Aspects of Hobbes

Noel Malcolm, one of the world's leading Hobbes scholars, presents a set of extended essays on a wide variety of aspects of the life and work of this giant of early modern thought. The greater part of this volume is published here for the first time. Malcolm offers a concise introduction to Hobbes's life and thought, as a foundation for his discussion of such topics as his political philosophy, his theory of international relations, the development of his mechanistic world-view, and his subversive biblical criticism. Several of the essays pay special attention to the European dimensions of Hobbes's life, his sources and his influence; the longest surveys the entire European reception of his work from the 1640s to the 1790s. All the essays are based on a deep knowledge of primary sources, and many present striking new discoveries about Hobbes's life, his manuscripts and the printing history of his works. Aspects of Hobbes will be essential reading not only for Hobbes specialists, but also for all those interested in seventeenth-century intellectual history more generally, both British and European.

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A Summary Biography of Hobbes

Both Hobbes and Locke came from families of West Country clothiers, and Bacon was the grandson of a sheep-receu (a chief shepherd). All three family stories tell us something not only about the importance of wool in the English economy but also about the role of education in stimulating social mobility during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Bacon's father, thanks to his studies at Cambridge, was able to become a prominent lawyer; and marry into the aristocracy. Locke's father was also trained as a lawyer, although he remained a humble country attorney; thanks to his own education at Oxford, Locke was able to pursue a career that included diplomatic work, secretarial assistance to a rich politician, and, eventually, a well-paid government administrative post. Of the careers of these three philosophers, Hobbes's was certainly the least adventurous. But it too would not have been possible without his education at Oxford, which gave him his entry to the Cavendish family, with whom he was to spend most of his life. The expense of educating a son up to university level may have been a threshold over which the poorest in society could not cross; yet the threshold was set relatively low, and once it had been passed a wide range of possible careers opened up.

One career that did not exist during this period was that of a professional philosopher. Not only was philosophy not defined or demarcated as a discipline in the way that it is today (the term was used to include the whole range of physical sciences as well), but there was no professionalisation of the subject. Some of those who wrote about philosophical matters, such as Henry More or Ralph Cudworth, may have been employed as academics. By publishing philosophical works, however, they were not exhibiting academic "research" so much as entering a republic of letters that was inhabited equally by churchmen, physicians, noblemen, officers of state, schoolmasters, and even, in the case of Hobbes's friend Sir Kenelm Digby, a one-time amateur pirate. With the proliferation of printing houses in seventeenth-century England, it was not difficult to get published. The modern system of royalties did not exist, but the code of patronage ensured that a well-chosen...
dedication might be handsomely rewarded. Books were expensive to buy, however; for example, Lecitacion, when it was first published, cost eight shillings, which was more than most ordinary labourers earned in a week. Any writer who wanted to keep up with what was being published on philosophical subjects needed one of four things: a private income, a well-paid job, membership of a circle of book-lending friends, or access to a well-funded library. Hobbes's career as tutor and secretary to the Cavendish family gave him the last of these four in full; over the years he earned three in smaller measure. He was content to remain the employee or retainer of a great noble household—a somewhat out-of-fashion career pattern that gave him access to a higher social world without making him a member of it, and which kept him at risk of losing the facility of the metropolitan intellectual scene. But it also gave him security, time to write a large quantity of works on a huge range of subjects, and powerful political protection against the public hostility to some of those works during the last three decades of his life.

I

Hobbes was born on 5/6 April 1588, in Wportun, a parish on the northeasterly side of the small town of Malmesbury, in north Wiltsire. His father, an ill-educated country clergyman, was curate of the small neighbouring parish of Brokenbrough, which was one of the poorest livings in the area. Some members of the family had grown prosperous in the cloth-making business. These included Edmund Hobbes (probably Hobbes's great-uncle), who became alderman, i.e. mayor, of Malmesbury in 1600; an even richer cousin, William Hobbes, who was a great clothier; and Francis, the elder brother of Hobbes's father, who was a prosperous grocer and became alderman of Malmesbury in 1672. Other Hobbeses in and around Malmesbury included some less prominent clothiers and two alderman-keepers, Edmund and Robert Hobbes of Wportun, whose exact relationship to

1 John Aubrey, monarchical claims that Hobbes's father was vicar of Wportun ('Brief Lives,' skilful of contemporaries, as shown by John Aubrey, besides the pages cited infra and supra, A. Clark, vol. Oxford, 1889, i, p. 340). Footnotes for 1605-16 may be found in some of the sources of Brokenbrough (Wilberforce Record Office, Trowbridge: Archdiocese of Wilbur, Act Books (Office), vol. i-ii; History vol. ed. 1814, 1714-1716. The church at Brokenbrough had been one of the most poorly equipped in 1714. J. E. Nightingale, The Church of the City of Wilbur, Woodbury, ed. 1714, p. 197), and in 1649 he and his wife obtained an indenture of

2 The year 1649 is mentioned by R. J. Newby, Woodbury Archdiocese and National History Society, Records Branch, 1, 1949, p. 48. A *

- 2 -

A SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Hobbes cannot be established. It seems likely that Hobbes's father spent more time in the Wportun alderman than he did in his church at Brokenbrough; during the archdeacon's visitation of the deanery of Malmesbury in October 1602 he failed to appear before the vicar, and two months later he was hauled before the archdeacon's court 'for want of quarter sessions and for not catechu-

3 Wrong troubles to follow. In October 1680 Hobbes's father was accused in the episcopal court of slanderous Richard Jeane, the vicar of Foxley (a nearby parish), whom he had described as a 'knaves an a base knave and a drunkard knave'. Required to make a public act of penitence in Foxley church, Hobbes's father failed to turn up for the occasion; fined 31s. 4d., he failed to pay and was discredited (eventually punished with excommunication. In February 1684 he chanced on Jeane in the churchyard at Malmesbury, whereupon, in the words of a witness, he 'followed the said M. Jeane revenging him and calling him knave and coming near unto him strooke him the said M. Jeane with his fust as near as about the head'. Any act of violence in a church or churchyard was an excommunicable offence, but laying violent hands on a clergymen was an even more serious crime in ecclesiastical law, for which corporal punishment was possible; and any excommuni-

4 The date of his education is unknown. He was described as 'a young clergyman, Robert Latimer, who had taught Hobbes Latin and Greek to a high standard at a little school in Wportun. Latimer was evidently a keen classicist and
by the works of Aristotle (although it did include some standard astronomical and geometrical works, including Euclid, which Hobbes would have had to study if he had wanted to proceed MA). Hobbes's complaint that the philosophy taught at the university was 'Aristotelian' had some truth to it. There had been a definite revival of Aristotelianism in England in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and extra degrees were issued in Oxford in 1586 to exclude the use of authors who disagreed with the 'ancient and true philosophy' of Aristotle. But, on the other hand, there is a mass of evidence that academics in the early seventeenth century had intellectual interests, especially in the sciences, which went far beyond the official curriculum, and that these interests were often reflected in their teaching.  

Nur should we assume that Hobbes's hostility to scholastic logic would have found no sympathetic echo in the Oxford of his day. The humanist criticism of scholasticism lingered on at the university. One fiercely anti-scholastic oration delivered in Magdalen Hall two or three years before Hobbes's arrival attacked the 'clamorous and barbarous words, "entitres", "formal essence", and "quidditias", and asked rhetorically: "How are ethica improved by the knowledge of propositions or the manufacture of syllogism?"  

II

For someone who did not intend to pursue a career in the Church or the university, there was little Derbyshire to stay on for the further degree of MA. Fortunately, Hobbes was offered employment immediately after completing his BA. On the recommendation of John Wilkinson he was taken on as a tutor by William Cavendish, a rich Derbyshire landowner who had been created a baron in 1605 and was to become first Earl of Devonshire in 1618. Hobbes's pupil, the future second Earl (also named William Cavendish), was only a few years younger than Hobbes himself. He had been entered briefly at St John's College, Cambridge. Hobbes joined him there in the summer of 1608 and accompanied him from Cambridge to Derbyshire in November.  

Thereafter Hobbes's relation to his charge seems to have been less that of a tutor than that of a servant, a secretary, or a friend. In
The influence of Bacon's Essays on the young William Cavendish, however, was evidently powerful. In 1610 an original collection of essays was published anonymously under the title Homunculus. It included a version of the Discourses Against Flatterers and a group of other essays in the Baconian style that can definitely be attributed to Cavendish; a fair copy of these essays, in Hobbes's hand, survives at Chatsworth. In addition to the Discourses Against Flatterers and the essays in the Chatsworth MS, the published text of Homunculus also included three new discourses. One was a description of Rome, obviously the fruit of Hobbes's and Cavendish's visit there in October 1614; the others were 'A Discourse upon the Beginning of Tacitus' and 'A Discourse of Lawes.' A recent statistical analysis of the prior characteristics of Homunculus suggests that, while the text of the work was not composed by Hobbes, these three discourses may have been. This is a little surprising in the case of the description of Rome, since writing such accounts when on a tour of Europe was a traditional exercise performed by pupils, not their tutors. But in the case of the other two discourses, it is possible to see similarities between the arguments of these writings and Hobbes's later thinking. The discourse on Tacitus, for example, could assume the importance of deception and self-interest in political affairs, and both discourses stress the unique evil of anarchy or civil war. On the other hand, the claims made in the 'Discourse of Lawes' about the relationship between law and reason and about the independent status of common law as something grounded in the 'judgment of the people' are in conflict with Hobbes's later position. Even if these discourses were by Cavendish and not by Hobbes, they give us an important insight into the thinking of the man who was intellectually and personally closest to him at this time.

Hobbes's introduction to political life and contemporary political thinking came largely through Cavendish's activities. Cavendish was never a prominent politician, but he was a member of the 1642 and 1652 parliaments, and Hobbes would no doubt have followed those debates that Cavendish attended. On his return to England, Hobbes found his position as a political philosopher firmly established, but he was also aware of the dangers that lay ahead. In the years that followed, he worked on his great work, Leviathan, which was published in 1651. The work was dedicated to Cavendish's brother-in-law Lord Ironside and was no doubt intended to bolster Cavendish's influence in the court. Hobbes's dedication to Cavendish is evident in his dedication to the work, which reads: 'To the Right Honorable and Vertuous Lord, the Earl of Cavendish, this book is dedicated.'

The dedication reflects Hobbes's deep respect for Cavendish and his desire to see his work recognized. It is also a testament to the close relationship that existed between the two men. Hobbes was a frequent visitor to the Cavendish household, and Cavendish was one of his closest friends. Their friendship was mutual, and they shared a deep understanding of each other's work and ideas. The dedication to Cavendish is also a reflection of Hobbes's desire to see his work recognized as a significant contribution to the field of political philosophy. The dedication is a testament to the importance of Cavendish's support and encouragement in the early years of Hobbes's career.
ASPECTS OF HOBES

from Italy in 1615, Cavendish kept up a correspondence with the Venetian friar Fulgenzio Micanzio, who was the friend and personal assistant of Paolo Sarpi; Micanzio's letters were translated by Hobbes for further circulation. In this way Hobbes must have gained a special interest in the writings and political actions of Sarpi, who had defended Venice against the papal interdict of 1606 and developed a strongly anti-papal theory of Church and State in which the temporal ruler alone is the source from whom all jurisdictions flow and to whom they all return. And through Cavendish and the connection with Micanzio, Hobbes must also have come into contact with the Croatian-Venetian churchman and writer Marc'Antonio de Dominis, who came to England in 1616, assisted in the project of translating Bacon into Italian, supervised the publication of Sarpi's Historia del concilio tridentino, and published a large and influential anti-papal treatise of his own, De repubblica ecclesiastica. Also thanks to Cavendish, Hobbes became a member of two trading and colonizing companies in which Cavendish had an interest: the Virginia Company and the Sooner Islands Company (which organized the settlement of the Bermudas). Hobbes was granted a share in the former by Cavendish in June 1622; the date of his formal involvement in the latter is not known, but his role as assistant to Cavendish would certainly have involved him in the affairs of both companies before he became a shareholder himself. At the thirty-seven separate meetings of the Virginia Company's governing body that Hobbes attended in 1622—3, he came into contact with prominent politicians and writers such as Sir Edwin Sandys (who criticized royal policy on taxation and foreign affairs in the parliament of 1621) and the lawyer John Selden (whose friend Hobbes later became). William Cavendish succeeded his father as second Earl of Devonshire in 1616, but he died only two years later, at the age of forty-three. At the time of his death, Hobbes was finishing work on a translation of Thucydides, which was published, with a dedication to Cavendish's elder son (the third Earl), in the following year. This was an important work of scholarship: it was the first translation of the work into English directly from the Greek, and it also included a detailed map of ancient Greece compiled from many sources and drawn by Hobbes himself. Although Thucydides' work is famous for its speech by Pericles in defence of Athenian democracy, its publication by Hobbes may nevertheless have been an implicitly pro-monarchical political statement, since the main theme of the book is the gradual


8 A SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

adversion of the Athenian state by ambitious demagogues. In his verse autobiography Hobbes emphasizes this aspect of Thucydides' work, saying that Thucydides was Hobbes' favourite historian because 'he shows how incompetent democracy is'.

33 A summary of the death of the second Earl, Hobbes left the service of the Cavendishes for two years. He was again employed as a tutor for the son of a rich landowner, Sir Gervase Clifton, and in 1629–30 he travelled with the young Gervase Clifton to France and Switzerland. From later accounts by Hobbes and Aubrey we learn that it was during his stay in Geneva in April–June 1630 that Hobbes began to read Euclid's Elements in 'a gentleman's library' and fell in love with his deductive method. It is unlikely, given his known earlier interest in astronomy, that this was Hobbes' first encounter with geometry; nor need we assume that he had never encountered Euclid's work before. What he stresses in his own account of the incident is that the work delighted him, 'not so much because of the theorems, as because of the method of reasoning'. This strongly suggests that Hobbes' mind was already preoccupied with some philosophical problems to which Euclidean method seemed to supply the solution. Of the nature of those problems, however, there is no direct evidence from this period itself.

After his return to England, Hobbes was taken back into the service of the widowed Countess of Devonshire in early 1631 as a tutor to her son, the third Earl. Possibly Hobbes was already spending much of his time reading about mathematics and other scientific subjects; in a legal document written in 1639, he explained that he had accepted this tutorship 'amongst other causes chiefly for this, that ye same did not much disturb him from his studies'. The boy was only 13, and Hobbes now had to teach at a more elementary level than he had done before. One of the methods he used was to go through a Latin translation of Aristeides' Nemesis, making a "digest" of it with his pupil. A version of this digest was later published in English by Hobbes. It is a largely faithful summary of Aristeides' analysis of how people can be swayed by appeals to their passions and interests.

III

The 1630s were crucial years in Hobbes' intellectual development. They saw not only the growth of his interest in science (especially optics) but also the formation of the main outlines of his political philosophy, which appeared as The Elements of


36 Hobbes, Thomas Hobbes: English, p. 6 (OGL, p. 66). Aubrey, Brief Lives, I, p. 331 (where Aubrey's manuscript gives the name of the city as: 'et alii').

37 Clairmont, At Hobbes' Dile, 46. 56.

ASPECTS OF HOBBES

Late in the end of the decade. Although we know more about his intellectual and personal life in this decade than in the previous ones, there is much that remains obscure. Recent studies have tended to locate Hobbes in two particular intellectual groups during this period. One was the "Wetbeck academy" of scientists connected with the Earl of Newcastle (so called after one of his family seats, Welbeck Abbey in north Nottinghamshire). They included Newcastle's brother, Sir Charles Cavendish, a talented mathematician who corresponded with mathematicians and scientists on the Continent: Newcastle's chaplain, Robert Payne, who conducted chemical experiments with Newcastle; and Walter Warner, who had been one of a number of scientists and free-thinkers (including Thomas Harriot) patronized by the Earl of Northumberland in the 1590s and 1600s.37 Hobbes was especially close to the Cavendish brothers in the late 1630s. He corresponded with Payne, who became one of his closest friends, and he also took an interest (although not an unsceptical one) in Warner's work on optics. We know that he was in contact with Warner, sending him suggestions of his own about the angle of refraction, as early as 1644.38

The other grouping was the so-called Great Tew circle that gathered round Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland (whose house, Great Tew, was near Oxford). Its members included theologians such as William Chillingworth, Oxford divines such as George Morley and Gilbert Sheldon, London lawyers such as Edward Hyde (the future Earl of Clarendon), and poets such as Edward Wadad.39 At the heart of the Great Tew circle lay the collaboration between Falkland and Chillingworth in an attempt to formulate a moderate and rational Anglicanism as a defence against Roman Catholicism. This defence of 'rational religion' was characterized as 'Socinianism' (an anti-Trinitarian heresy) by hostile critics, especially the more extreme Protestant ones; and the Great Tew writers' rejection of traditional ideas of spiritual authority in the Church, with their tendency to judge questions of church government in terms of mere convenience or conductiveness to temporal ease, set them apart from Laudians as well as Catholics. Three characteristics would also be found in Hobbes's later writings, and attacked in even stronger terms. Hobbes certainly owed some of his ideas about religion to members of the Great Tew circle, even though his defence of rational religion was not, as theirs generally was, on assumptions about the essential unreasonableness of God.

38 A proposition about the angle of refraction; in Hobbes's hand but entitled 'H Hobbes analogia' in Warner's hand, in BM, Add. 409, fol. 10, r. 135.

A SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

Although Hobbes's connections with various members of these two intellectual groupings are not in doubt, the idea of his belonging to two 'circles' located at Welbeck and Great Tew is misleadingly schematic. The phrase 'Wetbeck academy' is just a metaphor for a group of people connected with the Cavendish brothers and does not refer to physical gatherings, either formal or informal; there is no evidence, for example, that Walter Warner ever set foot in Welbeck Abbey. As for Great Tew, while it is clear that there were physical gatherings there, it is unlikely that Hobbes was more than a very occasional visitor to Falkland's house. One possible opportunity for a visit came in 1654, when Hobbes may have stayed for a while in Oxford, using that town also as a base for visits to his old friends in north Wilshire.40 Otherwise Hobbes is most likely to have encountered members of Falkland's circle in London. Outside its inner core of Oxford men, this circle had a more peripheral membership of London-based intellectuals, court wits, and poets, and it is among these that most of Hobbes's personal friendships with Great Tew writers are to be found—men such as the poet Edward Wadad and the lawyer Edward Hyde. Yet the intellectual and social world of early seventeenth-century England was so closely knit that one has only to begin pursuing possible connections to see any neat pattern of separate 'circles' break up before one's eyes. Thus, for example, Hobbes's intellectual contacts with the liberal Oxford theologians are likely to have come in the first place from Robert Payne, an Oxford man who was a friend of Sheldon, Morley, and Hammond; many of the poets and wits attached to Falkland's circle were also friends and admirers of Ben Jonson, whom Hobbes had known in 1618, before the Great Tew circle came into being. Jonson was himself a protégé of Newcastle and a friend of Payne; and Hyde was also connected with Walter Warner, whose patron during this period was Hyde's father-in-law, Sir Thomas Aylesbury.

In 1654 Hobbes embarked on another Continental tour with his pupil, the then Earl of Devonshire. They spent nearly a year in Paris, visiting off to Italy at the end of August 1655; they were in Rome in December of that year; in Florence in April 1656, and back in Paris in early June, whence they returned to England four months later.41 Even before he set out on this tour, Hobbes's mind had been filled, thanks partly to the stimulus of the Earl of Newcastle and his mathematician brother, Sir Charles Cavendish, with thoughts about optics, physics, and psychology. In early 1654 he had been commissioned by the Earl of Newcastle to find a copy of Galileo's Dialogo, and his earliest surviving letter sent from Paris during this tour answers a query from an unnamed correspondent about the functioning of vision and memory.42 The two prolonged stays in Paris that this continental trip allowed him were clearly of great importance to Hobbes's intellectual life. From the Earl of Newcastle and Sir Charles he had introductions to French scientists and

40 See Hobbes, Correspondence, I, Letters, n. 2.
41 ibid., 1, Letters, n. 5.
42 ibid., 1, Letters, n. 11.
mathematicians such as Claude Mephion, a writer on geometry and optics who was a close friend of Descartes. It was probably through Sir Charles's good offices, either directly or indirectly, that he was introduced to the learned, pious, and charming friar Marin Merseille, who was also a friend of Descartes, and who was already functioning as the centre of a huge network of scientific and philosophical correspondents. Hobbes later recorded in his autobiography that he had investigated "the principles of natural science" in Paris at this time (principles that he knew... were contained in the nature and variety of moives...), and that he had communicated his ideas on this subject to Mersenne on a daily basis. We know that he observed experiments carried out by William Davison, a famous Scottish chemist who taught at Paris, and during his final months in the French capital he was discussing philosophical matters with the martyr Catholic intellectual Sir Kenelm Digby.

By the time Hobbes returned to England in October 1656, he was devoting as much of his time as possible to philosophical works; the extreme pleasure I take in study", he wrote, "comes in me all other appetites." His pupil came of age in the following year, and although Hobbes remained in his service, his time was now largely his own; much of it was probably spent with the Earl of Newcastle and his brother at Welbeck. In a letter to the Earl from Paris in Christmas, 1655, Hobbes had expressed an ambition to be the first person to give 'good reasons for ye faculties & passions of ye soul', such as may be expressed in prose English; and, from a later letter from Sir Kenelm Digby, it appears that Hobbes had been planning, during his final months in Paris, a work on 'Logique' that would begin, in Euclidian fashion, with the definitions of primary terms. Whether these writings on logic and psychology or epistemology were conceived from the outset as a single, systematic project cannot be said with certainty, but all the evidence of Hobbes's letter does indicate that the urge to systematize was located deep in his intellectual character. It is unfortunate that any manuscript drafts of this project that Hobbes may have written during this crucial period of his intellectual formation, 1646–9, have apparently not survived. One manuscript traditionally attributed to Hobbes (and dated by some authors to this period, although by others to the beginning of the 1650s), the so-called Short Treatise, is in the handwriting of Robert Payne and can more plausibly be attributed to him. Another manuscript on metaphysics

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A SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

and epistemology, which definitely does contain material written by Hobbes and which has previously been dated to the period 1657–40, can more probably be dated to some time after July 1643.

The earliest surviving scientific-philosophical work by Hobbes is a manuscript treatise on optics, the so-called 'Latin Optical MS', which must have been completed by 1643. This important work evidently formed part of a larger body of writing; it refers back to a previous section (section) in which basic principles of physics had been discussed, such as the rule that 'all action is local motion in the thing which acts.' Since Hobbes was later to use the term 'section' for each of the three works that made up his tripartite 'Elements of philosophy' (De corpore, De homine, and De cœlo), and since Hobbes put his main discussion of optics in De homine, it is possible that this optical treatise was a version of what later became De homine, and that the earlier 'section' to which it refers was a body of work corresponding to what was eventually published as De corpore. How roughly the missing 'section' corresponded to that work can only be guessed at, but Hobbes's devotion to a hesitant drafting and refining of De corpore during the 1640s suggests that whatever existed before 1640 was probably more like a set of notes than a polished text. (This would fit the account of Hobbes's working methods given by Aubrey and by Hobbes himself.)

The striking thing about the Latin Optical MS, which probably set it apart from the previous 'section', was the fact that so much of it took the form of a running critique of Descartes's Dioptrique. This was the short treatise on optics (in particular, refraction) that had been published as one of the essays accompanying Descartes's Discours de la méthode in 1637. (Hobbes had been sent a copy of the book by Sir Kenelm Digby 1640 after its publication.) Descartes's work had an unerring effect on Hobbes, for two reasons. First, Descartes's mechanistic physics, and his assumption that perception is caused by physical motions or pressures that have no intrinsic similarity to the qualities (redness, heat, etc.) that are

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48 For a modern edition of this MS (National Library of Wales, MS 1971), see Hobbes, Opuscula De mundi, pp. 199-60. For previous dating, see M. R. Roux, Allie fons del deto et del materialismo moderno (Venere, 1942), pp. 310–5, and A. Delisi, Sine nel del mondo delle filosofe (Turin, 1945), pp. 147-48. The reasons for dating it as such given below.
49 For a modern edition of this MS (BL, MS Add. 7676), fol. 135–61, though retaining the diagram, see Hobbes, Tractatus opticus, ed. E. Alston, Finae criticae sive della filosofa, 87 (1968), pp. 157–142. For any reason for this dating, see the section on 'missing lost' in Hobbes, Correspondence, VI, 164. For all Hobbes, and Hobbes, Correspondence, II, 164.
51 Tract, 'Hobbes and Descartes', pp. 32–40. Then the Latin Optical MS was part of a larger project, at least one 'section', in idea. But it is still unclear whether Hobbes was refining, from the outset, the idea that this project would culminate in a treatise on optics. The account of the genesis of The Elements of Laws given in the Doctrine is more than a work (as was the short treatise) or a kind of infancy than the newly systematic retrospection of explanation given in the preface to De cœlo (ed. Weimar, p. 8).
ASPECTS OF HOBES

perceived, corresponded very closely to Hobes's own theories. Although neither Descartes nor Hobes was the first to have such ideas (they had been preceded by Isaac Beeckman and Galileo), this was still very much the frontier of modern thinking, and it must have been galling for Hobes to see some of his own research pre-empted in print. In 1640-1 an exchange of letters between Hobes and Descartes on optics and physics turned (at Descartes's prompting) into an acrimonious dispute about who had pre-empted—or even plagiarised—whom.

The second reason for Hobes's troubled reaction to Descartes was that the metaphysics of the French philosopher seemed to be radically out of step with the proper assumptions of his physics. That Hobes had already possessed distinctive ideas of his own on metaphysics before he read Descartes's book is indicated by the shred of comment Digby made when he originally sent the *Discours de la méthode* to Hobes: 'I doubt not but you will say that if he were as accurate in his metaphysical part as he is in his experience (i.e. his account of physical phenomena), he had carried the palm from all men living.' In the Latin Optical MS, Hobes attached the dualism at the heart of Descartes's theory, challenging the idea that the mind could be affected by the motion of objects without itself being a physical object. 'Since vision is formally and really nothing other than motion, it follows that that which sees is also formally and strictly speaking nothing other than that which is moved; for nothing other than a body . . . can be moved.' And in a set of 'Observations' to Descartes's *Meditationes,* commissioned and published by Mersenne in 1641, Hobes broadened his attack on Cartesian metaphysics, suggesting that Descartes had failed to eradicate his thinking from the assumptions of scholastic philosophy, with its hypostatized qualities, its degrees of reality of being, and its blurring of the distinction between existent beings (entia) and essences. In general, therefore, Descartes's philosophy was more an irritant than a stimulus to Hobes. The idea that transcending Cartesian scepticism became a major aim of Hobes's philosophical work cannot be supported by anything in Hobes's writings; his belief in the causal dependence of all ideas (including qualities and essences) on the physical properties of existing objects was part of the primary assumptions of his metaphysics, by which radical scepticism was simply precluded.

Hobes's work on science and metaphysics was interrupted at the end of the 1650s by politics. A number of issues were prompting discussion of the 'absoluteness' of sovereign power during the final years of King Charles I's personal rule. Of these, the most famous was the Ship Money case of 1637, which raised the question of whether any limits could be set to the power of the king. given that his normal powers could exceed in exceptional circumstances, and that the

A SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

king might judge which circumstances were exceptional.94 The Short Parliament of April 1649 (to which the Earl of Devonshire unsuccessfully tried to get Hobes elected as MP for Derby) voiced its concerns on these issues before it was abruptly dissolved. As one speaker put it, 'if the King be judge of the necessity, we have nothing and are but Tenants at will.'95 Four days after the dissolution of that parliament, Hobes signed the dedicatory epistle of a treatise, The Elements of Law, in which he aimed to settle all such questions by working out the nature and extent of sovereign power from first principles. The dedication was to his patron, the royalist Earl of Newcastle; the principles contained in the work, Hobes explained, 'are those which I have heretofore acquainted your Lordship withal in private discourse, and which by your command I have here put into method.'96

That this was a polemically pro-royalist work was obvious; as Hobes plainly stated in one of its final chapters, the idea that subjects could maintain rights of private property against the sovereign was a claim that he had 'confuted, by proving the absoluteness of the sovereignty.'97 But The Elements of Law was no mere polemical pamphlet. In it Hobes had attempted to base his political principles on an account of human psychology that was compatible with (although not necessarily dependent on) his mechanistic physics. The reduction of 'reason' to instrumental reasoning was an important part of this psychological picture. Reason, on his view of things, did not inherit values, but found the means to ends that were pointed by desire; desires might be various, but reason could also discover general truths about how to achieve the conditions (above all, the absence of anarchic violence) in which desires were least liable to be frustrated. By defining that which is 'not against reason' as 'right', Hobes also made the transition to a different type of general truths: definitional truths about rights and obligations, which would make the claims of the anti-royalist politicians as necessarily false as those of incompetent geometers. For sovereignty to exist at all, Hobes argued, it was necessary for all the rights of the subjects to be yielded to it; what he tried to show was that the reasons that made sovereignty necessary also made it absolute. This was a work of extraordinary assurance, an almost fully hedged statement of Hobes's entire political philosophy. His two later published versions of his theory, *De civi* and *Levitanus,* would develop further some of the points of detail, but the essential lineaments would remain the same.

97 I. W. F. (p. 124).
ASPECTS OF Hobbes

The Elements of Law were circulated in many manuscript copies, which Hobbes later recollected, "occasioned much talk of the Author; and had not His Majesty dissolved the Parliament, it had brought him into danger of his life." Possibly Hobbes was already thinking, during the summer of 1644, about going to live in Paris, for reasons of political safety and intellectual stimulus. Apart from the scientists he had met through Mersenne, an old friend of the Cavendish family was there: the French courtier charles du Bose, whom Hobbes had known in the 1620s, and who may have extended a general invitation to Hobbes when he visited England in 1658. In September 1640 Hobbes recovered £200 which he had asked the steward of Chatworth to invest for him; he also had £400 banked with the Cavendish family (at 6 per cent interest), so if he withdrew all his money on deposit he must have felt financially independent enough to embark on a long period of residence abroad. What finally prompted him to leave England was a debate on 7 November in the newly convened Long Parliament, in which John Pym and other anti-royalists attacked "Preaching for absolute monarchy that the king may do what he list." Fearing that he might be called to account for The Elements of Law, Hobbes fled to Paris.

IV

Thanks to his connection with Mersenne, Hobbes was quickly absorbed into the intellectual life of the capital. Mersenne had acted as intermediary for the correspondence between Hobbes and Descartes, and it was Mersenne who (as mentioned above) commissioned Hobbes' "Objectives" to the Meditations, which were published, in 1641, with five other sets of objections and Descartes' replies. Mersenne also arranged the publication of De corpore in 1642, over the inscription "L.I.H." This book, a remodelled version of the arguments of The Elements of Law, was much admired for the cogency and concision of its arguments about the nature of the state, but the reductive treatment of Christian theology in the final section of the work caused many eyebrows to be raised. It was De corpore that really established Hobbes as a political writer of European repute when it was issued (in two further editions, with additional explanatory notes by Hobbes) by the Dutch printer Elzevir in 1642. Meanwhile Mersenne had also published some small samples of Hobbes' work on physics and optics in two volumes of scientific compilations

A SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

that be edited in 1644, Cogitata physico-mathematica and Universe geometricae synopsis. And through Mersenne Hobbes became acquainted, in the early 1640s, with a number of French philosophers and scientists, including the anti-Aristotelian Pierre Gassendi, the mathematician and anti-Cartesian Gilles Persone de Roberval, the Huguenot physician Abraham de Puy, and two other younger Huguenots with scientific interests, Samuel Sorbière and Thomas de Maricq.

For most of the 1640s Hobbes was preoccupied with physics, metaphysics, and theology rather than political philosophy. In 1643-4 he wrote (probably at Mersenne's request) a huge blow-by-blow refutation of a scientific and theological work by the Catholic Aristotelian philosopher Thomas White. Mersenne studied this refutation in manuscript and may well have encouraged Hobbes to have it printed, but it was to remain unpublished until 1975. The Anti-White (as it is now generally called) is a strange work, written obviously in a great outpouring of ideas but having recourse to a mass of earlier notes and drafts. It is not surprising that Hobbes, who had set himself the task of arranging all such material methodically in his tripartite 'Elements of philosophy', should have been reluctant to publish it in this haphazard and repetitive form. And it is clear, within the text of the Anti-White, that one of the topics that was giving him the most difficulty was the nature of scientific method itself. Two different models of scientific knowledge jostle for position: the knowledge of causes, and the knowledge of definitional meanings. Hobbes made some unsatisfactory attempts to reconcile or unite these two models, possibly his own dissatisfaction with this aspect of his work was one reason for the slowness with which he drafted and redrafted his major work on logic, metaphysics, and physics, De corpore, throughout the 1640s.

Several fragmentary early drafts of this work (which was not published until 1651) survive, the most puzzling of which is a rough copy in another hand of a text that mixes English and Latin phrases. The traditional assumption that this was a semi-translation of Hobbes's Latin text by somebody else is probably false, since one whole section of the English reappears in a later English work by Hobbes. This draft was probably written in the years 1643-4; the material it contains was later used in chapters 7, 8, 11, and 12 of De corpore, but in this draft the material forms the opening chapters of the entire work. The exposition begins here with

84 See Hobbes, Correspondence, II, Biographical Register, "Mersenne."
85 On Leibniz and L. Angius' Gilei Persone de Roberval (Paris, 1515) on Gassendi, Abraham de Puy, Sorbière, and de Maricq, see Hobbes, Correspondence, II, Biographical Register.
86 See "Hobbes' Science of Politics and his 'Theory of Science'" (Ch. 7 above).
87 This MS is referred to above at n. 49. "The English passage [from the introductory section of the MS] Hobbes, Opuscula de De mande, p. 491 appears in Hobbes' Elements in the Preface to Gassendi see W. Demontes, Gassendi, ed. D. E. Godfrey (Oxford, 1970), p. 433, 8WP IV, p. 42, & n. 35. As noted, the MS also borrows a phrase from Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici, which was published in London in 1642. If we assume that the English in the MS was Hobbes' own, an easy explanation of this link with Browne suggests itself; Sir Kenneth Digby, who had read Browne's book and written a reply to it in London in Dec 1641, returned to Paris in July 1647 and may well have brought a copy of Religio Medici with him. That Hobbes
A SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

Coxm, the future bishop of Durham, and Henry Bennet, the future secretary of state Lord Arlington.

Given such contacts with royalist exiles, Hobbes's thoughts would naturally have turned more often in the later 1640s to the political situation in England. He maintained his friendship with the poet Edmund Waller, who was in exile in France after 1643, and he became well acquainted with the poet Sir William Davenant (for whom he wrote a long commensatory letter, published in 1670, on his poem Gondibert), and he also kept in contact with Edward Hyde. Hobbes kept up some correspondence with the Earl of Devonshire in England, and he also wrote regularly to his old friend Robert Payne, who was ejected from his Oxford college in 1649 but remained in England. In May 1650 Robert Payne learned about Levitathan for the first time, when Hobbes told him that he had completed thirty-seven chapters out of a projected total of fifty. Clearly, Hobbes's work on this new book had been rather secretive and very rapid; he probably did not begin it until the autumn of 1649 (he told Sir Robert Bruce in June of that year that he was working on De corpore, which he hoped to finish by the end of the summer), and he seems not to have mentioned it to Hyde when the latter saw him in Paris in August and September of that year. By the time Hyde returned to Paris in April 1651, Hobbes was able to inform him that 'his Book (which he would call Leviathan) was then Printing in England, and that he receiv'd every week a Sheet to correct... and thought it would be finished within little more than a month.'

That Hobbes went to the trouble of arranging the printing of the work in London confirms the essential validity of the joking remark he made to Hyde when the latter asked why he wanted it published: 'The truth is, I have a mind to go home.' As recently as May 1648, when Hobbes had discussed the possibility of returning to England in a letter to the Earl of Devonshire, he had written: 'When I consider how dangerous a place there is here to be for peaceable men, I am apter to wish you on this side, then my selfe on that side the sea.' But he had qualified this reluctance even then: 'I have no inclinations to the place where there is so little security, but I have such inclinations to your [Leiden] as I will come to any place (I may have a pause) where your Leidish[he] shall be.' Thereafter things had

28 Hyde to Sheldon, 23 May 1670, BL MS Hyde, 6303, no. 123.
29 Hobbes, Correspondence I, Letter 60; Hyde, Brief View and Survey, p. 1; in late Sept., or early Oct. 1649, Sir Charles Cavendish (who was now in Austria) received a letter from Hobbes, in which Hobbes made no reference to Levitathan, but he had hoped his "philosophie" (i.e., De corpore) would be printed in the following spring. BL MS A44, fol. 54 (Cavendish to Pol, 2 Oct. 1649).
30 Hyde, Brief View and Survey, p. 8. It seems to have been published in London in the following month. The printing had been rushed; the work was entered in the Stationers' Register on 20 June 1651.

-- 19 --
changed in England, with the execution of King Charles I in January 1649. Things had changed too for Hobbes in Paris. The death of Mersenne in September 1648 and the departure soon afterwards of Gassendi to the south of France meant that he was deprived of his two dearest philosophical friends.

It would, however, be too limited an explanation to say that Hobbes wrote Leviathan merely to ease his passage to England. Certainly he was keen—and excitable—to point out that his theory of political authority based on necessary consent (and necessary consent based on a rational understanding of ultimate self-interest) was not inherently pro-royalist (as the trappings of the argument in The Elements of Law and De civi might have made it appear to be). His argument, as Leviathan makes clear, was about sovereignty per se, which might be exercised by a king or an assembly, the shift in a subject's obligation from one holder of sovereignty to another would occur when the means of its life is within the Guards and Garrison of the Enemy—it being then rational to consent to obey the conqueror. Such calculations of interest had been a living issue for people such as the Earl of Devonshire, who had had to consider the parliamentary authorities for his estates. Sir George Cavendish had done the same in absentia for his estates in 1649, and would be persuaded by his brother and Sir Edward Hyde to return to England in 1651 to renegotiate for them. A decade later, Hobbes would explain that he had written Leviathan on behalf of "those many and faithful Servants and Subjects of His Majesty" who had been forced to compound for their lands. They had done so under an unstated endeavor to perform their obligation to the King, had done all that they could be obliged unto; and were consequently at liberty to seek the safety of their lives and livelihood elsewhere, and without Treachery. 89

It was reasonable of Hobbes to assume that this element of his argument would not cause intolerable offense among the courtiers of the young Charles II in Paris. Another aspect of the book that might reasonably be brought to the new king's attention was its attempt to analyze the nature of the false beliefs and harmful political practices—above all, those of organized religion—that Hobbes believed to have caused the destruction of Charles's father's kingdom. So it is not surprising that Hobbes actually presented a manuscript fair copy of the work to Charles II when the latter returned to Paris after his defeat at the Battle of Worcester in September 1651. Nor is it surprising that the theological arguments of the work, especially its ferocious attack on the Catholic Church, caused great offense to some of the English courtiers in exile, notably those who were close to the Catholic Queen Mother, Henrietta Maria. Hobbes was warned from the court; and not long afterwards, according to the reckoning of both Hobbes and Hyde, the French


A SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

Catholic clergy made an attempt to have him arrested. He fled from Paris in mid-December 1651 and soon thereafter crossed the Channel to England. 94

V

Hobbes settled in London, where he was able to make contact again with Sir Charles Cavendish, who had arrived there a couple of months earlier. Soon he was back in the employment of the Earl of Devonshire and had reverted to the old rhythm of life of a noble household, spending the summer months in Derbyshire and much of the rest of the year in London. His work for the Earl probably amounted to little more than some light secretarial duties and general intellectual companionship; otherwise his time was his own. He spent some of it in the stimulating company of the lawyers John Selden and John Vaughan, and the physicians William Harvey and Charles Scarborough. Scarborough, a mathematician as well as a medical man, held gatherings of scientists at his London house which Hobbes sometimes attended. Hobbes was also moving in the more orthodox and free-thinking circles of Thomas White (the Catholic philosopher whose De mundi he had refuted), John Davies (who published Hobbes's OfLiberty and Necessity in 1654 with a bitterly anti-clerical preface), and John Halis of Durham (the educational reformer and apostle of Crowne). It was probably in Davies's circle that Hobbes met Henry Stubbe, a young Oxford scholar and radical anti-clerical who began work—which he never completed—on a Latin translation of Leviathan.

The notoriety that Leviathan obtained for Hobbes was slow in coming. Early readers of the book were understandably startled by some of its theological contents, but there was no immediate outcry. A typical judgment was that of the moderate Anglican bishop of Salisbury, Brian Duppa, who wrote to a friend in July 1652: "as in the man, so there are strange mixtures in the book: many things said so well that I could embrace him for it, and many things so wildly and unchristianly, that I can scarce have so much charity for him, as to think he was ever Christian." That some of the theological arguments in Leviathan were phrased in such a way as to make them sound highly unorthodox is undeniable; Hobbes himself seems to have recognized this when he praised some of them (notably the passage in which

83 Ibid., p. 8 (UP IV, p. 450); Hyde, Brief View and Survey, pp. 8–9. See also the comments in Hobbes, Correspondence, II, Biographical Register, "James Butler, tenth Earl and first Duke of Ormonde" and "Charles IV.
85 Hobbes, Correspondence, II, Biographical Register, "Sir Charles Cavendish"
87 Hobbes, Correspondence, II, Biographical Register.
he appeared to make Moore a member of the Tindalians from his later Latin translation of the work. It is also true that his application of historical method—and causal-common sense—to biblical criticism had yielded some results, such as the denial of Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch, which were unacceptable to ordinary belief. But Hobbes was probably correct in thinking that his work would not have received the vast amount of subsequent denunciation he had not seen as threatening by a number of special-interest groups. Of these the most important were 'asceticalists' of various sorts—Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian—who saw that the basis of priestly or ministerial authority was undermined by Hobbes' arguments.

One particular interest group that Hobbes managed to offend was the universities. His attack on those institutions in Leviathan became suddenly topical when a proposal was made in the Barabroile Parliament in 1653 to abolish them altogether. 89 Two of the leading scientists at Oxford, Seth Ward and John Wilkins, published a defense of the universities in 1654 that included a fawning reply to Hobbes. Ward (who had previously been an admirer of Hobbes, regarding him as a fellow exponent of the mechanistic new science) also published a full-length attack on Hobbes' philosophy and theology. 90 The publication of Hobbes' De corpore, which contained a number of incoherent attempts at geometrical proofs, made Hobbes an easy target for another Oxford scientist, the mathematician John Wallis. Hobbes became embroiled in a sequence of polemical exchanges on mathematical subjects with Wallis that would last for nearly twenty years. The real animus behind this feud, however, was their disagreement over church politics, with Hobbes regarding Wallis as the chief representative of the Presbyterians.

Since Hobbes had, by the late 1650s, acquired the majority of these leading scientists, it is not surprising that there was some reluctance to enroll him in the Royal Society (as it later became) when it first met in 1660. But the basic reason for his exclusion was probably not just personal animosity; he had more personal friends than enemies among its membership, and there was no provision for black-balling in its elections of new fellows. Nor was he less of a scientist than many of the active members of that body. Although his mathematical work was sometimes incoherent, his major works on physics and optics, De corpore (1658) and De generation (1658), were comparable to similar work by other scientific writers who did become fellows of the Royal Society, and he continued to publish works on the explanation of natural phenomena, such as his Problems on physics (1665) and Deroxom

89 For the motion, see B. Shapiro, John Wilkins, 1614-72: An Intellectual Biography (Berkeley, Calif., 1964), p. 97.
90 W. White and S. Ward, Vindiciae academicae (Oxford, 1654), 8. Ward's attack was less ample than most others, however; he explicitly conceded (p. 141) that Hobbes was probably right.
91 A SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

physiologium (1675). The underlying problem seems to have been that the area of religious notoriety clinging to Hobbes meant that any public association with him would be a source of embarrassment to the active members of the Royal Society, given that his basic assumptions about a mechanistic physical universe were quite similar to their own. Many traditionalists still regarded such a view as leading inevitably to atheism; several key members of the Royal Society were highly sensitive to such criticism, and reacted in a pre-emptive and divestmentary way by directing fierce criticisms of their own against Hobbes. 91

Throughout the 1660s and 1670s Hobbes was frequently attacked, in print and from the pulpit, for his supposed atheism, denial of objective moral values, promotion of debauchery, and so on. 92 As its credence, this sort of criticism depended on a popular notion of 'Hobbesian' that had little to do with Hobbes' philosophical arguments and instead constituted a veiled attack on the libertinism of the Restoration court. Occasionally, however, there were more serious threats to investigate Hobbes' writings. In the early 1660s a lawyer was reported that some Anglican bishops were planning to have Hobbes tried for heresy, and in 1666 a House of Commons committee was empowered to "receive Information touching such books as tend to Atheisme, Blasphemy or Profaneseness or against the Evidence or Attributes of God. And in particular, the book of M. Hobbs called the Leviathan." 93 Hobbes responded to the first of these threats by composing a treatise on the law of heresy (demonstrating that people should not be burned for that offence) on one or other of these occasions he was sufficiently worried to conceal many of his own manuscripts to the flames. 94 In a number of writings during these final decades, Hobbes publicly defended himself against the criticisms of his conduct and beliefs. These defenses include a short autobiographical work, Mr. Hobbes Considered (1663); the dedicatory epistle to Problematum physica (also 1663); an appendix to the Latin translation of Leviathan (1668), in which he defended the work from charge of heresy; an angry public letter of complaint against libellous remarks inserted by the Oxford academic John Fell into a short biography of him published in 1674; an autobiography in Latin verse (1673); and, among his posthumously published works, a further defense of Leviathan against Bishop Bramhall (1682) and a polemical church history in Latin verse.

93 BL MS. Har. 3747, p. 229. For the earlier names, see Aubrey, 'Brief Lives', I, p. 357.
A SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

although Hobbes seems at first to have encouraged it183, Samuel Sibbald was not only a talented self-publicist but also an energetic publicizer of Hobbes's works; and it was through Sibbald's efforts that a collection of Hobbes's Latin writings, including a Latin translation of Leviathan made specially for it by Hobbes, was finally published by the Dutch printer Blau in 1668. This edition, together with frequent reprinting of De cive on the Continent, helped to transmit Hobbes's ideas to a wide range of readers, including Spinoza and Leibniz. The latter, indeed, was influenced more by Hobbes than by any other writer during his period of philosophical awakening late in the 1660s and early in the 1670s, and wrote to Hobbes to say so: 'I shall, God willing, always publicly declare that I know of no other writer who has philosophized so precisely, as clearly, and so elegantly as you have—to, not excepting Descartes with his superhuman intellect.'184

Hobbes died on 4 December 1679. He had been seriously ill since October and apparently suffered a severe stroke one week before his death. As the Earl of Devonshire's secretary wrote to the Oxford historian Anthony Wood, this prevented Hobbes from taking holy communion: "...as I am informed by my Lord's Chaplain (a worthy Gent) he has several times lately received the Sacrament of him... And I did once see him receive it and received it myself with him, and then he cooke it with seeming devotion, and in humble, and reverent posture."185 Hobbes was buried at the parish church of Haati Hucknall, near Hardwick Hall, under a tombstone with a modest inscription, apparently written by Hobbes himself: "He was a virtuous man, and for his reputation for learning he was well known at home and abroad."186 Romain had it that he had also considered a different inscription, one that would have reminded those who knew him of one of his personal qualities which is too seldom mentioned, but which no reader of his works can fail to discover: his splendid sense of humour. The proposed inscription was "This is the true philosopher's stone."

ADDITIONAL NOTES


183 Ibid., I, Letter 67, xiv, col. De Venitra also proposed a translation of De cive, which was not published, and a partial one of De cive, which was not published. II, Biographical Index, 'De Venitra'.


185 Ibid., I, Letter 264.


187 Aquinas, 'De fide', 1, p. 386.
these discourses desire, if not from Hobbes, then from someone (Cavendish) who was personally and intellectually very close to him, is more or less certain; that Hobbes may have contributed some ideas or arguments to them appears very probable; but that Hobbes himself was the author still seems to me quite doubful.

The dating of the composition of the 'Latin Optical MS' given here (see n. 50) was based on an argument about the date at which the surviving manuscript was copied (presented in Hobbes, Correspondence, I, pp. 85-89). Prompted by recent research by Dr Timothy Raylor, I have reconsidered the evidence, and now conclude that the manuscript was copied in Paris between December 1640 and, at the latest, April 1643 (or, more probably, August 1645). The composition of the work itself may perhaps be assigned to 1640 or 1642. See T. Raylor, 'The Date and Script of Hobbes's Latin Optical Manuscript', and my 'Hobbes, the Latin Optical Manuscript, and the Parian Slab', both in English Manuscripts Studies, ed. P. Beal and J. Griffith, 15 (2003) (forthcoming).

The 'audited manuscript by Hobbes' referred to in n. 71 is in fact a set of notes by Robert Payne on a draft of part of De corpore; see Chapter 4 below on 'Robert Payne, the Hobbes Manuscripts, and the "Short Tract"', esp. pp. 99-101.

Hobbes and Spinoza

1. Hobbes

When the Parliament sat, that began in April 1640, and was dissolved in May following, and in which many points of the regal power, which were necessary for the peace of the kingdom, and the safety of his Majesty's person, were disputed and denied, Mr Hobbes wrote a little tracts in English, wherein he did set forth and demonstate, that the said power and rights were inseparably annexed to the sovereignty, which sovereignty they did not then deny to be in the King; but it seemed understood not, or would not understand that inseparabity. Of this treatise, though not print, many gentlemen had copies, which occasioned much talk of the author and had not his Majesty dissolved the Parliament, it had brought him into danger of his life.1

Such was Hobbes's own account, written twenty-one years later, of the origins of his first work of political theory, The Elements of Law. Hobbes had himself been an unsuccessful candidate for election to the Short Parliament,2 so no doubt he followed its proceedings closely. The disputed 'points of the regal power' emerged most pointedly in John Pym's famous speech of 17 April, which asserted fundamental constitutional rights of Parliament against the Crown ('Parliament is as the soul of the common wealth', 'the intellectual part which Governs all the rest') and attacked 'the Doctrine that what property the subject hath in any thing may be lawfully taken away when the King requires it'. The latter point was taken up by Sir John Stangways on the following day: 'for if the King be judge of the necessities, we have nothing and are but Tenants at will'.3

The King dissolved this parliament on 5 May. Four days later Hobbes signed the dedicatory epistle of his treatise, which was addressed to his patron, the staunchly royalist Earl of Newcastle; he explained that the principles he was expounding were...