responsible for the attitudes of Restoration rakes and ‘libertines’, especially in sexual matters. This claim is in conflict with some obvious features of Hobbes’s own attitudes to sexual licentiousness, as expressed in several of his works. At the same time, however, there were elements in Hobbes’s thinking about desire and sin that might have been used to construct a pro-libertine position. This paper argues that in Hobbes’s own construction of his theory, these elements were nevertheless compatible with an account of what can be described as a socialising or civilising process.

**Texts by Hobbes**

*The Elements of Law* [1640], ed. F. Tönnies (London, 1889)

*De cive* [1642; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 1647], ed. H. Warrender (Oxford, 1983)

*Leviathan* [1651]. ed. N. Malcolm (Oxford, 2012)