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Common abbreviations

EW *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, edited by Sir William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1839–45) 11 volumes, reprinted as *The Collected Works of Thomas Hobbes*, (12 volumes, with an Introduction by G. A. J. Rogers (London and Bristol: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1992).

LW Thomæ Hobbes, *Opera Philosophica Omnia*, 5 volumes, edited by Sir William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1839–45) reprinted with an Introduction by G. A. J. Rogers (Thoemmes Press: Bristol, 1999).

L *Leviathan*, London, 1651. Page numbers are usually given to this first edition in subsequent editions and used in this volume unless otherwise indicated.

C *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, edited by Noel Malcolm (The Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1994).

3 Hobbes and historiography

Why the future, he says, does not exist

Patricia Springborg

> The *Present* only has a being in Nature; things *Past* have a being in memory onely, but things *to come* have no being at all; the *Future* being but a fiction of the mind, applying the sequels of actions Past, to the actions that are Present; which with most certainty is done by him that has most Experience; but not with certainty enough. And though it be called Prudence, when the event answereth our Expectation, yet in its own nature, it is but Presumption.[1]

1 Hobbes and the temporality of modernity

Philosophers tell us that the future does not exist, a tautology, but one that is nevertheless true. If the future is that abyss that we face every morning upon waking, then the present is the fleeting moment of the instantaneous and everything that lies behind that is the past. Riding the crest of the wave, which is the present, into the abyss, which is the future, depends on sensible expectations about the outcome of our actions and some understanding of how the present is governed by the past, in particular our own pasts. It is noteworthy that the ancients, to whom we credit the development of ethics as we know it, rarely spoke about the future. Nor did they indulge in the romantic fantasy that has become the hallmark of our times, of the future as a storehouse of goods to be unlocked by technology and enterprise.[2]

The ancient Greek view about ethics and responsibility was disarmingly simple. It rested on a view of the instantaneous present as a small window of opportunity in which all those choices on which our mortality - and immortality - depend, must be made. The future, to the extent to which it must be figured as the *terminus ad quem* of human action, the brink of the abyss, was not only the void into which the heroism of the present was hurled. It also had a quasi-human shape: the *bios* of the human life-cycle. Structures and collectivities face death and dismemberment, the ineluctable processes of corruption and decay, just because they are human constructs, suffering from the finitude and mortalism that is characteristically human.

Because the ancients took this disarmingly simple view of the relation between past, present and future, their ethics tended toward democracy. If the contours of history conformed roughly to common knowledge about causality and its characteristic paths, as Aristotle percipiently remarked, the common citizenry were repositories of more knowledge, more virtue and more wisdom than any, even a Platonic, elite. There was no good reason *not* to empower the people; and the middle classes, classic repository of sound common sense, could justly be claimed the backbone of all stable regimes. Moreover, Aristotle understood what Plato overlooked, that to *know* the good was merely academic. To act on it was the particular virtue of the ethical life. In such a capacity for virtue common people, faced every day with choices constrained by scarcity and pain, excel.

When Hobbes slipped so early into the epistemology of *Leviathan* the claim that the future does not exist, he reintroduced a pagan perspective. For it was Christianity which had cast the present in the mould of the future. Aristotelian teleology - a theory about things in themselves - harnessed to eschatology - a doctrine about 'last things' - created a terminus to Christian time towards which the present was directed. Hobbes's own theory of the Christian Commonwealth is jeopardized by a paradox like that later of Kant's, whose entire system is provisional, he admits, on 'the problem of *what we ought to do* if the will is free, if there is a God and a future world'.[3] Except that Hobbes sets out with a self-denying ordinance about the future. And yet Hobbes's conception of time-space boundaries does not radically depart from that of St Augustine, the great theorist of the *City of God* in Time - a caution never to overlook the degree to which Hobbes's apparently modern views in fact restate classical positions of the past, and positions that received orthodox ecclesiastical sanction. St Augustine, for whom the proposition that the future does not exist poses no self-denying ordinance concerning the kingdom of God to come, in fact cues us to the import of Hobbes's claim:

> What is by now evident and clear is that neither future nor past exists, and it is inexact language to speak of three times - past, present, and future. Perhaps it would be exact to say: there are three times, a present of things past, a present of things present, a present of things to come. In the soul there are these three aspects of time, and I do not see them anywhere else. The present considering the past is memory, the present considering the present is immediate awareness, the present considering the future is expectation. If we are allowed to use such language, I see three times, and I admit they are three. Moreover, we may say, There are three times, past, present, and future. This customary way of speaking is incorrect, but it is common usage. Let us accept the usage. I do not object and offer no opposition or criticism, as long as what is said is being understood, namely that neither the future nor the past is now present. There are few usages of everyday

> speech which are exact and most of our language is inexact. Yet what we mean is communicated.[4]

Augustine was signal in the distinction he assumed between propositional knowledge and the realm of faith. Only on such an assumption could his own Christian beliefs be reconciled with his metaphysics. Such a distinction between the realms of knowledge and the realms of belief must be assumed for Hobbes as well, if we are to take seriously, as I believe we must, his lengthy exegesis on the Christian Commonwealth in *Leviathan*, and his other religious writings, his intense debate with Bramhall on *Freedom and Necessity*, the *Narration Concerning Heresy* and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. And yet Hobbes's empiricism was deliberately secular in a way that Augustine's was not, founded on a theory of sensationalist psychology intended to cut history loose from the dogmatists. Drawing on his own early works on optics and theories of poetics that go back to the Greeks, Hobbes developed a theory of mind as the receptacle and processor of images. Since each wave of present sense experiences drives from the mind those that it displaces, history survives only in the relics of memory, he claimed. Left to chance history would survive in no true form at all. But raised to the surface of the mind through constant reiteration it has an artificial life, powerful despite its uncertain relation to things as they occurred.

Hobbes, for whom 'history concludeth nothing universally', denied to history the capacity for propositional truth, as he denied it to faith, but not simply on the basis of the superiority of philosophy as a deductive method. The incapacity of history is epistemic. In the eternal present of sense experience the past ebbs away.[5] It lingers in memory as the Gestalt against which the present is viewed. More specifically, it makes its appearance in the chains of causes that stretch up to the present. For sense perception is event-sequence based, involving assumptions about background and foreground, parameters of space and time necessary to isolate subject and object. Interest-driven individuals, who stretch back into the past for the background of their present experiences, project the present into the future as the storehouse of anticipated pleasures to be sought and pains to be avoided.

Seen in this way, the past is at the epistemic mercy of the present. And it may be deliberately invoked for projects whose success may stand or fall on how the past – that repository of event-sequences – is viewed. This is the point at which the past becomes history. For history is more than the haphazard collection of images that survives in the relics of memory. History lives up to its name as a story, and historians are those critically situated individuals who have the power to tell it.

But who empowers the historian? Although Hobbes denies to history the objectivity of the sciences, he expects honesty of the historian. This may seem paradoxical, but it can be explained in the following way. The sciences are objective by virtue of the regularity of observations guaranteed by the constancy of the object and of the physiology of perception. By putting the matter delicately like this, Hobbes avoided the necessity of attributing the objectivity of science to the power of the object – something he explicitly denied as smacking too closely of Aristotelian teleology.[6] The reason why history concludeth nothing universal is because history never repeats itself exactly. In the laboratory of sense experience a constantly shifting universe leaves uncertain tracks. To pretend that history is an objective science would be to remove the cautions required of any observer of human affairs to guard against the predations of fortune and the unexpected.

So history concludeth nothing universal appropriately. By the same token, any given historical event-sequence is potentially instructive, and can be turned that way by the skilful historian. A minimum condition of the historian doing his job is that his account admit of that degree of truth which the writing of history admits. Like the observer at the Olympic Games, he must tell a credible story that speaks to his listeners in the nuanced colours and timbre that they expect to hear. This is where Thucydides so excelled, unequalled in his power to recreate in his readers the passions of the past,

> aim[ing] always at this; to make his auditor a spectator, and to cast his reader into the same passions that they were in that were beholders . . . these things, I say, are so described and so evidently before our eyes, that the mind of the reader is not less affected therewith than if he had been present in the actions.[7]

Thucydides's superiority lay in the subtlety with which his lessons are imparted, but lessons for all that they are subtle:

> Digressions for instruction's cause, and other such open conveyances of precepts, (which is the philosopher's part), he never useth; as having so clearly set before men's eyes the ways and events of good and evil counsels, that the narration itself doth secretly instruct the reader, and more effectually than can possibly be done by precept.[8]

In the taxonomy of virtues of historians and poets Hobbes lists in the preface to his translations of Homer,[9] justice and impartiality come fifth, and only fifth: 'For both the poet and the historian writeth only, or should do, matter of fact.' Before come significantly, first, discretion; second, choice of words in the construction; third, 'the contrivance of the story or fiction'; and fourth, 'the elevation of fancy', or the imagination. After come, sixth, 'the clearness of the descriptions'; and seventh, 'the amplitude of the subject'.

Between them these virtues stress 'the perspicuity and the facility of

construction', 'the elevation of fancy' and 'the perfection and curiosity of descriptions, which the ancient writers of eloquence call *icones*, that is *images*'.[10] For, as Hobbes concludes in the age-old terminology of *pictura poesis*:[11]

> a poet is a painter, and should paint actions to the understanding with the most decent words, as painters do persons and bodies with the choicest colours, to the eye; which if not done nicely, will not be worthy to be placed in a cabinet.

So Virgil, an imitator of Homer with whom Renaissance poetics dealt dismissively, too excelled in his capacity to recreate in a metaphor the *Weltanschauung* of an age:[12]

> And in an image is always a part, or rather a ground of the poetical comparison. So, for example, when Virgil would set before our eyes the fall of Troy, he describes perhaps the whole labour of many men together in the felling of some great tree, and with how much ado it fell. This is the image. To which if you but add these words, 'So fell Troy.' you have the comparison entire; the grace whereof lieth in the lightsomeness, and is but the description of all, even the minutest, parts of the thing described; that not only they that stand far off, but also they that stand near, and look upon it with the oldest spectacles of a critic, may approve it.

But do these virtues in and of themselves make any given history authoritative? At least for historians of his own day Hobbes would deny it, conceding this power to the sovereign only. And probably he truly believed it. Historians could not pretend to an omniscient point of view. The past was irretrievable in fact, but it could be simulated by the imagination revivifying relics and artifacts. For this reason Hobbes quite simply subscribed to Aristotle's principle: 'poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars.'[13] As Aristotle went on to explain: 'The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse - you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it really consists in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be.'[14] Words that might well have been spoken by Hobbes who, it should not be forgotten, had maintained in his preface to Thucydides: 'It hath been noted by divers, that Homer in poesy, Aristotle in philosophy, Demosthenes in eloquence, and others of the ancients in other knowledge, do still maintain their primacy: none of them exceeded, some not approached, by any in these later ages.'[15]

For Hobbes, like the ancients, there was no real distance between

the present and the past. When, like Machiavelli, he dressed and adorned himself to enter their company, he did so as their contemporary, the very position the classical historians took with respect to their own predecessors.[16] Past time was no more problematic than present space. Ancient and early modern historians inhabited worlds in which the obstacles of distance, communication and transportation cast most of their physical world into darkness. Reliant as they were on texts and artifacts for knowledge of their contemporary everyday world, depending on the vicissitudes of text production, they sometimes found in the past a richer archive of human experience than in the present. There was no objective stance from which to view the world present or past. About that they were honest - omniscience was left to the gods. Such a view, humble with regard to the truth claims of history, but hubristic in the scope it accorded the historian to remake history, is perhaps more ubiquitous than we think. Founded on enduring realities, it was strikingly corroborated, for instance, in the reflection of Graf Reinhard to Goethe of 1820, after the surprising renewal of revolution in Spain:[17]

> You are quite right, my friend, in what you say about experience. For individuals it is always too late, while it is never available to governments and peoples. This is because completed experience is united into a focus, while that which has yet to be made is spread over minutes, hours, days, years, and centuries; consequently, that which is similar never appears to be so, since in the one case one sees only the whole while in the other only the individual parts are visible.

Graf Reinhard's observation has prompted the philosopher of *Begriffsgeschichte*, Reinhart Koselleck, to show us, perhaps unintentionally, how we can understand both the claims of Augustine and Hobbes that the future does not exist and the past only virtually; and the claims of Aristotle and Hobbes with respect to the truth deficit of history - that the meaning of the past which we seek is better supplied by the imagination in poetry:[18]

> Past and future never coincide, or just as little as an expectation in its entirety can be deduced from experience. Experience once made is as complete as its occasions are past; that which is to be done in the future, which is anticipated in terms of an expectation, is scattered among an infinity of temporal extensions. This condition, which was observed by Reinhard, corresponds to our metaphorical description. Time, as it is known, can only be expressed in spatial metaphors, but all the same, it is more illuminating to speak of 'space of experience' and 'horizon of expectation,' although there is still some meaning in these expressions . . . It makes sense to say that experience based on the past is spatial since it is assembled into a totality, within which many layers of earlier times are simultaneously present, without however, providing any indication of the before and after. There is no

> experience that might be chronologically calibrated - though datable by occasion, of course, since at any one time it is composed of what can be recalled by one's memory and by the knowledge of others' lives. Chronologically, all experience leaps over time; experience does not create continuity in the sense of an additive preparation of the past. To borrow an image from Christian Meier, it is like the glass front of a washing machine, behind which various bits of the wash appear now and then, but are all contained within the drum. By contrast, it is more precise to make use of the metaphor of an expectational horizon instead of a space of expectation. The horizon is that line behind which a new space of experience will open, but which cannot yet be seen. The legibility of the future, despite possible prognoses, confronts an absolute limit, for it cannot be experienced.

Because the past was always available as a resource for present projects, and only truly so available, it was also, and importantly, available for the state cult. State-sponsored history as the project of the collection of courtiers centred around James I of England was a programme to which Hobbes hoped to contribute. But the contentiousness of the story he had to tell disqualified it as ruling orthodoxy. Hobbes's only straight history, his *Dialogue of the Civil Wars of England*, or history of the Long Parliament came to be known by the title *Behemoth*, named for one of the Satanic beasts of the Book of Job. Few commentators have noted that Hobbes himself was unlikely to have given his work such a title, which he had in fact suggested for that of his enemies.[19] For in Hobbes's response to his critics, and specifically Bramhall, he had suggested that they wasted their time, 'but if they will needs do it, I can give them a fit title for their book, *Behemoth against Leviathan*'.[20] The fact remained, however, that Hobbes's history recorded a Babel of claims, many of them made on the grounds of the Holy Books, about the ancient constitution and present distributions of power. And the work was both so Royalist and so anti-clerical that it could not qualify as state sponsored history and Charles II refused to allow it to be licensed in Hobbes's lifetime. Hobbes's more arcane history of the Church in Latin, the *Historia Ecclesiastica*,[21] was even less orthodox, and it too lay unpublished in his lifetime.

Where Hobbes failed as an historian, he succeeded as a philosopher. One of his little remarked accomplishments was to theorize a history shorn of its conventional truth claims. History on such a view lent itself to state purposes, although not easily. How to conjure up images and evoke emotions of the past that congrued with the present experience of citizens was no easy matter. Heavy handed moralizing would not do it. And the historian could not be seen to intervene in the scenes he created, as the great Thucydides knew:[22]

> For the principal and proper work of history being to instruct and enable men, by the knowledge of actions past, to bear themselves prudently in the present and providently towards the future: there is not extant any other (merely human) that doth more naturally and fully perform it, than this of my author. It is true, that there be many excellent and profitable histories written since: and in some of them there be inserted very wise discourses, both of manners and policy. But being discourses inserted, and not of the contexture of the narration, they indeed commend the knowledge of the writer, but not the history itself: the nature whereof is merely narrative. In others, there be subtle conjectures at the secret aims and inward cogitations of such as fall under their pen; which is also not of the least virtues in a history, where conjecture is thoroughly grounded, not forced to serve the purpose of the writer in adorning his style, or manifesting his subtlety in conjecturing. But these conjectures cannot often be certain, unless withal so evident, that the narration itself may be sufficient to suggest the same also to the reader. But Thucydides is one, who, though he never digress to read a lecture, moral or political, upon his own text, nor enter into men's hearts further than the acts themselves evidently guide him: is yet accounted the most politic historiographer that ever writ.

2 Time, modernity and text production

So, Thucydides excelled as 'the most politic historiographer that ever writ', and this, I think, is our clue to Hobbes the historian. To submit Hobbes, founding philosopher of modernity, to the usual flat-footed treatment is to miss entirely what is novel about his treatment of history. For Hobbes, Renaissance humanist and courtier's client, time like space was a resource, and all resources were grist to the political mill for someone who lived by the patronage system - and who lived precariously. Time consciousness, we pride ourselves, is late modern, or possibly post-modern, but mistakenly. If it took an Alfred Einstein to theorize the relativity of time in the language of modern physics, ancients and early moderns nevertheless exhibited full awareness of human time as a stretchable dimension that wraps around its subjects and gathers event-sequences into its interest-centred flow.

The acceptance of different time-zones is as old as history. The Ancient Egyptians believed that human time is linear, following the shape of the human *bios*, but that the time of the gods is cyclical, an eternity of renewal in a perpetual sequence of reincarnations made possible by humans who revivify the gods in statue cults, by libations and burnt offerings[23] - Nietzsche's cult of the Eternal Return. There are magnificent examples of the manipulation for political gain of dimensions of time, as well as of space, from remotest antiquity, exhibiting all the sophistication we associate with

late modern progress. Of these, some of the finest examples involve deliberately archaising behaviour - the purposeful donning of a primordial cloak to lend some departure the air of antiquity. One of the earliest examples to my knowledge is the Memphite Theology, a recounting of the Ancient Egyptian theogony in the archaic language of the Pyramid Texts of the fifth or sixth dynasties (c. 2450-2150 BC), long thought to be contemporaneous with them, but now known to have been faked up for political purposes by the royal propagandists of King Shabaka of the twenty-fifth dynasty in the eighth century BC.[24]

Not only do we accept different time zones and move with subtlety between them, but our periodizations of history are often distinguished on the basis on time-consciousness - and these too we feel free to revise. There is no better example than the theorization of modernity itself. Modernity, in its early phase, is associated with two mutually dependent phenomena: the rise of print culture and the rise of the nation-state. Michel Foucault and Reinhart Koselleck have postulated two watersheds in the rise of modernity: the transition from the Renaissance to the neo-classical era, 1625-50; and the transition from the neo-classical to the modern, 1775-1825.[25] Koselleck's notion of the *Sattelzeit* and his concepts of temporalization more generally point to ways in which print culture and the rise of the nation-state interfaced. For print culture made of time itself a resource, reproducing and recirculating classical texts updated for present purposes. This is transparently the case in the way that Virgil's *Aeneid* updated Homer, by appending the foundation of Rome and the history of its heroes. Later, in the same way, Edmund Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland* transported Virgil's founders to England, providing spurious genealogies for the crown in the descent of Brutus from Aeneas and the descent of British kings from Brute.

Print culture opened up dimensions of time and space in a dramatic way, deepening and broadening the 'timeless' universality of modern collective identity, local yet cosmopolitan. Changing conceptions of time challenged the ancient caution, to which Hobbes subscribed, that 'the future does not exist'. The Renaissance had seen a transition from *polis* to politicking, from politics as city-state management to strategies of power-seeking that were deliberately future oriented. Changes in the conceptualization of space involved the fabrication of 'the West' and Western civilization of which particular states were the privileged bearer. The change of vision was profound. Life for the literate was no longer confined to lived-in institutions. Great vistas of different lives, lived in different and exotic structures, stretched before the Renaissance humanist, captured in ancient books. These vistas were commanded only by the elite, to whose safe-keeping the texts could be reliably entrusted, but which print media allowed to escape from their hands. As guardians of antiquity, officers of church and state and counsellors to kings, Renaissance humanists were keepers of *arcana imperii*, the secret and the hidden.[26] The texts they kept already

complicated any straightforward conceptions of space/time, anticipating the revolutions their new guardians were to bring about. For early modern humanists found ready to hand in the works of Greek and Roman authors boundaries between East and West, conceptions of the self and other, that assisted in the consolidation of national identity.[27] Not only were many of them deliberately archaising works but they also syncretized oriental and occidental sources, problematizing the concept of 'the West' that they were marshalled to defend. If fabrication of a collective identity both cosmopolitan yet local required manipulation of time/space dimensions, these distortions were already present in the texts Renaissance humanists resurrected, for precisely the reason that they too had served to bring about new collective identities by the sleight of hand.

It is not by accident that court poets of the Tudor and Stuart period should have turned to the imperial poets of Rome, Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Theocritus, Tibullus and Catullus as their models, poets who themselves turned to the vast repository of ancient writings belonging to an oral tradition, whose provenance and processes of transcription are still incompletely known. The works of Homer and Hesiod, imitated by Virgil, and with an archaising analogue in the *carmina* of Horace, enjoyed special status as relics of ancient memory from which counsels of state might be drawn. Their very archaism offered, at the same time, an evocation of immemorial tradition effectively applied to the imperial cult and the works of the Roman senatorial class. These imperial poets marshalled the primal language of seasonal chant and primordial sentiments of hearth and home to lend legitimacy to Emperors, many of them upstarts, as well as to celebrate the country estates of nouveaux riches Roman senators, to render their palatial piles more acceptable and familiar to common folk. Pastoral, a genre so celebrated by early modern court poets, also offered an alternative immemorial religious pagan tradition, durable enough to challenge the Catholic Church on its chosen ground: enjoying the marks of time, tradition and universality. Not without reason was Homer presented as the poet of kings. Celebrated early modern debates over the relative merits of Homer and Virgil, in which Hobbes himself and his interlocutor William Davenant participated, usually concluded in favour of the former on the grounds of antiquity alone, because Virgil was then cast as an imitator. But Roman archaising practices were themselves a lesson in the power of tradition. For Rome's conventional reputation as imitator of the Greeks hid an accomplishment that early modern humanists hoped to emulate: a cultural syncretism in which the most primitive expressions of human artifice were assimilated, the songs of the poets of remote antiquity and the songlines of genealogy and kingship that they sung. By resurrecting a literary tradition specifically designed to empower kings, early modern mirrorists were able to juxtapose to the powers of an ancient church with syncretic roots in the same cultural wellsprings, the countervailing power of pagan texts.

Among the most favoured transmitters of this 'ancient wisdom' were the

Alexandrine poets, servants of the Ptolemies, who grafted onto pharaonic Egypt the tradition of the Greeks and retransported it to Greece and Rome. Roman Alexandrians, imitators of Callimachus and Apollonius of Rhodes, had turned away from the Greek classics to Hellenistic poets of first and second century BC Alexandria, who, schooled in old forms, adapted them to a new empire. Breaking ground with innovations like the small-scale epyllion compared with the classical epic, the Roman Alexandrians were mocked by Cicero as *neoterici*: 'the Moderns'.[28] Their vitality was epitomized in the epigrams of Porcius Licinus, Valeriius Aedituus, and Lutatius Catullus and the 'bizarre erotic poems' of Laevius. Poets of Cisalpine Gaul, of whom only Catullus survives, included Valerius Cato, Cinna, Calvus, Cornelius Nepos, Ticidas and Furius Bibaculus. Ovid and Propertius, among the archaising moderns, represent them best.[29]

The differences of disposition between Ovidius Publius Naso, Virgil and Horace as imperial poets had its direct analogue among their early modern Renaissance imitators. There were those who deplored the costs of empire, hardship and war, and those who believed that only war was a palliative to human inertia and the softness of sedentary society. Moreover, the moderns self-consciously debated and reflected upon these differences. That peculiar literary genre, the country house poem, which emerged with the spate of aristocratic palace-building on which it commented, was the peculiar vehicle of classical reflection upon national expansion, political involvement and individual retreat which engaged servants of the Roman Empire as well as the courtiers of early modern nation-states.[30]

There is a more specific sense in which courtiers of the early modern period engaged in the fabrication of collective identity manipulated time/space dimensions. For they opened up not only the past, but also the future as a resource, violating the caution, of which philosophers ancient and modern have reminded us, that the future does not exist. And they reconfigured space by mobilizing a notion of the West, as an embattled civilization under threat. How it was that civilizations of Europe moved from being stationary-state and conserving to being future-oriented is a story to be told in stages, perhaps in the histories of its successive empires. A watershed in this history is marked by the transition made in the Italian *quattrocento* by the term 'politics', from connotating the common affairs of the city to future-oriented strategies of power-seeking. Niccolo Machiavelli is generally credited with making the shift.

Politicking certainly was not new, even if it went by a different name. But in what sort of systems did politicking take place, and why was Machiavelli's bringing the concept so dramatically to life scandalous?[31] Politics, his opening aphorism of *The Prince* suggests, is ubiquitous, whether men live in monarchies or republics.[32] But in the *Discourses* we learn that the particular virtue of republics lies in their insulation against its worst predations. How did Machiavelli come to have such a malign view of politics and why was it infectious? One reason is certainly that he inherited an aristocratic contempt for the political operator from Plato and Aristotle, both of whom had tried their hand at it with more or less success. But there were deeper reasons for a contempt for politicking that lay at the heart of classical Greek philosophy. This was a belief, most aptly expressed by Hellenistic philosophers, preoccupied with the volatility of power, that the secret to the good life was in knowing what is in one's control and seeking to control only that. Stoics, Sceptics and Epicureans, mostly non-Greeks if not Semites, for whom Greek was the *lingua franca* of their world, inhabited large-scale state systems in which cities, on whom the democratic governmental system of the *polis* had been conferred by imperial decree, were integrated as hubs of empire. They partook of an urban civilization that in scale and scope had been unmatched in the *polis* and whose ups and downs were correspondingly magnified. Imbued with the animism of the ancient oriental religions which had cross-pollinated the Greek and Roman religions, they personified and feminized misfortune, an ever-present prospect. *Fortuna* herself was caution against politicking, as the fateful river of chance that could sweep away the projects of mice and men. At the same time, Machiavelli presented politics as the choice of the brave; fearless ones who gambled on the future to create new empires and aggregations worthy of the glories of the past. Seen from the perspective of fragile Italian city-states, prey to pretenders to empire in France and Austria, it was perhaps a bet worth taking, as he suggests in his epilogue *The Prima* on the liberation of Italy. In the long run, ironically, it violated the best principles of the very authors he most venerated in his book on the Republic: prudence, wisdom and truth. One cannot outguess the future, and the fateful river lies in wait for all those who must eventually make the crossing. Politicking offends against prudence: the sacrifice of a certain present for an uncertain future. The maxim 'The end justifies the means' commits a concomitant categorial error in reversing the relation between the present and the future.

Machiavelli's *Prince*ly gamble on the future, of which he himself provides the best sustained critique, was replicated in those countries where his reception met similar circumstances. In France, aspiring to empire under Henry III, the Florentine origins of the infamous Catherine d'Medici catalysed political commentary by those who both aspired to defend the empire and those who sought to critique it. In England, in full retreat into its island fastness after the Tudor break with Rome, doubts about the impregnability afforded by the ocean moat prompted courtiers to dream of an empire for themselves. The full-scale debate conducted by Tudor and Stuart poets and dramatists not only examined Machiavelli's paradox, but reviewed its Roman and Italian sources as well as the French debate over the reception of Machiavelli still under way.

So characterized, the project of modernity involved a struggle between emergent state structures, hoping to expand their domain, against the resistance of a citizenry concerned to define their powers both as individuals

and as members of a nation. It is in this context that Hobbes's own multi-faceted works must be examined. I have no doubt that his experiments in optics - his excursus into the New Science - and his experiments with Latin poetry - his retreat into antique literary genres - are congruent. The long and attenuated history of classical texts opened up dimensions of time and space beyond immediate experience. What new science of optics taught Hobbes was that if, indeed, the brain was only activated by immediate sense impressions, people naturally lived in an eternal present. History, to teach any lessons at all, had to be revivified through images conjured up by the historian in the imagination of readers so as to simulate or retrieve from the relics of memory sensations experienced in the past.

This is why imagination is so essential to the success of Hobbes's epistemology and why, in his Answer to Davenant's Preface, he chides the poet laureate for underestimating the force of 'fancy', which alone has the power to leap the boundaries of time and space into which the sentient individual is experientially locked. History is important as a human resource capable, in the hands of the dramatic historian and spin artist, of expanding the horizons of understanding in which action-oriented behaviour takes place, future-oriented strategies are propounded, nations are made and unmade and empires rise and fall. It was as image-makers and spin artists that Hobbes believed Homer, Virgil, and Thucydides to have excelled: producers of texts with the power to conjure up times past in images capable of sensational emotional excitation. The net yield of his powerful and much neglected prefaces to his translations of Thucydides and Homer, is to insist over and over that only in the relics of memory does time past find space, and only if its event-sequences display an interest-centred relevance. The ordinary mortal is at the mercy of the imagination and creativity of the political historian with the power to reshape the past in a compelling way. It was a lesson William Davenant learned well. In *A Proposition for the Advancement of Morality*,[33] Davenant itemized in a thoroughly Machiavellian manner the means at hand for image-making in the service of the state cult, accepting the principles of Hobbesian sensationalist psychology he had already endorsed in his Preface to *Gondibert*, but now incorporating methods of persuasion in the form of royal ceremonial entries, processions, masques and music, images struck on medals and conveyed in portraits, which depended for their force on the power of the imagination explicitly. So far so good. But, as we shall see, the power to imagine collectivities on the strength of their icons or symbols and to construct a narrative account of the rise and fall of great social formations like Rome and Troy is a power that Hobbes's materialist and nominalist epistemology ultimately cannot sustain.

It is my purpose here to show how Hobbes's humanist endeavours brought together various literary genres for continuous state purposes: first, the genres of estate poetry, heroic and epic poetry, classical histories in translation that were intended only for scribal publication or circulation in manuscript; and second, classical histories and heroic epics translated explicitly for wide circulation through the print medium. Then I shall try to show how his philosophy systematically deprived him of a language in which these very collectivities and large-scale state systems, or indeed non-corporeal entities of any kind, could be discussed. Lacking the scope to provide the illustrative detail that would make my case compelling, I must beg my readers' indulgence and ask them to look elsewhere for the evidence.[34] Here I shall simply sketch in broad outline the paradoxical historical consequences of Hobbes's system known for its ruthless logic and yet founded on persistent anomalies and self-denying ordinances, particularly with respect to the very historiography to which he contributes, and which have not been previously pointed out in quite this way. It is Hobbes's very Machiavellianism that is at issue here and, in a curious way, *Leviathan* stands to *The Prince*, as Hobbes's humanist and historical works stand to *The Discourses*, raising a permanent question over the credibility of an author who could be at once sagacious in the classical mould and ruthlessly statist in the mould of modernity. To see precisely how Hobbes found himself in this paradoxical position we need to look briefly at the interlocking circles in which he moved - at some points reminiscent of Machiavelli's Rucellai circle - as an example of historical context at work.

3 English courtier clients and the fabrication of Great Britain

The Union of England and Scotland was engineered by James I of England, James VI of Scotland, with the assistance of client circles, to which Hobbes belonged, which set explicitly Machiavellian goals in their efforts to pacify the countryside with good arms and good laws and to create in the Church of England a civic religion.[35] Contributors to James I's nationalist project included royal historians and new scientists, court poets and dramatists, as well as members of the Virginia Company who were merchant adventurers and colonizers. The poets laureate, Ben Jonson and William Davenant, possibly Shakespeare, and certainly the chorographers Camden and Speed, were primary architects of the project. But less well known are the contributions of Michael Drayton, John Donne, Thomas Carew, Thomas May, George Chapman, Edmund Waller, and the humanist Hobbes. Hobbes was an associate of the poets laureate, Ben Jonson - whose advice he sought for the Dedicatory Preface of his translation of Thucydides - and William Davenant, whose long and tedious nationalist poem *Gondibert* is prefaced by an essay on poetics drawing on Hobbesian sensationalist psychology, to which Hobbes replies. And in the forums of the Virginia Company, that important political school for imperialists, Hobbes joined the poet and playwright brothers Sandys, the playwright brothers Killigrew and John Donne, all active members.

Modelling themselves on the great Roman imperial clients, Horace, Ovid, Virgil and Livy, these English humanists believed in the power of poets to discipline the court. Obsessed with dynastic instability and their own volatility, they engaged in a court discourse which formulated a deliberate programme of political pacification which included heroic poetry for the elite, masques and operas for the masses. It is no accident that translations of Homer and Virgil, including Hobbes's Homer, should be chosen vehicles for public policy. George Chapman, in the royal epistle dedicatory of his celebrated translation of Homer, pointed out to James I that the Ptolemies read Homer as a manual for kings, which he should emulate.[36] Great Britain, celebrated by Michael Drayton as *Poly-olbion*, chronicled and mapped by Camden and Speed, was fabricated with all the trappings that heroic poets of antiquity and their archaising counterparts of modernity could bestow. To this project Hobbes further contributed with his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, a satirical work in a long tradition of works of the same title, including those of Bede and Eusebius, designed in Hobbes's case to teach the evils of sectarianism, puritanism, a crusading church, and the benefits of a primitive Christianity that melded its programme to state purposes and crowd control.

In the hard work of reflection undertaken by the various circles of humanists, dramatists, courtiers, cavalier clubs, literary and antiquarian societies, to fabricate the early modern state, close attention was paid to the role of Empire in validating the existence of the nation-state. The fabrication of Great Britian turned out to be a project worthy of the Italian and French Renaissance as an exercise in cosmopolitan localism, whereby the resources of antiquity and modernity were jointly plundered to fabricate a particular identity out of a global class. In some of the more deliberate efforts to accomplish collective identity formation through persuasion, eloquence and the power of the image, the nation in an imperial mould was explicitly evoked. Sir William Davenant, poet laureate and playwright, celebrated national heroes and colonizers like Sir Francis Drake in support of 'Cromwell's "imperial western design" ',[37] in his plays of the 1650s, even invoking the essentially contested concept of civilization, hovering then as now on the wings of social theory as a concept of last resort.[38] So Hobbes could remind Davenant that he too would be a Homer or a Virgil, were his poem to be the bearer of an imperial culture like that of Greece or Rome:

> I never yet saw a Poeme, that had so much shape of Art, health of Morality, and vigour and bewty of Expression as this of yours. And but for the clamour of the multitude, that hide their Envy of the present, under a Reverence of Antiquity, I should say further, that it would last as long as either the *Aeneid*, or *Iliad*, but for one Disadvantage; and the Disadvantage is this: the languages of the *Greekes* and *Romanes* (by their Colonies and Conquests) have put off flesh and bloud, and are become immutable, which none of the moderne tongues are like to be.[39]

Davenant, author of the heroic poem, *Gondibert,* which he tells us Hobbes read in Paris as it was being written, appended to it a preface on poetics dedicated to Hobbes, from whom its theories of sensationalist psychology were drawn, and to which Hobbes further appended a lengthy 'Answer'. Davenant hoped that his poem might be read aloud at civic festivals like Homer. And in his epitome to his *Proposition for the Advancement of Moralitie*, Davenant outlined a 'new way of Entertainment of the People' which would accomplish crowd control through multi-media diversions:[40]

> In which shall be presented severall ingenious Arts, as Motion and transposition of Lights; to make a more naturall resemblance of the great and vertuous actions of such as are eminent in Story; and chiefly of those famous Battails at Land and Sea by which this Nation is renown'd; representing the Generalls and other meritorious Leaders, in their Dangers Successes and Triumphs; and our Enemies in such acts of Cruelty (like that at Amboyna) as shall breed in the Spectators courage and animosity against them; diverting the people from Vices and Michiefe; and instructing them (as in a Schoole of Morality) to Vertu, and to a quiet and cheereful behaviour towards the present Government.

The vitality of the English Renaissance, later than the Italian and French extending well into the Stuart age, derives from profound philosophical debate in dramatic and poetical dress. Aesthetic disguise worked well enough that formalistic analysis has dominated literary criticism to this very day and the political or prudential content of these works of the 'autonomous aesthetic moment' has been largely ignored. Of the myriad of aesthetic forms under which the courtiers of the English Renaissance wrote, one of the most symptomatic was the country house poem. To this literary genre Hobbes contributed his estate poem, the *De Mirabilibus Pecci Carmen* which celebrated his patron, William Cavendish, Earl of Devonshire, his lands in the Peak District of Derbyshire, and his country seat, Chatsworth.[41]

Imitative of the great poems addressed by Roman clients to their patrons, Horace to Maecenas, Virgil to Augustus, and so on, Hobbes joined those English courtier poets addressing to patrons in the great age of palace building on confiscated monastic lands, profound reflections on the ups and downs of politics. Aware, as we tend to be forgetful, of the precariousness of new families enriched at the expense of the church, the writers of country house poems were mindful of their own contribution to the stability of the house in the form of intangibles, reputation and honour. As a *quid pro quo* they extracted the right to remind their patrons of the

enduring hazards of political life and the ethical alternative - Stoic withdrawal and enjoyment of the present of pastoral and rural life.

Horace, whom Hobbes in his own estate poem frequently quotes, the great exemplar of the Roman country house poet, most beautifully presented the moral dilemma of the courtier as client in relation to the *illuminati* and Emperor as clients. While advising them on how better to exercise their power, he must constantly remind them that it is best not to exercise it at all. Pastoral withdrawal, enjoyment of present delights of nature and 'home' as one's favoured spot are all appeals to the patron to be mindful not only of the hazards of Fortune, which take man far from his roots, but also that reason enjoins one to enjoy the present, refusing to sacrifice it to a future that does not exist. All these elements are present in Hobbes's poem, the purposes of which are continuous with his translations of classical histories. Belonging to a literature of the Peak District that includes Jonson's *Gypsies Metamorphized* and his fragments on the Peak, Hobbes's estate poem shows him to be a true 'son of Ben'. Jonson's long diatribe against rhetoricians, his clumsy and rather crude veneration for local 'fairy' traditions of Robin Hood, nymphs of the solstice, Puck and Maid Marion, represented both a form of English pastoralism, as well as an attack on Machiavellians at court who would use their erudition for political enrichment. At the same time, Jonson held in contempt playwrights and poets who could not demonstrate sufficient classical erudition to know where danger lay: in imitating French and Italian models that might give entrée to European powers on English soil. The threads of a debate picked up here and there between the relative merits of nascent 'Gothic', Northern European, and therefore Barbarian, traditions, against imperial, Francophone or Italianate incursions find their echo in Hobbes's *Historia Ecclesiastica* as well as in his country house poem, the paraphrase of it by Charles Cotton, and Cotton's own poem on the Peak District.[42]

In Hobbes's literary works, as in those of Jonson his mentor, Machiavellian themes are everywhere to be found, in discussions of the merits of war as a purgative, and the anti-war themes of Horace and Virgil; in discussions of the merits of pagan civic religion against the claims of the Roman Church; in assessment of the role of the people and whether to enrich them economically or pacify them politically. Specific debates over Elizabeth's marriage suitors, the dynastic struggles between Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots, and discussions about the shape of the Stuart polity, revealed deeper underlying concerns about the viability of an island nation set in an imperial sea, be its garden ever so well cultivated. Once again in *De Mirabilibus Pecci Carmen*, the threads of dynastic conflict in the reigns of Elizabeth and James are brought together allegorically in the stories of the struggles between the suitors under Elizabeth, to be extrapolated to the vying of the favourites under James.

4 Print culture and democratization of the state cult

Invented and institutionalized in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the early modern national kingdom was theorized in the seventeenth.[43] The court produced chronicles and other mnemonic devices to enhance the institutionalization of kingship as a set of ceremonial performances. With repetition and the aid of memory, practices became rituals. Hobbes's discursus on memory in both *Leviathan* and the 'Answer to Davenant' applies his theory of memory, imagination and *pictura poesis* representation to historiography, to render in history a further resource for the state.

The debate over the comparative merits of print culture as opposed to scribal publication also concerned the guardianship of public information and control of the state cult. Should it be monopolized by courtiers in privately circulated manuscripts, or made accessible to the print-reading public? Hobbes flags his own position in the opening sentence of Chapter four of *Leviathan*, where he disparagingly remarks: 'The Invention of *Printing*, though ingenious, compared with the invention of *Letters*, is no great matter.' Hobbes's attitude to the Royal Society, devoted to the wider promotion of knowledge through public libraries - and for whose members, as Quentin Skinner convincingly argues,[44] Hobbes had little enthusiasm - was consistent with his dismissive view of the significance of the printing press. It was, however, a hotly contested topic and Michael Drayton opens his Preface to *Poly-Olbion* bemoaning to 'the Generall Reader' the restriction of public information reserved for the curiosity cabinets of the savants:[45]

> In publishing this Essay of my Poeme, there is this great disadvantage against me; that it commeth out at this time when Verses are wholly deduc't to Chambers, and nothing esteem'd in this lunatique Age, but what is kept in Cabinets, and must only passe by Transcription . . .; such I meane, as had rather read the fantasies of forraigne inventions, then to see the Rarities and Historie of their owne Country delivered by a true native Muse.

Drayton protests against the *arcana imperii* tradition of state secrets and royal mystique, a tradition flagged, ironically, by the frequent mention of Machiavelli and Bodin in Selden's somewhat hostile commentary on the poem published with it.[46] Drayton's first song connects his particular mapping of the counties of England and their muses to the fabulous heroic tradition. Reference is made to the genealogies of Homer and Hesiod, to the principles of metamorphosis and the transmigration of souls, as if this particular local chorographical work is simply a local variant of a larger history of the world. Drayton commends the pastoral tradition of Orpheus, of nymphs and of popular pagan religion, condemning those

> possest with such stupidity and dulnesse, that, rather then thou wilt take pains to search into ancient and noble things, choosest to remaine

> in the thicke fogges and mists of ignorance, as neere the common Lay-stall of a Citie; refusing to walke forth into the *Temple* and Feelds of the Muses, wheere through most delightfull Groves the Angellique harmony of Birds shall steale thee to the top of an easie hill, where in artificiall caves, cut out of the most naturall Rock, thou shalt see the ancient people of this Ile delivered thee in their lively images: from whose height thou mai'st behold both the old and later times, as in thy prospect, lying farre under thee; then convaying thee, downe by a soule-pleasing Descent through delicate embrodered Meadowes, often veined with gentle gliding Brooks; in which thou maist fully view the dainty Nymphes in their simple naked bewties, bathing them in Crystalline streames; which shall lead thee, to most pleasant Downes, where harmlesse Shepheards are, some exercising their pipes, some singing roundelaies, to their gazing flocks . . .

The elements of Drayton's disarming case are more complex than they seem. Evoking the pastoral of Virgil, Horace and Tibullus, he claims to be able to meld local lore to a cosmopolitan heroic tradition. Moreover, he hints at Machiavelli's famous claim to be able to chart the past and future from the high prospect of Mount Parnassus.[47] Here Drayton gives entrée to Selden, the antiquarian, Hobbes's friend, like Hobbes obsessed with the history of paganism as a resource to mobilize against priestcraft and in support of a state-centred collective identity. Entitling his comments symptomatically 'Illustrations', Selden gives Drayton's claims careful attention:[48]

> If in Prose and Religion it were justifiable, as in Poetry and Fiction, to invoke a *Locall power* (for anciently both *Jewes, Gentiles & Christians* have supposed to every Countrey a singular *Genius*) I would therin joyne with the Author.

Selden claims to have researched the tradition of Brute, travelling to the Abbey of Beccensam on the way to Rome.[49] Absent from the Greek and Latin authors, he claims, 'This Genealogie I found by tradition of the Ancients, which were first inhabitants of Britaine'.[50] Selden, while referring to 'the whole Chaos of Mythique inventions',[51] gives surprising consideration to the biblical, Hesiodic and Homeric genealogies. He alights on the metamorphic idiom to which the opening song appeals, connecting it to the transmigration of souls, or 'Pythagorean transanimation', and 'Romane' renderings of the Greek metamorphosis. Selden, preoccupied by the Druids, wonders 'whether Pythagoras received it from the Druids, or they from him, because in his travels he converst as well with *Gaulish* as *Indian* Philosophers'.[52]

Selden exhibits the very Platonism against which Hobbes's historiography was explicitly directed. In fact Hobbes's country house poem may be seen as an obscene parody of the mythography of Drayton's opening lines, while his Homer may well have been designed to debunk the *Homerus sophos* tradition of Platonism and priestcraft.[53] There is a deep sense, I believe, in which Hobbes's demystification of Homer is part of a larger strategy to assault Platonism and the doctrine of essences, just as his theory of memory as the relics of sense is designed to attack Platonist notions of mind as the bearers of innate ideas. The influence of Descartes and the not inconsequential appearance of the Cambridge Platonists on the horizon, may have been sufficient stimulus to Hobbes to produce his later Scarronesque parodies and burlesques: the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and his Homer. All this notwithstanding, Drayton's work contributed to a project of which Hobbes generally approved. For, in his own more bookish way, and not without criticism, Selden reworked Drayton's melding of the local and particular choreography of 'home' to the heroic tradition where the panoptic survey of the classical traveller's tale defines the field. Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid* have elements of the classic traveller's tale and were typically works of national celebration.[54]

Institutional theorization and borrowing take place under pressures of some kind. The conversion of kingship from the *arcana imperii* of the Royal household and its aristocratic extension to constitutional monarchy may have been driven less by the march of democracy than we tend to think. Transition from the heroic orator king of the medieval period, to the silent and distant monarch, statue-like, preferably hidden, of Bodin's ideal, an imitation perhaps of oriental monarchs recorded in travellers' tales, may simply reflect the exigencies of institutionalization. The more people clamoured for the presence of the monarch, at royal entries, shows and assemblies, the more necessary for the theurgic king to conceal his mortality and vulnerability. The greater the pomp and ceremony, the wider the distance between fact and fiction that had to be bridged. The gap of credulity yawned before monarchs on both continents. If royal ceremonial easily lent itself to parody in staged burlesques, by the seventeenth century the royal masque was a state-controlled event. Royal secrets, marking the boundaries between those in power and those out of it, became a feature of the cult of the king. Resistance to the *arcana imperii* gave way in turn to assemblies with all the forms of power and none of the substance, while the business of government continued behind the scenes. About this the French analysts at least were open. Nor did the anti-democrats see a unanimity of interests as the threat which the mob posed. Quite the contrary – the interests of the common people were too diverse and too unpredictable to allow them to enter politics directly.

The reaction of Thomas Hobbes and John Selden to sentiments of intense localism, reflected in the ideals of country-gentlemen writing regional histories, like Drayton, may simply have reflected their observation of the ungovernability of such a disaggregated collection of interests. Selden's particular form of antiquarianism preserves the private erudition of the *arcana imperii* for public purposes. Hobbes fears additionally that his

sense-datum psychology is now going to be employed by Davenant to support the diversity of disordered individual experience against the hegemonic church. But this too poses a threat to sovereignty.

The great advantage of public history in the form of king lists and chronicles of courts, was that it admitted no intruders from the private sphere. What 'modern' historiography represented was intrusion of private interests into the public space. Hobbes, and Locke after him, were to make a virtue of necessity, once the Civil War demonstrated that the crowd could no longer be kept out of politics. Their adoption of print media to circulate their own authoritative texts was critical. Attacks on the *arcana imperii* of the royal cult were not, therefore, politically innocent. And when, in England at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Whigs vociferously argued the case for the French threat, they targeted the closed nature of the royal cult to expand the circle of power. At the same time, Locke provided, in his sensationalist psychology, an epistemology for popular rule and equality of representation, confined as yet to the propertied classes. In this respect his indebtedness to the traditions of Descartes and Hobbes has long been underestimated. Having fabricated a national collective identity, early modern political theorists set about inviting a wider public to participate in it.

5 Hobbes, language and the shape of collectivities

That Hobbes continued to believe in the power of history as a state resource is clear from the fact that, in his later years, he directed his energies to the massive task of undertaking a new translation of Homer. He did so with the clear intention of circulating his translation as a printed text. In the important debate between proponents of scribal publication as opposed to print media, the monopoly of the courtier on the creation and distribution of knowledge had been at stake. Scholars, often of humble background, educated in courtier schools whose curricula required an intimate knowledge of a closed universe of classical texts, which we now associate with Talmudic or Koranic traditions, jealously guarded their privileges against intruders. Or else, with their patron's interests at heart, they feared distribution of information to a public in whose hands it might be dangerous. So, Hobbes had translated Thucydides, looking across to Europe and the advent of punishing wars of religion also looming on the English horizon. That he intended his translation, made from a top-down policy perspective, as a manual for his patrons, his preface makes explicit. His translations of Homer, by contrast, were for public consumption, a plain-speaking, pastoral reading of the Homeric world that fit very well with his view of how a pacified post-Civil War English society should look.

To see the radical shift involved in Hobbes's acceptance and endorsement, albeit grudging, of print culture, a break marked by *Leviathan*, it is

worth rehearsing the significance placed on the advent of print culture more generally. For by participating in it, Hobbes enjoyed access to worlds, and opened up worlds to others, that his strict materialism and empiricism officially would not admit. They are realms of imagination accessible through officially circulated texts whose novelty we can scarcely recapture and whose boundless political resources we must assume Hobbes recognized to invest such efforts in translation.

It seems to me that Hobbes from the outset was programmatic in his intellectual interests. The shifts in focus of his attention from optics, to a theory of sensationalist psychology, to the strategic use of classical history as a resource put at the disposal of the state-propaganda machine once the power of image makers was disclosed by his epistemological theories, and then to a legal–juridical formula for the exchange of protection for obedience on which the new nation-state was seen to rest, suggest a highly dedicated and scientific application to the question of state management and crowd control. Only belatedly, however, did Hobbes come to see that the invention of printing placed in the hands of text-producers a vehicle for the rapid dissemination of a concerted view of the world, extremely useful for political purposes. And this is why it is extremely important to pay attention to the hints he gives us in *Leviathan* that his bible of politics, to be read in all the universities, makes a break with the past and his commitment to scribal publication and distrust of print media. For, until Civil War opened the floodgates in England in the 1640s, Hobbes and like-minded courtier-clients believed in the power of poets and epic historians to discipline the court deploying the classic top-down vehicles of persuasion and rhetoric. As one who subscribed to the Machiavellian programme of his interlocutor, Davenant, Hobbes showed himself capable of radical adjustments in pursing his project of reinventing history, physics, philosophy, poetry and rhetoric for state-propaganda purposes. What appears to be a relentlessly logical and internally coherent system is, in fact, fraught with anomalies which are highly revealing. So, for instance, the translator of classical history who puts so much store by images, and who can re-imagine the history of Greece and Rome, stalks that 'ghost of the Roman Empire', the Catholic Church, as a bogus collectivity making fantastic claims in the impossible language of religious experience.

But, of course, Hobbes protested too much, and it was very much as an imperial apparatus located in, and succeeding to the imperial power of, Rome over that of fledgling nation states, that the Church represented a challenge to which Hobbes responded with whatever means to hand. The denaturalizing of spiritual bodies in general, and the characteristic metaphysical weapons of the Church, in particular transubstantiation and the doctrine of essences, were the strategies he employed. Hobbes's strict nominalism and empiricism served to simply put out of epistemic reach those realms of religious experience on which the Church based its appeal. But, at the same time, they involved Hobbes in a public disavowal of the power

of imagination to capture a sense of other worlds on which, in his prefaces to the ancient historians, he had been so insistent. The joint outcome of various routes of approach to the daily practical problems facing a courtier's client, whose business it was to offer policy advice in whatever form came to hand, was a stripped down language that simply would not admit questionable phenomena past the door, and therefore could not admit, in the end, those very genres to which he devoted so much of his life: history and poetry as works of the creative imagination.

So, it turned out that Hobbes, and Locke after him, pioneered a language of rights for the emergent nation-state faced with powerful collectivities in the form of church and empire that has proven hegemonic to this very day. Political exigencies caused these early modern courtiers to craft a language of individualism which met the demands both of religious rhetorics of reform and royal rhetorics of expansion. At the same time this language had its limitations. It could not then acknowledge the very collectivities it was designed to colonize. Of all the theorists of modernity, Hobbes and Locke were most caught by this dilemma. Hobbes, having theorized the Roman Catholic Church, which with its agent Spain represented the greatest national and international threat of the day, as 'the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting enthroned on the grave thereof', produced a language based on the metaphysics of atomism that could then not account for the existence of empires or ghosts. In fact, Hobbes ruled out analogue and metaphor of all sorts in serious speech:

> In Demonstration, in Councell, and all rigourous search of Truth, Judgement does all; except sometimes the understanding have need to be opened by some apt similitude; and then there is so much use of Fancy. But for Metaphors, they are in this case utterly excluded. For seeing they openly professe deceipt; to admit them into Councell, or Reasoning, were manifest folly.[55]

Locke followed Hobbes down the same track. Individuals as self-interested, autonomous, rational, aggregators of sense-impressions, produced ideas with no real standing. The unintended effect of early modern empiricism based on sensationalist psychology was to reduce human beings to the interest-seeking behaviours that they posited. While this might furnish some comfort for aggrandising imperialists it placed the genuine moral concerns of its progenitors – and the religious and moral concerns of Hobbes and Locke were genuine and pressing – forever out of reach. At the same time it incapacitated theorists seeking to explain the new collectivities to which the assault on the old gave rise. It is perhaps for this reason that Anglo-Saxon theorists of modernity produced no equals of Hegel, Marx, Freud or Nietzsche, self-confessed citizens of one of the world's most materially backward nations at the time. The language of collectivities that might explain new social aggregates and their tendencies eluded methodological individualists

of the British Empire and their colonies, who pioneered solipsistic everyday languages in their attempts to plumb the paradox of the impossible individualism of *common* language presented by Hobbes, Locke and Hume. This suspicion of collectivities and of languages in which they might be at home has continued to bedevil the social sciences, whose answers take the form of mathematical concepts, analogues of market-oriented behaviours that focus on *individual* choice, and other explanations of group behaviour as the sum of individuals who comprise it and no more.

Once again, the languages of empiricism not only could not provide a satisfactory account of the aggregate outcomes of individual behaviour, but they could not account for the social institutions that were driving them. Humean scepticism which bracketed causality by imposing a strict notion of cause-effect (if and only if a and b then c) and substituted coincidence as the norm in explanation, systematically ruled out the analysis of social processes of the past as the source of explanations of the present and considerations for the future. And yet, having adopted this strategy of epistemological imprisonment, Hume went on to produce one of the longest and most detailed histories of England. It is true that history as Hume conceived it, the enumeration of contingent items which, when aggregated, make up a collective history, was one way of configuring time and space. And in the language of materialism and empiricism it has become the officially approved method. In this way, history as a collection of coincidental particulars has its perfect analogue in the economic realm: the market as a vehicle for aggregating wealth by enumerating and making commensurable disparate values. Hobbes had set the trend for nominalists and atomists to engage in attempts at history writing – and history making – for which their epistemology officially made no room so long as it emphasized the power of the imagination to open windows onto different worlds. There are good reasons why those who followed him, early and brilliant theoreticians of the market as the model of social aggregation through the operation of systematic coincidence, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and others, should, at the same time, have produced histories of the Roman Republic as models for the emulation of British imperialists. In this way, they, like Hobbes, thought they could have it both ways. As materialists they could deny cognition the power to conjure into existence non-corporeal entities, metaphysical resources on which the institutional power of religion depended. And yet, as empiricists, they could preserve history and poetry as cultural artifacts with the power to create imagined communities, on the pretext that they were nothing but a collection of contingently enumerated items that filled up time and space. Of course, in each case they were depriving people of realms of meaning to which they themselves laid exclusive claim – the empiricist's dilemma. The future does not exist, they maintained, because it has yet to be made. And, more than story tellers, these particular empiricists, as courtier's clients and significant place-holders in the state system, were history makers.

Notes

1 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Richard Tuck (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, Chapter 3: 'Of the Consequence of Trayne of Imaginations', 10/22.
2 For a percipient analysis of this quintessentially modern perspective see Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology' in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, New York: Harper and Row, 1976.
3 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Norman Kemp Smith (ed.), London: Macmillan, 1950, 632.
4 St Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.20.26, Henry Chadwick (trans.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, 235, who notes that Augustine's view was anticipated by the Stoics. I wish to thank Rosamund MacKetterick for kindly pointing me to this passage, mentioned also in the notes to Reinhart Koselleck, '"Space of Experience" and "Horizon of Expectation": Two Historical Categories', in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Keith Tribe (trans.), Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985, note 4, 323.
5 See L, Chapter 2, 'Of Imagination', 5/16:

> And any object being removed from our eyes, though the impression it made in us remain; yet other objects more present succeeding, and working on us, the Imagination of the past is obscured, and made weak; as the voyce of a man is in the noyse of the day.

6 Hobbes's caricature of the Aristotelian system as essentialist comes very early in *Leviathan*. His highly tactile account of sense-experience attributes sensation to the friction of the external world on the organs of sense producing a representation of the thing in the mind. Aristotle and the School-men, however, have the fantastic idea that material objects send forth their essences into the world to be captured by the senses, he claims, in a most dreadful parody of their views aimed at Platonists too (L, 4/14):

> But the Philosophy-schooles, through all the Universities of Christendome, grounded upon certain Texts of *Aristotle*, teach another doctrine; and say, For the cause of *Vision*, that the thing seen sendeth forth on every side a *visible species* (in English) a *visible shew, apparition*, or *aspect*, or *a being seen;* the receiving whereof into the Eye, is *Seeing*. And for the cause of *Hearing*, that the thing heard, sendeth forth an *Audible species*, that is, an *Audible aspect*, or *Audible being seen*; which entring at the Eare, maketh *Hearing*. Nay for the cause of *Understanding* also, they say the thing Understood sendeth forth *intelligible species*, that is, an *intelligible being seen*; which comming into the Understanding, makes us Understand. I say not this, as disapproving the use of Universities: but because I am to speak hereafterof their office in a Common-wealth, I must let you see on all occasions by the way, what things would be amended in them; amongst which the frequency of insignificant Speech is one.

7 *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, Molesworth, Sir William (ed.), 11 vols (hereafter referred to as EW), VIII: xxii.
8 ibid.
9 Hobbes, EW X: *The Iliads and Odysses of Homer* (1673), iii.
10 ibid., iv–vi.
11 ibid., ix.

12 See Hobbes's long discussion in the Preface 'To the Reader' to *The Iliads and Odysses of Homer* (1673), of the question of whether Virgil adds anything to the images of Homer, of which the following is an epitome (EW X: viii–x):

> If we compare Homer and Virgil by the sixth virtue, which is the clearness of images, or descriptions, it is manifest that Homer ought to be preferred, though Virgil himself were to be the judge. For there are very few images in Virgil besides those which he hath translated out of Homer; so that Virgil's images are Homer's praises ... If it then be lawful for Julius Scaliger to say, that if Jupiter would have described the fall of a tree, he could not have mended this of Virgil; it will be lawful for me to repeat an old epigram of Antipater, to the like purpose, in favour of Homer.

13 Aristotle, *The Poetics*, 9, 5–10, in McKeon, Richard (ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Ingram Bywater (trans.), New York: Random House, 1941, 1464.
14 ibid., 9, 1–5, 1463.
15 Hobbes, EW VIII: v.
16 For a more extended account of the peculiar stance of the classical historians to their predecessors and their material, see Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination,* Paula Wissing (trans.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, discussed in Patricia Springborg, *Western Republicanism and the Oriental Prince*, Chapter 8, 'Foundation Myths and their Modes', Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, 133–41.
17 As recorded in the Goethe and Reinhard *Briefwechsel*, 246, cited by Koselleck, '"Space of Experience"', 272.
18 ibid.
19 I owe this observation to a private communication from Professor Karl Schuhmann of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Utrecht.
20 Hobbes, EW V: 27. Stephen Holmes's revised edition of the Tönnies translation of *Behemoth* notes Hobbes's comment but then goes on to assume that Hobbes applied the title to his work himself. See Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth or The Long Parliament*, Ferdinand Tönnies (ed.), with an introduction by Stephen Holmes (ed.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, ix.
21 Probably written in the early 1660s, Hobbes's *Historia Ecclesiastica* was published in 1688 and received an English paraphrase in 1722, but has, up to now, not been translated or received an authoritative modern edition. See, however, the forthcoming translation of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* by Patricia Springborg and Patricia Harris Stablein, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation. See also Patricia Springborg, 'Hobbes, Heresy and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1994, vol. 55, no. 4, 553–71.
22 Hobbes, Preface to the Reader to his translation of Thucydides, EW VIII: viii.
23 On the Ancient Egyptian concept of time see Jan Assmann, *Zeit und Ewigkeit im Altem Ägypten*, Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1975.
24 See F. Junge, 'Zu Fehldatierung des Sogenant Denkmals Memphitischer Theologie, oder: Der Beitrag des Ägyptischen Theologie zur Geistes Geschichte der Spätzeit', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archeologishen Instituts Abteilung Kairo*, 1973, vol. 29, 195–204. The Memphite Theology is discussed as an example of consciously archaising activity in Patricia Springborg, *Royal Persons*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, 83, 166.
25 See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, New York, 1980. To date, little of Reinhart Koselleck's work has been translated. See, however, *Futures Past* and *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*,

Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988. See also Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987.

26 The language of state secrets employed by Sir Robert Filmer in *Patriarcha*, against which Locke so vehemently protested in his *First Discourse*.

27 For an account of how deeply sedimented the divide between East and West is already in Greek and Roman literature, see Patricia Springborg, *Western Republicanism and the Oriental Prince*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992 and 'The Contractual State: Reflections on Orientalism and Despotism', *History of Political Thought*, 8, 3 (1987), 395–433. These schematic outlines do not even begin to broach in rich detail the Orientalist references to be found, for instance, in the Odes and Epodes of Horace, the idiom for despotism of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, examples of a persistent bias which courtiers and early modern political commentators imbibed and then passed on in contemporary depictions of a mythical Persian court in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, for instance. In all of these cases the interest-orientation of the commentators in question, whether Roman or early modern European, was comment on their own courts for which the Orientals were a serviceable whipping boy.

28 From the Greek, '*hoi neoteroi*'; see Cicero, *Att.* 7.2.1. 50 BC; 'poetae novi', *Orat.* 161, 46 BC; 'cantores Euphorionis', *Tusc.* 3.45 (45 BC); and Horace, *Sat.* 2.5.41 on lesser men who aped the fashion.

29 A brief synopsis of the career of Callimachus serves to indicate how closely the Alexandrine movement among the 'moderns' imitated its precursor. Callimachus, during his dispute with Apollonius Rhodius, wrote *Ibis*, 'a wilfully obscure poem in mockery of Apollonius, which gave Ovid the idea for his poem of the same name'. Prominent among Callimachus's pupils was Eratosthenes of Cyrene, head of the Alexandrian library and the first to call himself *philologus*, whose works comprised, *Platonicus, On the Means and Duplication of the Cube, On the Measurement of the Earth, Geographica*, and a short epic *Anterinys* or *Hesiod*, which dealt with the death of Hesiod and the punishment of his murderers. Aristophanes of Byzantium, who succeeded Eratosthenes as head of Alexandrian Library, edited Hesiod, Alcaeus and Alcman, published the first edition of Pindar and helped formalize the Alexandrian canon. See *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, 43–4, 184–6.

30 Kenny, Virginia C., in *The Country-House Ethos in English Literature 1688–1750*, Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984, treats the country house poem as it 'explores the themes of individual retreat and national expansion where they occur in the same work', ix.

31 Machiavelli brought politicking to light dramatically, quite literally, in his plays, the most famous of which is *Madragola*.

32 See the opening lines of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Quentin Skinner (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 5: 'All the states, all the dominions that have held sway over men, have been either republics or principalities. Principalities are either hereditary (their rulers having been for a long time from the same family) or they are new.' Those that are new need promoters, among whom Machiavelli saw himself.

33 James R. Jacob and Timothy Raylor, 'Opera and Obedience: Thomas Hobbes and *A Proposition for Advancement of Morality* by Sir William Davenant', *The Seventeenth Century*, 1991, vol. 6, 213.

34 See Patricia Springborg, 'Thomas Hobbes on Religion', *Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, Tom Sorell (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 346–80; and '*Leviathan*, Mythic History and National Historiography', in David Harris Sacks and Donald Kelley (eds), *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*, Cambridge/Washington, D.C.: Cambridge/Woodrow Wilson Press, 1997, 267–97.

35 See, for instance, the employment of such explicitly Machiavellian language in the counsel offered by the Marquis of Newcastle, Hobbes's patron, to Charles II, variously dated from the 1650s to the 1660s and translated by Thomas Slaughter (Philadelphia, 1984) as *Ideology and Politics on the Eve of the Restoration: Newcastle's Advice to Charles II*, and by Gloria Italiano Anzilotti (Pisa, 1988) as *An English 'Prince': Newcastle's Machiavellian Guide to Charles II*. For an excellent comparison of Newcastle's *Advice* to the King with that of Davenant, see Jacob and Raylor, 'Opera and Obedience', 217 ff.

36 George Chapman in the Preface to his famous translation of Homer, maintained:

> Homer (saith Plato) was the Prince and maister of all prayses and vertues, the Emperour of wise men ... Onely kings & princes haue been *Homers* Patrones ... O high and magically raysed prospect, from whence a true eye may see meanes to the absolute redresse, or much to be wished extenuation, of all the vnmanly degenerencies now tyranysing amongst vs.

George Chapman, *Achilles Shield Translated as the other seuen Bookes of Homer out of his eighteenth booke of Iliades*, London, John Windet, 1589, iii–v. Daniel, 'A Defence of Ryme', already declared Chapman 'our Homer-Lucan'. Drayton in 'Epistle to Henry Reynolds' (1627) lists him first among translators. Ben Jonson to Drummond claimed: 'the translations of Homer and Virgil in long Alexandrines were but prose', but prefixed complimentary verses to Chapman's 'Hesiod' that warmly praise his Homer, especially the Odyssey and Hymns. Dryden, in the dedication to vol. III of his Miscellanies reports 'the Earl of Mulgrave and Mr. Waller, two of the best judges of our age, have assured me they could never read over the translation of Chapman without incredible transport'. Pope acknowledges his predecessor, as he does Hobbes, and Dr Johnson affirms he always checked his own Homer against Chapman.

37 Jacob and Raylor, 'Opera and Obedience', 213.

38 See, for instance, the controversy surrounding Samuel P. Huntington's seminal article, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, 1993, vol. 72, no. 3, 22–49, and responses in the subsequent issue of *Foreign Affairs*, 1993, vol. 72, no. 4. See also Huntington's rejoinders in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

39 Hobbes's answer to Sir William Davenant's preface to *Gondibert: an Heroick Poem*, London, 1651, lines 343–53. The standard modern edition is David F. Gladish, *Sir William Davenant's Gondibert*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. See p. 54.

40 Davenant, *Proposition for the Advancement of Moralitie*, 249.

41 See the forthcoming translation of the *De Mirabilibus Pecci Carmen* by Patricia Springborg and Patricia Harris Stablein, Reading: Whiteknights Press.

42 See Charles Cotton's *The Wonders of the Peak*, lines 1279–80, 1301–12 (London, 1958 edition of Cotton's *Works*, 88–9). Cotton's description of Chatsworth, which resembles Hobbes in substance but not in tone, takes a Gothic vernacular stand against the imperial demeanour of this 'Princely *House*', which he sees as a deliberate affront to the wonders of the Peak, shaming, spiting and embarrassing the natural landscape in which it is set.

43 See Lawrence M. Bryant, 'Politics, Ceremonies and Embodiments of Majesty in Henry II's France', in *European Monarchy, its Evolution and Practice from*

Roman Antiquity to Modern Times, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992, 127-54.

44 Quentin Skinner, 'Thomas Hobbes and the Nature of the Early Royal Society', *The Historical Journal*, 1969, vol. 12, 217-39.

45 Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion, or A chorographicall Description of the Tracts, Riuers, Mountaines, Forests, and other Parts of this renowned Isle of Great Britaine* ... London: Mathew Lownes et al., 1613, reprinted in *The Works of Michael Drayton*, Hebel, William (ed.), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1933, vol. 4, v.

46 Richard Helgerson, in his magisterial account of chorographical histories, notes that *arcana imperii* could also include maps: 'in Philip II's Spain, Pedro de Esquival's great cartographic survey of the Iberian peninsula was kept in manuscript, locked in the Escorial as "a secret of state"'. Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992, 146.

47 See Machiavelli, 'Dedicatory Letter' to *The Prince*, loc. cit., 4:

> I hope it will not be considered presumptuous for a man of very low and humble condition to dare to discuss princely government, and to lay down rules about it. For those who draw maps place themselves on low ground, in order to understand the character of the mountains and other high points, and climb higher in order to understand the character of the plains. Likewise, one needs to be a ruler to understand properly the character of the people, and to be a man of the people to understand properly the character of rulers.

For parallels in Hobbes, see Patricia Springborg, 'Review Article: The View from the "Divell's Mountain"; Review of Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*', *History of Political Thought*, 17, 4 (Winter 1996), 615-22.

48 *The Works of Michael Drayton*, Hebel, William (ed.), vol. 4, 15.

49 ibid., 22.

50 ibid., 21.

51 ibid., 16.

52 ibid., 17.

53 See Paul Davis, 'Thomas Hobbes's Translations of Homer: Epic and Anticlericalism in Late Seventeenth-Century England', *The Seventeenth Century*, 1997, vol. 12, 231-55.

54 For an interesting discussion of the Indian *Mahabarata* as belonging to this genre, see Sheldon Pollock, 'India in the Vernacular Millennium, 1000-1500', and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Hearing Voices: Vignettes of Early Modernity in South Asia, 1400-1750', both appearing in *Daedalus*, 1998, vol. 127, no. 3, 41-74 and 75-104.

55 L: 34/52.

4 Hobbes, history and wisdom

G. A. J. Rogers

Introduction

What precisely in Hobbes's philosophy is the relationship between history and wisdom? Is there any room in his account of human knowledge for wisdom and what are its connections with both experience and science?

The problem is generated because Hobbes often draws such a sharp line between knowledge of fact and knowledge of consequences that it is difficult to see if there is any place at all in either category for wisdom, which seems to depend on both. That Hobbes does indeed draw such a distinction is clear from several places. In *Leviathan*, Chapter IX, 'Of the Severall Subjects of Knowledge' for example, he writes:

> There are of KNOWLEDGE two kinds; whereof one is *Knowledge of Fact*: the other *Knowledge of the Consequence of one Affirmation to another*. The former is nothing but Sense and Memory and is *Absolute Knowledge* ... the later is called *Science*; and is *Conditionall*; as when we know, that, *If the figure showne be a circle, then any straight line through the Center shall divide it into equall parts.* And this is the Knowledge required in a Philosopher; that is to say, of him that pretends to Reasoning.[1]

So, central to philosophy is the ability to reason. Whereas central to knowledge of fact are sense and memory. And it is on these two faculties that history relies:

> The Register of *Knowledge of Fact* is called *History*. Whereof there be two sorts: one called *Natural History*; which is the History of such Facts, or Effects of Nature, as have no Dependence on Mans *Will*; such as are the Histories of *Metalls, Plants, Animals, Regions*, and the like. The other, is *Civill History*; which is the History of the Voluntary Actions of men in Common-wealths.[2]

So Hobbes wishes to distinguish factual knowledge from knowledge of consequences. Nor was he the first or the last to do so. For a similar bifurcation