

BEHEMOTH LATINUS:
ADAM EBERT, TACITISM, AND HOBBS

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I

In the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, there is a little-noticed manuscript entitled ‘Thomas Hobbes De Rebus gestis Olivarij Cromvellj Protectoris sive Historia Bellorum Civilium Angliae ab Anno 1640 usq[ue] ad Annum 1660. Linguâ Anglicâ in Latinam Francofurti ad Oderam translata A[nn]o 1708’ (‘Thomas Hobbes, On the Actions of the Protector Oliver Cromwell, or, The History of the Civil Wars of England, from the year 1640 to the year 1660. Translated from the English language into Latin at Frankfurt an der Oder, in the year 1708’). The translation is preceded by a flowery dedication to King Friedrich I of Prussia by the translator, who signs it (in his own hand, as opposed to the scribal hands of the manuscript itself) ‘Devotissimus subditus Adamus Ebertus’ (‘your most devoted subject Adam Ebert’); a note at the end of the translation records that it was completed by Ebert on 28 June 1708.¹ This is clearly the original manuscript which Ebert gave to the King; it is a fair copy (in two scribal hands), on folio paper, handsomely bound. And, so far as one can tell, the manuscript has remained ever since in the Royal Library and the Staatsbibliothek, its modern successor.²

As this translation of *Behemoth* was never published, and does not seem to have been cited by any subsequent author in print, its importance must appear to be extremely slight. The translator, Adam Ebert, is easily identifiable as the scholar of that name who was a law professor at the University of Frankfurt an der Oder for many years until his death in 1735; Ebert receives brief

¹ Staatsbibliothek, Berlin [hereafter: ‘SBB’] MS Lat. 2o 129, fos. 1r (title), 2v-6r (dedication), 279v (final note). I am very grateful to the staff of the Manuscripts Department of the Staatsbibliothek for their help during my visits there.

² On fo. 1r there is an early stamp in red ink: ‘Ex Biblioth. Regia Berolinensi’ (‘from the Royal Library, Berlin’).

mentions in biographical dictionaries, but remains a very little-known figure, whose reputation as an academic and *littérateur* has faded almost to extinction.³ It would seem, then, that this strangely titled translation of Hobbes's work is little more than a curiosity: the product of an obscure individual's intellectual whim (and, no doubt, personal desire for royal favour), it appears to have been the object of a more or less private transaction, passing from the translator's hands to those of the King's librarian.

However, while this *Behemoth* translation may have had little or no importance – in the sense of influence on the thinking of others – it does have some significance: it can tell us some small but significant things about how Hobbes could be interpreted and appreciated in the intellectual world of late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century Germany. The presentation of the manuscript to the Royal Library also deserves further consideration, for this was not simply a way of consigning it either to the purely personal use of the King, or to oblivion; rather, it was a carefully calibrated form of quasi-publication. And as for the translator, Adam Ebert, the story of his life also merits more detailed investigation – not least because of the hitherto unknown fact that he had previously made the acquaintance of Hobbes in England.

II

First, however, the translation itself. Ebert was evidently working not from a manuscript but from a printed edition of the text: his title page reproduces the quotations (one from Lucretius, four from Horace) found on the title pages of most of the 1679 editions. He also reproduced the erratic page-numbering of the original; this shows that he was working from a copy of one of the 1679 duodecimo editions.⁴ Ebert was an attentive reader of the text, and in three places he noted that the assignment of material to the speakers 'A' and 'B' had gone awry in the original: two of these he corrected, but one was marked with a marginal note which stated 'Here again there

³ See, for example, R. von Liliencron *et al.*, eds., *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie*, 56 vols. (Leipzig, 1875-1912), v, p. 585.

⁴ The pagination (286 pp., with some major anomalies, including the omission of 169-214) matches that of items 87 (the self-styled 'Second Edition' of 1679) and 87a (a different issue of 87, also dated 1679) in H. Macdonald and M. Hargreaves, *Thomas Hobbes: A Bibliography* (London, 1952), pp. 65-66. Item 88 (also duodecimo, and also dated 1679) has a different pagination, extending to 214, not 286. Item 89 (dated 1680), which has the same pagination as item 87 and appears to be another issue of it, can be excluded: it lacks three of the quotations from Horace given on the title pages of 87 and 87a, which are reproduced by Ebert.

is a confusion of the letters representing the speakers, but it has been allowed to remain, for fear that there may be a hidden secret.⁵ Another sign of the care he took is the substantial index added to the manuscript.⁶ Also added are occasional marginal notes, drawing the reader's attention to key points in the argument: for example, 'Religion is a virtue' (against 'A's' statement that 'I have placed religion amongst the virtues'), or 'Hobbes does not recognize passive obedience' (against 'A's' declaration that 'Every law is a command *to do or to forbear*: neither of these is fulfilled by suffering').⁷ Several of these marginalia reflect the special interest in Cromwell expressed in Ebert's title: thus we have 'Why Cromwell refrained from taking the title "King"'; 'Cromwell's origins'; 'Cromwell the victor here' (against the account of the Battle of Marston Moor); 'Cromwell's first trick' (with an additional note, in Ebert's hand: 'Cromwell holds Parliament in his pocket'); 'How Cromwell arranges the murder of the King'; and 'An example of Cromwell's cunning'.⁸ Here and there, important passages – for example, Hobbes's comment on the Battle of Naseby and its effects on the King's fortunes ('for by the loss of one great battle, he lost all he had formerly gotten, and at length his life') – are also given special emphasis by single or double underlinings, in red ink.⁹

Some of the other marginalia reproduce phrases from the English: 'by Way of Bargain', 'but bought them off', 'a Posture of defence', and (in Ebert's hand) 'by way of adventure', and 'Vice admiral'. These seem to indicate some uncertainty about the translations of those phrases offered in the text, which

⁵ SBB, MS Lat. 2o 129, fo. 79v ('Hic iterum confusio Literarum colloquendum, sed tolerata metu latentis arcani'). The passage is on p. 56 of T. Hobbes, *Behemoth, Or, The Long Parliament*, ed. F. Tönnies (London, 1889) [hereafter: 'Tönnies edn.'], beginning 'Why then were they not in all points for the King's power...', where it is correctly assigned to 'B'; in the 1679 edition used by Ebert (p. 76), the preceding speech by 'A' has been merged with the one before it, by 'B', so that 'B' has two speeches in succession. The other two passages are SBB MS Lat. 2o 129, fos. 20v (Tönnies edn., p. 8, beginning 'But for those that die excommunicate in the Church of England...'), correctly assigned there to 'B'; in the 1679 edition (pp. 10-11) 'A's' reply to 'B's' question is merged with the question, so that 'B' has two speeches in succession), and 162v (Tönnies edn., p. 126, beginning 'That is to say, by making poor people...', correctly assigned there to 'A'; in the 1679 edition, p. 1302 (sig. I5v) it is assigned to 'B').

⁶ SBB, MS Lat. 2o 129, fos. 280-85.

⁷ *Ibid.*, fos. 68v, 73v (Tönnies edn., pp. 46, 50).

⁸ SBB, MS Lat. 2o 129, fos. 140r ('Cur Cromvellus Regis titulo abstinerit'), 156v ('Cromvelli primordia'), 167r ('Cromvellus hic victor'), 179r ('Primum Cromvelli artificium'; 'Cromvellus Parliamentum in sacculo tenet'), 199v ('Quomodo Cromvellus Regis caedem machinatur'), 214v ('Exemplum Calliditatis Cromvellianae') (Tönnies edn., pp. 109, 122, 129, 138, 151, 160-61).

⁹ SBB, MS Lat. 2o 129, fo. 170r ('eventu quippe unius proelii sinistri cuncta perdentis tandemq[ue] et vitam') (Tönnies edn., pp. 131-32).

do vary in adequacy but are in no case seriously wrong.¹⁰ From time to time, English words are also given alongside their translations in the text: for example, 'ex milite *provinciali* (*Train band*)', '*Rectum* (Righteousness) praescriberebrò in Ecclesiâ audivi', and 'Civibus et istis Equitibus, qui *Knights* appellantur'.¹¹ Generally, Ebert's grasp of the English is good; there are some puzzling errors which may arise merely from hasty mis-reading (such as the translation of 'by some law' as '*solenni Lege*', 'by a solemn law'), and some small omissions which may have been the fault of the copyist, not the translator, but these are few and far between.¹² Ebert's occasional expansions of the sense are usually helpful, showing that he has been following the argument intelligently (for example, his translation of 'from the Emperor's consent' as 'ex tacito Imperatoris consensu').¹³ And although Ebert's own Latin style, as displayed in his dedicatory epistle to the King of Prussia, was elaborate to the point of affectation, his rendering of Hobbes's English is reasonably straightforward – occasionally cumbersome, but never obfuscatory.¹⁴ Nor does he intrude his own opinions on the text, except in one particular – and quite minor – instance. At one point, 'A' criticizes 'those princes that with preferment are forced to buy the obedience of their subjects', and offers an ironic interpretation of the story of Hercules and the Hydra: 'For Hercules at first did not cut off those heads, but bought them off; and afterwards, when he saw it did him no good, then he cut them off, and got the victory.' Ebert, apparently not recognizing the sardonic humour of this remark, adds a marginal comment: 'Here Hobbes goes against the meaning and the truth of the pagan fables,

¹⁰ SBB, MS Lat. 2o 129, fos. 52v ('per modum pacti'), 96r ('sed pretio eadem redemit', which fails to convey the sense of buying off), 104v ('*Statum Defensionis*', which fails to convey the sense of 'posture'), 127v ('per mod[um] casus'), 236r ('vicarius Praetor') (Tönnies edn., pp. 32, 72, 79, 99, 175).

¹¹ SBB, MS Lat. 2o 129, fos. 11r (where the 1679 edition has 'Train'd-bands'), 86r, 93v (Tönnies edn., pp. 2 (which has 'trained soldiers'), 63, 70).

¹² SBB, MS Lat. 2o 129, fo. 21v (Tönnies edn., p. 9). Some omissions are ascribable not to the copyist but to the 1679 edition, e.g. fo. 112r: 'by the imprisonment of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and of Judge Bartlet, and the impeachment of other bishops and judges' (Tönnies edn., p. 85) is given as 'Archi-Episcopo autem Cantuariensi et iudicibus in carcerem consectis', which correctly translates the truncated version in the 1679 edition (p. 1161 (sig. F11v)). Much more puzzling is the translation of 'secular and ... regular priests' (Tönnies edn., p. 14) as 'sacerdotes eorum[ue] amicos' (fos. 27v-28r), which has no warrant in the 1679 edition.

¹³ SBB, MS Lat. 2o 129, fo. 24r (Tönnies edn., p. 11).

¹⁴ One of the worst examples of clumsiness is his version of the opening phrase, 'If in time, as in place, there were degrees of high and low...' as 'Siquidem tempora alia majoria alia minora aestimari merentur, quemadmodum spatiis locorum discrimen ejusmodi convenire videmus...' (fo. 10r); the quality of the translation does improve thereafter.

which do in fact teach something different.¹⁵ Otherwise, however, this is a sympathetic and faithful presentation of Hobbes's narrative in Latin, which could and should have reached a wider European audience through the medium of print. Why, then, was it merely deposited in the King of Prussia's library?

III

Ebert's translation of Hobbes was not the only work of its kind to be passed by him to the Royal librarian. Between 1695 and 1725 he presented a total of twenty such manuscript volumes, consisting of his own translations (into Latin, from Spanish, English, French and Italian) of a variety of works, mostly historical or political.¹⁶ The first of these was a version of one part of the biography of Charles V by Prudencio de Sandoval; four subsequent volumes (the last of them dated 1701) contained further extracts from Sandoval's work.¹⁷ These were followed by an 'epitome' of Bayle's *Dictionnaire* (in 1702); Edward Herbert's *The Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth* (1706); a little-known work on the 'arcana' of Ottoman rule by Antonio Geropoldi, the *Bilancia historico-politica dell'impero ottomano* (1707); and then Hobbes's *Behemoth* (1708).¹⁸ Four years later Ebert presented his translation of Luis de Cabrera de Cordova's life of Philip II, in four manuscript volumes; this was followed in 1717 by a large volume containing the principal works of Baltasar

¹⁵ Tönnies edn., p. 72; SBB, MS Lat. 2o 129, fo. 96r ('Hobbes hic sensui et veritati repugnant fabulis Ethnicis quippe aliud docentibus').

¹⁶ See the listing in V. Rose, *Verzeichniss der lateinischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1901-1919), ii, part I, pp. 1406-10 (SBB, MSS Lat. 2o 101-5, 117, 120-30, 132, 177, and MS Theol. 2o 199). The evidence tends to suggest that all the volumes presented by Ebert have survived: in the dedicatory epistle to the penultimate volume (MS Lat. 2o 104, dated 1723), Ebert wrote that it would bring the total to nineteen (fo. 3v: 'ijs[que] augebunt novendecim Volumina manuscripta'), and this was followed by one volume presented in May 1725 (MS Lat. 2o 105). However, in the preface to his *Historia captivitatis* (see below, n. 27), he mentions one other manuscript prepared by him, a translation into French of the letters of Charles I to Henrietta Maria during the Civil War (probably taken from *The King's Cabinet opened; Or, Certain Packets of Secret Letters & Papers, written by the King's own Hand, and taken in his Cabinet at Naseby-Field* (London, 1645)); this does not appear to have survived.

¹⁷ SBB, MSS Lat. 2o 132 (1695), 120-22, 123 (1701). The work by Sandoval was his *Historia de la vida y hechos del emperador Carlos V* (Pamplona, 1634).

¹⁸ SBB, MSS Lat. 2o 177, 128, 130, 129. Geropoldi's work (*Bilancia historico-politica dell'impero ottomano, ovvero arcana reconditi del maomettismo* (Venice, 1686)) is rare, and apparently not held by any British library; there is a copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (pressmark J-3407).

Gracián.¹⁹ Three years after that, he produced a three-volume translation of d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale*, a ground-breaking encyclopaedia of Arabic and oriental scholarship; in 1722 he contributed a version of some of the works of the abbé de Brantôme; in 1723 a strange coupling of the life of Christopher Columbus by his son, and Gracián's treatise on the Eucharist; and finally, in 1725, another composite volume, containing a version of the oriental fables *Kalilah ve Dimnah*, and the lightweight work by de Mailly, *Rome galante, ou histoire secrète*.²⁰

The great majority of these manuscripts bear personal dedications to the King (or, before 1701, Elector); clearly, attracting favour and patronage must have been a primary aim of the entire enterprise. This was in fact a method of gaining attention which Ebert had developed at an early stage in his life. As his account of his youthful travels round Europe informs us, he ended his stay in England in 1678 by presenting his manuscript Latin translation of Cavendish's life of Wolsey to the Archbishop of Canterbury; and on his eventual return to Brandenburg-Prussia in 1680, he gave copies of his Latin version of Sir Kenelm Digby's *Observations on Religio medici* to the two senior preachers at the Elector's court in Berlin.²¹ Another manuscript, dated 1696, ended up in the library of the Freiherr von Schwerin. (Unlike all the others,

¹⁹ SBB, MSS Lat. 2o 124-7; Theol. 2o 199 (containing Gracián's *El críticón; El discreto; El político Fernando; El héroe; and El oráculo*; Ebert had probably taken these from the two-volume collected *Obras* of Gracián published at Antwerp in 1669). The work by Cabrera de Cordova was his *Felipe segundo, rey de España* (Madrid, 1619).

²⁰ SBB, MSS Lat. 2o 101-3, 104, 105. On the significance of d'Herbelot's work see H. Laurens, *Aux Sources de l'orientalisme: la Bibliothèque orientale de Barthélemi d'Herbelot* (Paris, 1978). Gracián's *El comulgatorio de varias meditaciones de la sagrada comunión* was included in the two-volume *Obras* of 1669. The work known as *Kalilah ve Dimnah* has a complex textual history (see the Introduction to I. G. N. Keith-Falconer, *Kalilah and Dimnah, or, The Fables of Bidpai* (Cambridge, 1885)); the book translated by Ebert was the Spanish translation (by a Ragusan) of the first eight chapters of a Turkish version (the *Humayun-namah*): *Espejo político, y moral, para príncipes, ministros, y todo genero de personas*, tr. 'Vicente Bratuti' [Vicko Bratutti], 2 vols. (Madrid, 1654-58). On this translation see Keith-Falconer, *op. cit.*, p. lxx, and H. F. von Diez, *Über Inhalt und Vortrag, Entstehung und Schicksale des königlichen Buchs, eines Werks von der Regierungskunst* (Berlin, 1811), p. 151. (Bratutti worked first as a dragoman for his native Ragusa in Istanbul, then for the Habsburgs in Austria and Spain, and died in 1678; I am grateful to Dr. Robin Harris and Dr. Nenad Vekarić for their help in identifying him.) The work by de Mailly was first published in Paris in 1685; its second edition was entitled *Amours des empereurs romains Iules César et Auguste* (Amsterdam, 1701).

²¹ [A. Ebert,] *Auli Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung, von Franco Porto der Khur-Brandenburg durch Teutschland, Holland und Braband, England, Frankreich ... ferner nach Turin, gantz Italien, Rom, Neapolis ... mitgehend besondere Discourse von Religion, privat- und publique Conduite, wie auch galante und remarquable Consersation, in Europa* (Frankfurt, 1724), part 1, p. 106; part 2, p. 347.

this appears to have been an original work, a critical and biographical survey of modern historical writers.)²² This last item was also dedicated to the Elector; whether it was given directly to von Schwerin, or whether he merely failed to pass it on to its dedicatee, is not clear. What is evident is that Ebert was happy to kill more than one bird with such stones; his 'epitome' of Bayle, for example, which was presented to the Elector's library, bears a dedication to the state councillor Baron von Iljen, and the composite Columbus-Gracián volume, dedicated to the King, is accompanied by a letter to the royal minister Baron von Prinzen, which asks him to pass it first to Baron Cocceji (President of the royal council), and only thereafter to deliver it to the King's library.²³

But the potential readers of these volumes were more than just multiple potential patrons. In several of the manuscripts one finds, after the elaborate and honorific dedicatory epistle, a quite separate 'Preface to the Reader' – just as one might expect to find in a printed book.²⁴ And there is some evidence that Ebert did intend, or at least hope, that some of these manuscripts would be printed. The reason he gave for donating his translation of the life of Wolsey to the Archbishop of Canterbury was that he knew that his continuing travels would prevent him from making arrangements to get it printed at that time.²⁵ The dedicatory epistle placed before his translation of Geropoldi (1707) declared (with some metaphorical awkwardness): 'These are just some of the flowers that perfume the field which dares to invite Your Majesty to walk in it – Your Majesty, all your Court, and, if you wish, all the Republic of Letters' – the last phrase clearly implying that Ebert hoped the King would sponsor the work's publication in print.²⁶ In 1715 Ebert did pub-

²² This folio MS, which has not survived, is mentioned in G. G. Küster, *Des alten und neuen Berlin dritte Abtheilung* (Berlin, 1756), p. 551, where the title is given as 'Prodromus bibliothecae Parnassi complexus examen, vitasque historicorum, qui lingua latina, Germanica, Belgica, Anglica, Gallica, Italica, Hispanica & Portugallica duobus adhinc seculis gesta Regum Europae quam optime illustrarent' ('A forerunner of the library of Parnassus, containing an examination, and the lives, of those historians who, writing in Latin, German, Dutch, English, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, might best illuminate the actions of European kings in the last two centuries').

²³ The letter to von Prinzen (5 Nov. 1723) is tipped in at the start of SBB MS Lat. 2o 104, and has been numbered as fo. 1 (fo 1r: 'Apret [*sic*] l'avoir communiqué aussi a Mon Le Baron Cocceji Le President, je vous supplie, Monseigneur, de le livrer a la Bibliotheque Royale').

²⁴ For example, SBB MSS Lat. 2o 101, fos. 9v-11; 128, fo. 4; 130, fo. 8r.

²⁵ Ebert, *Auli Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung*, p. 106 ('weil den Authoren die *Continuation* seiner Reise nach Frankreich und anderen Landschafften darinnen jetzo verhin-derte dermahleins zum Druck zu befördern').

²⁶ SBB, MS Lat. 2o 130, fo. 7r ('Ceux cy sont *en partie* les fleurs dont respire le camps qui ose inviter Votre Majesté a la Promenade, Toute sa Cour, et si Vous voulez, toute la Republique des Lettres').

lish a book containing some extracts from his translations of Sandoval, Cabrera de Cordova and Herbert.²⁷ And ten years later, when he had completed his translation of *Kalilah ve Dimnah*, he went to the trouble of announcing, in a Leipzig journal, that he intended to have it printed.²⁸

Why were most of these works never printed? One slightly puzzling piece of evidence is supplied by the littérateur Gottlieb Stolle, who recorded, after Ebert's death, a conversation he had had with him in 1704 about his version of Sandoval's life of Charles V: 'Hereupon he told me that he translated this Spaniard's biography of Charles V from the Spanish, but that the King of Prussia had some scruple about allowing it to be printed, so the manuscript passed to the library in Berlin.'²⁹ The implied suggestion seems to have been that this text was thought to be sensitive and unsuitable for general consumption; this fits (as we shall see) Ebert's own obsession with the *arcana imperii*, but hardly fits the nature of the work itself, which had in any case been in print for many decades. A simpler explanation might be that Ebert had wanted the Elector to sponsor the publication in practical and financial terms, and that the Elector had doubted whether it was worth the trouble. Nevertheless, it is Ebert's own scruples that matter most of all in this story, as they seem to have determined his strategy of conveying works on statecraft to his ruler, and leaving it to the ruler's judgement to decide what level of readership they should be allowed to enjoy. (Compare the gradations of readership set out in the dedicatory epistle quoted above: 'Your Majesty, all your Court, and, if you wish, all the Republic of Letters'.) And a similar point is made in the dedicatory epistle which Ebert placed before his translation of Hobbes:

²⁷ A. Ebert, tr., *Historia captivitatis Francisci I. Galliarum regis, nec non vitae Caroli V. Imper. in monasterio, additâ relatio vitae mortisque Caroli Infantis Philippi II. Regis Hispaniarum filii: auctoribus Prudentio de Sandoval ... et Ludovico de Cabrera de Cordua* ('Milan' [Frankfurt an der Oder?], 1715). The brief specimen of his translation of Herbert consists of a speech by Cardinal Wolsey (pp. 367-72 [mispaginated '370']).

²⁸ von Diez, *Über Inhalt und Vortrag des königlichen Buchs*, p. 152 ('Ebert hatte auch den Druck seiner Übersetzung durch die leipziger Zeitungen von 1725 angekündigt'). In 1731 an edition appeared at Frankfurt an der Oder of another work which Ebert had translated, Gracián's *Oráculo*, under the title *Aulicus, sive de prudentia civili et maxime aulica liber singularis*. However, this translation is quite different from Ebert's, being taken from the French version by Amelot de la Houssaie (see below, n. 95), and the translator is identified on the title page as 'Franc[iscus] Garianus Meldenus, Constantiensis'.

²⁹ G. Stolle, *Anmerkungen über D. Heumanns Conspectum reipublicae literariae, allen Liebhabern der Historie der Gelahrtheit zu Liebe an den Tag gegeben* (Jena, 1738), p. 610 ('Hierauf erzählte er, dass er dieses Spaniers Lebensbeschreibung Kayser Carls des V. aus dem Spanischen vertiret, doch habe der König in Preussen Bedencken getragen, es drucken zu lassen, daher das Mst. in die Bibliothec zu Berlin gekommen').

Indeed, Hobbes not only adapted his efforts to demonstrating the savagery of rebellious injustice, but also ... wanted to make known the arts by which Cromwell, that unparalleled politician, climbed to the top of the ruins of royal power, admired by all the world. So, kneeling before your throne, I present this offspring of my industry to you, most sacred King; it would be most useful to have it committed to general publication, to defend the security of princes, which is apt to be undermined either by ignorance of the art of ruling, or by envy of royal power (dressed up as 'the right of the people'). If, indeed, you consider, once again, that such publication would be inadvisable for it, I beg you to store away this translation in your Royal library.³⁰

'Inadvisable' here ('inconsultum') appears to mean something a little more than 'undesirable'; the implication is that what is involved is an exercise of royal prudence, perhaps even political judgement. A common theme in the literature on 'reason of state' and the *arcana imperii* was the question of whether it was prudent to allow the general population to know about such matters; the standard response was a qualified 'yes' (the theorists giving this response were, after all, usually doing so in books that were on sale to the public), but the qualification was that due deference must be paid to the ruler's political needs and requirements.³¹ In some cases, the rulers did decide that publication would not be in their interest. (A classic example was the decision by the authorities in Venice to suppress the manuscript of Boccacini's great commentary on Tacitus: the officials who scrutinized it in 1627 produced a report stating that 'I am not sure how useful it would be for it to be distributed in the hands of the people, given that one may read in it about those *arcana* of rulers which it would be much better to have kept safely in private studies than seen and sold in shops'.)³² The safest solution for a def-

³⁰ SBB, MS Lat. 2o 129, fos. 5-6r ('Labores vero suos aptavit *Hobbesius* non modo ad demonstrandam injustitiae rebellantis immanitatem, sed et ut ... vulgarentur illae artes, quibus *Politicus sine Exemplo*, Cromvellus ille, regio rudere fastigium omni admirabile mundo exivit. Curvus igitur genu Solio Tuo hosce industriae meae foetus offero *Rex Sacratissime* utilissimos typis committi generalibus, ut incolumitas vindicetur Principum, quam vel inscitia regnandi vel livor Regiae Magnitudinis obtentu *Juris Populi* solet attentare. Quod si vero iisdem annuere denuo inconsultum, supplico, ut *Regiâ* versionem hanc recondas *Bibliothecâ*').

³¹ See, for example, the comments to this effect by Ebert's teacher Johann Christoph Beckmann: *Conspectus doctrinae politicae brevibus thesibus earum[ue] demonstrationibus propositus* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 1691), pp. 5, 12-13.

³² Report by Girolamo Lando and Vincenzo Gussoni, cited in H. Hendrix, *Traiano Boccacini fra erudizione e polemica: ricerche sulla fortuna e bibliografia critica* (Florence, 1995), p. 144 ('non saprei quanto fosse utile che ella si spargiesse per le mani de' popoli, si

erential author, therefore, was to let the ruler make the decision himself; but at the same time the most self-gratifying way of doing this was to donate the work to a library which, although under the ruler's direct control, was nevertheless a semi-public place.

As recent studies of 'scribal publication' have shown, the distinction which now seems so absolute between the worlds of print and manuscript was far from clear-cut in the early modern period.³³ Only in modern and colloquial usage does 'to publish' function as a synonym of 'to print'. To deposit a manuscript in a library could also be a form of publication; indeed, it might be described as the converse of scribal publication, involving not a multiplicity of copies being made (typically) for individual readers, but rather a multiplicity of readers coming to make use of an individual copy. Early modern writers might consign manuscripts of their writings to libraries for a variety of reasons. Modesty – the feeling that the work did not merit the more definitive method of publication in print – was one: for example, the Swiss mathematician Johann Heinrich Rahn explained in the preface to his *'Algebra speciosa seu introductio in geometriam universalem'* (1667) that he knew that distinguished men in England and Holland were working on the same topic, and that he had therefore decided to deposit his work in the Zurich city library instead of having it printed.³⁴ Other reasons might include a desire to preserve a controversial text for posterity without giving immediate offence to certain people (where the text included personal criticisms or accusations), and, more generally, a desire to make available to suitable researchers the raw materials for future works by others.³⁵ In all cases, what was intended was not non-publication, but publication of a specially qualified kind.

The Royal library in Berlin was also a 'public repository'. In c.1661 the practice had been adopted of allowing the public to consult items in the Elector's library in the afternoons – or, at least, not the general public, but approved individuals such as court officials and administrators, clerics, profes-

perche in essa leggono quegli arcani de principi che molto meglio stanno custoditi nelle segrete che nelle botteghe veduti et venduti'). The work was eventually published (incompletely and inadequately) in 1677 and 1678. Ebert, who was an enthusiast for both Tacitus and Boccacini, would no doubt have taken a special interest in the story of its suppression.

³³ See, for example, H. Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993); W. Speed Hill, ed., *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts* (Binghamton, NY, 1993); A. F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, NY, 1995).

³⁴ Zentralbibliothek, Zurich, MS C 114a, fo. IIIv.

³⁵ Both of these motives were at work in John Aubrey's decision to consign his MSS to a 'public repository': see K. Bennett, 'John Aubrey's Collections and the Early Modern Museum', *The Bodleian Library Record*, 17 (2001), pp. 213-45, esp. pp. 216-18.

sors and scholars. A full-time librarian was employed, and thanks to a very active acquisitions policy the collection held, by 1688, no fewer than 20,600 volumes.³⁶ By 1715 this figure had risen to roughly 50,000.³⁷ Many scholars – for example, the orientalist Christian Ravius, Hiob Ludolf and Andreas Acoluthus – did make regular use of the library; access was also easily gained by visiting men of letters such as John Toland, who reported in 1702 that ‘In the Palace is a Library, which has an annual Fund to augment and to maintain it. The Books are well chosen, numerous, and in good case.’³⁸ In 1693 the hours of the reading-room had been extended to mornings as well as afternoons; however, after some misuse, automatic access was restricted in 1710-11 to state counsellors and members of the ‘Societät der Wissenschaften’. (Others had to apply to a state counsellor to obtain permission.)³⁹ A senior court official was entrusted with the post of ‘Patronus’ or overseer of the library: holders of this office included Otto, Freiherr von Schwerin (from 1697 until his death in 1705); Marquard Ludwig, Freiherr von Prinzen (from 1709 until his death in 1725); and Samuel, Freiherr von Cocceji (from 1730 until his death in 1755) – three of the other people whose attentions were solicited by Ebert.⁴⁰ The Royal library was thus an institution closely tied to the court, and its users could be presumed to consist of people authorized (either directly or indirectly) as readers by the King and his immediate circle of political advisers.

How justified that presumption may have been, in practice, is hard to judge. Probably any educated person, with a suitable contact in Berlin society, could obtain access. And once access was gained, the reader would have found that there were few formal restrictions on the use that could be made of the library’s materials; with the good will of the librarian, a manuscript might even have been copied *in toto*. There is no direct evidence to show that any further copies of Ebert’s *Behemoth* translation were ever made; but there is one piece of indirect evidence, a suggestive chronological near-coincidence. In 1711 the Leipzig publisher Thomas Fritsch was planning to produce a new edition of Hobbes’s works, and was chivvyng Leibniz for the loan of his copy of his ‘book about liberty’ (either *Of Libertie and Necessitie* or, more probably,

³⁶ E. Paunel, *Die Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin: ihre Geschichte und Organisation während der ersten zwei Jahrhunderte seit ihrer Eröffnung, 1661-1871* (Berlin, 1965), pp. 17-18, 23. See also K. Tautz, *Die Bibliothekare der churfürstlichen Bibliothek zu Cölln an der Spree: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Preussischen Staatsbibliothek im siebzehnten Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1925), pp. 23-37.

³⁷ F. Wilken, *Geschichte der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin* (Berlin, 1828), p. 87.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-40; Küster, *Des alten und neuen Berlin*, p. 23; J. Toland, *An Account of the Courts of Prussia and Hanover, sent to a Minister of State in Holland* (London, 1705), p. 13 (letter dated 18 Aug. 1702).

³⁹ Paunel, *Die Staatsbibliothek*, p. 34.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25; above, at nn. 22, 23.

The Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance).⁴¹ Fritsch's ambitious project thus included the issuing of translations of works that had hitherto been available in English only. As Gottlieb Stolle later recalled, commenting on Hobbes's *Opera philosophica, quae latinè scripsit, omnia* of 1668: 'the writings which he left behind in his mother tongue are not included in it. Thomas Fritsch wanted to issue these in a Latin translation, and publish these *Opera* together with them, but this project made no progress, because he was not able to get hold of all of them.'⁴² Another reason for the non-appearance of Fritsch's edition was that in October 1711 the Elector of Saxony instructed the book-licensing authorities in Leipzig to suppress it; intriguingly, his instructions mentioned that Fritsch was planning to include 'several manuscripts which have not previously been printed'.⁴³ The identity of these manuscripts (presumably, translations into Latin of English-language texts by Hobbes) cannot be ascertained. But it must seem possible – likely, even – that one of them was a copy of Adam Ebert's complete translation of *Behemoth*, which had become available to interested members of the public, in the neighbouring territory of Brandenburg-Prussia, just three years before.

IV

What was the nature of Ebert's own interest in Hobbes? In order to answer this question, it is necessary first of all to fill in some of the details of the story of Ebert's life.

Adam Ebert was born in Frankfurt an der Oder, some time between 1653 and 1657.⁴⁴ He came from a prominent local family, which had supplied

⁴¹ J. Burckhard, *Historia bibliothecae Augustae quae Wolfenbütteli est*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1744–46), ii, p. 336 (Leibniz to Hertelius, 23 July 1711: 'M. Fritsch m'ayant fait presser pour l'*Ouvrage de Hobbes sur la Liberté*').

⁴² Stolle, *Anmerkungen*, p. 975 ('die Schrifften, so er in seiner Muttersprache hinterlassen, stehen nicht mit darunter. Thomas Fritsch wollte dieselben lateinisch übersetzen lassen, und diese *Opera* damit gantz heraus geben, allein, wie er sie nicht alle erhalten können [sic], so ist dieses Vorhaben Krebsgängig worden'). Puzzlingly, Stolle mis-dates the *Opera philosophica* to 1684. In a previous discussion of Fritsch's project I commented that he had 'perhaps' planned to commission translations into German, French or Latin (*Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford, 2002), p. 462); this evidence from Stolle, which was not known to me then, shows that Latin was the intended language.

⁴³ Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Dresden, MS 10753 (Oberkonsistorium, Büchersachen, vol. ii (1711–13)), fo. 18, copy of letter from Elector to 'Büchercommissarien', 11 Oct. 1711 ('worzu itzo noch etliche Manuscripta, so vorhero nicht in druck gewesen, kommen wären').

⁴⁴ Modern reference works such as the *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie* (see above, n. 3) give his date of birth as 1653. The text (by Georg Gottfried Küster) in M. F. Seidel, *Bilder-*

Lutheran clerics and intellectuals to that city for more than a century. His great-great-grandfather had been Frankfurt an der Oder's first Lutheran minister; his great-grandfather had been Rector of the city's University in 1593, 1605 and 1613; his grandfather was a Lutheran minister, and a brother of a Professor of Hebrew at the University; and his father, Gottlieb, was a merchant and city councillor.⁴⁵ Given this family background, there could be little doubt as to which university Adam Ebert would attend. He was first registered at the University of Frankfurt an der Oder – as, in effect, an auditor – in 1665; whether he was as young as eight or as old as twelve, he must have been a very precocious child. His matriculation took place in December 1674.⁴⁶ This university was of a modest size, and would soon be overshadowed, in the Elector of Brandenburg's territories, by the new foundation at Halle in the 1690s; it also represented a stricter, more old-fashioned brand of Lutheranism. But it did possess some intellectual luminaries – among them, the law professors Johann Brunnemann and Samuel Stryk, and the historian Johann Christoph Beckmann.⁴⁷

Ebert graduated in 1677; he then set off on the first of his travels, a round trip to Vienna, passing through Silesia on the way there and returning via Prague. In the Viennese bookshops he found a satirical pamphlet on the fall from favour of Leopold I's minister, Prince Wenzel Lobkowitz, written as if by Boccacini (in the manner of his *Ragguagli di Parnasso*).⁴⁸ Ebert may have been already familiar with Boccacini's work, which was still highly popular

Sammlung, in welcher hundert grösten theils in der Mark Brandenburg gebohrne, allerseits aber um dieselb wohlverdiente Männer vorgestellt werden (Berlin, 1751), gives 1656 (p. 45). In the preface to his account of his travels in 1678, 1679 and 1680, however, Ebert refers to himself as aged 21, 22 and 23, which would imply that he was born in 1657; and in the text he refers to the start of his 22nd year (i.e., his 21st birthday) in the autumn of 1678 (Ebert, *Auli Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung*, sig. π4v; part 1, p. 116). In view of his early registration at the university, however, it may be suspected that he was understating his age in these later writings.

⁴⁵ Seidel, *Bilder-Sammlung*, p. 45 (Gottlieb); J. C. Beckmann ['Becmanus'], *Notitia Universitatis Francofurtanae, una cum iconibus personarum aliquot illustrium* (n.p., n.d. [Frankfurt an der Oder, c.1706]), pp. 50-51, 71, 116-20 (other ancestors).

⁴⁶ E. Friedländer, ed., *Ältere Universitätsmatrikeln der Universität Frankfurt an der Oder*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1888-91), ii, p. 108.

⁴⁷ See C. R. Hausen, *Geschichte der Universität und Stadt Frankfurt an der Oder* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 1800), pp. 17-20.

⁴⁸ Ebert, *Auli Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung*, part 1, pp. 18-19. The pamphlet appeared first in 1674 as *Der gewonnene Ausgang und plötzliche Fall des ... Fürst Lobkowitzens ... geschrieben aus dem Parnas von Trajano Boccacini*; it was reissued in both German and Latin in 1675 (see P. Stötzner, 'Der Satiriker Trajano Boccacini und sein Einfluss auf die deutsche Litteratur', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Litteraturen*, 103 (1899), pp. 107-47; here pp. 144-45).

throughout Europe, but this was perhaps his first encounter with the genre of pseudo-Boccalinian writing, to which he himself would later contribute. In January 1678 he travelled to Hamburg, to take a boat to Amsterdam. While in Hamburg he met a Major-General von Bülow, who discussed with him, over dinner, people of exceptional intelligence who had suffered for their cleverness: Machiavelli, Cardano, Boccalini and Campanella. The Major-General also recommended Bacon's *Sermones fideles* (the Latin version of his *Essays*) and Cardano's *Arcana prudentiae* (his treatise on behaviour in society, *Proxenetæ, sive de arcanis prudentiae civilis liber singularis*).⁴⁹ Ebert's destination in Holland was Leiden, where he had planned to study jurisprudence; but he was quickly disappointed by the quality of the law professors, and abandoned the idea. He returned to Amsterdam, where he bought both of the books by Cardano and Bacon: the latter he 'read through three times in two months'. Then he took a boat to England, arriving in London on Easter Saturday.⁵⁰

Thanks to the help of the Freiherr von Schwerin, who was then the Elector of Brandenburg's envoy in London, Ebert obtained a letter of introduction to the Oxford mathematician John Wallis; his aim was to study under him 'the science of encrypting letters in unbreakable code'. But when he met Wallis, at his farm outside Oxford, Wallis demanded such exorbitant fees that Ebert decided immediately to return to London.⁵¹ There he visited the Royal Society, which did not impress him, and the bookshops, which did; he bought (among other things) Edward Herbert's life of Henry VIII, Jeremy Taylor's *Ductor dubitantium* and a commentary on Tacitus.⁵² More surprisingly, he also paid a visit to Thomas Hobbes. This meeting – one of the very last documented encounters that anyone had with the elderly philosopher – has remained unknown to Hobbes scholars; indeed, it has always been assumed, on the basis of a statement by Aubrey, that Hobbes left London in 1675 and spent the rest of his life in Derbyshire.⁵³ Ebert's account (in which he refers to himself in the third person) is therefore worth reproducing in full.

⁴⁹ Ebert, *Auli Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung*, part 1, pp. 29-30.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, part 1, pp. 51, 58 ('die er drey-mahl in 2. Monathen durchgelesen'), 60.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, part 1, pp. 61 ('wegen der Wissenschaft Brieffe in unauflöselichen Characteren zu verhehlen'), 64. Wallis's activity as a code-breaker on behalf of the Parliamentary authorities during the Civil War was one of the things harped on in Hobbes's polemics against him.

⁵² *Ibid.*, part 1, pp. 70, 73, 106, 109-10.

⁵³ J. Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, chiefly of Contemporaries, set down by John Aubrey, between the years 1669 & 1696, ed. A. Clark, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1898), i, p. 346 ('1675, mense ... [*sic*], he left London *cum animo nunquam revertendi* ['with the intention of never returning'], and spent the remaynder of his dayes in Derbyshire').

He also paid his respects to the world-famous Thomas Hobbes, who, at a great age, was lodging with a maker of mathematical instruments, Robert Joyle, not far from Fleet Bridge. He expressed his esteem for him, and that of all Germany; but he [Hobbes] was so ill and incapable that he could scarcely enter into relations with him. He was a tall man, with fair or sun-bleached hair. He had to endure many misfortunes during Cromwell's time, especially where Dr Wallis was concerned at Oxford University – in such a manner that he was also threatened with imprisonment in that very place. After that, he betook himself to King Charles II in France, and taught him mathematics, giving him such pleasure that the King, at his restoration, not only greeted him while making his first entry into London (when he saw him at the window), but also, thereafter, had his portrait put up in all his palaces.⁵⁴

'Robert Joyle' here was Robert Jole or Choule, a scientific instrument maker who was active in London between 1664 and 1704; Ebert's account is confirmed by the fact that Jole is known to have had an address in Fleet St in 1672.⁵⁵ But what his connection was with Hobbes, or why Hobbes was lodging with him at this time, remains quite obscure. Some of the details about Hobbes's life given here are evidently rather confused, in matters of both fact and chronology; nor is it clear whether they are based on what Hobbes told Ebert on that occasion, or on other sources of information (the most likely being hearsay, the 'Hobbiana vitae auctarium' by Aubrey and Blackburne, and Sorbière's published account of his visit to England). If they derive from Ebert's conversation with Hobbes, then the cause of the confusion may have been Hobbes's illness (only a temporary one, however, as we know that he was capable of perfectly lucid argument one year later); or, more probably, it

⁵⁴ Ebert, *Auli Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung*, part I, pp. 78-79 ('Er hat auch dem Welt-berühmten Th. Hobbes *reverenciret* / als er sehr alt zu Londen bey einem *Mechanico Mathematicher Instrumenten*, Robert Joyle, nicht weit von *Fleetbridge* logirt. Er trug ihm sein *Estim*, so in gantz Teutschland / vor; allein er war so kranck und unvermögend / dass er sich wenig einlassen konte; ein langer Mann / gelb oder *basané*. Er hatte zu *Cromvels* Zeiten viel *Dessastres* auszustehen gehabt / absonderlich auff der *Universität* zu Ochsfort mit *Doctor Vallis*, dergestalt / dass er auch mit dem *Carcer* daselbst *scandalisirt*. Nachdem begab er sich in Franckreich zum König *Carolo II.*, *informirte* ihn in *Mathematicis* mit solchem Vergnügen / dass der König bey seiner *Restitution* ihn nicht allein grüssete / als er seinen ersten Einzug in Londen that und ihn im Fenster erblickete / sondern auch nachmahls sein Bildnüß in allen seinen Pallästen auffrichten liess').

⁵⁵ For what little is known of Jole, see J. Brown, 'Guild Organisation and the Instrument-Making Trade, 1550-1830: The Grocers' and Clockmakers' Companies', *Annals of Science*, 36 (1979), pp. 1-34 (here p. 31); G. Clifton, *Dictionary of British Scientific Instrument Makers, 1550-1851* (London, 1995), p. 152.

may have been linguistic, given the rustiness of Hobbes's Latin and the fact that Ebert had been learning English for only a matter of weeks or months.⁵⁶ That Wallis could have threatened to have Hobbes imprisoned in Oxford seems unlikely; but perhaps there was some other legal threat by him, the details of which have otherwise not survived. One thing at least is clear: Ebert was happy to express his admiration of Hobbes, even though he was well aware of his controversial reputation. Not long afterwards, when he was returning to London after a trip to Windsor, he had an agreeable Englishwoman as his travelling companion. 'But when she came to talk about the world-famous Thomas Hobbes, she exclaimed against him as a child of the devil; something for which he was also denounced throughout England, especially by theologians – in the pulpit, at any rate.'⁵⁷

Ebert left England in the autumn of 1678, and spent the next seven months in Paris. There he visited Colbert's house, and studied the 'Testaments politiques' of both Colbert and Louvois; he also got to know the historian Antoine Varillas at the Bibliothèque Saint-Victor, who advised him to read the works of Sandoval.⁵⁸ On one occasion he visited Versailles, where, in the gardens, he caught a glimpse of the *Roi soleil*, in clothes glittering with pearls and jewels.⁵⁹ In the summer of 1679 he returned briefly to Holland, and then began a long tour of the French coast, starting in the north-west; for the first part of this journey he had a travelling-companion, an English merchant, who described himself as a cousin of Cromwell. This man was, it seems, a source of 'many' stories about the Protector and his family; the only one Ebert preserved for posterity concerns Charles II summoning one of

⁵⁶ Quentin Skinner has recently demonstrated that Chatsworth Hobbes MS D 5, which contains a fragment of a series of dictated responses by Hobbes to questions by the fourth Earl of Devonshire, was a product of the Exclusion Crisis of 1679 (see his edition of this text in the Clarendon Edition of the Works of Hobbes, forthcoming). So whatever Hobbes's medical problems may have been in these final years, it is clear that they did not include senility. Hobbes's spoken Latin was already unusably rusty by 1652: see L. Huygens, *The English Journal, 1651-1652*, ed. and tr. A. G. H. Bachrach and R. G. Collmer (Leiden, 1982), pp. 75, 218.

⁵⁷ Ebert, *Auli Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung*, part I, p. 105 ('Als sie aber zu reden gekommen von dem Weltberühmten *Th. Hobbes*, schalt sie denselben vor ein Teuffels-Kind / davor er auch in gantz England / absonderlich von den *Theologis*, allerdings auff der Cantzel aussgeruffen ward').

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 116, 153, 156. Varillas had previously been Royal librarian in Paris (1655-62), and had published his most famous work, *Politique de la maison d'Autriche*, in 1658.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 145. Thirty-six years later Ebert would refer to this encounter when addressing one of the three dedications of his translation of Cabrera, Sandoval and Herbert (see above, n. 27) to Louis XIV (the others being to the Kings of Prussia and Spain): Ebert, tr., *Historia captivitatis Francisci I*, p. 'II'.

Cromwell's daughters to an audience soon after the Restoration, at which he pinched her nose and repeated the words of the popular song, 'Oliver, Oliver, lend me your nose'.⁶⁰ Ebert was evidently fascinated by Cromwell; in England he had acquired a book about him, and in Holland he bought a medal which had the Protector's head on one side, and an olive-tree on the other, with (according to Ebert) the motto 'Nunquam tibi deficient oliva'. With a slight frisson, Ebert recalled in his travel-book that he had been told 'in secret' by the seller that this medal was in fact made not in 1658 (the date it bore) but in 1678, 'because England was not very satisfied with Charles II, and wanted thereby to let him know, indirectly or ambiguously, that there could soon be another Oliver Cromwell, if he did not improve his rule.'⁶¹

Ebert's tour of French coastal towns took him as far as Marseille and Toulon; from there he travelled to Lyon, and from Lyon he set off for Italy. He settled for a while in Turin, where he paid a Genoese man to instruct him in Italian – not so much because he needed language lessons, as because the man was secretary to a senior minister, and was able to tell him 'the most secret things, which had just become known at Court'.⁶² He also patronized an Italian musician who had recently moved to Turin from England, giving him money because he liked to hear his stories about the courts where he had worked. Unfortunately, he just missed Richard Cromwell, who came to Turin at about this time; by then, Ebert himself was on his travels again.⁶³ He went first to Venice; anti-Roman books in his luggage were confiscated at the border, but he persuaded the authorities to give them back. He enjoyed the car-

⁶⁰ Ebert, *Auli Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung*, part 1, pp. 162 (Holland), 192 (story).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, part 1, pp. 107 (book), 108-9 ('in geheim'; 'da England auf König Carolo II. Nicht wohl zu Muth; diesem oblique oder halb und halb dadurch zu verstehen zugeben, es könnte sich bald ein neuer Olivarius Cromvel finden / wan er nicht besser regirte'). Ebert's memory was faulty, and his version of the inscription ungrammatical: the medal, dated 3 Sept. 1658 (the date of Cromwell's death) in fact bears a picture of a young olive tree glowing close to the dead stump of an old one, with the motto 'NON. DEFITIENT. OLIVA' ('They [*sc.* the people] shall not lack an olive-tree') – referring to Richard Cromwell. The medal was genuinely issued in 1658, by the well-known artist Thomas Simon, but two imitations of it were made later in Holland (see H. W. Henfrey, *Numismata cromwelliana* (London, 1877), pp. 167-72; E. Hawkins, *Medallic Illustrations of the History of Great Britain and Ireland to the Death of George II*, 2 vols. (London, 1885), i, pp. 433-35). Ebert also noted (*Auli Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung*, part 1, p. 202) that the 'cousin' of Cromwell looked just like the portrait on the medal. He refers to the book as 'the Mistakes of Cromvel'; in a subsequent comment (part 2, p. 348) he appears to identify this with the German book *Politicus sine exemplo*, which was a translation of the anonymously published work by Henry Fletcher, *The Perfect Politician* (see below, n. 99).

⁶² *Ibid.*, part 1, pp. 257-91 (Marseille-Lyon); part 2, p. 22 ('die geheimsten Dinge, so zu Hoff nur eclatirten').

⁶³ *Ibid.*, part 2, pp. 11, 33.

nival there; then he travelled to Florence (where he admired the manuscripts of Tacitus, Apuleius and Virgil in the Medicean library) and on to Rome.⁶⁴ After further trips to Naples and Palermo, he returned to Venice; from there he travelled north, through Austria, to his home town, arriving in the summer of 1681.⁶⁵ He was soon calling on various dignitaries in Berlin: the court preachers (to whom he gave his translation of Digby), the secretaries of state (to whom he presented copies of a book about Cromwell), and the Elector's chief minister, Friedrich von Jena. To the last of these, Ebert had written a long letter from Toulon, giving his observations on the strength of France's coastal and naval defences; it thus seems that Ebert's French tour had incorporated an element of amateur espionage. And on the strength of this, he obtained an audience with the Great Elector himself, who was so charmed by his young subject that he invited him back for further discussions on three separate occasions.⁶⁶

Given his fascination with courts and politicians, it might have been expected that Ebert would now embark on a political career himself, perhaps as a secretary to some important courtier or minister. That his own interests lay in that direction was confirmed by the publication, two years later, of his first book, *Quinquaginta relationes ex Parnasso* – a spirited imitation of Boccalini's *Ragguagli di Parnasso*, discussing history, philosophy, political theory and political practice from a wide range of countries and periods. Contemporary politics was not excluded: one 'relatio' analysed the reasons for the excessive power of France (relative to Spain and England), and another contained a discussion of the recent Treaty of Nijmegen – to which Ebert appended the text of his long letter to von Jena about French ports and the French navy.⁶⁷ Overall, this book was a work of some youthful exuberance, containing such things as an apologia by Attila the Hun, an argument between St Paul and Numa Pompilius, a reply by Tacitus to his critics, and a dialogue between Thales and Campanella; the only modern scholar to have commented on the quality of Ebert's work judges it too harshly when he says that it 'completely lacks' the vigour and vivacity of Boccalini's own *Ragguagli*.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ibid., part 2, pp. 41-46 (books), 120 (Florence), 127 (Rome).

⁶⁵ Ibid., part 2, pp. 151 (Naples), 175 (Palermo), 258 (Venice), 347 (Frankfurt an der Oder). (The date of arrival is given as July '1680', but this appears to be a misprint, given the chronology up to that point.)

⁶⁶ Ibid., part 2, pp. 347-51.

⁶⁷ A. Ebert, *Quinquaginta relationes ex Parnasso de variis Europae eventibus* (Hamburg, 1683), pp. 1-7, 242-49, 250-58.

⁶⁸ Stötzner, 'Der Satiriker Trajano Boccalini', p. 146 ('Seinem Vorbilde aber steht Ebert weit nach, es fehlt ihm völlig die Frische und Lebhaftigkeit, die an Boccalini so wohl gefällt').

At the end of the list of contents of this book, Ebert gave a listing of the works he planned to produce: these included an edition of Tacitus (with a 'supplement' to the *Annals*), a work entitled 'XXXIV. Libri Historiarum Europae, a primordio hujus seculi ad Pacem usque Noviomagensem' ('Thirty-four books of the histories of Europe, from the beginning of this century to the Peace of Nijmegen'), and one called 'Pallium Religionis fraudes Gentilium, Judaeorum, Christianorum & Mahumetanorum obtegens' ('The cloak of religion, which covers up the frauds of the heathen, the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims').⁶⁹ None of these, however, was to see the light of day. And instead of pursuing a career as a littérateur, composing these or other such works on history, politics and religion, Ebert returned to the University of Frankfurt an der Oder to undertake a doctorate in law. This was accomplished in 1685, under Professor Stryk; Ebert's doctoral dissertation, 'De eo quod fit ipso jure', was an ambitious study of the concept (in Roman law) of that which is done 'by right itself', as opposed to that which is done by either the right of a minister of the state, or the right of a subject. Published thirteen years later, it filled more than 200 pages; characteristic touches included references to Taylor's *Ductor dubitantium* (on Mosaic law) and an opening section based on Tacitus's account of the origin of law in book 3, ch. 26, of the *Annals*.⁷⁰ In the following two years Ebert presided over the presentation of two other substantial dissertations, on diplomatic immunity and on the legal justification of the policies of Philip II of Spain; and in October 1686 he was appointed 'professor extraordinarius' in the faculty of law.⁷¹ But after giving a course of lectures on the whole of Grotius's *De jure belli ac pacis*, he 'preferred to move on',

⁶⁹ Ebert, *Quinquaginta relationes*, sig. *7v. The other works included a treatise on the relatedness of the Romance languages, and one on shorthand.

⁷⁰ J. C. Beckmann ['Becmanus'], *Catalogus bibliothecae publicae Universitat. Francofurtanae* (Frankfurt an der Oder), p. 92, gives its date of publication as 1698 (in 'Voll. Dispp. Francoff.'). No copy of this edition is known to me. A 2nd edition ('denuo ed.') was published in 1699: *Tractatus de eo, quod fit ipso iure* (Frankfurt an der Oder); there is a copy in the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Münster, pressmark Ia 4097+ a-5, 12. Another edition ('Revisus & denuo editus' ('revised and re-published')) was issued in Hanover and Leipzig in 1699 (203 pp.); there are multiple copies of this in the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Halle. I have used the later printing in S. Stryk, ed., *Dissertationum juridicarum francofortensium volumen novissimum sive Vltum, ex jure publico, privato, feudali et statutorio materias exhibens* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 1744), pp. 374-460: see pp. 374 (Tacitus), 402-3 (Taylor).

⁷¹ The dissertations are: *Dissertatio de immunitate legatorum, quam ... praeside Dn. Adamo Eberto, J.U.D & P.P. in auditorio Jctorum ad diem XXVI. Augusti anno MDCLXXXVI. ... sistit aut. & resp. Andreas Johann Liscovius Cöslino-Pom.* (n.p, n.d. [Frankfurt an der Oder, 1686]); *Dissertatio academica, de justitia actionum Philippi II. Hispaniae & Indiarum regis, quam Adamo Eberto, D. & professore juris extraordinario 1687. ad diem 28. Maj. Publicae eruditorum censura exhibiturus Gustavus Andreas Bornemann, Wernigerodensis* (Frankfurt an der Oder, n.d.

as he would later put it, 'to studying the ways in which not only natural law but also the law of nations and civil law were put into practice by kings'.⁷² In some of his later accounts he gave the impression that he had been put off, either by the 'thorny and useless' nature of Roman law, or by the fact that the theoretical basis of civil law had plenty of teachers already.⁷³ But in moving away from pure theory, he was simply renewing his long-standing interest in the study of political action. In his preface to the dissertation on diplomatic immunity of 1686, he had announced that he would embark on a series of studies of the 'jus' (right, or legality) of the actions of great princes down the ages; the long list of suitable subjects which he appended there included Xerxes, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Charles V, Mehmet II, Süleiman the Magnificent, Henry VIII, Philip II, Mazarin, and Queen Christina of Sweden.⁷⁴

None of these studies (with the exception of his pupil's dissertation on Philip II, to which Ebert may have contributed substantially) ever appeared.⁷⁵ Instead, Ebert's work in this field seems to have been confined to extending his knowledge of the historical-political literature, and, as we have seen, translating some specimens of it, for the benefit of his royal patron and others. In 1715, the year in which he published extracts from his translations of Sandoval, Cabrera de Cordova and Herbert, a new edition of his *Quinqu-*

[1687]). The titles indicate that Ebert's appointment as professor took place between those two dates; a four-page prospectus of his inaugural lecture (dated 31 October) was printed as *Ab augusto sereniss. & potentissimo domino Friderico Wilhelmo, Electore Brandenburgico ... professionem iuris extraordinariam clementissime demandatam iussa solennitate auspicandi ad explicationem tituli imperatoris Iustiniani die 31. octobris in auditorio publico proponendam ... invitat Adam Ebertus D.* (Frankfurt an der Oder, n.d. [1686]). (There is a copy in the Sächsisches Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden, pressmark Coll. Diss. B. 129, misc. 19.) The title 'professor extraordinarius' signified merely that he was outside the official complement of law professors, which was fixed by the statutes at no more than five (G. Kaufman and G. Bauch, eds., *Acten und Urkunden der Universität Frankfurt a. O.*, Heft 3, 'Die Facultätsstatuten und Ergänzungen zu den allgemeinen Statuten der Universität Frankfurt a. O.', ed. P. Reh (Breslau, 1900), p. 50). Under these statutes, the curriculum concentrated solidly on the Pandects, Institutes, and other texts of Roman law (pp. 52-53).

⁷² Ebert, tr., *Historia captivitatis Fransisci I.*, sig. * 2v ('ad Praxin transgredi Regiam placuit, JURIS NATURAE nimirum, GENTIUMQUE & CIVILIS').

⁷³ The former comment ('Spinosa ac inutili jurisprudentia') is from a note added by Ebert to the end of his 1685 dissertation: Stryk, ed., *Dissertationum juridicarum*, p. 460. The latter is contained in a brief autobiographical text by Ebert, printed in Seidel, *Bilder-Sammlung*, p. 45.

⁷⁴ Ebert, praes, *Dissertatio de immunitate legatorum*, sigs. 2A1-2.

⁷⁵ The dissertation was attributed to Ebert by Stolle: *Anmerkungen*, p. 609. According to Küster, Ebert's manuscript works did include a life of Alexander the Great (as well as a commentary on the *Annals* of Tacitus, and several legal treatises): Seidel, *Bilder-Sammlung*, p. 46. But those manuscripts have not survived.

genta relationes ex Parnasso also appeared; and eight years later he published the long account of his youthful travels, *Aulii Apronii Reise-Beschreibung*.⁷⁶ (His nom-de-plume, 'Aulus Apronius', was adapted from the name of a minor character in the *Annals* of Tacitus, Lucius Apronius.)⁷⁷ A certain element of boastfulness was apparent in the preface to this last book. Ebert remarked that some people might wonder whether a young man of 21, 22 or 23 could have had the intellectual ability to observe and understand all the things contained in the book, but retorted: 'Where then did the *Relationes ex Parnasso* come from in 1681?'⁷⁸ Some readers found an answer to that question: seizing on a passage in the travel-book in which Ebert said that he had gained material for his *Relationes ex Parnasso* from the Italian musician whom he had cultivated in Turin, they supposed that that work was little more than a piece of plagiarism. The accusation was made after Ebert's death by the bibliophile E. G. Rinck, whose general verdict on Ebert was that 'he was tormented by enormous ambition'.⁷⁹ Ebert's reputation did not improve with time; an anonymous owner of the British Library copy of the 1715 edition of the *Relationes ex Parnasso* wrote that 'He was a most extraordinary man, having almost become deranged in consequence of an excess of vanity and self-importance'.⁸⁰ But those who had known him personally wrote about him in a way that, while making allowance for his stylistic exuberance, treated him with respect and admiration. Gottlieb Stolle, writing soon after Ebert's death in 1735, noted his love of 'the high-faluting, affected style of the Spanish', and observed that 'he therefore cultivated a concentrated way of writing'; Samuel Strimesius, writing twelve years earlier, had praised him for possessing 'a pen wonderfully skilled in European and learned languages'.⁸¹

⁷⁶ The 2nd edition of the *Quinquaginta relationes* was entitled *Anecdota sive historia arcana Europae* ('Cosmopolis' [Amsterdam?], 1715). Copies of the 1st edition of *Aulii Apronii Reise-Beschreibung* (Frankfurt an der Oder) are rare; there is one in the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen, pressmark 8 ITIN, 164 EXE:02. I have used the more common 2nd (and enlarged) edition, *Aulii Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung*.

⁷⁷ See Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.29 and 3.64.

⁷⁸ Ebert, *Aulii Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung*, sig. π4v ('wo sind dann Anno 1681. die Relationes ex Parnasso ... hergekommen?'). Ebert had mis-remembered the date of publication, perhaps substituting inadvertently the date of composition.

⁷⁹ A. F. Glafey, ed., *Bibliotheca rinckiana, seu suppellex librorum quos ... collegit ... Eucharius Gottlieb Rinck* (Leipzig, n.d. [1747]), pp. 240 ('enormi ambitione vexabatur'), 847-48 (plagiarism). The statement made by Ebert about his debt to the musician does not begin to support such a charge.

⁸⁰ Ebert, *Anecdota*, BL pressmark 9073 b. 13, note on blank leaf before title page.

⁸¹ Stolle, *Anmerkungen*, p. 609 ('die hochtrabenden gezwungnen Manieren der Spanier'; 'einer tiefsinnigen Schreibart beflissen'); Strimesius, quoted in Küster, *Den alten und neuen Berlin*, p. 550 ('eine in den Europäischen und gelehrten Sprachen wunder-erfahrene

V

Some of the elements of Adam Ebert's intellectual formation will already be apparent from this brief sketch of his life. From his early adulthood onwards, he had been influenced by what seemed to him a particular tradition, even a canon, of political writers. The canon is delineated most clearly in his *Quinquaginta relationes*, where Apollo, giving advice on reading to a group of German 'studiosi', lists Machiavelli, Cardano and Bacon as the greatest writers on 'civil prudence', and declares that the best theorists on politics are Machiavelli, Cardano, Bacon and Campanella: Cardano and Bacon taught people how to advise themselves, he explains, while Machiavelli and Campanella taught them how to advise princes. Exercising some prudence of his own, Ebert also announced that the best guide to morals was the Bible; but he added, significantly, that the truth of the Christian religion 'is simple, nor would there ever have arisen any controversies about it, except where they were needed for domination'.⁸² Interest was the driving force of all political action, and in order to attain mastery in the art of politics it was necessary to study all the stratagems and devices by means of which successful rulers ensured that their own interest prevailed. Such a study was necessarily historical; and of all the historians who had written about politics, none was more important than Tacitus, the veritable lode-star of Ebert's intellectual life. He worked for many years on an edition of, 'supplement' to, and/or commentary on Tacitus; he took his own nom-de-plume from a Tacitan character; his *Quinquaginta relationes* were modelled on the writings of Boccalini, the most prominent of modern literary Tacitists; and in his travel-book he not only mentioned his inspection of the Medicean manuscript in Florence, but also cited and discussed Tacitus' works repeatedly.⁸³ Tacitus appears several times in the *Quinquaginta relationes*, defending himself from not very substantial criticisms by two writers who were themselves heavily influenced by him, Justus Lipsius and Virgilio Malvezzi. Blamed for teaching the secrets of rulers to all and sundry, he explains that he never teaches such 'arcana' directly, but uses phrases which lead the intelligent reader to search them out; and in any case, the 'arcana imperandi' can never be understood by the vulgar.⁸⁴

Feder'). Strimesius had been Rector of the University of Frankfurt an der Oder in 1688, 1694 and 1699.

⁸² Ebert, *Quinquaginta relationes*, pp. 180-81 ('simplex est, nec unquam de eadem motae fuissent controversiae nisi ubi illis indiguerit Dominatio').

⁸³ Ebert, *Auli Apronii vermehrte Reise-Beschreibung*, part 1, pp. 208, 268; part 2, pp. 122, 144, 232, 239.

⁸⁴ Ebert, *Quinquaginta relationes*, pp. 135-46 ('arcana': p. 143), 182, 197, 269-78 (reply to criticism).

Ebert was thus a late representative of the Tacitist tradition – a tradition which, thanks to writers such as Arnold Clapmarius in the early seventeenth century, had become closely intertwined with a particular branch of the Machiavellian tradition, identifying the stratagems of the Machiavellian prince with the Tacitan ‘*arcana imperii*’.⁸⁵ It was no less closely connected with the theory of ‘reason of state’, which justified the exceptional measures taken by rulers to defend the state, and/or preserve their own rule. (Ebert’s own most striking use of this phrase was in the long essay which he appended to his *Quinquaginta relationes*, entitled ‘*Ratio status Davidis, Judaeorum regis*’ (‘The reason of state of David, king of the Jews’) – a study of the political arts by which David came to power.)⁸⁶ The general assumptions of anyone who adhered to these interconnected traditions in the seventeenth century might be summarized as follows. ‘Interest’ is the driving force not only of politics, but of all human affairs. The common people, though always eager to advance their own crude interests, are stupid, and easily tricked. An ambitious demagogue can deceive them, making them think that they will advance their interests when they will in fact only promote his; and a wise ruler can, and in some ways should, deceive them, both by keeping them in awe of unknown powers, and by giving them those ‘*simulacra*’ of liberty which will make them content. Much of the art of ruling thus consists of knowing how to simulate and how to dissimulate. This does not mean that ruling is unconnected with moral values, merely that, in order to further those values, it is necessary for the wise man to adapt his actions to the conditions of cupidity and stupidity that prevail among the people. Similarly, the interests of the state can properly be furthered by actions which would otherwise, without such a justification, be immoral. In the case of some writers, this pattern of thought enjoyed an affinity with neo-Stoicism; it encouraged a separation between an inner world of belief and intention, where true virtue is located, and an outer one, where actions must inevitably

⁸⁵ On this identification see especially P. S. Donaldson, *Machiavelli and Mystery of State* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 110-40. On Tacitism see J. von Stackelberg, *Tacitus in der Romania: Studien zur literarischen Rezeption des Tacitus in Italien und Frankreich* (Tübingen, 1960); E.-L. Etter, *Tacitus in der Geistesgeschichte des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Basel, 1966); G. Spini, ‘The Art of History in the Italian Counter Reformation’, in E. Cochrane, ed., *The Late Italian Renaissance* (London, 1970), pp. 91-133 (esp. pp. 114-33); K. C. Schellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought* (Chicago, 1976); the essays by P. Burke, ‘Tacitism’, in T. A. Dorey, ed., *Tacitus* (London, 1969), pp. 149-71, and ‘Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State’, in J. H. Burns and M. Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 479-98; and R. Tuck, *Philosophy and Government, 1572-1651* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 31-136.

⁸⁶ Ebert, *Quinquaginta relationes*, pp. 317-76.

be compromised by circumstance. And this set of attitudes also tended to promote a view of true religion as an essentially internal affair: all the externalities of religion, meanwhile, needed to be placed under the ruler's control, since religion would otherwise be too powerful a tool in the hands of demagogues and plotters intent on gaining political power for themselves.

For writers who held such assumptions, the issue of whether it was right to expose the stratagems of statecraft to public view was not just a matter of authorial prudence; it raised much larger political or ideological questions. One classic study divides the authors of this period into 'black' and 'red' Tacitists – in other words, monarchical and popular.⁸⁷ The former wrote about the devices and deceptions used by skilful monarchs to show that they were necessary and justified; the latter wrote about them to teach the people how not to be deceived. Naturally, there were many possible gradations between the red and black ends of this spectrum. So-called 'liberal' monarchist Tacitists, for example (such as Malvezzi) wrote essentially from the monarchical point of view, but advised the ruler that it was against his interests to thwart the interests of his people; the German professor of politics and counsellor to the Count of Hesse Cyriacus Lentulus used Tacitus – in his *Princeps absolutus* (Herborn, 1663) – to teach the ruler the difference between a 'princeps bonus', such as Trajan, and a 'princeps pessimus', such as Nero.⁸⁸ On the 'red' side of the argument, by far the most influential writer was Boccalini; but his own precise place on the spectrum was hard to locate, thanks to the stylistic devices (of irony, the dramatization of argument, and so on) which rendered his most widely-read work, the *Ragguagli*, so piquant and intriguing. Throughout that work, a parallelism operates between Tacitus and Machiavelli, and while the latter is denounced at the surface level of the text, he is nevertheless implicitly commended as a truthful writer; both Tacitus and Machiavelli are accused (by other, hostile speakers – this is one of Boccalini's literary devices) of endangering princes by unmasking their tricks. (The charge against Machiavelli is that he has taught sheep the tricks of dogs; that against Tacitus is that he has given the people 'political spectacles', which have enabled them to see through the pretences of princes.)⁸⁹ That Boccalini opposed the Spanish

⁸⁷ G. Toffanin, *Machiavelli e il 'tacitismo'* (Padua, 1921).

⁸⁸ Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, pp. 74-78 (Malvezzi); Etter, *Tacitus in der Geistesgeschichte*, pp. 167-68 (Lentulus).

⁸⁹ See T. Boccalini, *Ragguagli di Parnasso*, ed. G. Rua and L. Firpo, 3 vols. (Bari, 1910-48), i, pp. 326-28 (cent. 1, rag. 89); ii, pp. 247-49 (cent. 2, rag. 71). The most penetrating study of Boccalini's attitude to Tacitus and Machiavelli is M. Sterpos, 'Boccalini tacitista di fronte al Machiavelli', *Studi secenteschi*, 12 (1971), pp. 255-83. Many 17th-century writers

monarchy and favoured the Venetian republic was clear enough from the text appended to his *Ragguagli*, the *Pietra del paragone politico*; on this basis, his work was often used or adapted by anti-absolutist writers in northern Europe in the two or three generations after his death.⁹⁰ But the passionately anti-monarchical nature of his thinking became fully apparent only when substantial parts of his commentary on Tacitus were finally published in Switzerland in 1677 and 1678. 'So beware,' he wrote, 'you who negotiate with princes, of their malicious thoughts, and of the poultrice of their soft words; for when they sing sweetly, they are weaving cruel spells. Their tongues are moved by interest, not by justice, nor by love of the public good.'⁹¹

It might be thought, therefore, that in producing a work so closely modelled on Boccalini in 1683, Adam Ebert was signalling an anti-monarchic ideological position. This would have been a strange tactic, however, for someone who had gone to such trouble to ingratiate himself not only with senior courtiers in Berlin, but also with the Great Elector himself. In fact there is nothing anti-monarchical in his *Quinquaginta relationes*; a text which includes a very reasonable-sounding apologia by Attila the Hun is unlikely to be read as a denunciation of the cruelty of princes. Instead, Ebert finesses the red-black problem by adopting a distinctive shade of grey: in his view, the essential function of Tacitus' historiography and analysis is neither to justify princes nor to give power to the people, but rather to instruct 'courtiers' – a category that appears to include all politicians operating under a monarchy – in the arts of survival and self-promotion. Thus Apollo declares that 'Tacitus described the *arcana* of courtiers'; and he also recommends that among the Latin historians, 'Tacitus and Justinus should be read carefully – the former because he would teach the reader how to be a

penetrated less far, however; the Dutch scholar Theodore Ryck, editing Tacitus, distinguished Machiavelli (a supporter of tyrants) from Tacitus (an exposé of the devices of princes), and blamed Boccalini for assimilating Tacitus to the Machiavellian tradition (Tacitus, *Opera quae exstant*, ed. T. Ryck ['Ryckius'] (Leiden, 1687), sig. *9).

⁹⁰ For such use of Boccalini see M. Stolleis, *Arcana imperii und Ratio status: Bemerkung zur politischen Theorie des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1980), pp. 26-29.

⁹¹ *La bilancia politica di tutte le opere di Traiano Boccalini*, ed. G. Leti, 2 vols. ('Castellana' [Geneva], 1678), i, p. 85 ('Guardatevi dunque voi, che negoziate co' Principi, dai concetti maliziosi, e dall'empiastrò di morbide parole; perchè quando dolcemente cantano, allhora crudelmente incantano. L'interesse muove la loro lingua, non la giustizia, e non l'amore del Ben-publico'). In the Introduction printed before the other edition of this commentary, Boccalini explained that he had written the *Ragguagli* 'with a mask on my face' ('con la Maschera sul volto'); now, he said, he wanted to show 'the deeds and secret intentions of princes past and present' ('i fatti, e l'intentioni secreti de' Principi passati, e presenti') (*Comentarii di Traiano Boccalini romano sopra Cornelio Tacito*, 2nd edn. ('Cosmopoli' [Geneva?], 1678), sig. †4.

courtier, the latter, how to be a counsellor.⁹² (This distinction seems to imply that a courtier is someone who acts in his own interest, as opposed to someone who attends to the interest of the monarch.) The only potentially subversive element here is the possibility that Tacitus teaches courtiers not merely how to survive, but how to usurp the power of the ruler; this is the main point at issue in the discussions Ebert presents between Tacitus and both Malvezzi and Lipsius, which focus on Tacitus' account of the rise to power of Sejanus. Thus Malvezzi says to Tacitus at one point: 'You, the leading writer at the court of the emperors of the human race, taught posterity the ways in which one can deceive kings and overcome one's equals.'⁹³ Lipsius accuses Tacitus of contradiction, since he writes at one point as if Sejanus brought about Tiberius's retirement to Capri, and at another point as if Tiberius willed it himself. Tacitus replies that Sejanus strengthened a pre-existing inclination on the emperor's part; but, with studied ambiguity, he explains his own role as follows. 'He did not describe what Sejanus did, but rather, taught what another person could have done. He recommended that art to every historian. For the writer should be concerned not so much with the history, as with the use of it.'⁹⁴

An obsession with courtiers runs through all of Ebert's work; even his nom-de-plume converts the name taken from Tacitus, Lucius Apronius, into 'Aulus' Apronius. ('Aulus' was an authentic Roman name; but Ebert seems to have chosen it for its association with 'aula' (court) and 'aulicus' (courtier).) His selection of texts to translate was dominated by such concerns: Gracián's *Oraculo*, for example, taught the reader how to behave as a 'great man', whether courtier or ruler, and its popular French translation by Amelot de la Houssaie (who also translated Machiavelli and wrote a commentary on Tacitus) was entitled *L'Homme de cour*.⁹⁵ The role of 'ministers' attracted Ebert's special attention; his interest may have been first drawn to the

⁹² Ebert, *Quinquaginta relationes*, pp. 182 ('Tacitum & Justinum diligenter legendos; illum quod Aulicum formaret, hunc vero quod Consiliarium'), 197 ('Tacitum scribere Arcana aulicorum').

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 136 ('tu primus Aulae Imperantium generi humano scriptor, docuisti posteritatem modos decipiendi Reges superandique aequales').

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 272 ('se non, quid fecerit Sejanus, scripsisse; sed quid alios facere posset, docuisse. Illamque artem se recommendare unicuique Historicorum. Nam non adeo Historiae quam ejusdem usui scriptorem decere esse intentum').

⁹⁵ B. Gracián, *L'Homme de cour*, tr. N. Amelot de la Houssaie (Paris, 1684); this was reprinted fourteen times between 1686 and 1716 (see B. Gracián, *The Oracle*, ed. and tr. L. B. Walton (London, 1962), p. 44). The first German translation, by J. L. Sauter, was similarly entitled *L'Homme de Cour, oder der heutige politische Welt- und Staats-Weise* (Frankfurt am Main, 1687). Gracián was himself deeply influenced by Boccacini: see Hendrix, *Traiano Boccacini*, pp. 75-84.

Spanish version of *Kalilah ve Dimnah* by the fact that it was entitled *Espejo político, y moral, para príncipes, ministros, y todo genero de personas* ('A political and moral looking-glass for princes, ministers and all sorts of people'). In his *Quinquaginta relationes* he strongly recommended the *Relaciones* and *Aphorismos* of Antonio Pérez, the minister of Philip II who had fallen from grace, been imprisoned, and subsequently fled to England; the *Aphorismos* in particular are full of advice on how a senior courtier should conduct himself.⁹⁶ And when characterizing his *Quinquaginta relationes* in 1715, Ebert described it – rather misleadingly – as 'comprising the *arcana* of the Minister, Count and Duke Olivares, Cardinal Richelieu and Cardinal Mazarin, the Earl of Clarendon, Griffenfeld, and others'.⁹⁷

Oliver Cromwell, of course, could not be placed precisely in this category; his rise to power was not based on ministerial office. But he was, like the others just mentioned, someone who came to exercise state power through his own skill, not through the accident of inheritance. Indeed, he had gone much further than the others: he was a consummate usurper who had entirely supplanted the hereditary ruler, a Sejanus who had had Tiberius put to death. Ebert, who had been under Cromwell's spell for thirty years before he translated *Behemoth*, seems to have regarded him as the ultimate exponent of those arts and stratagems which ambitious courtiers and politicians needed to master: he knew how to deceive the people, how to enlist other holders of power in his own support, and how, in the end, to take that power from them.

Such, in fact, was the standard view of Cromwell in the writings about him published in continental Europe. Soon after his death, a popular satirical pamphlet by an anonymous German author presented a discussion between Cromwell and Oxenstierna in the underworld; this work, itself an imitation of Boccacini, was filled with references to Tacitus, and praised Cromwell as a master of the Tacitan arts of 'ratio status'. As one character remarks to Cromwell, discussing his retention of the House of Commons after he had abolished the House of Lords: 'For your Highness arranged for the English to have only "umbrae" and "simulacra", shadows and pictures, as Tacitus and Boxhorn (in

⁹⁶ Ebert, *Quinquaginta relationes*, pp. 182, 204. On Pérez see G. Marañón, *Antonio Pérez (el hombre, el drama, la época)*, 7th edn., 2 vols. (Madrid, 1963): for details of the original printings of these works see ii, pp. 954-55. Ebert probably read the *Relaciones* and the various sets of *Aphorismos* in the 1676 Geneva edition, *Las obras y relaciones de Antonio Perez*; for examples of court-related aphorisms see pp. 402, 404, 727, 731.

⁹⁷ Ebert, tr., *Historia captivitatis Francisci I*, sig. *2r ('*arcana Ministerii Comitum & Ducum OLIVARII RICHELIIQUE & MAZARINI Cardinalium, CLARENDONIIQUE Comitum & Greifenfeldii aliorumque complexae*'). Peder Schuhmacher Griffenfeld was the powerful minister of the Danish kings Frederick III and Christian V.

his 17th Emblem) call them.⁹⁸ Also widely read in Germany was a translation, published in 1663, of Henry Fletcher's *The Perfect Politician* (1660): this was the work to which Ebert referred, under the first part of its title, when he used the phrase *Politicus sine exemplo* in the dedication of his *Behemoth* translation.⁹⁹ Fletcher's book, which was written just before the Restoration, was a mainly positive appreciation of Cromwell's political skills. 'He shewed himself to be in *Policy* as far above the *Peoples Capacities*, as *Saul* in *Stature* was above the *Israelites* ... In his rise, he never cut down one step before another was built to support him ... Secrecy in carrying on Designs, is the principal part of a Prince: at this he was excellent.'¹⁰⁰ The beauty of this characterization of Cromwell was that it equally served the purposes of those who wished to damn him; thus the fervently pro-Royalist Ferrarese writer Alfonso Paioli could describe Cromwell as the incarnation of the Machiavellian Prince, a 'politico' *par excellence*, while not denying that 'he was a person of extraordinary talents'.¹⁰¹ Such an attitude, hostile but at the same time admiring, was expressed in the two books that enjoyed the widest circulation in Europe: Ferdinand de Galardi's *La Tyrannie heureuse, ou Cromwel politique, avec ses artifices & intrigues* (Leiden, 1671), and the *Historia, e memorie recondite sopra alla vita di Oliviero Cromvele, detto il tiranno senza vizi, il prencipe senza virtù* (2 vols., Amsterdam, 1692), by Gregorio Leti, the editor of Boccalini's commentary on Tacitus. As Leti put it (quoting, as he claimed, his English patron, the Earl of Anglesey), 'the earth never had a ruler more prudent than he, nor a commander more skilled in advancing his own fortune ... He was a friend without loyalty, an enemy without rancour, a judge

⁹⁸ Schreiben welches der vorlengst verstorbene hochgelahrte Herr Don Franciscus de Quevedo ... überschicket betreffende einige statistische ... Discursen so zwischen denen verstorbenen Hn: Protectore von Engellandt dem schwedischen Reichs-Cantzler Ochsenstern und Lilienströhmen (n.p., 1659), e.g. sigs. C3v (on Cromwell's arrangement of his son's succession, calling it 'ratio status'), C4r (on his gradual accumulation of power), C4v ('Indem Ew. Hoheit den Engelländern nur umbras und simulacra, nur Schatten und Bildnüsse, wie Tacitus und Boxhornius, Embl. 17. es nennen, hergemachet'). There were several editions and continuations of this work: see G. Berghaus, *Die Aufnahme der englischen Revolution in Deutschland, 1640-1669* (Wiesbaden, 1989), pp. 316-19. Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn taught at Leiden University, and published an edition of Tacitus in 1643. This reference is to his *Emblemata politica*, 2nd edn. (Amsterdam, 1651), pp. 134-36.

⁹⁹ [H. Fletcher,] *Politicus sine exemplo, oder kurtzer Begriff der Kriegs- und Staatshandlungen seiner Hoheit Olivier Cromwels*, tr. anon (Nuremberg, 1663). For Ebert's reference see above, n. 30.

¹⁰⁰ [H. Fletcher,] *The Perfect Politician*, 2nd edn. (London, 1680), p. 281. The German translator's Preface praises his political skills even more highly: *Politicus sine exemplo*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰¹ A. Paioli, *Vite del Turena, del Mazarini e del Cromvele* (Bologna, 1680), pp. 234 (Machiavelli), 239 ('isquisitamente Politico'), 240 ('non può negarsi ch'egli fosse soggetto di straordinari talenti').

without justice, a great politician among disorders ... in short, he was a compendium of the worst evil, and a summation of the greatest good.¹⁰²

VI

Such, then, was the fascination of Cromwell for Ebert, and, because of it, the appeal to him of Hobbes's work. But was Ebert responding, at the same time, to elements that are genuinely present in Hobbes's account? Is it possible that this Ebertian reading of *Behemoth* may have at least something positive to contribute to our understanding of that work? Behind such questions there lurks a larger one: should Hobbes's political thought be viewed as essentially a product of the Tacitist tradition?

To see Hobbes in this way would not be a novel development. One person who did so was the influential writer Johann Christoph Beckmann, who was first Professor of History, then Professor of Politics, at the University of Frankfurt an der Oder. Beckmann would write admiringly of Ebert when they were colleagues in later years; Ebert had probably attended Beckmann's lectures as a student, we may guess that it was thanks to Beckmann – one of the most outspoken defenders of Hobbes in Germany at the time – that he had acquired such a keen interest in Hobbes that he sought him out in London in 1678.¹⁰³ In his *Meditationes politicae* (1674), Beckmann tried to weld together Hobbesian natural law theory and the entire Tacitist tradition of political analysis. His list of recommended modern writers on politics included Bacon, Boccacini, Boxhorn and Clapmarius, and culminated in Grotius, Hobbes and Pufendorf; substantial parts of the book were devoted to the defence and praise of Hobbes, whom he called 'ingeniosissimus'. His chapter

¹⁰² Leti, *Historia*, i, p. 5 ('la Terra non hebbe mai un Governatore più prudente di Lui, nè un Condottore più destro della sua propria fortuna ... Egli fu amico senza fede, nemico senza rancore, Giudice senza Giustitia, gran Politico tra li disordini ... & in somma un compendio del maggior male, & un'Epilogo del più gran bene'). It is also noteworthy that de Galardi defended the style he had adopted by reference to a French translation of Tacitus: *La Tyrannie heureuse*, sig. *5r. There is no general study of continental representations of Cromwell. For a very brief overview, see W. C. Abbott, *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1937-47), iv, pp. 883-4.

¹⁰³ On Beckmann see C. G. Jöcher, *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1750-51), i, cols. 994-95, and F. Palladini, *Discussioni seicentesche su Samuel Pufendorf: scritti latini, 1663-1700* (n.p. [Bologna], 1978), pp. 284-85. For his praise of Ebert see his *Notitia universitatis francofurtanae*, pp. 118-19. Beckmann may also have given Ebert the idea of becoming a translator of politically interesting texts: he published a translation of James I's *Basilikon doron* (*Jacobi donum regium, sive de institutione principis* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 1679)).

on 'ratio status' began by explaining that while the name was new (invented, he said, by Italians in modern times), the theory was ancient, and could be found in the works of Tacitus.¹⁰⁴ As an exposition of it he recommended the *Dissertatio academica, cuius pars prima de ratione status ...* by Wilhelm von Schröder, a highly controversial work which had been denounced on its first appearance as an extreme statement of 'Hobbism'.¹⁰⁵ Beckmann's own argument, which followed quite closely in Hobbes's tracks, was that people act out of interest; that individual interests necessarily clash; that self-preservation is an overriding interest, which requires human beings to create sovereign authority; and that that authority can and should then act in whatever ways are necessary to advance the interest of the whole state.

Put in those terms, Hobbes's theory does seem to flow quite naturally from a Tacitist world-view. We can be confident, too, that Hobbes had read not only Tacitus, but also the works of some of the key writers in the modern Tacitist tradition. In the Chatsworth library catalogue which he drew up in the late 1620s (making some further additions in the early 1630s), we find, for example, 'Ammiratus in Tacitu[m]' (Scipione Ammirato, *Dissertationes politicae, sive discursus in C. Tacitum* ('Helenopolis', 1609), the Latin version of his *Discorsi sopra Cornelio Tacito* (Florence, 1594)); 'Cleland. Institution of a Nobleman' (John Cleland, *Propaedeia, Or, The Institution of a Young Noble Man* (London, 1607) – a work written by the tutor of the young Prince Charles, which draws moral advice from Tacitus); 'Lipsij opera'; 'Lipsij Politica'; 'Tacitus English' (*The Annales of Cornelius Tacitus*, tr. R. Greenwey (London, 1598)); 'Ammirato. Discorsi sopra Tacito'; 'Boccalinj Ragguaglij di Pernasso'; 'Boccalinj Pietra di Parangone' [sic]; 'Tacito Lat. Italian by Dati. 2. vol.' (*C. Cornelij Taciti opera latina, cum versione italica* (Frankfurt, 1612), which included the translation by G. Dati, first published in Venice in 1563); 'Tacito Ital. by Politi' (*Annali, et istorie, di G. Cornelio Tacito*, tr. A. Politi (Venice, 1615-16)); 'Tacitus wth Aphorismes in Spanish' (*Tacito español, ilustrado con aforismos*, tr. B. Alamos de Bar-

¹⁰⁴ J. C. Beckmann, *Meditationes politicae, iisdemque continuandis & illustrandis addita politica parallela* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 1679), pp. 5-7 (writers), 24 ('Ingeniosissimum Hobbes'), 31 ('ratio status'), 47-53, 85-86, 417-18 (defence of Hobbes). (This edition, the third of the *Meditationes*, includes the first printing of a second work, the *Politica parallela*.) All references to Hobbes were omitted from his later political treatise, *Conspectus doctrinae politicae*, but the essential theory remained unchanged; and that work did also include the statement that 'Machiavelli too is not as bad as he is popularly supposed to be' ('*Machiavellum quoq[ue] tam malum non esse, quam vulgo creditur*': p. 6).

¹⁰⁵ W. von Schröder ['Schröter'], *Dissertatio academica, cuius prima pars de ratione status, altera de nobilitate, tertia de ministrissimo* (Jena, 1663); this dissertation was presided over by S. C. Olpe, Rector Magnificus of the University of Jena, and Beckmann refers to it as his work (*Meditationes*, p. 44). On the reaction to it see Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, pp. 512-13.

rientos (Madrid, 1614)); and 'Tacitus in french' (*Les Oeuvres de C. Cornelius Tacitus*, tr. C. Fauchet and E. de la Planche (Paris, 1584)).¹⁰⁶ When Hobbes's pupil William Cavendish (the future second Earl of Devonshire) published – anonymously – a book of his essays in 1620, it included a 'Discourse upon the Beginning of Tacitus'; although the claim by its two modern editors that this discourse was written by Hobbes may be doubted, the work nevertheless provides important evidence of the intellectual preoccupations of the person to whom Hobbes was most closely attached at that time.¹⁰⁷

Many of the assumptions of the Tacitists, about human nature in general and political action in particular, can be found in Hobbes's works, implicitly or explicitly; and in few works are they more explicit than in *Behemoth*.¹⁰⁸ Of the Scottish gentry, 'B' remarks that 'in their lives they were just as other men are, pursuers of their own interests and preferments'; and more generally he insists that 'people always have been, and always will be, ignorant of their duty to the public, as never meditating anything but their particular interest'.¹⁰⁹ In some cases the pursuit of such interest is crude and straightforward (as with the soldiers who supported Cromwell only because 'they aimed at rapine and sharing the lands and goods of their enemies'); in other cases, while it rests on equally obvious foundations, it may have gained a little superstructure of pseudo-justification (as with the merchants who support rebellions because their 'profession is their private gain', but who claim to be taking a principled stand against the 'grievance' of taxation).¹¹⁰

However, in many cases – above all, the religious demagogues, on whom Hobbes lays the primary blame for the Civil War – the pseudo-justification seems to have corrupted even the understandings of those who use it, so that it becomes hard to tell whether they are cynical hypocrites fooling the people, or whether they have, so to speak, fooled themselves, thereby becoming sincere fanatics. Thus on the one hand 'A' explains that the Presbyterians were 'impious hypocrites' who sought political power in order to 'fill their purses'; yet on the other hand he declares that 'this was the design of the Presbyterian

¹⁰⁶ Chatsworth, MS Hobbes E 1 A (unfoliated; the entries are given here in the order in which they appear). A forthcoming edition of this MS, by the late Richard Talaska, has been promised by the Philosophy Documentation Center, Bowling Green, Ohio.

¹⁰⁷ The claim is made in 'T. Hobbes' (attrib.), *Three Discourses: A Critical Modern Edition of Newly Identified Work of the Young Hobbes*, ed. N. B. Reynolds and A. W. Saxonhouse (Chicago, 1995). For the original text of this discourse see Anon. [W. Cavendish], *Horae subsecivae: Observations and Discourses* (London, 1620), pp. 223-324.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Richard Tuck's comments in his 'Hobbes and Tacitus', in G. A. J. Rogers and T. Sorell, eds., *Hobbes and History* (London, 2000), pp. 99-111, esp. p. 109.

¹⁰⁹ Tönnies edn., pp. 29, 39.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 136.

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'.¹¹¹ Fixated as he is on the idea that everything in the political realm depends, in the end, on the beliefs that exist in people's heads, Hobbes cannot operate with a simple dichotomy between the foolish multitude, whose beliefs are subject to manipulation, and their manipulators, the clever politicians, who act on a clear-sighted view of their own advantage – for the latter may also have beliefs in their heads that lead them to act in irrational ways.¹¹² When 'B' exclaims, 'What silly things are the common sort of people, to be cozened as they were so grossly!', 'A' replies: 'The craftiest knaves of all the Rump were no wiser than the rest whom they cozened. For the most of them did believe that the same things which they imposed upon the generality, were just and reasonable...'¹¹³ His interest in this issue thus seems to have propelled Hobbes some way beyond the Tacitist position.

There are, it is true, plenty of passages in *Behemoth* which consist of analyses of political 'arts', 'artifices', deceptions and tricks, performed – sometimes with real skill – by both Presbyterians and Parliamentarians. Such passages do indeed show what a Tacitist grounding there was to Hobbes's understanding of political action. But as the work progresses, the Parliamentarians are increasingly shown to have been dupes themselves, always liable to be fooled or out-manoeuvred by others; and the Presbyterians are increasingly depicted as driven by an almost frenzied malice. Only one figure emerges on the rebel side who seems, for the most part, to have been neither a fool nor a fanatic: Oliver Cromwell. Here was someone who had both a long-term aim (to take sovereign power from the King and exercise it himself: 'His main end was to set himself in his place') and an interim strategy of self-advancement ('I cannot believe he then thought to be King; but only by well serving the strongest party, which was always his main polity, to proceed as far as that and fortune would carry him').¹¹⁴ Hence the passages illustrating Cromwell's political skill, to which Ebert drew special attention with his marginal notes – above all, those describing his manoeuvrings in the period 1647-8, in what Hobbes por-

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 75, 89.

¹¹² For a valuable analysis of how non-rational behaviour can be found at all levels of Hobbes's argument, see S. Holmes, 'Political Psychology in Hobbes's *Behemoth*', in M. G. Dietz, ed., *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1990), pp. 120-52.

¹¹³ Tönnies edn., p. 158.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 147. Both statements are by 'A', and the apparent contradiction between them is largely mitigated by the comments with which he introduces the latter statement: Cromwell had a series of necessary steps to take before he could seize kingly power, each of them difficult and risky, so that his strategy involved pitching his ambitions no higher than one step at a time.

trays, in a grand extended metaphor, as ‘a game at cards’ between Cromwell and Parliament. Here Ebert was responding to elements that are genuinely present in the text – even though he may not have appreciated all the nuances of Hobbes’s writing. (When he translated ‘This was the first trick Cromwell played’ using the word ‘artificium’, and repeated it in his marginal note, he probably did not notice the card-game metaphor at work.)¹¹⁵

However, although Hobbes is happy to credit Cromwell with considerable political skill, he is far from portraying him as ‘the perfect politician’. Even during that crucial political card-game, Cromwell is shown to have made a potentially devastating mistake, when he arranged for the King to escape from captivity; had the King actually fled abroad, he might have returned with a victorious French army, and it was only the unexpected actions of the Governor of the Isle of Wight that prevented that from happening.¹¹⁶ Nor was Cromwell’s judgement faultless in military affairs: Hobbes goes out of his way to emphasize that, during his last Scottish campaign, ‘all his glories had ended in shame and punishment, if fortune and the faults of his enemies had not relieved him’.¹¹⁷ And although Hobbes says almost nothing about Cromwell’s religious convictions, he does allow ‘B’ to comment that he was ‘superstitious’ in his belief in 3 September as a lucky day – which suggests that there was room for at least some foolish beliefs in Cromwell’s otherwise calculating brain.¹¹⁸ The overall assessment of Oliver Cromwell seems to be that he was a flawed but great politician: he may never have achieved any one thing quite so magnificent as Monck’s march on London (‘the greatest strategem that is extant in history’), but he did display impressive political skills in a whole series of contests for power over a long period. (And, it must be said – though Hobbes does not of course make the comparison explicitly – he is shown to have been a much more skilled politician than Charles I, who failed to take the initiative at crucial moments, and allowed his advisers to talk him into pursuing a hopeless strategy of would-be negotiation.)¹¹⁹

One key term is used to characterize Cromwell’s undoubted talent for power-politics: Hobbes refers to it as ‘wit’. Describing Cromwell’s seizure of sovereign power from Parliament, ‘A’ remarks: ‘Therefore he called a Par-

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 138 (and cf. the continuation of the metaphor on p. 139: ‘These were the articles that put them to their trumps’); SBB, MS Lat. 2o 129, fo. 179r. Tuck notes parallels between Hobbes’s treatment of Cromwell here and that of Augustus by Tacitus, as commented on in the ‘Discourse upon the Beginning of Tacitus’ (‘Hobbes and Tacitus’, pp. 109-10).

¹¹⁶ Tönnies edn., pp. 143-44.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3, 125.

liament, and gave it the supreme power, with condition that they should give it to him. Was not this witty?'¹²⁰ The adjective may have overtones of humorous ingenuity, but the substantive stands for an important human attribute, a kind of natural prudence or cunning. In an earlier passage, 'A' described the plans of the Presbyterians to engineer a transfer of power from the King to the House of Commons, which they were confident they could control: 'wherein they were deceived, and found themselves outgone by their own disciples, though not in malice, yet in wit' – those disciples being, apparently, first the Independents, and then Cromwell.¹²¹ The significance of this particular human attribute is brought home most strongly in an important speech delivered by 'A' near the beginning of the fourth dialogue:

You may perhaps think a man has need of nothing else to know the duty he owes to his governor, and what right he has to order him, but a good natural wit; but it is otherwise. For it is a science, and built upon sure and clear principles, and to be learned by deep and careful study, or from masters that have deeply studied it ... Your calling the people silly, obliged me by this digression to show you, that it is not want of wit, but want of the science of justice, that brought them into these troubles. Persuade, if you can that man that has made his fortune, or made it greater, or an eloquent orator, or a ravishing poet, or a subtle lawyer, or but a good hunter or a cunning gamester, that he has not a good wit; and yet there were of all these a great many so silly, as to be deceived by the Rump and yet were members of the same Rump. They wanted not wit, but the knowledge of the causes and grounds upon which one person has a right to govern, and the rest an obligation to obey; which grounds are necessary to be taught the people, who without them cannot live long in peace amongst themselves.¹²²

The inclusion of cunning gamesters in this list of people with 'a good wit' is also significant: it reminds us that Hobbes's metaphor of the Cromwellian game of cards was not chosen lightly. Throughout his political writings, Hobbes resorts to metaphors of games of chance or skill (or some combination of the two) to characterize what true politics is not. In *De cive* he observes that wars of aggression are like games with dice ('sicut alea'), in most cases making the aggressors poorer in the long run.¹²³ And, famously, in *Leviathan* he declares: 'The skill of making, and maintaining Common-

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 158-60.

¹²³ T. Hobbes, *De cive* (Paris, 1642), XIII.14.

wealths, consisteth in certain Rules, as doth Arithmetique and Geometry; not (as Tennis-play) on Practise onely: which Rules, neither poor men have the leisure, nor men that have had the leisure, have hitherto had the curiosity, or the method to find out.¹²⁴

This, surely, is where Hobbes departed from – and went far beyond – the Tacitist tradition. That tradition was fixated on the study of political history, because it did not believe that there was any ‘method’ that would yield certain rules for political action comparable to the rules of arithmetic and geometry; the most that any method could achieve was to extract maxims and aphorisms from a comparative study of discrete units of political experience. Hobbes, on the other hand, believed in the possibility of working out a true civil ‘science’ – a system of certain knowledge, not a mere accumulation of prudence. And he believed not only that that possibility had been realized (in his own writings), but also that it was necessary to teach the basic conclusions of that science to the people, so that they would have a clear understanding of their own political duties. That is the central theme of *Behemoth*; and every passage, every comment that emphasizes the importance of people’s beliefs as the basis of their actions is itself an expression of that theme.

Hobbes made large claims about the ability of his ‘science’ to furnish all the essential principles needed for ‘maintaining’, as well as ‘making’, commonwealths: in other words, he seems to have thought that it could provide not only a formal system of rights and duties, but also, in some ways at least, the actual contents of governmental policies. Nevertheless, he did not exclude the need for knowledge of contingencies, or for the prudential skills required to manage them. Listing the qualities of a good ‘Counsellor’ in *Leviathan*, he put first a true understanding ‘of the Rights of Government’ (i.e. his ‘science of justice’), and then added that knowledge was also required of ‘the Strength, Commodities, Places, both of their own Country, and their Neighbours’ – which, he said, ‘is not attained to, without much experience’. He concluded: ‘When for the doing of any thing, there be Infallible rules ... all the experience in the world cannot equall his Counsell, that has learnt, or found out the Rule. And when there is no such Rule, he that hath most experience in that particular kind of businesse, has therein the best Judgement, and is the best Counsellour.’¹²⁵ At one point in *Leviathan* he even seemed to imply that governing a state consisted, most of the time, of the exercise of such prudence: ‘To govern well a family, and a kingdome’, he suggested, were both applications of prudence, albeit ‘to different sorts of businesse.’ That was

¹²⁴ T. Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London, 1651), p. 107.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 134–35.

the prudence which he had just defined as follows: 'When the thoughts of a man, that has a designe in hand, running over a multitude of things, observes how they conduce to that designe; or what designe they may conduce unto; if his observations be such as are not easie, or usuall, This wit of his is called PRUDENCE; and dependeth on much Experience, and Memory of the like things, and their consequences heretofore.'¹²⁶

In this sense, the story of how Cromwell exercised his political 'wit' may well have had some value, in Hobbes's eyes, as an example of how natural prudence could adapt to circumstances and carry an agent through to his long-term goal. But this can only have been a secondary purpose for Hobbes – not a primary one, as Ebert's re-titling of the entire work seemed to imply. If there was any didactic value in the story of Cromwell's prudential actions, it lay only in exhibiting the general functioning of such prudence (and at the same time, as we have seen, qualifying it as no guarantee of success); it did not consist, as Ebert and the Tacitists would have supposed, in furnishing a set of specific tricks and manoeuvres. For, as 'A' puts it in a dismissive comment about the Parliamentarians, 'If craft be wisdom, they were wise enough. But *wise*, as I define it, is he that knows how to bring his business to pass (without the assistance of knavery and ignoble shifts) by the sole strength of his good contrivance.'¹²⁷ Prudence is easily converted into craft by knavery: 'To Prudence, if you adde the use of unjust, or dishonest means ... you have that Crooked Wisdome, which is called CRAFT.'¹²⁸ The politician who based his actions on 'the science of justice', however, could never be perverted in this way; his actions – which, of course, might well be described as 'tyranny' by those who disliked their effects – would, by definition, never make use of unjust means. The Tacitist description of a world of craft and deception was not dismissed out of hand by Hobbes. On the contrary, he recognized it as a description of the real world – the reality of which had been made painfully clear in the British Isles between 1642 and 1660. But instead of trying to extract, from such a description, a set of techniques of deception which had proved successful before and might possibly be successful in the future, he aimed at something quite different: a true science of politics, which would guarantee the certainty of success for future rulers by systematically deceiving the people. Tacitism mattered for Hobbes, but it did so only because it described the problem. To that problem, he offered a fundamentally different solution.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹²⁷ Tönnies edn., p. 38.

¹²⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 34.