

# Studies in the History of Political Thought

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VOLUME 6

# Why Concepts Matter

Translating Social and Political Thought

*Edited by*

Martin J. Burke and Melvin Richter



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be published side-by-side in both languages. Once an edition of this kind becomes available, it may safely be predicted that there will be a revival of interest in this great political theorist, whose achievement has been obscured by the absence of an adequate bilingual and critical edition.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> While the preparation of just such a Bodin edition under my direction is already under way, potential readers may wish to examine an exemplary trilingual edition of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, ed. Raffaella Santi (Milan: Bompiani, 2001). The English text is on the left-hand side of the page, while the Italian translation is on the right, and the Latin is at the bottom of the page in lieu of footnotes.

## TRANSLATION AS CORRECTION: HOBBS IN THE 1660S AND 1670S<sup>1</sup>

Eric Nelson

### I

In August of 1658 the philosopher and physician Samuel Sorbière wrote to urge Hobbes to introduce his *Leviathan* to "the groves of Latium"—in other words, to translate the work into Latin.<sup>2</sup> Sorbière, who had himself translated Hobbes's *De cive* into French a decade earlier, would, as it turned out, have to wait a further ten years before Hobbes finally acceded to his request. The eventual occasion was the projected release of a collected edition of Hobbes's Latin works by the Amsterdam publisher Johan Blaeu. Sorbière took it upon himself to act as Hobbes's agent with the press, and in January 1664 reported to Hobbes that "M. Blaeu tells me in a letter that he will start printing your works this month."<sup>3</sup> In July of that same year, however, Sorbière again wrote to Hobbes, this time imploring him "to add your *Leviathan*" to the collection. "You should make a Latin translation of it," he wrote, "or at least allow him [Blaeu] to have one made by that learned man who has translated many of Lord Chancellor Bacon's works" (the Dutch scholar Isaac Gruter).<sup>4</sup> Hobbes at long last accepted Sorbière's advice and began to prepare the text himself. The project evidently took him a considerable amount of time. In December 1667, three full years after Sorbière's letter, Blaeu's son Pieter wrote to Hobbes expressing relief that he had at long last "completed two-thirds of that book (you know which), and that you are working on it for two hours every day, and hoping to finish it, with, God's help, by Easter."<sup>5</sup> Hobbes seems to have met this last deadline, and his *Opera philosophica quae*

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to James Hankins, Kinch Hoekstra, Noel Malcolm, Quentin Skinner, and Richard Tuck for many helpful comments on material that appears in this essay. I am also indebted to my co-panelist Julian Franklin, and to numerous participants in the workshop conference, for an engaging discussion of its themes.

<sup>2</sup> *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 499.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 586.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 619.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 695.

*latine scripsit omnia* was finally released in 1668, complete with a new Latin version of his English masterpiece.

The Latin *Leviathan* has long been of special interest to scholars, chiefly because it was the medium through which important continental philosophers—such as Spinoza and Leibniz—were introduced to Hobbes's fully developed civil science.<sup>6</sup> But while scholars have been unanimous in their high regard for the text's significance, they have been less certain of exactly what sort of text it is. In particular, it has become commonplace to suggest that the Latin *Leviathan* is not, properly speaking, a translation at all. A number of different arguments have been advanced in support of this view, the most sweeping of which was first offered by Zbigniew Lubiński almost seventy-five years ago, and has more recently been defended at length by François Tricaud.<sup>7</sup> Tricaud argues that a close analysis of the Latin text reveals that it was written (for the most part) before the English edition of 1651. The general pattern, he notes, is for the Latin to contain a shorter, more compact version of paragraphs present in the English text, indicating, on his account, that the latter was an elaboration of the former.<sup>8</sup> He also argues that several passages in the Latin version contain chronological statements which make no sense given the conditions of 1668, but which make abundant sense given the circumstances of the 1640s.<sup>9</sup> The implications of this hypothesis, if correct, would be quite significant: we would have to become accustomed to viewing the English *Leviathan* as a later version of a Latin original, rather than the other way around.

As it happens, however, there is no compelling reason to accept Tricaud's analysis. The fact that the Latin text is generally more compact than the English tells us absolutely nothing about the question of priority.<sup>10</sup> The English could be an elaborated version of the original Latin, or the

Latin could be a condensed version of the original English. So the entire burden falls squarely on the small number of passages in the Latin text which, according to Tricaud, situate it in the 1640s rather than the 1660s. But here again the argument is unpersuasive. Of the four passages he identifies, not one of them includes a 1640s chronological reference that is not itself present in the 1651 English text—making it entirely possible that Hobbes was simply translating his own English in 1668. Indeed, one of Tricaud's examples seems to point unmistakably in this direction. In chapter 18 of the English *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes that, but for false opinions concerning the possibility of a divided sovereignty, "the people had never fallen into this Civill Warre . . . which [has] so instructed men in this point of Sovereign Right that there be few now (in England) that do not see, that these Rights are inseparable, and will be so generally acknowledged, at the next return of Peace."<sup>11</sup> Tricaud makes much of the fact that, in the Latin version, Hobbes likewise writes of how full sovereign prerogatives will "be publicly recognized as soon as peace has returned" (*et publice agniture sint, simul atque redierit pax*)—a clear reference to an ongoing war which had, of course, ended eight years before the release of the Latin version.<sup>12</sup> Yet since, as we have just seen, precisely the same phrase appears in the English text, no conclusion can be drawn as to which came first. What is revealing, in contrast, is the reference to "this civil war" in the previous sentence of the English version; in the Latin, Hobbes writes instead of the civil war "which followed" (*quod sequutum est*), which might well be regarded as a concession to the changed political reality of the late 1660s.<sup>13</sup> All of these observations—together with the fact that nothing in Hobbes's correspondence or biographical writings suggests the existence of an early Latin manuscript—should cause us strongly to doubt Tricaud's hypothesis.

But Tricaud's conjecture has not by any means been the only, or even the dominant reason scholars have offered for their view that the Latin *Leviathan* is not really a translation. They have focused, rather, on the indisputable fact that it is a very different text from its English counterpart. It is, according to a representative statement by A.P. Martinich, "the

<sup>6</sup> Spinoza did, however, know Hobbes's *De cive* (1642) long before composing the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670); moreover, although he did not read English—and therefore could not have read *Leviathan* in the original—he was close friends with the man who translated it into Dutch (1665–7). So it is quite possible that he was familiar with the arguments of *Leviathan* before he read the Latin version (1668). See Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2002), 47, 390–2.

<sup>7</sup> Zbigniew Lubiński, *Die Grundlagen des ethisch-politischen Systems von Hobbes* (Munich, 1932); Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. and trans. François Tricaud (Paris, 1971). For another endorsement, see F.C. Hood, *The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes: an Interpretation of Leviathan* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1964).

<sup>8</sup> Tricaud, xxii.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv.

<sup>10</sup> Tricaud concedes this point (xxiii).

<sup>11</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck, rev. ed. (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1996), 127.

<sup>12</sup> Quotations from the Latin *Leviathan* are taken from Hobbes, *Opera philosophica quae latine scripsit omnia*, ed. William Molesworth, vol. 3 (London, 1841).

<sup>13</sup> One could, of course, claim that Hobbes altered this detail while preparing his early Latin manuscript for publication twenty years later—but one cannot treat both correct and incorrect chronological details as evidence of early composition.

fourth version of [Hobbes's] political theory," alongside *The Elements of Law, De cive*, and the English *Leviathan*.<sup>14</sup> In this Martinich is certainly correct. There are entire sections of the Latin text which do not appear in the English, and vice versa.<sup>15</sup> The most substantial of these is the lengthy appendix to the Latin which, like a series of other texts Hobbes composed in the 1660s, aims to answer charges of heresy that had been brought against him. But that is by no means where the differences end. There is also a large set of cases in which Hobbes chose to excise material from the English version in a clear attempt to mute its religious heterodoxy. A paragraph from chapter 41 of the English, for example, claims that "Our Saviour... both in Teaching and Reigning, representeth (as Moses did) the Person of God; which God from that time forward, but not before, is called the Father; and being still one and the same substance, is one Person as represented by Moses, and another Person as represented by his Sonne the Christ."<sup>16</sup> This passage, which seems to incorporate Moses into the Trinity—or at the very least to suggest that Moses bore the person of God in precisely the same manner as Jesus—is completely absent from the Latin, as is a similar passage from chapter 16.<sup>17</sup> Also eliminated is a massive section of chapter 47, sharply criticized by Clarendon,<sup>18</sup> in which Hobbes had warmly greeted the demise of episcopacy and presbyterianism in Interregnum England, and its replacement with "the Independency of the Primitive Christians."<sup>19</sup> In its stead, Hobbes included in the Latin version a lengthy summation welcoming the Restoration of the realm's "legitimate king."<sup>20</sup>

All of these excisions reflect Hobbes's deep anxiety over his safety during the 1660s, a period in which Parliament's Atheism Bill (which had been written with Hobbes specifically in mind) was under intermittent consid-

<sup>14</sup> A.P. Martinich, *Hobbes: A Biography* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1999), 352.

<sup>15</sup> The study of the relationship between the English and Latin versions will shortly be revolutionized by the appearance of Noel Malcolm's bilingual edition of *Leviathan* (forthcoming from The Clarendon Press, Oxford).

<sup>16</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 338.

<sup>17</sup> See Hobbes, *Opera*, 357. The relevant passage from chap. 16 reads as follows: "The true God may be Personated. As he was; first, by *Moses*; who governed the Israelites, (that were not his, but Gods people,) not in his own name, with *Hoc dicit Moses*; but in Gods Name, with *Hoc dicit Dominus*. Secondly, by the Son of man, his own Son, our Blessed Saviour *Jesus Christ*..." (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 114).

<sup>18</sup> See Edward Hyde, *Brief View*, 308–9.

<sup>19</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 479. For the significance of this passage, see Jeffrey Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2005).

<sup>20</sup> Hobbes, *Opera*, 509.

eration. But they were by no means the only sorts of textual changes that Hobbes incorporated into the Latin *Leviathan*. There were, in addition, numerous shifts in emphasis and argument designed to tighten his prose and answer objections. For instance, one prominent complaint about the English *Leviathan* had concerned the historicity of the state of nature. François Peleau, one of Hobbes's correspondents, had reported back to Hobbes in November 1656 that "I am being hounded with syllogisms designed to prove to me that the state of nature in the strict sense (such as you show it to be in your Politics) has never existed in the world."<sup>21</sup> Hobbes replied to this query (or others like it) by making a substantial modification to a key passage in chapter 13 ("Of the Natural Condition of Mankind"). In the English version, Hobbes had observed that "it may peradventure be thought, there was never such a time, nor condition of warre as this [i.e. the war of all against all in the state of nature]; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world."<sup>22</sup> By 1668, however, Hobbes had clearly come to regret the concession, and, in the Latin version, replaced it with the following passage: "But someone may say: there has never been a war of all against all. What! Did not Cain out of envy kill his brother Abel, a crime so great he would not have dared it if there had at that time been a common power which could have punished him?"<sup>23</sup> Scholars have observed that this is a surprising claim, since Cain was evidently living under a power capable of punishing him—namely God, who promptly did so.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, this may well have been the passage Leibniz had in mind two years later when he wrote in a letter to Hobbes that "given the existence of a ruler of the world, men cannot live in a pure state of nature outside all republics, since God is the common monarch of all men."<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, this is a clear case in which Hobbes significantly departed from the English text to strengthen his case in the Latin.

Hobbes also clearly came to feel that he had let slip some indiscreet comments on the subject of monarchy in the English *Leviathan*, which he wished to withdraw in the Latin. The most substantial of these was

<sup>21</sup> Hobbes, *Correspondence*, 331.

<sup>22</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 89.

<sup>23</sup> Hobbes, *Opera*, vol. 3, 101. "Sed omnium in omnes, inquiet allegia, bellum naturam erat. Quid, nonne fratrem suum Abelum invidia interfecit Cain, tantum REX non tantum erat, et communis potentia, quae vindicare potuisset, tunc extitisset?"

<sup>24</sup> See Richard Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1999), pp. 137–8; and Helen Thornton, "Cain, Abel, and Thomas Hobbes" in *History of Political Thought* 23 (2002): 611–99.

<sup>25</sup> Hobbes, *Correspondence*, 717.

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the "Review, and Conclusion" of the English text, in which Hobbes had notoriously advocated "engagement" and obedience to the Parliamentary regime, provoking outrage and charges of opportunism from his former royalist allies. Hobbes's decision to eliminate this discussion from the Latin version was a matter of simple prudence in the face of the Restoration. But the translation also provided him with a welcome opportunity to alter and refine specific arguments about monarchy that he had offered in the English version. In chapter 19, for example, the English records that "in Monarchy there is this inconvenience; that any Subject, by the power of one man, for the enriching of a favourite or flatterer, may be deprived of all he possesseth; which I confesse is a great and inevitable inconvenience."<sup>26</sup> The notion that such cruel expropriation was an "inevitable" feature of monarchy was evidently one that Hobbes very much wanted to dispel in 1668. In the Latin version, he accordingly replaced this passage with the following observation: "in monarchy there is this inconvenience: that the monarch, to enrich some friend, can deprive a good citizen of all his property; nevertheless, we do not read that this has ever been done."<sup>27</sup>

A similar instance occurs in chapter 35, entitled "Of the Signification of the Kingdom of God." In the English version, Hobbes attempts to show that the phrase "kingdom of God" refers in the Bible, not to the world to come, but rather to the commonwealth of the Hebrews, "wherein God was king" (274).<sup>28</sup> He defends this claim with a three-paragraph discussion of a key passage in 1 Samuel: "when the Elders of Israel . . . demanded a King, Samuel displeas'd therewith, prayed unto the Lord; and the Lord answering said unto him, *Hearken unto the voice of the People, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.* Out of which it is evident that God himself was then their King."<sup>29</sup> Later on, Hobbes adds that the prophets foretold the restoration of God's kingdom. He characterizes God's promise as follows: "I will reign over you, and make you to stand to that Covenant which you made with me by Moses, and brake in your rebellion against me in the days of Samuel, and in your election of another King." In short, Hobbes defends his claim that "the kingdom of God" refers to God's civil sovereignty over Israel by reading

<sup>26</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 121.

<sup>27</sup> Hobbes, *Opera*, vol. 3, 144. "in monarchia Incommodum quidem est, ut possit monarcha ad ditandum amicum aliquem fortunâ omnibus bonum civein, quod tamen nunquam factum legimus, spoliare."

<sup>28</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 283.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

I Sam. 8:7 to mean that, when the Israelites asked for a mortal king, they were in fact deposing God as their temporal ruler.

By the time he came to write the Latin *Leviathan*, however, Hobbes had clearly come to regret this entire line of argument. It was, he now realized, disconcertingly similar to the anti-monarchical argument advanced John Milton and other republican authors in the 1650s. Writing in the *Pro populo anglicano defensio* of 1651, Milton had glossed the same Biblical passage as follows:

God indeed gives evidence throughout of his great displeasure at their [the Israelites'] request for a king—thus in [1 Sam. 8] verse 7: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them, according to all the works which they have done wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods." The meaning clearly is that it is a form of idolatry to ask for a king, who demands that he be worshipped and granted honors like those of a god. Indeed he who sets an earthly master over him and above all the laws is near to establishing a strange god for himself, one seldom reasonable, usually a brute beast who has scattered reason to the winds. Thus in 1 Samuel 10:9 we read: "And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulation, and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us" . . . just as if he had been teaching them that it was not for any man, but for God alone, to rule over men.<sup>30</sup>

In this new and deeply radical exegesis, Milton argued that, in asking for a mortal king, the Israelites had committed the sin of idolatry—they had chosen to bow down to a flesh and blood man, rather than to God.<sup>31</sup> He restated this position in *The readie and easie way* (1659), arguing that "God in much displeasure gave a king to the Israelites, and imputed it a sin to

<sup>30</sup> "Passim enim testatur Deus valde sibi displicuisse quod regem petissent. ver. 7. *Non te sed me spreverunt ne regnem super ispos, secundum illa facta quibus dereliquerunt me & coluerunt Deos alienos:* ac si species quaedam idololatriae videretur regem petere, qui adorari, & honores prope divinos tribui sibi postulat. Sane qui supra omnes leges terrenum sibi dominum imponit, prope est ut sibi Deum statuat alienum; Deum utique haud saepe rationabilem, sed profligata saepius ratione brutum & belluinum. Sic I Sam. 10.19. *Vos sprevistis Deum vestrum qui ipse servat vos ab omnibus malis, & angustiis vestris, cum dixistis ei, regem praeponens nobis . . . plane ac si simul docuisset, non hominis esse dominari in homines, sed solius Dei*" (Milton, *Pro populo anglicano defensio* (London, 1651), 66–7). The English translation is taken from *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, vol. 4, Don Wolfe, ed., Donald Mackenzie, trans. (New Haven, 1966), 369–70.

<sup>31</sup> For Milton's derivation of this revolutionary argument from rabbinic sources, and Hobbes's reaction to it, see Eric Nelson, "Talmudical Commonwealthsmen' and the Rise of Republican Exclusivism" in *The Historical Journal* 50 (2007), 809–835; cf. Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 23–56.

them that they sought one."<sup>32</sup> Human kingship, on this account, is a sinful usurpation of God's throne. He alone is "our true and rightfull and only to be expected King, only worthy as he is our only Saviour, the Messiah, the Christ, the only heir of his father."<sup>33</sup>

It was precisely because Hobbes's reading seemed to flirt so dangerously with this revolutionary position that chapter thirty of *Leviathan* drew such intense criticism from royalists. Robert Filmer, for example, attacked Hobbes's analysis directly in his 1652 *Observations Concerning the Originall of Government*: "I do not find," he observed, "that the desiring of a king was a breach of their contract or covenant, or disobedience to the voice of God. There is no such law extant."<sup>34</sup> Clarendon was even more insistent in his review of the English *Leviathan*: "We are not oblig'd," he wrote, "nor indeed have any reason to believe, that God was offended with the Children of Israel for desiring a King, which was a Government himself had instituted over them."<sup>35</sup> Hobbes evidently came to appreciate the danger of this bit of Biblical criticism, and cut the entire discussion from the Latin text.<sup>36</sup>

All of these examples, and dozens more like them, make clear that the Latin *Leviathan* is not what we today would consider a translation. It includes a great deal of material that is not present in its English counterpart, and deletes an equally substantial amount of material that is. Hobbes's mission was one of correction; he took the opportunity provided by the publication of his Latin works to strengthen the case he had laid out in 1651. Accordingly, he excised erroneous statements, or statements

<sup>32</sup> *Complete Prose*, vol. 7, 360-1.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Filmer, 'Observations concerning the originall of government' in *Patriarcha and other writings*, Johann Sommerville, ed. (Cambridge, 1991), 196.

<sup>35</sup> Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon, *A brief view and survey of the dangerous and pernicious errors to church and state, in Mr. Hobbes's book, entitled Leviathan* (Oxford, 1676), 74.

<sup>36</sup> Hobbes, *Opera*, 294-8. Hobbes cuts similar material from chap. 38, where the English version records that God was king in Israel "till in the days of Samuel they rebelled, and would have a mortall man for their King, after the manner of other Nations" (Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 309; *Opera omnia*, vol. 3, 329), and where it has "in the time before the Jews had deposed God" (Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 314; *Opera omnia*, vol. 3, 324). He also tellingly alters a passage in chap. 36: where the English version has "after the people of the Jews, had rejected God, that he should not reign over them," the Latin substitutes the vague phrase "after the Israelites had relieved themselves of the divine yoke" (*postquam autem jugum Dei excusserant Israelitae*) (Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 294; *Opera omnia*, vol. 3, 306). Hobbes did not, however, remove all traces of this earlier reading. See, for example, *Opera omnia*, vol. 3, 95.

which he now feared would tend to promote rebellion, and reformulated many of his key arguments to make them more persuasive. But, assuming we can agree that the Latin *Leviathan* does not fall under our definition of a translation, the next question to ask is whether Hobbes himself regarded it as a translation. When he was composing the Latin *Leviathan*, did he think he was engaged in the act of translation, or in a project of some other kind? As it happens, this is a question we can answer in Hobbes's case because of the presence of a control in the experiment. Soon after he finished the Latin *Leviathan*, Hobbes embarked upon the longest single literary project of his lifetime: a complete English translation of the Homeric poems. This massive work, which Hobbes completed only three years before his death, gives us a perfect point of comparison: a text which Hobbes certainly considered to be a translation, undertaken at precisely the same stage of life. An examination of this text yields the startling conclusion that Hobbes's practice as a translator in *The Iliads and Odysseys of Homer* was identical in all important respects to his practice in the Latin *Leviathan*. His aim was, once again, to correct his source: to remove its indiscretions and ensure that it taught the essential moral value of obedience to sovereigns. It is to that later project that I now want to turn.<sup>37</sup>

## II

For Hobbes, the chief virtue of an epic poem, or indeed of any sort of discourse, was "discretion"—an understanding on the part of the individual of what is appropriate for different "times, places, and persons" together with "an often application of his thoughts to their End; that is to say, to some use to be made of them."<sup>38</sup> In the case of epic poetry, the aim was didactic: "by imitating humane life, in delightfull and measur'd lines, to avert men from vice, and encline them to virtuous and honorable actions."<sup>39</sup> Poetry, in short, should teach moral virtue. Given this understanding, it should not surprise us that Hobbes regarded Homer as a very dangerous author. The great bard had, first of all, posed as a conduit for divine revelation, anxious

<sup>37</sup> My analysis of the Homer translations is drawn largely from the General Introduction to my recent edition of the text. See Eric Nelson, ed., *Thomas Hobbes: Translations of Homer*, 2 vols., The Clarendon Edition of the Works of Thomas Hobbes (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2008), vol. 1, xii-xci.

<sup>38</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 51.

<sup>39</sup> Hobbes, "Answer to Sir William D'Avenant's Preface Before *Gondibert*" in Sir William Davenant, *Gondibert*, ed. David F. Gladish (Oxford: O.U.P., 1971), 45.

to have his poems "passe for the word of God, and not of man; and to be hearkened to with reverence."<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Homer had not been familiar with the true principles of moral philosophy, and accordingly had littered his poems with numerous statements undermining the obedience of subjects to their sovereigns.<sup>41</sup> Homer's sixteenth and seventeenth-century interpreters had then gravely compounded these indiscretions, fashioning a Renaissance-Homer who had himself become a rival Sovereign, teaching a corrupt civil science to his unwitting subjects. Hobbes saw it as his task to undo this damage, to tame the Homeric poems and make them safe for philosophy. In pursuit of this object, Hobbes routinely departed from Homer's Greek and from previously published translations and commentaries in order to bring the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into alignment with his views on politics, rhetoric, aesthetics, and theology. The translations therefore constitute a revealing window onto the philosophy of the late Hobbes—but they are no more or less translations than the Latin *Leviathan*.<sup>42</sup>

Take, for example, the subject of rhetoric. Hobbes had long held that rhetoric was inherently perverse because of its fundamental indifference to the truth and its long record of inflaming passions and encouraging rebellion. Accordingly, since the role of poetry was, in Hobbes's view, to teach moral virtue, any praise of rhetoric appearing in an epic poem would violate the cardinal principle of "discretion"—that is, the appropriate tailoring of all elements of the text to its end, the inculcation of virtue. Hobbes therefore takes square aim at those passages of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Hobbes argued repeatedly that he himself had been the first to discover the true principle of moral philosophy. As he put it in *Leviathan*, "neither Plato, nor any other Philosopher hitherto, hath put into order, and sufficiently or probably, proved all the Theoremes of Morall doctrine, that men may learn thereby, both how to govern, and how to obey" (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 194).

<sup>42</sup> The literature on Hobbes's Homer translations consists of no more than five published articles. See Jerry Ball, "The Despised Version: Hobbes's Translation of Homer in Restoration" 20 (1996): 1–17; Paul Davis, "Thomas Hobbes's Translations of Homer: Epic and Anticlericalism in Late Seventeenth-Century England" in *Seventeenth Century* 12 (1997): 231–55; Eleni and Ion Kontiados, "O Thomas Hobbes ως μεταφραστής του Ομήρου" in *Parnassos* 8 (1966): 277–99; A.P. Martinich, "Hobbes's Translations of Homer and Anticlericalism" (a reply to Davis) in *Seventeenth Century* 16 (2001): 147–57; and G.B. Riddehough, "Thomas Hobbes' Translations of Homer" in *The Phoenix* 12 (1958): 58–62. Davis also has a fine chapter on Hobbes's Homer in his unpublished doctoral dissertation, to which I am greatly indebted: Paul Davis, "The 'Imaginary Resistance' of Dryden's Virgil," Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 1996), 33–85; and Luc Borot has printed a critical edition of Hobbes's prefatory essay to the translations: see Borot, "The Pontics of Thomas Hobbes by Himself: An Edition of his Preface to his Translations of Homer" in *Cahiers Elzevirianus* 60 (2001): 67–82.

which had served for centuries to underwrite the image of *Homerus Orator*, Homer the teacher of rhetoric. In Book Ten of the *Institutio oratoria*, the most widely read handbook of classical rhetoric, Quintilian declares Homer to be "the model and origin of every department of eloquence" (*omnibus eloquentiae partibus exemplum et ortum dedit*) and "supreme not only in poetic but in rhetorical excellence."<sup>43</sup> The most prominent locus of rhetorical training in the Homeric poems is, for him, "book nine [of the *Iliad*], containing the embassy of Achilles" which exhibits "all the arts of forensic and deliberative rhetoric."<sup>44</sup> At this point in the story, Achilles has decided to boycott the Greek offensive in response to Agamemnon's provocations, and Odysseus and Phoenix are dispatched to change his mind. Phoenix, Achilles's former tutor, appeals to their shared past:

Peleus the aged horseman sent me forth with you on that day when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon a mere child, who knew nothing of yet of the joining of battle nor of debate where men are made preeminent. Therefore he sent me along with you to teach you all of these matters, to make you a maker of speeches and a doer of deeds (*Il. IX. 438–444*).<sup>45</sup>

The diptych in this passage could hardly be more pronounced: men win glory in war (*πόλεμος*) and while debating in the assembly (*ἀγορέων*); accordingly, Phoenix's mission was to teach Achilles to be a "maker of speeches" (*μύθων ῥητῆρ*) and a 'doer of deeds' (*πρηκτῆρά ἔργων*).

Even in antiquity this passage had already become a *locus classicus* for the tradition of viewing Homer as a teacher of the rhetorical arts, and it remained so throughout the Renaissance. Homer's sixteenth and seventeenth-century translators were, accordingly, quick to emphasize this theme when rendering Phoenix's remarks. Hugh Salel, for one, has Phoenix say in his French translation that he was sent to make Achilles

<sup>43</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 10.1.47. "Hic enim . . . omnibus eloquentiae partibus exemplum et ortum dedit." See Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> "nonne vel nonus liber, quo missa ad Achillem legatio continentur [and the debate scene in Book II] sententiae omnis litium atque consiliorum explicant artes?"

<sup>45</sup> "σὸ δὲ μ' ἔπεμπε γέρον ἱππιάτα Πηλεὺς / ἤματι τῷ ὅτε σ' ἐκ φθίης Ἀγαμέμνωνι πέμπε / νήπιον, οὗ πῶ εἰδὼς ἄριστον πολέμοιο, / οὐδ' ἀγορέων, ἵνα τ' ἀνδρες ἀριπρεπέες τελέθουσι, / τοῦνεκα με προέργε διδασκόμεναι τὰδε πάντα, / μύθων τε ῥητῆρ' ἔμεναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων." English texts from the *Iliad* not attributed to early-modern authors are taken from *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). Occasionally (as in this case) I have modified Lattimore's translations; where this is done, it is duly noted.

an "Orateur parfait." Against this backdrop, Hobbes's rendition is truly remarkable:

When you to Agamemnon first were sent,  
You were a child, and understood not war,  
Unable to say clearly what you meant,  
Which the first principles of honour are.  
And by your father I was with you sent,  
To show you how you were to speak and do.<sup>46</sup>

Hobbes has jettisoned the Greek text and two centuries of exegesis in order to replace Homer's perfect orator with his own discreet hero; the educated man is to be taught not the tropes of rhetoric, but rather "to say clearly what you mean." Recall that this was Hobbes's position as far back as *De cive*. Rhetoric was, for Hobbes, the degenerate practice of making "good and evil, profitable and unprofitable, honest and dishonest, appear to be more or less than indeed they are."<sup>47</sup> It was to be contrasted with the true art of discourse, the only aim of which is to provide "an elegant and clear expression of the conceptions of the mind."<sup>48</sup> The latter is indeed "the first principle of honour."

Hobbes intervenes in this manner whenever Homer's reverence for the rhetorical arts is on display. In Book III of the *Odyssey*, for example, Nestor recognizes Telemachus as Odysseus's son because of his rhetorical skill: "I look at you and a sense of wonder takes me./ Your way with oratory [μῦθος]—it's just like his—I'd swear/ no young man could ever speak like you [ἐοικότα μυθήσασθαι]" (*Od.* III. 124–5).<sup>49</sup> George Chapman's version moves in the predictable direction: "Your speech puts on his speeche's ornament,/ Nor would one say that one so young could use/ (Unlesse his son) a Rhetorique so profuse."<sup>50</sup> John Ogilby, whose edition of the poem came out in 1665, writes similarly that "Thou look'st so like and speak'st so like thy Sire./ Nor need thy Blushes thee excuse as young,/ Who hast his

<sup>46</sup> My italics. All quotations from Hobbes's Homer are taken from Nelson, ed., *Thomas Hobbes: Translations of Homer*. This passage appears on vol. 2, 72.

<sup>47</sup> I have taken the translation of Hobbes's Latin from Charles Cotton's English edition of 1651, reprinted in Hobbes, *Man and Citizen (De Homine and De Cive)*, ed. Bernard Gert (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), 231. For Cotton's authorship of this version (published under the title *Philosophicall Rudiments concerning Government and Society*), see Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2002), 234–58.

<sup>48</sup> Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*, p. 253.

<sup>49</sup> "ἢ τοι γὰρ μῦθοι γε ἐοικότες, οὐδὲ κεν φαίης/ ἄνδρα νεώτερον ὡς ἐοικότα μυθήσασθαι." I have modified Fagles's translation here.

<sup>50</sup> *Chapman's Homer*, ed. Allardyce Nicoll, 2 vols. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956) 2: 47.

Eloquence and Silver Tongue."<sup>51</sup> Hobbes's Nestor, on the other hand, says nothing about the "ornaments" of speech or "silver tongues"; he simply tells Telemachus that "hearing you speak your mind,/ And steadfastly your person looking on,/ Much respect for you in myself I find."<sup>52</sup> Once again, the great virtue is to "speak one's mind," to "say clearly what one means." An even more notable instance occurs in Book VIII of the *Odyssey*. Here Odysseus has just been taunted by an ill-mannered Phoenician, and he replies with forceful disdain:

... You do not speak nicely, my friend.  
You, you're a reckless fool—I see *that*. So,  
the gods don't hand out all their gifts at once,  
not build and brains and flowing speech to all.  
One man may fail to impress us with his looks  
but a god can crown his words with beauty, charm,  
and men look on with delight when he speaks out.  
Never faltering, filled with winning self-control,  
he shines forth in the assembly and people gaze  
at him like a god when he walks through the streets  
(*Od.* VIII. 166–73).<sup>53</sup>

This, again, is the standard Homeric vision: the virtue of a man is found in physical prowess and in eloquence. In addition to martial valour, there is the "flowing speech" (ἀγορητύν) that shines forth in the assembly (ἀγορεύει). The word translated here as "flowing speech" is, in fact, cognate with the word "assembly"; that is, it refers to eloquence in public deliberation. Indeed, Chapman's version has Odysseus say that it is "pleasing speech" which makes men "shine/ in an assembly with a grace divine,"<sup>54</sup> and Ogilby likewise records that lackluster "outward parts" are compensated for by "Eloquence and nobler Arts." Hobbes, unsurprisingly, will have none of this:

<sup>51</sup> John Ogilby, *Homer, his Odysseys* (London, 1665), p. 29. Here the *versio latina* is more subdued. Stephanus, for example, has: 'Siquidem tu vere/ Ilius filius es admiratio mihi tenet aspicientem./ Profecto enim sermones similes, neque tu diceres/ Virum Juniores, usque aetate similis loqui.' See *Homeri Odyssea, Cum interpretatione Lat. ad verbum* (Amsterdam, 1650), 59.

<sup>52</sup> Hobbes, *Translations of Homer*, vol. 2, 32.

<sup>53</sup> "Ξεῖν', οὐ καλὸν κείπεις. ἀτασθαλίῳ ἀνδρὶ ἔοικας./ οὕτως οὐ πάντασι θεοὶ χαρίοντα θεῖοισιν/ ἀνδράσιν, οὐτε φῆγν οὐτ' ἔρ φρένας οὐτ' ἀγορητύν./ ἄλλος μὲν γὰρ εἶδος ἀκιδυότερος πάλαι ἀνὴρ,/ ἀλλὰ θεὸς μορφὴν ἔπεισι στέφει, οἱ δὲ τ' ἐς αὐτὸν/ τερόμενοι λείσσοουσιν. ὃ δ' ἀσφαλδῶς ἀγορεύει/ αἰδοὶ μείλιχ' ἢ, μετὰ δὲ πρόπει ἀγορομένοισιν./ ἐρχόμενον δ' ἀνά ἄστου θεόν ὡς εἰσπρόσωιν." I have modified Fagles's translation here.

<sup>54</sup> *Chapman's Homer*, vol. 2, 136.



My friend, such words are *indiscreet* and ill.  
The Gods the gifts as they see fit divide.  
To one, of beauty they deny the grace,  
But give him language steady and discreet,  
Whereby he honour'd is i' the public place,  
And men gaze on him going in the street.<sup>55</sup>

Hobbes has turned this passage into a meditation on the central virtue of epic poetry, "discretion." Where Homer had "flowing speech" crowned with "beauty" (μορφή) and uttered by a "godlike" man, Hobbes has "language steady and discreet" (a contrast with the "indiscreet" author of the taunt), and completely elides the thought that the orator is like a god. Once again, discretion replaces rhetoric in Hobbes's epic, and his Alcinous ends the episode by declaring that Odysseus's virtue could only be derided by "those that nothing say discreetly can."<sup>56</sup>

An interesting corollary to this rule is that Hobbes takes evident delight in accentuating the failures of public debate—that is, revealing the perversity of rhetoric. This pattern emerges clearly from his treatment of the frequent "council" scenes in the poems. In Book VIII, for example, the bard Demodocus recounts the response of the Trojans to the arrival of the Trojan Horse: "Now it stood there looming/ and round its bulk the Trojans sat debating/ clashing [ἄκριτα πόλλ' ἀγόρευον]" (*Od.* VIII. 505–6).<sup>57</sup> Chapman translates the verse straightforwardly: "where sate all arew/ Their Kings about it, many counsels given/ How to dispose of it."<sup>58</sup> Ogilby likewise writes simply that the Trojans "consulted" on what to do next.<sup>59</sup> Hobbes, however, adds a line of his own:

The Trojans sitting round about debate,  
And many a foolish speech they uttered,  
And on three points they there deliberate,  
And voted what the Gods determined.<sup>60</sup>

There is nothing at all in the Greek or in previous translations about "foolish speeches" or "voting." Hobbes has imported these ideas in order to render deliberation and public decision-making ridiculous. The Trojans,

<sup>55</sup> My italics. Hobbes, *Translations of Homer*, vol. 2, 100.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>57</sup> ὣς ὁ μὲν ἐστήκει, τοὶ δ' ἄκριτα πόλλ' ἀγόρευον/ ἡμεῖνοι ἄμφ' αὐτόν. I have modified Fagles's translation here.

<sup>58</sup> *Chapman's Homer*, vol. 2, 146.

<sup>59</sup> Ogilby, *Homer his Odysseys*, 110. Stephannus is consistent here (see *Homeri Odyssea*, 220).

<sup>60</sup> My italics. Hobbes, *Translations of Homer*, vol. 2, 109.

after all, decide to bring the horse into the city walls, thus sealing their doom. Once again, rhetoric is shown to be a colossal failure.

The issue of rhetoric is, then, a dominant concern for Hobbes, but his translations are equally committed to a rehabilitation of the Homeric heroes. His view, once again, is that poetry should teach virtue, and that, as a result, its heroes should function as moral exemplars. Achilles was notorious for his indiscretion, but it is, unsurprisingly, the figure of Agamemnon who receives the bulk of Hobbes's attention. The French Jesuit René Rapin spoke for many scholars when he complained that Agamemnon behaves "with much pride and impiety" (*beaucoup d'orgueil & d'impiété*) in the *Iliad*.<sup>61</sup> Hobbes could not, of course, rescue Agamemnon completely without altering the course of the plot (if Agamemnon did not take Briseis away from Achilles, we wouldn't have much of a story). But there were clearly areas where Hobbes felt that intervention was both possible and necessary. Agamemnon, after all, was a king, and no discreet epic should ever provoke sedition by speaking ill of monarchs. In this respect, Hobbes acted quite early, offering an extraordinary translation of one of the most famous verses in the entire poem. In Book I, the Greeks are suffering from a plague, and the seer Chalcas is asked to explain why the gods have sent it. His answer will implicate Agamemnon, so he is understandably nervous:

... I believe I shall make a man angry who holds great kingship  
over the men of Argos, and all the Achaians obey him.  
For a king when he is angry with a man beneath him is too strong,  
and suppose even for the day itself he swallow down his anger,  
he still keeps bitterness that remains until its fulfillment  
deep in his chest. (*Il.* I.78–82).<sup>62</sup>

The second half of this passage cries out to be read as a pronouncement on the character of kings, and, accordingly, it became a *locus classicus* for the nature of kingly 'wrath' (χόλος). To take just one example, it makes a

<sup>61</sup> René Rapin, *Comparaison des poèmes d'Homere et de Virgile*, 3rd edn. (Paris, 1664), 73. The contrary view was also occasionally expressed. Spenser, for example, writes in "A Letter of the Authors expounding his whole intention in the course of this worke" (a preface to the *Faerie Queene*) that Homer "in the Persons of Agamemnon and Vlysses hath exemplified a good gouernour and a vertuous man, the one in his *Ilias*, the other in his *Odyssies*." See Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton (London: Longman, 1977), 737.

<sup>62</sup> ἢ γὰρ ἔλομαι ἄνδρα χολωσέμεν, ὃς μέγα πάντων/ Ἀργείων κρατεῖει καὶ οἱ πείθονται Ἀχαιοί./ κρείσσων γὰρ βασιλεύς ὅτε χόσεται ἀνδρὶ χέρη./ εἰ περ γὰρ τε χόλον γε καὶ αὐτήμαρ καταπίβη/ ἀλλὰ το καὶ ματέπισθεν ἔχει κότον, ὄφρα τελέσση/ ἐν στήθεσσι βίοισι.

prominent appearance in Nicholas Coëffeteau's *A Table of Humane Passions* (1621). In the chapter 'Of Choler', Coëffeteau writes as follows:

... men of authority and command, will have such as are subject to their government, honour them with service. And if their inferiours faile to yeeld them the honor which they think is due unto them, they cannot endure this injury, but fall into a rage, which makes them to seeke all occasions to punish this contempt. And therefore it was truly said, That the indignation of a King is great and fearefull; for when as a great king is incensed against any one that is not of his quality, although he temper and moderate his *choler* for a time, yet he smothers it in his brest, and is never satisfied untill hee hath made him feele the effects of his power, that durst presume offend him.<sup>63</sup>

The second half of this passage is a straightforward quotation of the verses we are considering. *Iliad* I.80 had, in short, become a proof text for much that republicans dreaded about monarchy.

Chapman wrote a dedicatory poem to Coëffeteau's treatise,<sup>64</sup> and this forceful reading of the verse comes through powerfully in his translation. Indeed, since Chapman explicitly used the Achilles/Agamemnon quarrel as an analogue for the dispute between Elizabeth I and his own patron, the Earl of Essex, it is not difficult to understand why he was so anxious to emphasize the dangers of royal wrath:<sup>65</sup>

... I well conceive  
That he whose Empire governs all, whom all the Grecians give  
Confirm'd obedience, will be mov'd—and then you know the state  
Of him that moves him. When a king hath once markt for his hate A man  
inferior, though that day his wrath seems to digest Th'offence he takes, yet  
evermore he raked up in his brest  
Brands of quicke anger till revenge hath quencht to his desire  
The fire reserved.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Nicolas Coëffeteau, *A Table of Humane Passions, With their Causes and Effects. Written by ye Reverend Father in God F.N. Coëffeteau, Bishop of Dardania... Translated into English by Edw. Grimston Sergiant at Arms* (London, 1621), 569–70. The text was originally published in French the previous year.

<sup>64</sup> See Colin Burrow, *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1993), 212.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 214–17.

<sup>66</sup> *Chapman's Homer*, vol. 1, 26. Portus's Latin is consistent here: "Profecto enim puto virum aegre laturum, qui magnum in omnes/ Argivos habet imperium, ei obediunt Graeci./ Potentior enim rex est cum irascitur viro inferiori,/ Nam etsi iram retinet, ut ad finem perducat,/ In pectore suo" (*Homeri Iliads, id est, De rebus ad Trojam gestis* (Cambridge, 1648), 5).

Chapman has added the imagery of "brands" and "fire" to amplify what is already present in the verse. Ogilby's translation is similarly on point:

It will offend Him who the Army sways,  
Whom all the Camp as Generall obeys.  
When Kings with meaner Persons are displeas'd,  
'Though for the time their Anger seems appeas'd,  
Yet they within revengefull Rancour hide.<sup>67</sup>

Ogilby also supplies an explanatory note in the margin: "Great ones are, for the most part, sad Remembrancers, and having *plumbas iras* [oppressive furies], conceale their wrath but till they can wreak it, dissembling the injuries they receive but to return them with interest."

Seen in this context, Hobbes's version is astonishing:

Of all the Greeks it will offend the best;  
Who though his anger for awhile he smother,  
Will not, I fear, long time contented rest,  
But will revenged be some time or other.<sup>68</sup>

Hobbes has simply cut the central line. Verse eighty, which begins "For a king is too powerful" (*κρείσσω γὰρ βασιλεύς*), and which turns this passage into a generic statement about kings and kingship, is not allowed to survive. What remains is a mild anxiety directed at Agamemnon *per se*, rather than kings in general. And that anxiety is greatly mitigated by Hobbes's use of the epithet "best" to describe Agamemnon—an epithet which is absent from the text, and which in Homer is usually reserved for Achilles, "the best of the Achaians" (*ὁ ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν*). Hobbes's reasons are clear. He had written in a 1650 essay on epic poetry of "the uncomeliness of representing in great persons the inhumane vice of Cruelty,"<sup>69</sup> and "Cruelty" is defined in *Leviathan* as a violation of the law of nature characterized by "revenge without respect to the Example, and profit to come... glorying in the hurt of another, tending to no end."<sup>70</sup> Surely such an injunction directed at "great persons" would apply *a fortiori* to the entire class of kings. If the purpose of epic is to teach moral philosophy, and if the highest requirement of moral philosophy is obedience to sovereigns, then for an epic to demonize the institution of monarchy is about as indiscreet as one could get.

<sup>67</sup> Ogilby, *Homer his Iliads*, 6.

<sup>68</sup> Hobbes, *Translations of Homer*, vol. 1, 6.

<sup>69</sup> *Condiibert*, 53.

<sup>70</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 106.

An equally powerful example occurs in Book XIX of the *Iliad*. Here, Odysseus is negotiating a truce between Achilles and Agamemnon, and he sets out his proposed terms (speaking first to Achilles):

And by this let the spirit in your own heart be made gracious.  
After that in his own shelter let him appease you  
with a generous meal, so you will lack nothing of what is due you.  
And you, son of Atreus, after this be more righteous to another  
man. For there is no fault when even one who is a king  
appeases a man, when the king was the first to be angry (*Il. XIX.178*).<sup>71</sup>

Once again, we have a general statement about kingship: when a subject has been denied what is due him (*δική*), "one who is a king" (*βασιλῆα*) should conciliate (*ἀπαρέσασθαι*) the wronged man. Chapman, unsurprisingly, makes a great deal of this passage:

And last, tis fit he should approve  
All these rites at a solemne feast in honour of your love,  
That so you take no mangl'd law for merites absolute...  
And thou, Atrides, in the taste of so severe an end,  
Hereafter may on others hold a juster government.  
Nor will it ought empaire a king to give a sound content  
To any subject soundly wrong'd.<sup>72</sup>

Clearly thinking of the wronged Essex, Chapman cuts the opening injunction directed at Achilles ("let the spirit in your own heart be made gracious"), and intensifies the language of "injustice" ("mangl'd law," "juster government," "soundly wrong'd"). In this respect, he is adopting the vocabulary of the *versio latina*, which likewise speaks of Achilles's "iuris mutilum" and the "iniuria" suffered by the king's subject.<sup>73</sup> Ogilby follows suit:

When thou art thus appeas'd, (what is but right)  
He to a sumtuous Feast shall thee invite.  
And last, Atrides, if advise I may, Ponder thy Words, thy Actions better weigh.  
That Prince deserves no Blame, who low descends  
Any whom he hath wrong'd to make amends.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> "καὶ δὲ σοὶ αὐτῷ θυμὸς ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ἴλαος ἔστω./ αὐτὰρ ἔπειτὰ σε δοῦναι ἐνὶ κλισίῃς ἀρεσσάσθω/ πειρῆ, ἵνα μὴ τι δίκης ἐπιδευέξ ἔχησθα./ Ἀτρεΐδῃ, σὺ δ' ἔπειτα δικαιότερος καὶ ἐπ' ἄλλω/ ἔσσειαι. οὐ μὲν γάρ τι νεμεσσητῶν βασιλῆα/ ἄνδρ' ἀπαρέσασθαι, ὅτε τις πρότερος χαλεπήγη."

<sup>72</sup> Chapman's *Homer*, vol. 1, 396.

<sup>73</sup> Portus has "Atque tibi ipsi animus in praecordiis mansuetus fit:/ Ac deinde te convivio in tentoriis oblectet/ Oviparo, ut ne quid iuris mutilum habeas./ Atride, tu vero deinde aequior & in alium/ Eris nequaquam enim reprehendendum est, regem/ Virum privatum placare, quando quis prior iniuriam fecerit!" (*Honart Illas*, 559).

<sup>74</sup> Ogilby, *Homer his Iliads*, 418.

Hobbes's response to all of this is predictable:

And you [Achilles] *your anger henceforth bridle must*.  
And you, Atrides, feast him like a friend.  
And for hereafter learn to be more just,  
*Nor think't a shame for men their faults to mend.*<sup>75</sup>

Hobbes restores and intensifies Odysseus's scolding of Achilles, replacing the muted "be gracious" (*ἴλαος ἔστω*) with "your anger henceforth bridle"; and he completely eliminates the thought that kings have a responsibility to appease wronged subjects.<sup>76</sup> It is, after all, a central commitment of Hobbes's political theory that sovereigns cannot "injure" their subjects in any way. Hobbes injects this view into the poems on numerous occasions: in *Iliad* I, for example, Nestor says to Agamemnon, "You, good man that you are, do not take the girl [Briseis] away, but let her be" (*Il. I.275*).<sup>77</sup> Hobbes renders the verse as follows: "Atrides, take not from him, *though you can*,/ The damsel which the Greeks have given him."<sup>78</sup> Hobbes insists that Agamemnon has it in his authority to take whatever he wants away from Achilles. As Hobbes explains in *Leviathan*, sovereigns can violate the laws of nature (they can be "iniquitous"), but they cannot "injure" those whom they rule.<sup>79</sup>

But Hobbes does not only defend the prerogatives of monarchy by strategic deletions; he also periodically inserts his own verses into the poems to make familiar points about his civil science. Consider, for example, a passage from Book XI of the *Odyssey*, in which Homer records an unexceptional exchange between his hero and Alcinous, the king of Phaeacia. Odysseus has just paused in the midst of his narration of the *nekia*—his encounter with the shades of Tiresias and the great Argive heroes—and his royal host, deeply impressed by the tale he has just heard, offers him splendid gifts:

<sup>75</sup> My italics. Hobbes, *Translations of Homer*, vol. 1, 313.

<sup>76</sup> It is perhaps uncharacteristic that Hobbes retains even the thought that Agamemnon should "learn to be more just," when he could have substituted a less juridically charged term (e.g. "righteous"). That said, it is worth recalling that, in Hobbes's political theory, "justice" refers to one of the laws of nature (i.e. the requirement to keep bargains covenants), which Agamemnon has violated (see Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 100).

<sup>77</sup> "μήτε σὺ τόνδ' ἀγαθὸς περ ἔων ἀποαίρες κοῦρημ,/ ἄλλ' ἔα..." I have modified Lattimore's translation here.

<sup>78</sup> My italics. Hobbes, *Works*, vol. 10, 6.

<sup>79</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 108–110, 148. It is worth noting that in Divus's Latin version (reproduced in Lectius) the word "iniuria" is actually used in the translation of *Iliad* XIX. 182–3: "non quidem enim quicquam vituperabile est, regem/ virum privatum placare, quando quis prior iniuriam fecerit." The impact of this version on Chapman's rendering is clear.

Our guest, much as he longs for passage home,  
must stay and wait it out here till tomorrow,  
till I can collect his whole army of parting gifts (*Od.* XI. 350-2).<sup>80</sup>

Odysseus responds with mannered thanks, making light of the delay:

Alcinous, majesty, shining among your Island people,  
if you would urge me now to stay here one whole year  
then-speed me home weighed down with lordly gifts,  
I'd gladly have it so. Better by far, that way,  
The fuller my arms on landing there at home,  
the more respected, well received I'd be  
by all who saw me sailing back to Ithaca (*Od.* XI. 355-61).<sup>81</sup>

With that fairly banal reflection on the popularity that comes with bearing gifts, the intermezzo ends and Odysseus returns to his story. Unsurprisingly, this passage attracted hardly any notice in the first two centuries of Homer's English reception. In Hobbes's version, however, the repartee between Odysseus and his host takes on an entirely new significance:

Let not the stranger till to-morrow go;  
Till we prepare our gift he must remain . . .  
To whom the wise Ulysses thus replied:  
Renown'd Alcinous, that reignest here,  
Though a whole year you should command my stay,  
It will not trouble me. Nay, that I'd chuse,  
Since you intend to send me rich away:  
For I am sure I shall no honour lose  
By coming richly home. *Kings that have store  
Of wealth, are better commonly obey'd,  
And by their subjects are respected more,  
Than those whose treasures and chests are void.*<sup>82</sup>

Hobbes remains largely faithful to the Greek throughout the first half of this passage, and certainly has a warrant in the original for employing the language of "respect" (the Greek adjective αἰδοίτερος). But at the end he has simply grafted on to Homer's verses an excursus of his own composition on the theme that kings are not obeyed unless their treasures are

<sup>80</sup> "ξείνας δὲ τλήτω μάλα περ νόστοιο χατίρων/ ἔμπης οὖν ἐπιμένειν ἐς αὔριον, εἰς δ' ἐκ πᾶσαν/ δωτίνην τελέσω."

<sup>81</sup> "Ἀλκίνοσε κρείον, πάντων ἀριδείκτε λαῶν,/ εἴ με καὶ εἰς ἑνιαυτὸν ἀνάγοιτ' αὐτάθι μῆναιν/ πομπήν τ' ἄτρύνοιτε καὶ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα διδοῖτε,/ καὶ κε τὸ βουλοίμην, καὶ κεν πολὺ κέρδιον εἴη/ πλειοτέρη σὺν χειρὶ φίλῃν ἐς πατρίδ' ἰκέσθαι. καὶ κ' αἰδοίτερος καὶ φίλτερος ἀνδράσιν εἶην/ πᾶσιν, ἅσαι μ' ἰθάκηνδε ἰδοῖατο νοστήσαντα."

<sup>82</sup> Hobbes, *Translations of Homer*, vol. 2, 151. The italics are mine.

full—a theme which he had placed at the very center of his account of the Civil War in *Behemoth* and elsewhere.<sup>83</sup>

### III

We see then a fundamental continuity between Hobbes's practice in the Latin *Leviathan* and his practice in *The Illiads and Odysseys of Homer*. He regarded each text as a source of civic instruction, and therefore took it upon himself to ensure, insofar as he could, that each would clearly and convincingly demonstrate the virtue of obedience to sovereigns. He saw no value at all in replicating errors for the sake of "faithfulness to the original." Indeed, we should notice that, implicit in his practice, there is an assumption that he is serving the interests of his author, whoever it is. Homer, he makes clear, did not fully understand the principles of civil science; he himself, however, is privy "to all the Theoremes of Morall doctrine."<sup>84</sup> By correcting Homer's indiscretions, he is therefore acting on his behalf. Recall that, on Hobbes's account, people find themselves on the side of sedition only through ignorance.<sup>85</sup> Had Homer known the full truth, he would have made the very same corrections Hobbes had now made on his behalf—just as the Hobbes of 1668 had been eager to correct his earlier self. The fundamental principle underlying all of this is both strident and surprising: it is that faithful translation, as we understand it, is immoral. It can never be right to propagate what is contrary to the demands of peace—whether in one's own voice or in the voice of another. The translator ought, therefore, to be a rescuer of texts, one who saves past authors from their own indiscretions. Hobbes saw himself as just such a translator.

<sup>83</sup> The most similar version is that of Ogilby: "...far better 'twere for me,/ With coffers full my Native Land to see;/ They then would all me love and honour more./ Subjects contemn their Princes when grown Poor" (see Ogilby, *Homer, his Odysseys*, 153). However, not even Ogilby introduces the question of "obedience"; indeed, it is worth noting that "obey'd" rhymes only weakly with "void." The word choice was not determined here by metrical considerations. For Hobbes on money and the Civil War, see, for example, Hobbes, *Works*, vol. 5, 166.

<sup>84</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 254.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-213.