

BEHEMOTH: DEMOCRATICALS AND RELIGIOUS FANATICS

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The seed of the “memorable civil war in his Majesty’s dominions from 1640 to 1660,” Hobbes wrote in the Epistle Dedicatory to *Behemoth*, were “certain opinions in divinity and politics,” out of which grew “declarations, remonstrances, and other writings between the King and Parliament.” Actions taken in that period were what he called “the war itself.” He apportioned the first two, out of four, dialogues of his *Behemoth* to discussing those “certain opinions” and the pamphlet war, he explained, and represented the second, slightly shorter, half of the book as “a very short epitome of the war itself, drawn out of Mr. Heath’s chronicle.”¹ This brief dedication raises questions.

Florus or Machiavel

The division between the two main parts of *Behemoth* is not as neat as Hobbes would make us think. There is no reason to assume that his knowledge of the “war itself” rested on Heath’s chronicle alone. Hobbes was undoubtedly quite well acquainted with the civil war literature, as he himself indicated. In *Leviathan*, for example, he referred to “divers English Books lately printed” and in *Behemoth* he mentioned “divers men that have written the history.”² Why did he, then, represent Heath as his source? One reason may have been practical. Baron Arlington, the Secretary of State and *Behemoth*’s dedicatee, had given Heath permission to print his *A Brief Chronicle* in 1663 and could thus reasonably be expected to grant – or help obtain – Hobbes license

¹ *Behemoth*, Epistle Dedicatory. I used the reprint of the Tönnies’s edition, *Behemoth, or the Long Parliament*, with an Introduction by S. Holmes (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), and consulted *Béhémouth ou le Long Parlement*, ed. and trans. Luc Borot, vol. 9 of *Oeuvres* by Thomas Hobbes, ed. Y. Ch. Zarka (Paris: Vrin, 1990).

² *Leviathan*, ed. R. Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 484; *Behemoth*, 45; and cf. Borot, *Béhémouth*, 264.

to publish an epitome of that chronicle.³ But such considerations aside, Heath was not the Livy of the English civil war. Among his contemporaries he was reputed for having had “a command of his Engl. and Lat. pen, but wanted a head for a chronologer.” One commentator found his chronicles faulty: “mostly compiled from lying pamphlets, and all sorts of news-books,” and full of “innumerable errors...especially as to name and time.”⁴ Did Hobbes really want to be seen as Heath’s Florus?⁵ If we accept what Hobbes wrote in the dedication, only part of the manuscript he handed over to Arlington was an epitome of Heath. But what Hobbes represented as the division between the two main parts of *Behemoth* was rather a distinction between two levels of the book, corresponding to two types of knowledge – knowledge of events and scientific knowledge of causes⁶ – both present throughout the text. I believe Hobbes actually wanted to suggest how his “booke of the Civill Warr”⁷ was to be read: that the reader was to consider as properly Hobbes’s own – and important – that which was not the “epitome of the war itself.”⁸

³ Cf. Geoffrey Vaughan, *Behemoth Teaches Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Political Education* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002), 104 n. 61. On Hobbes’s difficulties to publish under the Licensing Act, see Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 348-49. Heath was expelled from his studentship at Oxford by the Parliamentarians and joined the royalist exiles in Paris, but whether political affinities had played a role in Hobbes’s choice of the *Brief Chronicle* remains a question. Cf. John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. A. Clark (Oxford: Clarendon, 1898), 1: 306; Anthony Wood, *Athenae oxonienses: An exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education in the University of Oxford*, ed. Ph. Bliss (London: Printed for F. C. and J. Rivington et al., 1813-20), 3: cols. 663-64. On Arlington, see especially Philip Milton, “Hobbes, Heresy and Lord Arlington,” *History of Political Thought* 14, no. 4 (1993): 525 ff.

⁴ Wood, *Athenae oxonienses*, 3: col. 664. For Wood, *Behemoth* too contained “many faults” — and “several things against religion, ancient learning, universities, &c.” *Ibid.*, col. 1213.

⁵ On Hobbes and Florus, see Karl Schuhmann, “Hobbes’s concept of history,” in *Hobbes and History*, ed. G. A. J. Rogers and T. Sorell (London: Routledge, 2000), 3-4, 20 nn. 6, 7. On the popularity of Florus in the early Stuart England, see D. R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and “The Light of Truth” from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 173-74.

⁶ Cf. M. M. Goldsmith, *Hobbes’s Science of Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 232 ff., especially 233.

⁷ Hobbes to John Aubrey, 18 [1/28] August 1679, in *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. N. Malcolm (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 2: 772.

⁸ This assertion contradicts the argument that the book we call *Behemoth* was actually entitled by Hobbes as *Epitome of the Civil Wars*. See Schuhmann, “Hobbes’s concept of history,” 4; “Thomas Hobbes, *Oeuvres*,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 4, no. 1 (1996): 156; and *Hobbes: Une chronique* (Paris: Vrin, 1998), 198. “Epitome” is mentioned in François du Verdus’s letter to Hobbes, [3/] 13 April 1668, *Correspondence*, 2: 697; Hugh Macdonald and Mary Hargreaves, *Thomas Hobbes: A Bibliography* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1952), xv, and no. 88; and Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, 1: 363. There is no evidence that Hobbes himself ever used that title.

Hobbes's own work – not the epitomizing he said he had done – was not a conventional history. True, once – probably in the last months of his life – Hobbes referred to *Behemoth* as “a history of the English Civil War between King Charles and his Parliament,” which he wrote “[i]n or around his eightieth year.”⁹ But at about the same time he complained that a pirated 1679 edition had “a foolish title set to it”¹⁰ The title of the first three unauthorized printings was *The History of the Civil Wars of England, From the Year 1640, to 1660*.¹¹ Histories were not meant to explain causes of events. Hobbes's ambition in *Behemoth* was precisely that. Toward the end of the first dialogue the character *B* has come to understand that the purpose of his older interlocutor *A* was “to acquaint me with the history, not so much of those actions that passed in the time of the late troubles, as of their causes, and of the councils and artifice by which they were brought to pass.” To this *B* added that “[t]here be divers men that have written the history, out of whom I might have learned what they did, and somewhat also of the contrivance; but I find little in them of what I would ask.”¹²

Others have placed *Behemoth* in the context of contemporary historiography or done the preparatory work for such an enterprise.¹³ Here, I want to

⁹ T. Hobbes *Malmesburiensis Vita*, OL 1: xx; trans. in *The Prose Life*, in Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic, Part I Human Nature, Part II De Corpore Politico, with Three Lives*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 252; cf. François Tricaud, “Éclaircissements sur les six première biographies de Hobbes,” *Archives de Philosophie* 48, no. 2 (1985): 280 ff. See n. 7 and Hobbes to William Crooke, 19 [29] June 1679, and 18 [28] August 1679, *Correspondence*, 2: 771, 774, where Hobbes spoke of “my Dialogue of the Civil Wars of England” and “my Book concerning the Civil Wars of England, &c.”. Cf. Crooke's “Bookseller's Advertisement” in *Considerations upon the reputation, loyalty, manners, and religion of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury* (1680), EW 4: 411-12.

¹⁰ Hobbes to John Aubrey, 18 [28] August 1679, *Correspondence*, 2: 772.

¹¹ Macdonald and Hargreaves, *Bibliography*, nos. 86-87a. If the edition in question was the fourth pirated edition from that year, *Behemoth, or An epitome of the Civil Wars of England, from 1640, to 1660* (ibid., no. 88), Hobbes could as well have been unhappy with “Behemoth” (or “An Epitome”). In that case, “the Original” referred to by Hobbes in his letter to Crooke, 19 [29] June 1679, *Correspondence*, 2: 771, was not the St John's College, Oxford, manuscript, entitled *Behemoth*, as it is commonly assumed.

¹² *Behemoth*, 45. Consonant with this explanation is the title Hobbes's printer and bookseller William Crooke gave to the work when he printed it “from the Author's true Copy” in 1682: he entitled it *Behemoth, the history of the Causes of the Civil-Wars of England, And of the Councils and Artifices by which they were carried on, from the year 1640. to the year 1660*. Macdonald and Hargreaves, *Bibliography*, no. 90.

¹³ See especially Fritz Levy, “The background of Hobbes's *Behemoth*,” in *The historical imagination in early modern Britain: History, rhetoric, and fiction, 1500-1800*, ed. D. M. Kelley and D. H. Sacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Woodrow Wilson Center, 1997); see also F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580-1640* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), esp. 170 ff.; Royce

turn to what was, for Hobbes, the question one would want to ask regarding the English civil war. Hobbes answered the question before the character *B* or the reader could even have asked it. In the Epistle Dedicatory, he explained that “[t]here can be nothing more instructive towards loyalty and justice than will be the memory, while it lasts, of that war.”¹⁴

The simplicity of this pronouncement is as apparent as its objectivity. Memory – begotten by experience, “bits of remembered sense-data” continually under assault from new waves of sensation¹⁵ – needed reinforcement to last. It could be revived by production of images and exempla, which was seen as the task of history writing. Hobbes wanted the memory of the civil war to last and instruct, and undertook to revivify the past “for the purposes of the present.”¹⁶ He accepted the idea that history has to teach – a common topic in humanists’ discussions – early in his life. In his translation of Thucydides’s *Peloponnesian War*, the earliest publication on which Hobbes’s name appeared, Hobbes wrote that “the principal and proper work of history” was “to instruct and enable men, by the knowledge of actions past, to bear themselves prudently in the present and providently towards the future.”¹⁷ Hobbes praising Thucydides as foremost among historians and as the “most politic historiographer that ever writ,” especially admired his ability to instruct “secretly” through the “narration itself,” not by digressing to moral or

MacGillivray, *Restoration Historians and the English Civil War* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1974); R. C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution Revisited* (London: Routledge, 1988), chap. 2; Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England*; Blair Worden, “Ben Jonson among the Historians,” in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. K. Sharpe and P. Lake (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993); David Wootton, “Thomas Hobbes’s Machiavellian moments,” in Kelley and Sacks, *The historical imagination*; J. G. A. Pocock, “Thomas May and the narrative of Civil War,” in *Writing and Political Engagement in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. D. Hirst and R. Strier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); idem, “Medieval Kings at the Court of Charles I: Thomas May’s Verse Histories,” in *Perspectives on Early Modern and Modern Intellectual History: Essays in Honor of Nancy S. Struever*, ed. J. Marino and M. W. Schlitt (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000); essays in Rogers and Sorell, *Hobbes and History*, especially Johann P. Sommerville, “Hobbes, Selden, Erastianism, and the history of the Jews”; David Norbrook, “The English Revolution and English historiography,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Vaughan, *Behemoth Teaches Leviathan*, especially 92 ff.

¹⁴ *Behemoth*, Epistle Dedicatory.

¹⁵ “The Answer of Mr. Hobbes to Sir Will. d’Avenant’s Preface before Gondibert,” in William Davenant, *Gondibert*, ed. D. F. Gladish (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 49; Patricia Springborg, “*Leviathan*, mythic history, and national historiography,” in Kelley and Sacks, *The historical imagination*, 284.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, ed. D. Greene (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), xxi; EW 8: vii.

political lectures or “other such open conveyances of precepts.”¹⁸ This is not what Hobbes did in *Behemoth*, nor had his writing of *Behemoth* conformed to what he considered the virtues of historiography toward the end of his literary career, when he was back to translating ancient Greek.¹⁹ In *Behemoth*, he was neither impartial – as he wrote in the preface to his translation of Homer that a historian ought to be, desisting from speaking evil of any man – nor was his history “wholly related by the writer.” Indeed, the dialogue form made *Behemoth* closer to a heroic poem, where the narration is “put upon some of the persons introduced by the poet.”²⁰

In *Behemoth*, it was not the narration of the history of the civil war that was instructive; rather, Hobbes instructed through a dialogical discourse on that history, through voicing his opinions of the opinions that, in his view, caused the war. *Behemoth* indeed can be regarded as what Bacon called “RVMINATED HISTORY,” that is, “a scattered History of those actions” which were “thought worthy of memorie, with politique discourse and obseruation thereupon,” and “more fit to place amongst Bookes of policies” than civil history.²¹ The master of such “*discourse upon Histories or Examples*” was “Machiauel.”²²

Since Hobbes made the memory of the civil war “instructive towards loyalty and justice,” *Behemoth* can be read as a lesson in civic education.²³ The war taught by negative example: If one were to observe, “as from the Devil’s Mountain,” the actions of Englishmen in that period, one “might have had a prospect of all kinds of injustice, and of all kinds of folly, that the world could

¹⁸ *Thucydides*, xxii, 577; EW 8: viii, xxii.

¹⁹ See Luc Borot, “History in Hobbes’s thought,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. T. Sorell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially 321 ff.

²⁰ “To the Reader: Concerning the Vertues of an Heroic Poem,” EW 10: v-vi. On the intricate issues of the relation among history, rhetoric, and philosophy, see, especially, David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986); Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); idem, *Hobbes and Civil Science*, vol. 3 of *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Springborg, “*Leviathan*, mythic history, and national historiography.”

²¹ This is convincingly argued in Levy, “The background of Hobbes’s *Behemoth*.” Earlier, the question of whether *Behemoth* belongs to what Bacon in his classification called history or to political histories with commentary at the margins of historical genre was asked by Borot, “Introduction” to *Béhémouth*, 15. See Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. M. Kiernan, vol. 4 of *The Oxford Francis Bacon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 70.

²² Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 162. Wootton, “Thomas Hobbes’s Machiavellian moments,” 228, defines *Behemoth* as “a study in Machiavellian politics.”

²³ See Mary G. Dietz, “Hobbes’s Subject as Citizen,” in *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory*, ed. M. G. Dietz (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990); and Vaughan, *Behemoth teaches Leviathan*.

afford."²⁴ But the character *B* and the reader were not taken to the Devil's Mountain to be tempted with glory and authority²⁵ but to be taught civil duty and obedience. That positive lesson was taught by Hobbes's "science of *just* and *unjust*," the science that instructed men how, by following the "rules of *just*" and submitting "to the laws of the commonwealth," they could live "in peace amongst themselves."²⁶

The utility of Hobbes's science of politics lay in teaching men how to avoid evil. "All calamities which human industry can avoid arise from war, especially from civil war, for from this come massacres, loneliness, and shortage of all things," Hobbes explained in *De corpore*. "But the cause of these things is not that humans want them; for there is no will except for the good, at least for what appears so; and it is not that they do not know that these things are evils; for who is there who does not realize that massacres and poverty are evil and harmful for themselves? Therefore, the cause of civil war is that people are ignorant of the cause of wars and peace and that there are very few who have learned their responsibilities, by which peace flourishes and is preserved..."²⁷

Speaking concretely, Englishmen were not stupid, just ignorant. It was "not want of wit, but want of the science of justice, that brought them into these troubles."²⁸ But what brought them into troubles was not simply the absence of "infallible rules and the true science of equity and justice."²⁹ What led them to war was the presence, and prevalence, of false opinions, doctrines, and beliefs, made possible by the absence of the true science of justice.

Seducers of the People

For Hobbes, opinions were of primary importance. Men's actions originated in their opinions and, consequently, "the power of the mighty hath no foundation but in the opinion and belief of the people."³⁰ There is nothing

²⁴ *Behemoth*, 1; cf. 119, Hobbes's speaking of those who destroyed monarchy: "I intended only the story of their injustice, impudence, and hypocrisy."

²⁵ The devil led Christ "up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world./ And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority'" etc. Lk 4.5-6. Cf. Mt. 4.8-10: "the devil took him to a very high mountain" etc.

²⁶ *Behemoth*, 39, 44, 159-60.

²⁷ *De corpore* I,i,7 (OL 1: 7; I cite English translation in Thomas Hobbes, *Computatio Sive Logica: Logic, translation and commentary* A. Martinich, ed. I. C. Hungerland and G. R. Vick [New York: Abaris Books, 1981], 185).

²⁸ *Behemoth*, 159.

²⁹ *Behemoth*, 70.

³⁰ *Behemoth*, 16; cf. *Leviathan* (Tuck), 124. See Robert P. Kraynak, *History and Modernity*

surprising in the prominence in *Behemoth* given to taking issue with opinions subversive of the commonwealth. Surprisingly, however, in the somewhat jumpy opening of the dialogue, Hobbes does not directly proceed to opinions. Instead, he identifies the protagonists of the rebellion first, only later to explain their actions through exposition of their opinions and doctrines. In this, the treatment of the causes of the dissolution of government in *Behemoth* differs from that in his earlier treatises.³¹

The protagonists enter the stage as seducers and the seduced. One encounters the image of seduction as early as the translation of Thucydides. Hobbes rendered the opening of the Melian Dialogue, in which the democratic Athenians scoff at the aristocratic Melians, as follows: "Since we may not speak to the multitude, for fear lest when they hear our persuasive and unanswerable arguments all at once in a continued oration, they should chance to be seduced (for we know that this is the scope of your bringing us to audience before the few)."³²

The context in which the possibility of seduction appears is highly significant. Seduction of the multitude is the result of rhetoric, and the point here is that democratic persuasion, dismissive of the adversary's political constitution, takes place at gunpoint (as we would say today), with the stronger – the Athenians – refusing to discuss "either the justice of their demand or any substantive arguments the Melians may wish to offer."³³

The seduced, in Hobbes's analysis of the English civil war, were the people. They contributed to the destruction of the monarchical government because they refused to pay taxes, so that the king, who did not lack virtue, lacked soldiers under his command. More fatally, he was unable to keep the

in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); William R. Lund, "Hobbes on Opinion, Private Judgement and Civil War," *History of Political Thought* 13, no.1 (1992).

³¹ This does not mean that there is no continuity in Hobbes's view of what — and especially which opinions — was destructive of government. Cf. Tom Sorell, *Hobbes* (London: Routledge, 1986), 128 ff. See *The Elements of Law* II, xxvii; *De cive* xii (I cite *On the Citizen*, ed. and tr. R. Tuck and M. Silverthorne [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998]); *Leviathan* xxix.

³² *Thucydides*, 364; EW 9: 97-98. In a modern translation, the passage reads: "So we are not to speak before the people, no doubt in case the mass of the people should hear once and for all and without interruption an argument from us which is both persuasive and incontrovertible, and should so be led astray. This, we realize, is your motive in bringing us here to speak before the few." Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* V,85 (trans. R. Warner and ed. M. I. Finley [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974]), 400-1.

³³ See Finley's note in Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 614; the importance of the Melian Dialogue for our study of Hobbes is emphasised in Wootton, "Thomas Hobbes's Machiavellian moments."

people "from uniting into a body able to oppose him."³⁴ But why should people be moved to unite against the king? They were "corrupted generally," it is true, but at least the common sort of them did not care much "for either of the causes, but would have taken any side for pay or plunder." They were seduced. The reader, who has not heard anything yet about the "causes" and the "sides" of the conflict, begins to learn about them through learning "what kind of people were they that could so seduce" the people.³⁵

The seducers were, first, "ministers, as they called themselves, of Christ," who are later discussed as the Presbyterians; second, those "known by the name of Papists"; third, the Independents and other sectarians (Anabaptists, Fifth Monarchists, Quakers, Adamites and others whose names for Hobbes were not worth remembering); fourth, the admirers of "the ancient Grecian and Roman commonwealths," enamored with popular government; fifth, the city of London and other great towns of trade; sixth, the would-be war profiteers who had wasted their fortunes and "saw no means how honestly to get their bread" ("multis utile Bellum")³⁶; and seventh, "the people in general" who were almost completely ignorant of their duty and had "no rule of equity, but precedents and custom."³⁷ The first three categories are religious groups, whereas the fourth and seventh are people in doctrinal error.³⁸ The fifth, the city of London and towns of trade, are, in Hobbes's analysis (disputed by our contemporary research), dissolved into religious and doctrinal groups.³⁹ The war profiteers are the only group that falls out of the larger, if heterogeneous, mass of those holding dangerous opinions "in divinity and politics," but could easily be counted among those "ignorant of their duty."

³⁴ Bacon noted that whatever causes seditions "joyneth and knitteth" people "in a Common Cause," in his essay "Of Seditious and Troubles," to which *Behemoth* almost inevitably bears some resemblance. *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, ed. M. Kiernan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 46.

³⁵ *Behemoth*, 2.

³⁶ Lucan I, 182, cited by Bacon in "Of Seditious and Troubles," 45.

³⁷ *Behemoth*, 2-4.

³⁸ For a different interpretation, cf. Royce MacGillivray, "Thomas Hobbes's History of the English Civil War: A Study of *Behemoth*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 31, no. 2 (1970): 187; Borot, Introduction to *Béhémot*, 16.

³⁹ See *Behemoth*, 22-23, 25, 104, 121, 126, 142; cf. Valerie Pearl, "London's Counter-Revolution," in *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement 1646-1660*, ed. G. E. Aylmer (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1972); James F. Farnell, "The Social and Intellectual Basis of London's Role in the English Civil Wars," *Journal of Modern History* 49, no. 4 (1977); Roger Howell, "Neutrality, Conservatism and Political Alignment in the English Revolution: The Case of Towns, 1642-9," in *Reactions to the Civil War, 1642-1649*, ed. J. Morrill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), especially 67, 77, 87.

Having categorized the seducers of the people, Hobbes wrote a section on the Papists who were of marginal importance for the outbreak of the civil war, its unfolding, and the search for a settlement but – as the contemporary obsession with Popish plots indicate – most important to the “Puritan mind.”⁴⁰ If Hobbes, like many other contemporary historians of the civil war, indeed desired to “expose the Papists as a cause of this catastrophe, or at least to connect them with its origins,” he failed, and his treatment of the Roman Catholics may be judged “unreasonable and unfair.”⁴¹ And unless Hobbes’s critique of the Papists is read as a model for critique of any other Christian group’s relation to civil authority, the section is also uneconomical.

Hobbes then turned his attention to the Presbyterians, but the discussion soon lost its focus, spilling over into an account of events, some of which called for further theoretical explanations and asides, and the list of seducers definitively ceased to be an organizing principle for the narration. Instead, at the point of transition from the inventory of seducers to the discussion of the Papists, a new question emerged: “from whence, and when, crept in the pretences of that Long Parliament, for a democracy.”⁴² Nor did this question, quite abruptly asked, become the guideline for Hobbes’s discussion. But Hobbes returned to the question of democracy as soon as he completed the section on the Papists and he kept tackling it, especially until the narrative reached the institution of the Rump. I want to argue that the question of democracy is a central question in *Behemoth* and that it is the discussion of democracy in *Behemoth* that is not only generally consistent with, but also adds to, the views developed in Hobbes’s earlier, more methodical but not more theoretical, works.⁴³

⁴⁰ William Lamont, *Puritanism and historical controversy* (London: UCL Press, 1996), 2, has warned against historians’ “underrating the force of anti-Catholicism in the seventeenth century.” Cf. Michael G. Finlayson, *Historians, Puritanism, and the English Revolution: the Religious Factor in English Politics before and after the Interregnum* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), chap. 4. On the Catholics’ inactivity in the civil war, see Keith Lindley, “The Part Played by the Catholics,” in *Politics, Religion and The English Civil War*, ed. B. Manning (London: Edward Arnold, 1973); on the “popish threat,” see especially Peter Lake, “Anti-popery: the Structure of a Prejudice,” in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603-1642*, ed. R. Cust and A. Hughes (London: Longman, 1989).

⁴¹ MacGillivray, “Hobbes’s History,” 190-91; idem, *Restoration Historians*, 74.

⁴² *Behemoth*, 5.

⁴³ For this distinction, cf. Onofrio Nicastro, “Le vocabulaire de la dissolution de l’État,” in *Hobbes et son vocabulaire: Études de lexicographie philosophique*, ed. Y. Ch. Zarka (Paris: Vrin, 1992), 261.

Democracy: Forms of Government

In his earlier treatises, Hobbes as a rule treated democracy as a form of government.⁴⁴ Seeing democracy that way had been an element in, and a result of, the process of “domestication of the classical-humanist constitutional terminology,” and a commonplace in English political treatises and historiography from at least early sixteenth century onward.⁴⁵ In *Behemoth*, by contrast, the theory of forms of government was of little importance. Here, most of what Hobbes had to say about democracy had been said before he even mentioned the three distinctive forms of government. The first substantial reference to the forms of government appeared only at the beginning of the fourth dialogue, and was used for polemical purposes. To B’s question of what “kind of government” was the Rump, A replied: “It is doubtless an oligarchy. For the supreme authority must needs be in one man or in more. If in one, it is monarchy; the Rump therefore was no Monarch. If the authority were in more than one, it was in all, or in fewer than all. When in all, it is democracy; for every man may enter into the assembly which makes the Sovereign Court; which they could not do here. It is therefore manifest, that the authority was in a few, and consequently the state was an oligarchy.”⁴⁶

When “monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy” are first mentioned, as forms of “commonwealth,” it almost seems as though Hobbes does not care enough to be consistent. For in the very next paragraph, “commonwealth” transforms from a generic into a specific term and is cited as distinct from monarchy: “The Greeks had for awhile their petty kings, and then by sedition came to be petty commonwealths; and then growing to be greater commonwealths, by sedition again became monarchies.”⁴⁷ Elsewhere, these distinctions are an object of derision, as when Hobbes alludes to those “men of the better sort” who, in their youth, read famous Greek and Roman authors and “became thereby in love with their forms of government.”⁴⁸

The problem with those “fine men” was that, once enamored with the forms of government and averse to “absolute monarchy, as also absolute

⁴⁴ See *Elements of Law* II,xx,3; xxi,1-2; xxiv,1; *De cive* vii,1-2, 7-11; *Leviathan* (Tuck), 129-30, 133, cf. 378-79

⁴⁵ Michael Mendle, *Dangerous Positions: Mixed Government, the Estates of the Realm, and the Making of the Answer to the six propositions* (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1985), 59. I am much indebted to this study. For historiography, cf. Fussner, *The Historical Revolution*, 166-67,169.

⁴⁶ *Behemoth*, 156; cf. 75, 155, where the same point was made *en passant*.

⁴⁷ *Behemoth*, 70.

⁴⁸ *Behemoth*, 3.

democracy or aristocracy, all which governments they esteemed tyranny," they fell "in love with *mixarchy*."⁴⁹ The problem with the forms of government theory was that it helped those gentlemen articulate both their aversion to simple – "absolute" – forms of government and their liking of a mixed government, combining, as they believed, the good qualities of the simple forms. Hobbes was not impressed. "Mixarchy" stood for a mixed monarchy and this, even if advocated by royal counselors, was undermining royal authority. Besides being politically dangerous, the idea of mixed monarchy was philosophically untenable: It meant division of sovereignty.⁵⁰ But sovereignty, for Hobbes, was indivisible.

The forms of government were basically irrelevant for the formulation of this central concept of Hobbes's "science of justice." Or, looking from the other end, sovereignty was indifferent to the forms of government. In fact, at least in Hobbes's own presentation, his idea of sovereignty – and thus his civil science – was articulated against that ancient "vain philosophy," in particular Aristotle's, of which the doctrine of forms of government had been an essential element. Hobbes's judgement, that "scarce any thing" could be "more repugnant to Government" than the *Politics*, applied to the forms of constitution discussed there (as Hobbes had made clear).⁵¹ Yet anti-Aristotelian declarations notwithstanding, the forms of government retained a honorable place in *Leviathan*. In *Behemoth*, their standing deteriorated. Their relevance now lay principally in their having been employable, and actually employed, for doctrinal subversion of sovereignty. Seen from this perspective, democracy was in the final analysis not so much a form of government that represented an alternative to the kingly rule of one as a threat to government as such. Hobbes's most radical charge against the Presbyterians, whom he saw as the principal agent of disorder, was that they "reduced this government into anarchy." And the resulting problem, which they were unable to solve, was to establish the government in *any* form.⁵² Democracy was a set of ideas directing and legitimizing the undoing of the government and civil order: a practice of anti-governmentality.

⁴⁹ *Behemoth*, 116.

⁵⁰ *Behemoth*, 33, 112, 114, 125.

⁵¹ *Leviathan* (Tuck), 461-62, 470 (manners of commonwealth). See J. Laird, "Hobbes on Aristotle's *Politics*," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series 43 (1942-43); William Mathie, "Justice and the Question of Regimes in Ancient and Modern Political Philosophy: Aristotle and Hobbes," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 9, no. 3 (1976); Curtis Johnson, "The Hobbesian Conception of Sovereignty and Aristotle's *Politics*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46, no. 3 (1985).

⁵² *Behemoth*, 109.

Democracy in Practice: From Thucydides to Leviathan Latinus

Hobbes did not dwell on formal distinctions among the three kinds of government in *Behemoth*, except where it proved useful for denouncing English democrats. Rather, he focused on democracy in action. There are some precedents for such an approach in his earlier works.

The most famous case is Hobbes's translation of the *Peloponnesian War*. In his introduction to that translation, Hobbes pointed out that Thucydides showed the Athenian democracy as "the emulation and contention of the demagogues for reputation and glory of wit." Those demagogues crossed "each other's counsels, to the damage of the public." What also characterized that democracy was "the inconsistency of resolutions, caused by the diversity of ends and power of rhetoric in the orators; and the desperate actions undertaken upon the flattering advice of such as desired to attain, or to hold what they had attained, of authority and sway amongst the common people." Through the working of democracy it "came to pass amongst the Athenians, who thought they were able to do anything, that wicked men and flatterers drave them headlong into those actions that were to ruin them." Small wonder then that, in Thucydides's "opinion touching the government of the state, it is manifest that he least of all liked the democracy."⁵³

Hobbes manifestly sympathized with Thucydides. His judgment of the Greek historian and the importance of his work was not to change. In his own biography, published fifty years after the appearance of the translation, Hobbes summarized Thucydides's history as follows: "In it the weaknesses and eventual failures of the Athenian democrats, together with those of their city state, were made clear."⁵⁴ He reasserted his sharing with Thucydides of his aversion to democracy: "There's none that pleas'd me like *Thucydides*./ He says Democracy's a Foolish Thing,/ Than a Republick wiser is one King."⁵⁵ Modern historians have followed Hobbes's lead when they considered his "distrust of democracy" influenced by "the lessons of Thucydides," or described his translation of the *Peloponnesian War* as, for example, mounting "a sustained argument against republican democracy."⁵⁶ If this comes near to

⁵³ *Thucydides*, 572 (EW 8: xvi-xvii).

⁵⁴ *The Prose Life*, trans. in *The Elements of Law* etc. (Gaskin), 246.

⁵⁵ *The Verse Life* (anonymous contemporary translation), in *The Elements of Law* etc. (Gaskin), 256; cf. *T. Hobbes Malmesburiensis Vita*, OL 1: lxxxviii: "Sed mihi prae reliquis Thucydides placuit./ Is Democratia ostendit mihi quam sit inepta,/ Et quantum coetu plus sapit unus homo."

⁵⁶ George Klosko and Daryl Rice, "Thucydides and Hobbes's State of Nature," *History of Political Thought* 6, no. 3 (1985): 405; David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 62.

making too much of Hobbes's (sometimes misleading) statements about his own work, we can rely on the growing knowledge of the profound impact of Thucydides on Hobbes's thinking.⁵⁷

There are echos of Thucydides in the *Elements of Law*. In the *Peloponnesian War*, for example, Athens is described as "democratical in name, but in effect monarchical under Pericles," whereas in Hobbes's own treatise democracy is characterized as, "in effect, no more than an aristocracy of orators, interrupted sometimes with the temporary monarchy of one orator."⁵⁸ In *De cive*, a feature of democracy is that, under "popular control [*dominatio*], there may be as many *Neros* as they are *Orators* who fawn on the *people*. For every Orator wields as much power as the *people* itself, and they have a kind of tacit agreement to turn a blind eye to each other's greed (*my turn today, yours tomorrow*), and to cover up for any of them who put innocent fellow citizens to death arbitrarily or because of private feuds."⁵⁹ In *Leviathan*, Hobbes remembered how destructive of peace and safety were the factions of "Aristocraticalls and Democraticalls of old time in *Greece*," and how seditions finally undermined the "antient Roman Common-wealth."⁶⁰

But the closest Hobbes comes to his *Behemoth*-like take on democracy is in the Latin version of *Leviathan*, published in 1668 and probably at least partly written in the same period as *Behemoth*.⁶¹ Here democracy, in its practical immediacy, is an English problem. In the substantially rewritten Latin version of the last *Leviathan*'s chapter, there is the following lapidary characterization of the English civil war: "The democrats won, and they established a democracy; but they paid the price of their great crimes by losing it in no time at all."⁶² The downfall of democracy – first brought about by that "single tyrant" who seized control of England, Scotland, and Ireland and "confounded their [the democrats'] democratic prudence (both that of the laity

⁵⁷ Recently stated in Jonathan Scott, "The peace of silence: Thucydides and the English Civil War," in Rogers and Sorell, *Hobbes and History*; a pioneering study is Richard Schlatter, "Thomas Hobbes and Thucydides," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6 (1945). It is interesting to note that Clifford W. Brown, Jr., "Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Derivation of Anarchy," *History of Political Thought* 8, no. 1 (1987), does not even refer to *Behemoth*. See also his "Thucydides, Hobbes and the Linear Casual Perspective," *History of Political Thought* 10, no. 2 (1989); and Gabriella Slomp, "Hobbes, Thucydides and the Three Greatest Things," *History of Political Thought* 11, no. 4 (1990).

⁵⁸ *Thucydides*, 573 (EW 8: xvii); *Elements of Law* II,xxi,5.

⁵⁹ *De cive* x,7.

⁶⁰ *Leviathan* (Tuck), 164, 222.

⁶¹ On the composition date see Curley's note in *Leviathan: with selected variants from the Latin edition of 1668*, ed. E. Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), lxiii-iv.

⁶² OL 3: 509; I cite Curley's translation, *Leviathan* (Curley), 488.

and that of the ecclesiastics),” and completed by the restoration of the “legitimate king,” whom the people “asked for pardon (i.e., acknowledged their foolishness)”⁶³ – was what made that sequence of events a revolution.⁶⁴

That revolution was part of a broader phenomenon: “of those civil wars concerning religion in Germany, France, and England.” The origin of those wars in general and the beginning of English troubles in particular were democratic “principles,” derived from “the ethical and political philosophy of Aristotle and of those Romans who have followed Aristotle.” Hobbes’s own teaching was their opposite.⁶⁵ *Leviathan* was both the expounding of the sound, and rejection of seditious, doctrine, written “at the time when civil war, born in Scotland over the issue of ecclesiastical discipline, was raging in England also and in Ireland, when not only the bishops, but also the king, the law, religion and honesty had been abolished, and treachery, murder, and all the foulest crimes dominated (but masked as something else).”⁶⁶ But Hobbes’s engagement, as he noted in retrospect, “was of little benefit then.” He hoped, however, “that it would be of more benefit after the war was over.” For this reason he translated *Leviathan* into Latin: “Who will believe that those seditious principles are not now completely destroyed, or that there is anyone (except the democrats) who wishes the suppression of a doctrine whose tendency toward peace is as great as that of my teaching? So that this would not happen, I wanted it to be available in Latin. For I see that men’s disagreements about opinions and intellectual excellence cannot be eliminated by arms. In whatever way evils of this kind arise, they must be destroyed in the same way.”⁶⁷

The victory over the democrats may have been won but it needed to be consolidated since the democratic threat had not been eliminated. If the Latin translation of *Leviathan* was declared a contribution to the struggle against the democrats, I am tempted to regard *Behemoth* as well as part of the same permanent struggle: as a text whose aim it was to help wash away “that democratic ink.”⁶⁸

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Behemoth*, 204.

⁶⁵ *Leviathan* (Curley), 476, 488; OL 3: 502, 509.

⁶⁶ In the conclusion of this sentence, an observer “brought here from a remote part of the world” fulfills the function of the view from the Devil’s Mountain in *Behemoth*. *Leviathan* (Curley), 488; OL 3: 508-9; cf. Appendix ad *Leviathan* III, OL 3: 559-60; *Leviathan* (Curley), 538-39.

⁶⁷ *Leviathan* (Curley), 488; OL 3: 509.

⁶⁸ “Itaque atramentum illud democraticum, praedicando, scribendo, disputando eluendum est.” OL 3: 509-10; cf. *Leviathan* (Curley), 488.

Democracy in Practice: Behemoth

A closer look at Hobbes's treatment of democracy in *Behemoth* shows that treatment to be not systematical at all, which actually makes it interesting. Hobbes did not start with a definition of democracy but rather, in the course of his *discorsi*, produced a number of equivalences and oppositions that determine our understanding of democracy, and which I will try to organize for the clarity of my argument.

The democrats make their most memorable appearance as the "democratical gentlemen." Who were they? The first and easiest answer is that they were parliamentarians. The Parliament was a specimen of "democratical assemblies"⁶⁹ and was, from another perspective, an assembly intent on establishing a democracy,⁷⁰ in which it eventually succeeded.⁷¹ As such, the democrats were either to be met in the Parliament – like those gentlemen who made the people "in love with democracy" by their "harangues in the Parliament"⁷² – or else were striving to get there, pressuring the King to call the Parliament. A case in point were those English "democraticals" who, when the enforcement of the new Scottish Prayer Book in 1637 led to rebellion in Scotland, encouraged the Scottish Presbyterians in their attack on the Church establishment. They knew that the King could only hope to suppress the rebellion if he were able to raise an army, for which he lacked money. To collect money, he needed the consent of the Parliament, but he had dissolved it years ago. In Hobbes's own words, "the thing which those democraticals chiefly then aimed at, was to force the king to call a Parliament, which he had not done for ten years before, as having found no help, but hindrance to his designs in the Parliaments he had formerly called."⁷³

The crucial defining element of the "democraticals" is the Presbyterian connection. As a rule, they appear coupled with the Presbyterians. That strong relationship, however, is not uniformly defined. When Hobbes attributes "this late rebellion" to "the presbyterians and other democratical men,"⁷⁴ the Presbyterians are a subset of the democrats. The democrats are also represented as an incorporating category when Hobbes comments on the 1628 Parliament. Then, the "democratical gentlemen had received" the Presbyterians "into their counsels for the design of changing the government from

⁶⁹ *Behemoth*, 68.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 5, 89.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 155-56.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 23; cf. 68, 89, 155.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

monarchical to popular, which they called liberty.”⁷⁵ Quite consistent with this comment is Hobbes’s portrayal of the Presbyterians as the originators of the vices and crimes on which the majority of the members of the Long Parliament rested their democracy.⁷⁶

Most often, however, Hobbes sees the relationship between the “democratals” and Presbyterians as one between equals. The Presbyterians, for example, “had the concurrence of a great many gentlemen, that did no less desire a popular government in the civil state than these ministers did in the Church.”⁷⁷ There was a clear affinity and agreement between the aims of the two groups, and both “those preachers and democratals” were teaching “rebellion and treason.”⁷⁸ They favored, animated, and assisted each other, like “the English Presbyterians and democratals” – or “the democratals and Presbyterian English” – and the Scottish Covenanters.⁷⁹ To the degree they were distinct groups, the democratals and Presbyterians were allies, working together and exerting influence together.⁸⁰

The “democratals” and Presbyterians were either jointly opposed or supported each other in their opposition to the Elizabethan religious settlement, ecclesiastical government, and episcopacy,⁸¹ on the one hand, and, on the other, to the government, the King, and King’s interests.⁸² They were inveighing against tyranny and extolling liberty, which they equated with popular government.⁸³ Striving in reality for their own absolute government, they were the cause of disturbance of the commonwealth.⁸⁴ They founded their democracy on vices, crime, and folly, established it with an army, and ultimately failed because they had no army to maintain it.⁸⁵

Republicanizing the Democratals

If these were the democrats, what was democracy? It was the outcome of their action, indelibly marked by those who gave it birth. Democracy was the work of religious fanatics and classicizing fine gentlemen, a synthesis of what

⁷⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 155.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 39.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 30-31.

⁸⁰ Cf. Ibid., 193.

⁸¹ Ibid., 20, 22-23, 30, 88-89.

⁸² Ibid., 22-23, 28, 88-89.

⁸³ Ibid., 23, 26.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 22, 68.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 155.

today we would call religious fundamentalism and republicanism. In the more than three hundred years that divide us from Hobbes, the foundational philosopher of our political institutions,⁸⁶ such a view of democracy – indeed, any view in which democracy is a “foolish thing” or even an ugly one – has become counterintuitive. In his own time, Hobbes’s view of democracy was not unique and was likely to upset, but not to puzzle, his contemporaries. Nowadays, it goes against our political sensibilities. It is alien to our political thinking. And it is hard to square with what has become the dominant interpretation of political thought of Hobbes’s period.

It appears that Hobbes’s view of civil war is hard to fit in what is deemed the consensus among today’s historians of English political thought. The consensus is about the central importance of republicanism and its acme: “The consensus is that republican thought only came of age in England with the appearance of James Harrington’s *The Commonwealth of Oceana* in 1656. How can Hobbes’ claims about the headway made by republicanism before the war be reconciled with these findings of its belatedness?”⁸⁷

Hobbes thus claimed that “two groups above all” were to be blamed for “the catastrophe of the 1640s”: the Presbyterians and the democratical gentlemen.⁸⁸ Whereas the former are of no great interest within the consensus, the latter can briefly be identified as members in the House of Commons or as the gentry.⁸⁹ Such historical identification is a step toward conceptual classification. One can see this well in the only one recent attempt I know of to give more thought to “the group of malcontents... stigmatised by Hobbes ... as the ‘Democratical Gentlemen.’” Here, Hobbes is represented as having been both wrong and right. He gave the misleading impression that “the gentlemen in question were self-conscious exponents of a radical ideology designed to limit the powers of the crown” (while in fact they were only concerned about upholding “their traditional privileges”); and he was right to see “that their reliance on classical arguments about freedom and servitude eventually pushed them into adopting a standpoint so radical as to be virtually republican in its constitutional allegiances.”⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and government, 1572-1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), xvii.

⁸⁷ Martin Dzelzainis, “Ideas in conflict: political and religious thought during the English Revolution,” in Keeble, *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, 36.

⁸⁸ Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, 431-32; cf. Martin Dzelzainis, “Milton’s classical republicanism,” in *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. D. Armitage, A. Himy, and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-4.

⁸⁹ Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, 432, 433; Dzelzainis, “Milton’s classical republicanism,” 3.

⁹⁰ Quentin Skinner, “Classical Liberty and the Coming of the English Civil War,” in

I find the language of radical ideology anachronistic (on both accounts, of “ideology” and “radical,” even if I think of the “Root and Branch”).⁹¹ But my main misgiving is about the translation of Hobbes’s democratically into republicans.⁹² Republicanism is represented as the result of ideological radicalization, where royal power was being challenged on the basis of the principles drawn – even “entirely drawn” – from the “legal and moral philosophy of ancient Rome.”⁹³ Since royalism is equated with monarchy, republicanism becomes anti-monarchism and, as such, a constitutional position. The slogan expressing that position is: “the people of England never, never, never shall be slaves.”⁹⁴

That emblematic slogan was made in the 1990s and seems an unexpected conclusion of an analysis that took Hobbes for a starting point. One can easily imagine Hobbes agreeing with emphasizing the importance of classical political sensibilities and ideas in England’s troubles. But unlike a number of today’s historians, he spoke of the “democratical” – not republican – “principles.”⁹⁵ Does this matter?

Before the republican turn in the history of political thought, at least from Eduard Bernstein and G. P. Gooch to an early work of a still active scholar,⁹⁶ Hobbes’s characterization of ideas he criticized as democratic would fall within the historiographical mainstream. True, speaking of the English civil war or its particular aspects and protagonists in democratic terms has more often than not been an act of appropriation. That fits the general pattern: “Much modern historical discussion of the English revolution has been governed by attempts to appropriate it.” But the republicanizing historians nowadays have not broken the pattern: “To this generalization the historiography of English republicanism, despite its quality, is no exception.”⁹⁷ The quality indeed is admirable, but speaking of republicanism where historical actors themselves did not seems a departure from methodological guidelines

vol. 2 of *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. M. van Geldern and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15.

⁹¹ Cf. Conal Condren, *The Language of Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), chap. 5, especially 149.

⁹² Cf. n. 87.

⁹³ Skinner, “Classical Liberty,” 14-18.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁹⁵ *Behemoth*, 43 (naming Aristotle and Cicero).

⁹⁶ Eduard Bernstein, *Sozialismus und Demokratie in der Grossen Englischen Revolution* (Berlin: Dietz, 1895); G. P. Gooch, *English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959; first published 1898); Perez Zagorin, *A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1997; first published 1954), especially p. 2.

⁹⁷ Jonathan Scott, *England’s troubles*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 290.

on which that quality of research has been built. The translation of Hobbes's democracticals into republicans allows assumptions that were not present in the historical situation and blinds us to important aspects of Hobbes's critique of democracy.

As to the assumptions, it is probably correct to accept that what is regarded as an increasingly republican Parliamentary position had not much to do with "the people." At their most active, Hobbes saw the people as helpers: With their help the Parliamentarians were to set up democracy.⁹⁸ When the people entered democratic politics, they did so as "hands." They "understood not the reasons of either party." But, paradoxically, those "hands were to decide the controversy."⁹⁹ That is why the people had to be seduced and, as an "ignorant multitude," could be seduced.¹⁰⁰ Used by the seducers as they desired and saw fit, the (common) people appear on the scene and act as a "tumultuous party," "insolent rabble of the people," or "great multitudes of clamorous people," characterized by their "fury."¹⁰¹ Parliamentary declaration that "the people, under God, are the original of all just power,"¹⁰² which Hobbes was happy to cite, was an *enjeu*, a stake in the game played by ambitious, glory-seeking men.¹⁰³

Hobbes did not judge highly of the people in politics, but some democractical gentlemen disdained them. Henry Parker, for example, who figures as a marker in the emerging neo-classical/Roman denunciation of royal policy,¹⁰⁴ may have had "an almost mystical sense of the identity of people and parliament,"¹⁰⁵ but he shuddered at the idea that "Mechanicks, bred up illiterately to handy crafts," would be "placed at the helm," that "ignorance, and sordid

⁹⁸ *Behemoth*, 89.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 115-16.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 68, 116, 188.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 64, 69, 71, 88, 97, 98.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁰³ See Deborah Baumgold, *Hobbes's political theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chap. 7; idem, "Hobbes's Political Sensibility: The Menace of Political Ambition," in Dietz, *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory*; cf. Dietz, "Hobbes's Subject as Citizen," 97; Gabriella Slomp, *Thomas Hobbes and the Political Philosophy of Glory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), especially chap. 5. For Hobbes's frequently used language of acting and gaming, cf. *Behemoth*, 24, 38, 136-37, 159.

¹⁰⁴ Skinner, "Classical Liberty," 15-16, 21 ff. But see Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 369, who denies Parker the title of a classical republican and speaks, instead, of an "Aristotelian populism." Michael Mendle, "Parliamentary sovereignty: a very English absolutism," in *Political discourse in early modern Britain*, ed. N. Phillipson and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 118, also speaks of Parker's populism.

¹⁰⁵ Mendle, *Dangerous Positions*, 132.

birth...be lifted up to the eminent offices, and places of power," that that "which was the Foot" would be made "the Head," "and that the foot, which was the Head."¹⁰⁶ Nedham, to take another example, saw democracy – because it "puts the whole multitude into an equal exercise of the supreme authority, under pretense of maintaining liberty" – as the "greatest enemy of liberty."¹⁰⁷ One could not formulate it better than a pamphleteer did shortly before the Pride's purge: "It is not *vox*, but *Salus populi* that is the supream law."¹⁰⁸

That anonymous anti-royalist saw the people as dim eyed and dull and knew that they were not to be trusted. Because the people, or the majority of them, were a "giddy multitude," "sensual, ignorant, and inconsiderate," foolish and "mad men," expected to be "bestial in their Votes" (because they supported the King), the reasonable, tyranny-hating and liberty-loving minority was not to submit to them: "it is major reason...and not the major voice" that was to rule.¹⁰⁹ *Vox populi* has a connection with *populus*, the people; *salus populi* is decided by the voice of the sovereign, whether people or not. The safety of the people, the pamphleteer declared, is "the chiefest Lord, Rule, Reason, and Law."¹¹⁰ He did not say that the people were "the chiefest Lord." There is nothing inherently republican – or radical or democratic – in the *salus populi* formula.¹¹¹ Hobbes accepted it as happily as the author of the *Salus populi solus rex* (who in turn shared Hobbes's abhorrence at the prospect of the absence of government).¹¹² For Hobbes, *salus populi* was a guideline for royal policy or for policy of any supreme power, and he denounced the Long Parliament's use of it as a pretext for rebellion.¹¹³

Salus populi is a poor foundation for constitutionalism, since *salus populi* is

¹⁰⁶ *A letter of due censure, and redargution to Lieut. Coll: John Lilburne* (London, 1650), 21, 22; cf. W. K. Jordan, *Men of Substance: A Study of the Thought of Two English Revolutionaries, Henry Parker and Henry Robinson* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1942), 156.

¹⁰⁷ Marchamont Nedham, *The Case of the Commonwealth of England, Stated*, ed. Ph. A. Knachel (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1969), 99.

¹⁰⁸ *Salus populi solus rex: The peoples safety is the sole sovereignty, or The royalist out-reasoned* (London, 1648), 19; see David Underdown, *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 266.

¹⁰⁹ *Salus populi solus rex*, 1, 18, 19.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹¹ Skinner, "Classical Liberty," 12, cites first "salus populi suprema lex esto" from Cic. *Leg. III*,iii,8 as one of the golden rules of a "free state," and then (*ibid.*, 18 ff.) frequent references to that rule in the parliamentary documents of the early 1640s to demonstrate the process of radicalization leading to republicanism.

¹¹² "[B]etter is the Government of the great *Turk*, than no Government, because without all Government, *homo homini demon*, one man will be a devil to another." *Salus populi solus rex*, 18.

¹¹³ *Behemoth*, 68, 73, 108, 180, 198.

the language of emergency – and *necessitas* knows no law.¹¹⁴ For Hobbes, civil war was not about constitutional issues. On the one hand, he highlighted the base motives for what he saw as democratic politics¹¹⁵ and brought our attention closer to that field in which English “radicalism” mainly played itself out, namely practical morality.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, he was sceptical of the notion of fundamental law. He spurned the Rump’s declaration of its resolution to maintain “*the fundamental laws of the nation, as to the preservation of the lives, liberties, and properties of the people,*” as nothing but an “abuse of the people.”¹¹⁷

Classicizing Democrats

Some of the gentlemen whom Hobbes called “democraticals” would have objected to that name. In his polemics with the royalists, Henry Parker, for example, “did all he could to minimize the imputation of democracy to the House of Commons.” For him, democracy was “the greatest irritant.”¹¹⁸ Had Hobbes directly engaged in the pamphlet war of the early 1640s, calling men like Parker democratical gentlemen would have been an effective polemical device. But why did Hobbes do that in retrospect? Why did he choose this language for his civic education?

A reason may lie in greater precision of the language of democracy, as compared with the language of republicanism, when it comes to talking about public authority. Democracy is a form of government (even if of secondary importance for Hobbes). Republic is not. It may mean, among other things, a kingless government. But what was true for sixteenth-century England held generally true in at least a good part of the seventeenth century as well: *republica* did not mean “a type of constitution incompatible with monarchy” and was “an acceptable term for a variety of political systems.”¹¹⁹ Thomas Smith’s

¹¹⁴ Analysis of the same historical material as Skinner’s (see n. 111) led Mendle, “Parliamentary sovereignty,” 118-19, to identify Parliamentary sovereignty as absolutism based on permanent emergency.

¹¹⁵ See Stephen Holmes, “Political Psychology in Hobbes’s *Behemoth*,” in Dietz, *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory*, 121 ff., and his Introduction to *Behemoth*, xi ff.

¹¹⁶ See especially Scott, *England’s troubles*, part II.

¹¹⁷ *Behemoth*, 157-58 (italics in Borot’s ed.).

¹¹⁸ See Mendle, *Dangerous Positions*, 182; and [Henry Parker,] *Observations upon some of his Majesties late Answers and Expresses* (London, 1642), 22-23. Cf. Jordan, *Men of Substance*, 155, that Parker made it plain that the civil war was not to inaugurate the evil of an “irresponsible democracy.”

¹¹⁹ Patrick Collinson, “The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester* 69, no. 2 (1987): 400-1.

Republica anglorum, for example, translated as the *Commonwealth of England* and was defined as a republic/Commonwealth governed by the monarch, "King or Queen."¹²⁰ Republic was the generic term for a body politic or, as Smith wrote, echoing Cicero, for "a society or common doing of a multitude of free men collected together and united by common accord and covenantes among themselves, for the conservation of themselves aswell in peace as in warre,"¹²¹ of which monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy were species.

Notable diversions from this usage were few. Thomas Elyot wanted to make sure that *Respublica* not be understood as the rule of the multitude only, that is of *plebs*, which "in englisshe is called the communalitie" and contained "the base and vulgare inhabitantes not auanced to any honour or dignitie," but as the rule of the public, *publike*, which "is diriuied of people," meaning "all the inhabitantes of a realme or citie." He proposed a distinction between a *publike weale* and a *commune weale*, corresponding to the Latin *Res publica* nad *Res plebeia* respectively.¹²² Walter Raleigh named "monarchy or kingdom," aristocracy, and "a free state or popular state" the forms of the state. He reserved the name commonwealth "or government of all the common or baser sort" for the degenerated form of the popular state.¹²³ But in his *Cabinet-Council*, published by Milton in 1658, Raleigh went back to the more conventional usage: "All commonwealths are either monarchies, aristocracies, democracies" (also called popular government).¹²⁴ That was the usage conforming to the classical Roman sources, even though they lacked uniformity, as Thomas Smith had observed.¹²⁵

Since Cicero defined kingdom as a republic in which the supreme authority is in the king's hands,¹²⁶ and called the authority of the people *civitas popularis*, Hobbes was truer to the neo-Roman literary conventions than are

¹²⁰ *De Republica Anglorum* by Sir Thomas Smith, ed. M. Dewar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), I,i, vii, x; II,iii.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, I,x; cf. *Cic. Rep.* I,xxv,39.

¹²² *The Boke Named the Governour* I,i.

¹²³ Walter Raleigh, *Maxims of State*, in vol. 8 of *The Works of Sir Walter Raleigh, kt, now first collected, to which are prefixed the lives of the author, by Oldys and Birch* (Oxford: The University Press, 1829), 1-2.

¹²⁴ *The Cabinet-council: Containing the Chief Arts of Empire and Mysteries of State*, in vol. 8 of *The Works*, 37. In a note that "all monarchies are principalities, but all principalities are not monarchies" (*ibid.*, 44), one can see an allusion to Machiavelli's categorization of *stati* into *republiche* and *principati*, but this distinction is not operative in Raleigh's work.

¹²⁵ "[T]he rule of the multitude which the Greeks called Δημοκρατία: the Latines some Respublica by the generall name, some populi potestas, some census potestas, I cannot tell howe latinely." *De Republica Anglorum* I,xiv.

¹²⁶ "quare cum penes unum est omnium summa rerum, regem illum unum vocamus et regnum eius rei publicae statum." *Cic. Rep.* I,xxvi,42.

some of our contemporary historians. One can get an intimation of how strong were those terminological conventions from a parliamentary document issued after the beheading of the King, in the period when all our contemporary historians agree republicanism did exist in England. The Rump required "engagement" by the members of the Council of State to "a Republic, without King or House of Lords."¹²⁷ Not *Republic* "senza nulla addizione" (as Dante would say), but a republic that had undergone "unkinging" (as Baxter would say).¹²⁸ Not a transition from monarchy to republic but a transformation of republic. True, parliamentary language was vacillating in that period. Let me cite just a few examples: England was defined as a nation whose government was "now settled in the way of a Commonwealth"; it was famously declared to be "a Commonwealth and Free State"; but the engagement to be taken by "all men of the age of eighteen" spoke, again, of the "Commonwealth of England, as it is now established, without a King or House of Lords."¹²⁹

Hobbes, of course, did not think much of the "Commonwealth and Free State." That phrase simply meant, he explained, that "neither this king, nor any king, nor any single person," but only the Rump themselves "would be the people's masters."¹³⁰ The adjective "free" is easy to use and does not need to mean much since it can mean so many different things. When King James I, for example, wrote about "free monarchies," he was explaining his idea about the true monarchy: a *Common-wealth* in the "trew paterne of Diuinitie" in which the king thinks himself "onely ordained" for the *weal* of his people who, in turn, are his "louing and obedient subiects."¹³¹ "Free" is certainly not a constitutional term in itself. But, meaning different things to different men, it can be emotionally charged and express strong political sentiments, just like the vocabulary, images, and models conveyed by the classical literature in general.

Hobbes, as must be clear by now, thought that classical learning had played a fateful role in the outbreak of the civil war. He did not give particu-

¹²⁷ *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625-1660*, ed. S. R. Gardiner, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1899), 384.

¹²⁸ Baxter cited in William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millenium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 98; for Dante, cf. *Convivio* IV, iv,6-7.

¹²⁹ Gardiner, *The Constitutional Documents*, 387, 388; further instances of "Commonwealth" at 390-99.

¹³⁰ *Behemoth*, 164. Cf. *ibid.*, 157, Hobbes's comment on the Rump's calling themselves *Custodes Libertatis Angliae*: "B. I do not see how a subject that is tied to the laws, can have more liberty in one form of government than in another. A. Howsoever, to the people that understand by liberty nothing but leave to do what they list, it was a title not ingrateful."

¹³¹ *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies: or the Reciproock and mutvall Duetie betwixt a Free King, and His Natural Subjects*, in *The Political Works of James I*, ed. Ch. H. McIlwain (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1918).

lar credit to the neo-Roman legitimation of Parliament's claims. He regularly spoke of Grecian and Roman political literature and, in *Behemoth*, named Aristotle more often than any other classical author, Cicero included.¹³² The point Hobbes repeatedly made was that reading the "glorious histories and the sententious politics of the ancient popular governments of the Greeks and Romans, amongst whom kings were hated and branded with the name of tyrants, and popular government (although no tryarnt was ever so cruel as a popular assembly) passed by the name of liberty," led to rebellion.¹³³

The principles drawn from the classical literature, however, were neither necessarily nor exclusively democratic or republican. Classicism was used for "ridiculing parliamentary apologists,"¹³⁴ and it offered means for arguing the royal cause as well. The *Answer to the six propositions* is a prominent example. It has been interpreted as using the language of classical republicanism to "support the denial that England was a republic."¹³⁵ In the 1650s, the royalists came to praise no other than William Prynne as the "Cato of his Age."¹³⁶ Examples can be multiplied.¹³⁷ The young Hobbes himself sought to "enlist the intellectual tradition of Greece and Rome behind a monarchist philosophy" in order to "counter enthusiasm for democracy."¹³⁸

In *Behemoth*, Hobbes no longer fought within that shared discursive field. Countering the wartime pathology of language,¹³⁹ he abandoned the lan-

¹³² Cf. Scott, *England's troubles*, 293: "Aristotle was the most ubiquitous renaissance classical source and there is a republican Aristotle. It is because Aristotle was a key source for English humanist moral philosophy that Hobbes aimed his criticism particularly in this direction." Among today's historians of seventeenth-century English republicanism, Scott in particular insists on the importance of the Greek ingredient. See his *England's troubles*, chap. 13; "Classical Republicanism in Seventeenth-century England and the Netherlands," in vol. 1 of *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, 61-62, 66.

¹³³ *Behemoth*, 3, 23 (the citation), 43, 56, 95, 158.

¹³⁴ Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 103.

¹³⁵ Mendle, *Dangerous Positions*, 15; idem, "Parliamentary sovereignty," 116.

¹³⁶ Lamont, *Puritanism and historical controversy*, 23.

¹³⁷ See, e.g., Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, 102 ff., 207 ff.; Malcolm Smuts, "Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians, c. 1590-1630," in Sharpe and Lake, *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, especially 39 ff.; David Norbrook, "Lucan, Thomas May, and the Creation of a Republican Literary Culture," *ibid.*, especially 56 ff.; cf. idem, *Writing the English Republic*, chap. 1.

¹³⁸ Smuts, "Court-Centred Politics," 42; cf. Norbrook, "Lucan, Thomas May," 58; idem, "The English Revolution and English historiography," 246-47; and, generally, Skinner, *Hobbes and Civil Science*.

¹³⁹ "The received value of names imposed for signification of things, was changed into arbitrary." *Thucydides*, 204; EW 8: 348. See Nicastro, "Le vocabulaire de la dissolution de l'État," 260.

guage that had succumbed to pathology. That was a pathognomic language. Learning and speaking that language paved the way to the rebellion because one could not be “a good subject to monarchy” if one took his principles from “the enemies of monarchy, such as were Cicero, Seneca, Cato, and other politicians of Rome, and Aristotle of Athens, who seldom speak of kings but as of wolves and other ravenous beasts.”¹⁴⁰ Moreover, what the Englishmen drew out of ancient books was not just a particular political sensibility, it was also political sentences: “arguments for liberty out of the works of Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, and out of the histories of Rome and Greece,” furnished them “for their disputation against the necessary power of their sovereigns.”¹⁴¹

State Democracy and Church Democracy

In his memoirs, Richard Baxter remembered that “many honest Men of weak judgments and little acquaintance with such Matters, had been seduced into a disputing vein, and made it too much of their Religion, to talk for this Opinion and for that; sometimes for State Democracy, and sometime for Church Democracy.”¹⁴² Baxter loathed Hobbes, but this passage could be written by either man (or many others). What the passage makes clear is that the debate about democracy was taking place within “Religion.” It also shows that the debate moved freely from considering State Democracy to Church Democracy. It describes forcefully the religious embeddedness of democracy. This aspect, unnoticed or pushed aside by many of the historians of English republicanism,¹⁴³ is hardly ever out of Hobbes’s sight.

Religious fanatics, whom Hobbes may call irreligious,¹⁴⁴ and democratic gentlemen do not stand for distinct secular and religious spheres. They are hardly distinguishable in their actions and ideas. At first sight, there is a

¹⁴⁰ *Behemoth*, 158.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁴² *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxters narrative of the most memorable passages of his life and times*, ed. M. Sylvester (London, 1696), 53.

¹⁴³ Scott, *England’s troubles*, 252: “the greatest shortcoming of the modern analysis of English classical republicanism [is] that it has failed adequately to explain that religious dimension which was almost as central to the republican as to the civil war phase of the revolution.” Cf. Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 13, choosing not to look at “expressly puritan or Calvinist modes of argument.”

¹⁴⁴ See *Behemoth*, 155.

parallelism between the endeavours of the religious fanatics, most often personified by the Presbyterians, and the democratical gentlemen. The latter “did not less desire a popular government in the civil state than these ministers did in the Church. And as these did in the pulpit draw the people to their opinions, and to a dislike of the Church-government, Canons, and Common-prayer-book, so did the other make them in love with democracy by their harangues in the Parliament, and by their discourses and communication with people in the country, continually extolling liberty and inveighing against tyranny, leaving the people to collect themselves that this tyranny was the present government of the state.”¹⁴⁵

Such parallelism collapses when Hobbes apportioned most of the blame to one side. Thus it was the design of the Presbyterian ministers, “who taking themselves to be, by divine right, the only lawful governors of the Church, endeavoured to bring the same form of Government into the civil state. And as the spiritual laws were to be made by their synods, so the civil laws should be made by the House of Commons; who, as they thought, would no less be ruled by them afterwards, than they formerly had been.”¹⁴⁶ Or: “To the end that the State becoming popular, the Church might be so too, and governed by an Assembly; and by consequence (as they thought) seeing politics are subservient to religion, they might govern, and thereby satisfy not only their covetous humour with riches, but also their malice with power to undo all men that admired not their wisdom.”¹⁴⁷

But that parallelism was only an apparent one. Firstly, there was no substantial difference between the two sets of rebels in their psychological make-up. As to the Presbyterians, “every minister shall have the delight of sharing in the government, and consequently of being able to be revenged on those that do not admire their learning and help to fill their purses, and win to their service those that do.”¹⁴⁸ Similarly, “those fine men, which out of their reading of Tully, Seneca, or other anti-monarchics, think themselves sufficient politics, and show their discontent when they are not called to the management of the state, and turn from one side to another upon every neglect they fancy from the King or his enemies.”¹⁴⁹ Secondly, and more importantly, their actions had the same source. Intellectually, they all embraced democratic principles that Hobbes identified at the root of European “civil wars

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 155-56. Hobbes denounces Cicero himself as being moved in his actions “out of love to himself.” *Ibid.*, 72.

concerning religion.”¹⁵⁰ Institutionally, they were all bred at the universities. The democratical gentlemen learned their classics there, and “[f]rom the Universities also it was, that all preachers proceeded.” The “curious questions in divinity” as well as “all those politic questions concerning the rights of civil and ecclesiastic government” were “first started at the Universities,” the “core of rebellion.”¹⁵¹ Thirdly, their actions were mutually reinforcing. While Presbyterianism was “the very foundation of the Parliament’s treacherous pretensions,” it was both the “seditious Presbyterian ministers” and “ambitious ignorant orators” who, ones from the pulpits and others in the Parliament, “reduced this government into anarchy.”¹⁵²

In a Protestant country, where the King was head of the Church and religion a law of the commonwealth,¹⁵³ any challenge to, or change in, the religious establishment was an unsettling of the civil government as well. That was noticed and feared long before the civil war. When Hobbes was one year old, for example, Bishop Cooper, in response to a Puritan attack on episcopacy, argued that Puritan principles of ecclesiastical organization and authority may have been good “where the church was in persecution vnder tyrants; but where the assistance may bee had of a Christian Prince or Magistrate, it is neither necessarie, nor so conuenient, as it may be otherwise.” Commenting on common election of ministers, Cooper noted that “their whole drift...is to bring the Gouernment of the Church to a *Democracie* or *Aristocracie*.” If the common people were made familiar with such principles, he warned, “[i]t is greatly to bee feared, that they will very easily transferre the same to the Gouernment of the common weale.”¹⁵⁴ He disliked Presbyterian schemes because the convulsion they would cause in the state would be damaging to religion: “The reason that mooueth vs not to like this platforme of gouernement, is, that when wee on the one part consider the thinges that are required to be redressed, and on the other, the state of our countrey, people, and commonweale: we see euidently, that to plant those things in this Church, wil drawe with it, so many, and so great alterations of the State of gouernment, and of the lawes, as the attempting thereof might bring rather the ouerthrowe of the Gospel among vs, then the end that is desired.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ See n. 65. Aristotle, for example, was an “ingredient in religion,” and the clergy was versed in the babbling philosophy of Aristotle. *Behemoth*, 41, 95.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 41, 56, 58.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 82, 109.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 46, 53.

¹⁵⁴ T[homas] C[oooper], [Bishop of Winchester], *An Admonition to the People of England, 1589*, ed. E. Arber (Birmingham: English Scholar’s Library, 1883), 70. Partly cited in Mendle, *Dangerous Positions*, 82.

¹⁵⁵ Cooper, *An Admonition*, 65.

Anti-episcopalians themselves reflected on the homology between the ecclesiastical and civil government, making themselves vulnerable to the charge of subverting monarchy. Thomas Cartwright, one of the most learned sixteenth-century Puritans/Presbyterians denied that the church was “popular” only in the first centuries of Christianity, before there had been Christian magistrates to establish it: “For the church is governed with that kind of government which the philosophers that write of the commonwealths affirm to be the best. For, in respect of Christ the head, it is a monarchy; and, in respect of the ancients and pastors that govern in common and with like authority amongst themselves, it is an aristocracy, or the rule of the best men; and, in respect that the people are not secluded, but have their interest in church-matters, it is a democracy, or a popular estate. An image whereof appeareth also in the policy of this realm; for as, in respect of the queen her majesty, it is a monarchy, so, in respect of the most honourable council, it is an aristocracy, and, having regard to the parliament, which is assembled of all estates, it is a democracy.”¹⁵⁶

That was dangerous thinking, for it implied the denial of the supreme power of the prince, as John Whitgift, the future archbishop of Canterbury, did not hesitate to expose. “I know that all these three kinds of government may be mixed together after divers sorts,” he replied to Cartwright, his fellow at the Trinity College, “yet still the state of government is named according to that which most ruleth, and beareth the greatest sway: as, when matters are most commonly governed by the consent of the more part of the people, the state is called popular; when by divers of the best and the wisest, it is called *optimorum status*; when by one, it is called monarchy.” The conclusion Whitgift wanted to make was that “in this realm” “the state is neither ‘aristocracy,’ nor ‘democracy,’ but a ‘monarchy.’”¹⁵⁷ Making “the government of the church popular” would be an impediment to civil government: if “the people (who are commonly bent to novelties and to factions, and most ready to receive that doctrine that seemth to be contrary to the present state, and that inclineth to liberty)” would elect the ministers, they would “usually elect such as would feed their humours,” and as a consequence “the prince neither should have quiet government, neither could be able to preserve the peace of the church, nor yet plant that religion that he

¹⁵⁶ Cited by Whitgift in his *The Defense of the Aunsvvere to the Admonition, against the Replie of T.C.* (London, 1574), in *The Works of John Whitgift, D.D., Master of Trinity College, Dean of Lincoln, &c., Afterwards successively Bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. J. Ayre, The Parker Society (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1851), 1: 390. Cf. Mendle, *Dangerous positions*, 64-68.

¹⁵⁷ *The Works of John Whitgift*, 1: 393.

in conscience is persuaded to be sincere.”¹⁵⁸ In support of his view that the popular government is “the worst kind of government that can be,” Whitgift cited Calvin’s point that “the fall from a popular state into a sedition is of all other most easy.”¹⁵⁹

Given his serious intellectual engagement with the church, theology, and religion and commitment to the “Calvinist Christianity of Jacobean England,”¹⁶⁰ Hobbes must have been acquainted with the literature and the kind of arguments I have just cited. It may be a pure coincidence that Elizabethan Bishop Sandys and Hobbes both discredited democracy as a fruit of emulation and contention, but it is a coincidence worth noting. For Sandys, democracy sprung out of emulation and contention – “great and pestilent infections of the heart” – generated by pride: “Pride causeth emulation, and of emulation cometh strife; so that the cursed generation of vice is fruitful,” he preached before the Queen. “Pride made the devilish angel envy that his Lord and God should be above him; it made Adam desire to be as full of knowledge as his Creator; Absolon to emulate his father, and to thirst after his kingdom. Caesar was so proud, that he could not abide a superior; Pompey could not bear an equal.” After this not unusual mixture of Scriptural and Roman exempla illustrating pride and rebellion in general, Sandys turned specifically to democracy: “Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, in the pride of their hearts, sought to displace Moses and Aaron, the chief magistrate and the chief minister. They set down a handsome platform of equality; and many of the multitude allowed of it, as well pleased with a popular estate, where the worst of them might be as good as the best. But God brought their device and themselves to nought.”¹⁶¹ Hobbes used the story of Korah, Dathan and Abi-

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 466-67.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 467. See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV,xx,8 (Allen’s translation, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1949, 2: 778, has “democracy” at this place). Whitgift’s reference is misleading; for Calvin states that, of the “forms of government, which are stated by philosophers,” aristocracy or a mixture of aristocracy and democracy was the best to his mind, and that the “vice and imperfection of men...renders it safer and more tolerable for the government to be in the hands of many,” since they can assist, admonish, censor, and restrain each other. (*Ibid.*) Cf. *The Decades of Henry Bullinger, minister of the Church of Zurich, translated by H. I.*, ed. Th. Harding, The Parker Society (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1849 [originally published 1587]), I: 311: “none can deny, but that great perils and infinite incommodities are in the aristocracy, but far more many in the democracy.”

¹⁶⁰ See A. P. Martinich, *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁶¹ *The Sermons of Edwin Sandys, D.D., Successively Bishop of Worcester and London, and Archbishop of York; to which are Added Some Miscellaneous Pieces, by the Same Author*, ed. J. Ayre, The Parker Society (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1841), 138-39. (Originally published in 1585.)

ram to illustrate rebellion against the sovereign, that is, against the authority to interpret the Word of God *and* supreme civil authority, then united in Moses, in all his major political treatises.¹⁶² And in his commentary on Thucydides, “emulation and contention” were the spring of democracy.¹⁶³

Democracy can be contemplated as a form of government. But in *Behemoth*, it is represented as the offspring of the children of pride who, as Hobbes shows, managed to destroy their king. What destroyed Leviathan was an explosive mixture of Greco-Roman political sentiments and ideas, and religious fanaticism fueling ambitious, gain and glory-seeking elites and pulling the common people into the vortex. The destruction of the state was authorized by the Word of God to establish the reign of God. In the Presbyterians’ self-image, “where they reign, it is God that reigns.”¹⁶⁴ The sovereign was killed because “there ought none to be sovereign but King Jesus, nor any govern under him but the saints,” as believed the Fifth-monarchy-men, “of whom there were many” in the Parliament.¹⁶⁵ The rebellion against sovereignty was a democratic holy war. If we choose to call classicizing political sentiments and ideas republicanism, that was a republicanism covered with the cloak of godliness. But that cloak was not a disposable cover: it was Nessus’s shirt.

Postscript

Writing this article, I could not help thinking of the current American policy. The pernicious combination of militaristic republicanism and Christian fundamentalism, with their drive to spread democracy worldwide, makes the USA our great *behema*. Leaving no stone unturned, these children of pride have not even left Hobbes alone. They are laying claim to him. But what they are doing runs against the core tenets of Hobbes’s political thought. What they are creating, turning Hobbes upside down, is a world where the life of ever more people is becoming ever more democratic, free, nasty, brutish, and short: *homo homini wolfowitz*.

¹⁶² *Elements of Law* II,xxvi,2; *De cive* xvi,13; *Leviathan* (Tuck), 325-26; cf. Num 16.

¹⁶³ EW 8: xvi (see n. 53). On emulation, cf. *Elements of Law* I,ix,21; *Leviathan* VI,48; on contention, *Leviathan* XI,3; on pride, VIII,19.

¹⁶⁴ *Behemoth*, 50, 167.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 182.