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'Reason of State' and Hobbes

The first book to have 'ragion di stato' (reason of state) in its title, and the most influential of all books on this topic, was published by the ex-Jesuit Giovanni Botero in 1589. In his dedicatory epistle Botero explained that he had made many journeys in recent years, and had visited the courts of several kings and princes.

> Among the things that I have observed, I have been greatly astonished to find Reason of State a constant subject of discussion and to hear the opinions of Niccolò Machiavelli and Cornelius Tacitus frequently quoted: the former for his precepts relating to the rule and government of peoples, the latter for his lively description of the arts employed by the Emperor Tiberius in acquiring and retaining the imperial title in Rome . . . I was moved to indignation rather than amazement to find that this barbarous mode of government had won such acceptance that it was brazenly opposed to Divine Law, so that men even spoke of some things being permissible by Reason of State and others by conscience.[1]

In the rest of his book, Botero went on to develop a more carefully modulated view of what reason of state could or should be. But those severe opening remarks testify to some simple and important facts: the term 'ragion di stato' already enjoyed wide currency; it was associated with Machiavellianism and Tacitism; and it was used to account for political actions that were, on the face of it, contrary to 'Divine Law' or morality. There is other evidence, from earlier in the sixteenth century, that the term was in common use; but the great popular vogue for 'ragion

[1] G. Botero, *The Reason of State*, tr. P. J. Waley and D. P. Waley (London, 1956), pp. xiii–xiv (G. Botero, *Della ragion di stato*, ed. C. Morandi (Bologna, 1930), pp. 3–4: 'tra l'altre cose da me osservate, mi ha recato somma meraviglia, il sentire tutto il dí mentovare Ragione di Stato, e in cotal materia citare ora Nicolò Machiavelli, ora Cornelio Tacito: quello, perchè dà precetti appartenenti al governo, e al reggimento de' popoli; questo, perchè esprime vivamente l'arti usate da Tiberio Cesare, e per conseguire, e per conservarsi nell'Imperio di Roma . . . Ma quel, che mi moveva non tanto a meraviglia, quanto a sdegno si era il vedere, che così barbara maniera di governo fosse accreditata in modo, che si contraponesse sfacciatamente alla legge di Dio; sino a dire, che alcune cose sono lecite per ragione di Stato, altre per conscienza').

di stato' got under way in the last decade of that century (stimulated, no doubt, by the work of Botero and other writers) and continued until the middle decades of the following one.[2] By 1621 the Venetian writer Lodovico Zuccolo could write that even 'barbers . . . and other artisans of the humblest sort, in their shops and meeting-places, make comments and queries on reason of state, and pretend that they know which things are done for reason of state and which are not'.[3] Indeed, the fact that the efflorescence of reason of state theory during this period went hand in hand with the growth in public interest in matters of state, especially foreign affairs, is surely not coincidental: here was a way of looking at political events that made them more open to discussion, since it both suggested that they needed to be deciphered and supplied some simple rules for their decipherment.[4]

Anyone who studies the theoretical literature developed by Botero and his successors may become absorbed in the subtleties of their various attempts to produce a more acceptable version of 'ragion di stato'. So it is worth bearing in mind at the outset that they operated against a background of ordinary public debate, in which the concept of reason of state was used in a quite simple way. It can be explained most easily using the distinction which was to be found in most elementary discussions of moral theory: between 'honestum' (that which is virtuous or right) and 'utile' (that which is useful or profitable).[5] When a ruler did something which was not virtuous or right (or not in accordance with his religious duties—for example, forming an alliance with heretics or infidels against his co-religionists), but which was useful or profitable for his state, this was ascribed to 'ragion di stato'. The term was thus

[2] On the earlier evidence see K. C. Schellhase, 'Botero, Reason of State, and Tacitus', in A. E. Baldini, ed., *Botero e la 'ragion di stato': atti del convegno in memoria di Luigi Firpo* (Florence, 1992), pp. 243–58, esp. pp. 246, 248–9.

[3] L. Zuccolo, 'Della ragione di stato', in B. Croce and S. Caramella, eds., *Politici e moralisti del Seicento* (Bari, 1930), pp. 23–41; p. 25: 'i barbieri . . . e gli altri più vili artifici nelle boteghe e nei ritrovi loro discorrono e questionano della ragione di stato e si dànno a credere di conoscere quali cose si facciano per ragione di stato e quali no'.

[4] See the valuable essay by Marcel Gauchet, 'L'État au miroir de la raison d'État: la France et la chrétienté', in Y. C. Zarka, ed., *Raison et déraison d'état: théoriciens et théories de la raison d'État aux XVI^e^ et XVII^e^ siècles* (Paris, 1994), pp. 193–244.

[5] This distinction, found in Cicero and Seneca among others, was universally recognized in Renaissance Europe. Jean Bodin recommended that readers of history should, when taking notes, categorize every act or saying as 'honestum', 'turpe' (the opposite of honestum), 'utile', or 'inutile' (the opposite of utile), using formulae such as 'C.T.U.', which stood for 'consilium turpe sed utile' ('a wicked but useful plan'): *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, tr. B. Reynolds (New York, 1945), pp. 35–6.

partly a descriptive one (this is how rulers act, this is how politics works); but it also suggested something quasi-normative, a value, a ground for justification—not a moral value, however, but one which operated on a different basis (profit, utility) and became most noticeable precisely when it conflicted with morality.

From the late sixteenth century onwards, this notion of utility or profit was increasingly encapsulated in another term, which would itself long outlast the phrase 'reason of state', becoming an almost indispensable piece of political vocabulary: 'interest'. When the French political analyst René de Lucinge (a friend and admirer of Botero) used the term in his influential treatise of 1588, he had to explain what he meant by it. He noted that all actions of princes were motivated by honour or profit, and that the former was often subordinated to the latter: 'We shall therefore concern ourselves only with profit, which we may call "interest".'[6] Botero then popularized the use of 'interest' as a fundamental principle of political analysis: 'It should be taken for certain,' he wrote in *Della ragion di stato*, 'that in the decisions made by princes interest will always override every other argument; and therefore he who treats with princes should put no trust in friendship, kinship, treaty nor any other tie which has no basis in interest.'[7] Nine years later, Botero would sum up his view with the simple phrase, 'reason of state is little else than reason of interest'; the term was by now well established.[8] By the 1620s, when it was used intensively by Richelieu's publicists, and the 1630s, when the eminent Huguenot Henri, duc de Rohan, made it the basis of his influential treatise *L'Interest des princes* (with its memorable opening phrase, 'Princes rule the people, and interest rules princes'), the analysis of geopolitics was unthinkable without it.[9]

[6] R. de Lucinge, *De la Naissance, durée et chute des estats*, ed. M. J. Heath (Geneva, 1984), III.7, p. 222: 'Nous nous attacherons donc seulement au proffit, que nous pouvons nommer interest'. On de Lucinge's connections with Botero and their mutual influence see A. E. Baldini, 'Botero et Lucinge: les racines de la *Raison d'État*', in Y. C. Zarka, ed., *Raison et déraison d'état: théoriciens et théories de la raison d'État aux XVI^e^ et XVII^e^ siècles* (Paris, 1994), pp. 67–99.

[7] Botero, *Reason of State*, p. 41 (Botero, *Della ragion di stato*, p. 62: 'Tenga per cosa risoluta che nelle deliberationi de' Prencipi l'interesse è quello che vince ogni partito. E per ciò non deve fidarsi d'amicizia, non di affinità, non di lega, non d'altro vincolo, nel quale, chi tratta con lui, non abbia fondamento d'interesse').

[8] G. Botero, *Aggiunte di Gio. Botero Benese alla sua ragion di stato* (Pavia, 1598), fo. 34v: 'ragion di Stato è poco altro, che ragion d'interesse'. The term 'interest' had also been used by Bodin; a full study of its early development has yet to be made.

[9] See R. von Albertini, *Das politische Denken in Frankreich zur Zeit Richelieus* (Marburg, 1951), esp. pp. 176–8; E. Thuau, *Raison d'État et pensée politique à l'époque de*

Once again, the attraction of this term lay partly in the ambiguous way in which it straddled the descriptive–normative divide: it was possible both to say (as Botero did) that rulers generally act out of interest, and to suggest that 'interest' constituted some kind of justification for acting. Interest—unlike sheer desire—might be studied in the light of objective criteria: a person could, after all, be criticized for an action that did not serve his real interests.[10] The nature of that justification, however, was not obviously (and in many cases obviously not) moral: while 'the common good' was a term that was always liable to serve as a hostage to traditional moral theorists and theologians ('bonum commune'), 'the public interest' or 'interest of state' suggested a different set of concerns and, therefore, a different kind of competence to judge them.

The idea that politics should be understood in terms of the pursuit of interest was supported by more general ideas about human nature and human action, derived from many sources, including the Augustinian theological tradition (with its emphasis on man's fallen nature) and the various currents of thought that can be described as Renaissance naturalism. What they all had in common was an assumption that human beings would not naturally follow the dictates of conscience or 'right reason', and that they would seek a 'good' conceived more narrowly in terms of benefit or advantage; it followed that their interactions might often be conflictual, and that social or political coexistence must depend on artifice and discipline rather than natural harmony. In the modern political literature, these ideas were most forcefully expressed by Machiavelli and his followers (and by the historian Guicciardini); the Machiavellian influence on the 'ragion di stato' tradition was fundamental.[11] But late Renaissance humanists, searching for models and authorities in the ancient world, found a near-equivalent to Machiavelli's teachings in the writings of Tacitus; and, insofar as Tacitus' imperial Rome differed from the world of small principalities, independent republics, and politically

Richelieu (Paris, 1966), e.g. p. 180; Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State*, pp. 116–18; H. de Rohan, 'L'Interest des princes', in his *Le Parfait Capitaine* (n.p., 1639), pp. 261–364, here p. 269. On Rohan's influence, and on later developments in the use of the term, see J. A. W. Gunn, '"Interest will not lie": A Seventeenth-Century Political Maxim', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 29 (1968), pp. 551–64; J. A. W. Gunn, *Politics and the Public Interest in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1969).

[10] For a classic study, arguing that 'interest' functioned as a half-way house between reason and desire, see A. O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (Princeton, 1977).

[11] See the still valuable work by Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson* (Munich, 1924).

active citizenries described by Machiavelli, it seemed actually closer to the world of sprawling monarchies and febrile court-politics they now inhabited. Tacitus' writings offered a radical alternative both to the Aristotelian textbook tradition and to the pious moralism of Christian advice literature; they made politics seem, instead, like a complex and ruthless game in which all players are self-interested and power is the prize. On this view, the common people, though always eager to advance their own crude interests, are stupid and easily tricked; an ambitious demagogue can deceive them, making them think that they will advance their interests when they will in fact only promote his, and a wise ruler can, and in some ways should, deceive them, both by keeping them in awe of unknown powers, and by giving them those 'simulacra' of liberty which will make them content. Much of the art of ruling thus consists of making deceptions of various kinds: these, the 'arcana imperii', were easily identified with the stratagems of the Machiavellian prince.[12]

Part of the attraction of Tacitist political literature was that it offered the reader a key to unlocking all kinds of mysteries of state (the same attraction, indeed, that was exerted by analyses of 'ragion di stato'): politics thus became decipherable and legible. But opinions differed as to whether the discussion of these arcana was, on the one hand, a way of alerting the people to the tricks of their rulers, or, on the other, a way of teaching rulers how to trick the people more expertly (or at least, a way of explaining to some people that such stratagems were necessary and justified): one classic study has divided the Tacitan authors of this period into 'red' and 'black' Tacitists—that is, republican and monarchical—on those grounds.[13] Nevertheless, the

[12] On this identification see R. de Mattei, *Il problema della 'ragion di stato' nell'età della Controriforma* (Milan, 1979), pp. 46–7; M. Behnen, '"Arcana—haec sunt ratio status." Ragion di stato und Staatsräson: Probleme und Perspektiven (1589–1651)', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*, 14 (1987), pp. 129–95; P. S. Donaldson, *Machiavelli and Mystery of State* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 110–40. On Tacitism more generally see J. von Stackelberg, *Tacitus in der Romania: Studien zur literarischen Rezeption des Tacitus in Italien und Frankreich* (Tübingen, 1960); E.-L. Etter, *Tacitus in der Geistesgeschichte des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Basel, 1966); G. Spini, 'The Art of History in the Italian Counter Reformation', in E. Cochrane, ed., *The Late Italian Renaissance* (London, 1970), pp. 91–133 (esp. pp. 114–33); K. C. Schellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought* (Chicago, 1976); the essays by P. Burke, 'Tacitism', in T. A. Dorey, ed., *Tacitus* (London, 1969), pp. 149–71, and 'Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State', in J. H. Burns and M. Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 479–98; and R. Tuck, *Philosophy and Government, 1572–1651* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 31–136.

[13] G. Toffanin, *Machiavelli e il 'tacitismo'* (Padua, 1921).

basic assumptions of these various Tacitist writers about the nature of politics and government did not significantly diverge. Among the most controversial of those was the assumption that religion must be regarded as an instrument of rule. Fear of unknown powers was a very powerful factor in human psychology (here early modern Tacitism went hand in hand with the Epicurean psychology of religion found in Lucretius). It followed that religion should be carefully managed and controlled by the ruler, for more than one reason: because it could shore up his power; because if it lay outside his control, it could be used against him by demagogues and rivals; and because, as Machiavelli had argued, the power of religion over human behaviour was such that a religion of the wrong sort could have a harmful effect on the people, and thus on the strength of the state as a whole.

While the underlying assumptions of the Tacitists about human nature and politics were shared by most writers on 'ragion di stato', this Tacitist (and Machiavellian) instrumentalizing of religion offended many of them deeply. The genre of treatises on reason of state which Botero inaugurated was strongly motivated by a desire to oppose this line of argument; many of the authors of these treatises, indeed, were Jesuits, and if one followed only their self-understanding of what they were doing one would say that they were engaged in a re-Christianizing—or, to be precise, re-Catholicizing—of political theory, fully in the spirit of the Counter-Reformation. (One of their greatest bugbears was the 'politique' tradition of writers such as Bodin, whose experience of the French Wars of Religion had led them to recommend the toleration of religious minorities for the sake of peace; the Jesuit writers saw this as a Machiavellian subjection of religion to the state, and fiercely criticized it.)[14] However, while they thought that they were confronting the Machiavellian-Tacitist doctrine head-on, the fact that they shared so many of its underlying assumptions meant that their whole style of argument tended, in some ways, to run parallel to it, or even to reinforce it. Against the Machiavellian claim that Christianity was enfeebling, and in opposition to any idea that religion should be merely instrumentalized by the state, they wanted to show that Christianity should be the very basis of the state, and that a state so grounded in true religion would

[14] For a valuable study of some of these writers which, however, accepts them rather too easily on their own terms, see R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince: Anti-Machiavellianism and Catholic Statecraft in Early Modern Europe* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1990); for a broader perspective, see H. Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State, c.1540–1630* (Cambridge, 2004), esp. pp. 84–139.

be more successful and more advantageous.[15] Thus the Spanish Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra insisted that the most secure state was a state based on true religion, and penned an entire chapter demonstrating that Christianity produced successful military commanders.[16] And when Botero introduced the subject of religion into his political treatise, he began with a statement that was fully in line with the Machiavellian tradition,

> So great is the power of religion in government that the state can have no secure foundation without it. Hence almost all those who have attempted to found new empires have introduced new faiths or changed the old ones . . .

and then added:

> But of all religions none is more favourable to the ruler than the Christian law, according to which not merely the bodies and possessions but even the souls and consciences of his people are subject to him: their affections and thoughts are bound, as well as their hands.[17]

Here, from someone deeply opposed to the instrumentalizing of religion, was a recommendation of Christianity precisely on the grounds that it instrumentally benefited the ruler.

In order to emphasize the difference (as they saw it) between them and their opponents, some of these Counter-Reformation theorists argued that there were two types of reason of state: the acceptable, Christian kind and the unacceptable, Machiavellian variety. As Pedro de Ribadeneyra put it, 'this reason of state is not a single thing, but two: one false and apparent, the other solid and genuine; one deceptive and diabolical, the other certain and divine.'[18] The Sienese theologian and pro-Papal

[15] See H. Lutz, *Ragione di stato und christliche Staatsethik im 16. Jahrhundert* (Münster, 1961), pp. 41–2.

[16] P. de Ribadeneyra, *Tratado de la religion y virtudes que deve tener el Principe Christiano, para governar y conservar sus estados* (Madrid, 1595), pp. 1–258, 494–504.

[17] Botero, *Reason of State*, p. 66, adapted (Botero, *Della ragion di stato*, p. 94: 'È di tanta forza la Religione ne' governi, che senza essa, ogni altro fondamento di Stato vacilla: cosí tutti quelli quasi, che hanno voluto fondare nuovi Imperi, hanno anco introdotto nuove sette, o innovato le vecchie . . . Ma tra tutte le leggi non ve n'è più favorevole a Prencipi, che la Cristiana; perchè questa sottomette loro, non solamente i corpi, e le facoltà de' sudditi, dove conviene, ma gli animi ancora, e le conscienze; e lega non solamente le mani, ma gli affetti ancora'). The use of the term 'legge' here ('law') situates the argument in a Machiavellian (and, ultimately, Averroist or Paduan Aristotelian) tradition.

[18] De Ribadeneyra, *Tratado*, sig. ††7r: 'esta razon de Estado no es vna sola, sino dos: vna falsa y aparente, otra solida y verdadera; vna engañosa y diabolica, otra cierta y diuina'.

(anti-Venetian) writer Ventura Venturi similarly distinguished 'blessed' reason of state from 'accursed' reason of state: the former conformed always to true religion, while the latter contravened divine and natural law.[19] In the abstract, of course, this distinction was easily made; indeed, it could be expressed in the simplest possible terms as a matter of 'utile' (profitable) versus 'honestum' (virtuous). As Botero's friend Frachetta put it:

> In governing states, the prince considers either the profitable on its own, or the profitable conjoined to the virtuous. If he considers the profitable alone, and proceeds rationally and wisely, choosing the suitable means with which to bring about that profitable result, he will be called cautious and wise; and the art he uses will be called reason of state, and it could be called false prudence, or the shadow or reflection of prudence. But if the prince considers the profitable conjoined to the virtuous, and proceeds rationally and with good counsel, he will be called truly prudent, and his manner of acting will be called true civil prudence. The former is not united with the moral virtues; the latter is.[20]

But the problem, of course, was that in many cases reality did not conform to this simple scheme: following the path of virtue might be profitable in a general, long-term way, but it was often the case that strict adherence to the moral law was seriously disadvantageous, and it was also frequently found that a long-term strategy of virtue could be enhanced by tactical measures which, in themselves, were not virtuous at all. One of the aims of these Counter-Reformation 'reason of state' theorists was, in fact, to show that various forms of apparent immorality and deception were compatible with their overall moral programme: thus Botero, for example, recommended the use of agents and spies to foment mutual distrust among heretical subjects, and de Ribadeneyra allowed his prince not only to equivocate (as was permitted by some

[19] W. J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation* (Berkeley, 1968), pp. 381, 447.

[20] G. Frachetta, *Seminario de' governi di stato et di guerra* (Venice, 1613), discorso 12, p. 79: 'nel gouerno de' Stati, ò il Prencipe riguarda l'vtile solo, ò l'vtile congiunto con l'honesto. se l'vtile solo, procedendo con ragione, & sauiezza, & eleggendo i debiti mezzi per conseguir questo vtile, si dirà accorto, & sauio; & l'Arte si chiamerà Ragione di Stato, & si potrà dir falsa prudenza, ò ombra, ò imagine di prudenza. ma se il Prencipe riguarda l'vtile congiunto con l'honesto, procedendo con ragione, & con buon consiglio, si dirà veramente prudente: & l'habito si appellerà vera prudenza ciuile. l'vna non è vnita con le virtù morali, l'altra sí'. Elsewhere in his writings Frachetta referred to these as false and true reason of state. Frachetta, who took minor orders, served as a secretary or adviser to several cardinals.

Catholic casuists) but also, in small measure, to simulate or lie.[21] But their simple dichotomy between good and bad reason of state, with the former presupposing that advantage would always follow naturally in virtue's train, failed to account for much of the actual working-out of their theories—the attraction of which, to contemporary readers, came largely from the ways in which they incorporated much hard-headed advice about the exercise of political power. Nor were the theoretical difficulties much alleviated by the tendency of many of them (including Botero, Frachetta, and de Ribadeneyra) to portray 'good' reason of state as a general form of civil prudence—a kind of practical judgement which applied, in principle, to all activities of government.[22] That a good ruler needed discretion, judgement, and the sort of skill that came from experience was not in doubt. But in assimilating 'ragion di stato' to some all-encompassing kind of practical knowledge, the theorists merely moved further away from those special and awkward cases for which the term had been invented. The danger—as writers such as the 'red' Tacitist Traiano Boccalini and the distinctly 'black' theorist of the 'coup d'état' Gabriel Naudé complained—was that this tendency led to a version of reason of state so sanitized that it could no longer perform any useful function.[23]

A different approach was taken by a number of writers whose attitude was less exaltedly theological than that of the Counter-Reformation theorists. The key exponent of the alternative approach was the Flemish

[21] Botero, *Della ragion di stato*, V.7, p. 154 (*Reason of State*, p. 108); de Ribadeneyra, *Tratado*, pp. 291–2.

[22] Botero defined reason of state as a general art of rule, and presented 'prudence' as the central component of that art: *Della ragion di stato*, I.1, II.1–10, pp. 9, 53–77 (*Reason of State*, pp. 3, 34–53); Frachetta identified civil prudence with true reason of state (see his *Il prencipe* (Venice, 1599), pp. 13–14); de Ribadeneyra identified prudence as the guide to all virtues, and equated it with 'good' reason of state (see his *Tratado*, pp. 405–6, and Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought*, pp. 165–7). Maurizio Viroli misrepresents this line of argument, I believe, when he identifies this 'prudence' with the new, immoralist, reason of state, and contrasts it with the traditional (Aristotelian) idea of politics: *From Politics to Reason of State: The Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics, 1250–1600* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 278.

[23] See de Mattei, *Il problema della 'ragion di stato'*, pp. 67–87; J. Freund, 'La Situation exceptionelle comme justification de la raison d'État chez Gabriel Naudé', in R. Schnur, ed., *Staatsräson: Studien zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffs* (Berlin, 1975), pp. 141–64. An interesting exception to this tendency was Scipione Ammirato, who, although he broadly shared the Counter-Reformation mentality of the Jesuit theorists, was much more steeped in Tacitism than they; on his theory of reason of state as a higher-order principle that overrules ordinary law, see R. de Mattei, *Il pensiero politico di Scipione Ammirato, con discorsi inediti* (Milan, 1963), esp. pp. 124–9.

humanist (and editor of Tacitus) Justus Lipsius, whose treatise on politics, *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex*—a work much admired for the elegant way in which it wove together a tissue of quotations from classical sources—exerted a huge influence.[24] Like the Jesuit writers, Lipsius subscribed to some fundamentally Machiavellian and Tacitist assumptions about the nature of politics; unlike them, he did not believe that it was possible to construct, even in theory, a perfectly virtuous 'reason of state', accepting instead that the art of ruling must make some compromises with vice. In his scheme of politics and government, there were three levels of fraudulent behaviour: 'light' (involving dissimulation, the concealment of intentions), 'medium' (involving the active deception, or corruption by bribery, of enemies), and 'great' (involving such actions as breach of treaty). The first, he wrote, was advisable, the second tolerable, and the third unacceptable. His justification for this position was framed, at first sight, in merely quantitative terms: 'Wine does not cease to be wine if it is lightly diluted with water; nor does prudence cease to be prudence, if you add some little drops of fraud.' But he went on to add, importantly, that the permitted frauds were tolerable only when done for the common good; any deception not aimed at that end was a great sin.[25]

The emphasis on the common good here opened up the possibility that this version of reason of state might even be framed as a more convincingly unified theory than that of the Jesuits—something closer to a traditional scheme of natural law, a hierarchical system in which the application of lower-order values could be altered or superseded by the requirements of higher-order ones. But in practice that path was not taken. The Lipsian version of reason of state theory functioned, rather, as something more modest and more realistic than the high-flown, Counter-Reformation variety. Lipsius's term for reason of state was 'mixed prudence', which he described as a mixture of 'honesta' and 'utilia'.[26] As his English disciple Robert Dallington put it:

> All Moralists hold nothing profitable that is not honest. Some Politicks haue inuerted this order, and peruerted the sense, by transposing the tearmes in the

[24] On Lipsius and his influence see G. Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 13–117; A. McCrea, *Constant Minds: Political Virtue and the Lipsian Paradigm in England, 1584–1650* (Toronto, 1997), *passim*.

[25] J. Lipsius, *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* (Leiden, 1589), pp. 204–16 (p. 204: 'Vinum, vinum esse non desinit si aquâ leuiter temperatum: nec Prudentia, Prudentia, si guttulae in eâ fraudis').

[26] Ibid., p. 203: 'vtilia honestis miscere'.

proposition: holding nothing honest that is not profitable. Howsoeuer those former may seeme too streight laced, these surely are too loose. For there is a middle way betweene both which a right Statesman must take.[27]

The 'Moralists' here might have included the Jesuit writers (at least, in some of the summaries of their theories, if not in the practical details), while the 'Politicks' (i.e. politiques) represented a caricature version of the Machiavellian tradition. But in reality Lipsius's approach remained loyal to Machiavelli's own belief that a ruler may be obliged to do bad things for the good of the state.

More broadly, Lipsius represented a tradition of argument, partly stemming from Machiavelli and transmitted through widely read authors such as Girolamo Cardano, which insisted that the wise and virtuous man must learn to adapt his external behaviour to the conditions of stupidity and vice that prevailed in the general population; different levels of wisdom would thus be needed, with the highest human level operating, for the most part, only internally.[28] This attitude was very much in tune with Renaissance neo-Stoicism, of which Lipsius was a leading exponent; it was developed further by another influential writer, Pierre Charron, who combined elements of neo-Stoicism, a Montaignian sense of the disjunction between the private and public realms, and a deep admiration for Lipsius.[29] And another widely read author who displayed a similar pattern of thought (though with a more ambivalent attitude to Stoicism) and an evident debt to Lipsius was Francis Bacon, whose essay 'Of Simulation and Dissimulation' put forward what was very evidently an adaptation of Lipsian 'mixed prudence'.[30]

In theory, there were some large differences between the Counter-Reformation reason of state theorists and the Lipsians. The latter were closer to the outlook of the original 'politiques' in the French Wars of Religion: the tranquillity of a well-governed state was to be judged on public criteria, which mere external conformity might satisfy. The former insisted that externalities would not suffice, and that the people must support the state privately, with their souls (as properly directed by the Church) as well as publicly, with their bodies. (Lipsius

[27] R. Dallington, *Aphorismes Civill and Militarie* (London, 1613), book V, aphorism 19, p. 314.

[28] See G. Procacci, *Studi sulla fortuna del Machiavelli* (Rome, 1965), pp. 77–106.

[29] See ibid., p. 100, and R. Kogel, *Pierre Charron* (Geneva, 1972), pp. 50–77, 127–33.

[30] Bacon, *Essayes*, pp. 20–3; McCrea, *Constant Minds*, pp. 87–96.

did recognize—like Bodin—that religious uniformity strengthened a state, and recommended the extirpation of religious dissenters who challenged the secular power; otherwise his argument defended some form of toleration for the sake of civil peace.)[31]

But once the discussion moved away from matters of church and state, and turned instead to the regular business of secular rule, there was in fact much common ground between these two types of reason of state theory. Both took it for granted that the common people were turbulent, fickle, and short-sighted, and that government must involve the management of them in accordance with a superior wisdom which they themselves could not be expected fully to understand. Both accepted that the ruler could properly engage in dissimulation (the concealment of his real thoughts, feelings, or intentions) towards his own subjects and towards foreign powers; the Counter-Reformation writers were more reluctant in theory to allow simulation (that is, positively pretending to have thoughts, feelings, or intentions that one does not have), though they usually found some room for it in practice.[32]

Hovering at the back of all discussions of these topics, of course, was the notorious eighteenth chapter of *The Prince*, in which Machiavelli discussed the relative worth of being thought to possess certain qualities and actually possessing them—the difference between seeming and being. And although most reason of state theorists insisted, understandably enough, that being (virtuous, pious, brave, etc.) was better in the long run, one of the most striking features of their writings is the huge amount of attention they gave to the theme of seeming. The key term here was 'reputation'. In his treatise on reason of state, Botero declared that 'love and reputation' were 'the two foundations of all rule and government'.[33] His later 'additions' to this work included a lengthy discourse on reputation, in which he developed that argument in a more recognizably Machiavellian way. The ruler's authority depends, he explained, on either love, or fear, or reputation; and reputation itself is a combination of love and fear. Love is best *per se*, but least reliable

[31] See Bireley, *Counter-Reformation Prince*, pp. 89–90.

[32] For the theological constraints on the notion of simulation, and the various ways of evading them, see J. P. Sommerville, 'The "New Art of Lying": Equivocation, Mental Reservation, and Casuistry', in E. Leites, ed., *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 159–84; P. Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1990).

[33] Botero, *Reason of State*, V.9, pp. 113–14, adapted (*Della ragion di stato*, p. 162: 'essendo due fondamenti dell'Imperio, e del governo, l'amore, e la riputazione').

in practice, because of man's fickle nature; reputation is better than either love or fear taken separately, since 'what it gains from love is the union of the subjects with their ruler, and what it gains from fear is their subjection'; but, in the composition of reputation, fear has the larger part. In any case, however it is analysed, reputation rests 'in the opinion and belief which the people has about him [*sc*. the ruler]'.[34] Frachetta agreed, devoting a whole chapter of his treatise to 'How important reputation is to a ruler in the government of his state'; the English Jesuit writer Thomas Fitzherbert also stressed the importance of reputation, declaring that 'of al external goods it is the principal, & most pretious'.[35] Lipsius also warmed to this theme: all rule depended, he observed, on the 'consensus' (agreement, consent) of the ruled, and that agreement derived from their 'aestimatio' (high opinion) of the ruler: 'take away this, and you take away the kingdom'.[36] (These comments came in a chapter on 'Contemptus'—which is the attitude subjects will adopt towards their ruler if he has lost his reputation with them.) Many later writers on reason of state also attributed special importance to reputation. The duc de Rohan, for example, emphasized its value in both external and internal affairs (commenting that if a ruler is reputed to have an extensive intelligence network, other rulers will be more wary of entering into conspiracies against him), and concluded that 'It is a thing that seems empty, but produces solid effects'.[37] And Richelieu, in his *Testament politique*, gave as the prime reason for not breaking treaties the fact that such breaches would harm the ruler's reputation: 'he cannot break his word without losing his reputation and thereby losing the greatest strength that sovereigns possess.'[38]

As this example shows, the requirements of 'seeming' could have direct consequences for 'being'. There were other ways, too, in which the cultivation of reputation (and 'love') might have real and practical effects. Several of these writers paid special attention to the ways in

[34] Botero, *Aggiunte*, fos. 42–4 (fo. 42r: 'nell'opinione, e nel concetto, che il popolo ha di lui'; fo. 44r: 'ella prende dell'amore l'vnione de' sudditi col Prencipe, e dal timore la soggettione').

[35] Frachetta, *Il prencipe*, pp. 21–6 (p. 21: 'Quanto importi al Prencipe la Riputatione per il gouerno dello Stato'); T. Fitzherbert, *The First Part of a Treatise concerning Policy, and Religion* (n.p. [Douai], 1615), p. 271.

[36] Lipsius, *Politicorum libri sex*, p. 194.

[37] De Rohan, 'De l'Interest des princes', p. 277 ('C'est vne chose vaine en apparence, mais qui produit de solides effets').

[38] Quoted in von Albertini, *Das politische Denken*, p. 185: 'qu'il ne peut violer [*sc*. sa parole] sans perdre sa réputation et par conséquent la plus grande force des souverains'.

which the ruler could increase not only the strength of his state but also the contentment of his subjects by promoting commerce and industry.[39] Botero wrote, more generally, that 'he who wishes to keep his subjects contented and quiet should procure for them plenty, justice, peace, and a certain virtuous liberty'; as Rodolfo de Mattei has pointed out, it is hard to tell whether Botero viewed such things primarily as instrumental means towards successful rule, or as things to be valued in themselves by a virtuous ruler.[40] A similar ambiguity hovers over the notion of 'consent', which was not only implicit in the general argument about reputation, but was also made explicit by writers such as Lipsius (quoted above), Frachetta (who wrote that 'all rulers need the consent of the people, whether immediate or mediate, express or tacit'), and the Spanish Jesuit Juan de Mariana (whose carefully phrased argument was that 'the Prince should never attempt in the commonwealth what it would not be possible to get the citizens to approve').[41] Was this merely a means towards effective rule, or was the obtaining of such consent in some sense a moral duty? The argument was never pursued by the reason of state authors in ways that might have yielded a definite answer to that question. For, in the end, reason of state theory was not a complete body of political philosophy; it put forward a set of techniques and embodied a set of assumptions, but it did not deal in any direct way with the most basic justificatory principles of government and law. That, perhaps, is one reason why the vogue for it came to an end. Once the techniques had been assimilated, it could have little new to offer; and interest shifted towards those styles of political theorizing which could anchor some of the assumptions in philosophical principles of a more abstract and fundamental kind.

In the light of this brief and necessarily schematic sketch of the 'ragion di stato' tradition, some comments may be added both about the nature of the *Altera secretissima instructio*, and about the possible relation to that tradition of Cavendish and Hobbes. That the *Altera secretissima instructio* stands in a close connection to 'ragion di stato' will

[39] See Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince*, p. 129.

[40] G. Botero, *Relatione della repubblica venetiana* (Venice, 1605), fo. 74r ('chi gli vuole tener contenti, e quieti, deue procurare loro l'abbondanza, la giustizia, la pace, & vna certa honesta libertà'); de Mattei, *Il problema della 'ragion di stato'*, p. 56.

[41] Frachetta, *Seminario*, discorso 6, p. 30: 'hanno bisogno del consentimento del popolo, ò immediato, ò mediato, ò espresso, ò tacito'; J. de Mariana, *The King and the Education of the King*, tr. G. A. Moore (Chevy Chase, MD, 1948) [tr. of *De rege et regis institutione* (Toledo, 1599)], p. 345, cited in J. A. Fernández-Santamaría, *Reason of State and Statecraft in Spanish Political Thought, 1595–1640* (Lanham, MD, 1983), p. 99.

be self-evident even to the most casual reader: the text itself refers to 'the great cause, cause of causes, *Reason of State*'.[42] But, once again, the way in which this work makes use of reason of state theory seems, on closer inspection, rather ambiguous. This is a satirical or parodic work which is in some ways meant to be taken seriously; it is also a 'most secret' instruction which is meant to be read as widely as possible. In its most extreme statement, it offers what sounds like a purely parodic version of reason of state, a worst-case example of the sort of 'bad' or 'false' reason of state denounced by the Counter-Reformation theorists: 'you need to use not only forces and stratagems, but also nothing less than criminal acts and things contrary to divine law. To this advice I give first place—and second, and third, and thousandth.'[43] Yet although the phrasing here is clearly designed to shock and repel, many of the details of the argument would not seem so shocking to anyone familiar with the reason of state tradition. The two sentences just quoted form part of a recommendation that the Elector Palatine should try to stir up distrust and disagreement among his enemies—something not very different from Botero's advice on stirring up dissensions among heretical subjects. Elsewhere the author advises Frederick to suborn the counsellors of his enemies; this was specifically allowed by Lipsius, who placed it in his category of 'medium' fraud.[44] The advice that he change religion might also have been thought to belong in the same Lipsian category, since it was well known that Lipsius himself had changed religion more than once.[45] That such actions were described by the author as 'fraud' was not necessarily damning; the same term had been used by Lipsius both for the one category he disapproved of and for the two he permitted. And, as if to emphasize the point, the author accompanied his recommendation of fraud with a comment which many readers would have recognized as an adaptation of one of the most Machiavellian phrases in Lipsius's *Politicorum libri sex*: 'When y^{e} Lions skin is worne out, put on the Foxes case [*sc*. skin]'.[46]

Was the author engaged in a surreptitious satirizing or discrediting of Lipsian reason of state theory? If so, he was being quite unfair, since he omitted Lipsius's key condition (that any frauds be committed for the public good), treating the matter merely as an issue of Frederick's personal survival and advantage. But there is hardly enough evidence to

[42] Section 9. [43] Section 31. [44] Section 19. [45] Section 21.
[46] Section 19 (at n. 224). For the use of another phrase which may have had Lipsian associations, see section 25 (at n. 261).

show that the author had any such clear moral purpose. At one point he did comment disapprovingly on the idea of an alliance with infidels, and warned, in true Counter-Reformation style, that the dictates of religion must ultimately prevail: 'And yet I feare that such vngodly aydes, will proue the ruine of them that seeke them. For though in Politique strategems, Religion be last looked at, yet it seemes there is some kingly power aboue that ratifyes the priuiledges of Magistrates, and is iudge of right and wronge.'[47] Yet that warning is noteworthy precisely because it stands out in the text, being quite untypical of it. The only other reference to God comes in the remark that 'To be obstinate against experience is an iniury to God', which seems to be just a rhetorical way of emphasizing the importance of secular experience.[48] Some religious motivation is, at first, attributed to Louis XIII ('Religion drawes him backe. he holds it a great sinne to warre against his bloud'); but Louis's fear of excommunication is explained purely in terms of its secular effects ('He sayes he will not offend the Pope or Popes frends; he feares excommunication. The effectes of it, y^{e} Rebellion of his Princes he abhorres'). Throughout the text, all human action is judged in terms of self-interest; to the rhetorical question, 'does euery man loue himselfe best?', the answer is never in doubt.[49] In the series of case-studies that makes up the first part of the work, the author shows that each of the Elector's allies, no matter how closely connected by blood or friendship, or how strongly bound by solemn promises, will abandon him as soon as that ruler's own interest diverges from his. One could scarcely ask for a more specific substantiation of Botero's comment that 'in the decisions made by princes interest will always override every other argument; and therefore he who treats with princes should put no trust in friendship, kinship, treaty nor any other tie which has no basis in interest'.[50] Not only does the author show that they will follow their own interest; he also notes that, in doing so, they commit frauds of various kinds. (Louis XIII defrauded his own allies; Christian IV seized Bremen by fraud.)[51] Once again, if the analysis in the first part of the text is seen as compelling (as it is surely intended to be), it becomes difficult to dismiss the kind of advice given in the second part as self-evidently satirical. The author seems to be playing a game with reason of state theory: insofar as it is both credible and potentially disreputable, he simultaneously seeks to build on its credibility and

[47] Section 14. [48] Section 2. [49] Section 21. [50] See above, n. 7.
[51] Sections 8, 11.

exploit its disreputability. Reason of state is stretched here, but not to breaking-point.

One other issue deserves consideration: the extent to which the writing and publication of this text could itself be seen as an application of reason of state. Here too things are not as straightforward as they may at first appear. Secrecy was certainly the basic form of dissimulation recommended and required by writers on 'ragion di stato'; the wise and experienced counsellor was also a stock figure in their treatises, and such a counsellor was expected to keep secret not only the sensitive information he received, but also his own advice to the ruler. So to publish a 'most secret instruction' might seem, at first blush, like a subversion of reason of state—were it not for the obvious fact that in this instance the counsel was itself subversive and quasi-satirical, designed not to fortify but to cow and weaken the counselled. It is nevertheless true that this text did include much genuine political information, of the sort that ordinary readers were eager to obtain. And it is also true that many writers on 'ragion di stato' advised rulers that it was not in their interests to let the common people inspect the 'arcana' of politics (a piece of advice that was to be found, paradoxically, in books about those 'arcana' which were sold to the common people in large quantities). One modern historian has concluded that, in the 'ragion di stato' literature, 'the underlying principle was secrecy, not propaganda', and has singled out Paolo Sarpi—who both engaged in pamphlet warfare, and set out the principles of it in his advice to the Venetian Senate—as a startling exception to the rule.[52]

But this is to take too narrow a view of the requirements of reason of state theory; it is to ignore the wider implications of the doctrine of 'reputation', which positively favoured the practice of political propaganda. As these writers emphasized, reputation was not only important for the internal stability of a state under normal conditions; in Frachetta's words, 'reputation matters to the ruler no less in war than in peace'.[53] In any situation of international conflict, a rise in a ruler's reputation would count as an increase of his strength (as it would help to deter enemies and attract allies); equally, therefore, one

[52] De Vivo, 'Paolo Sarpi and the Uses of Information', p. 45. (De Vivo notes, however, that Sarpi's advice to the Senate concluded that it would in principle be better to keep the people ignorant of affairs of state, but that if something damaging had been published, it was necessary to counteract it.)

[53] Frachetta, *Il prencipe*, p. 150: 'Non importa meno la riputatione al Prencipe nella guerra che nella pace.' Cf. the statement in section 17: 'Warre depends on fame'.

effective way of reducing the strength of one's opponents would be to undermine their reputations. Such offensive propaganda actions would not necessarily involve fiction and lies; an unmasking of the other side's dissimulations and simulations might be all the more effective because it told the truth. (The duc de Rohan would recommend, as a basic maxim for the French king, a policy of exposing the misuses of Catholicism by Spain and the Papacy, in order to 'make Catholics understand the poison that is hidden underneath'.)[54] The author of the *Altera secretissima instructio* understood that truth, as well as lies, could have a propaganda effect. And in order to achieve his purpose, he was quite happy to exploit both the popular hunger for 'secret' information, and the pleasure which a public brought up on 'reason of state' discourse naturally derived from seeing the workings of such reason of state laid bare.

Among those readers was Thomas Hobbes, whose familiarity with quite a range of literature on 'ragion di stato' can be assumed. By the time he drew up the catalogue of the library at Hardwick in 1627 or 1628, it contained de Lucinge's *De incrementis* (the Latin translation of his *De la Naissance . . . des estats*); a whole collection of works by Botero, including his *Della ragion di stato*, *Treatise concerning the . . . Greatnes of Cities*, *Relationi universali*, *Principi cristiani*, and *Detti memorabili*; Frachetta's *Il Prencipe*; Lipsius's *Politicorum libri sex*; Mariana's *De rege et regis institutione*; Charron's *De la Sagesse*; Dallington's *Aphorismes*; and both parts of Fitzherbert's *Treatise concerning Policy and Religion*.[55] It also contained Machiavelli's *Discorsi* (in Latin and English translations) and his *Florentine History* (in English); several works by Guicciardini (in Italian and English); Paolo Sarpi's *Historia del Concilio Tridentino* and his history of the controversy over the Venetian Interdict; and the

[54] de Rohan, 'L'Interest des princes', p. 280: 'faire comprendre aux Catholiques le venin caché la dessous').

[55] Chatsworth, MS Hobbes E. 1. A. At some stage an incomplete manuscript copy was also acquired of James Mabbe's translation of a Spanish work in the Counter-Reformation 'ragion di stato' tradition, Juan de Santa María's *Tratado de república y policía cristiana para reyes y príncipes* (Madrid, 1615): Chatsworth, MS Hardwick 49. This scribal manuscript was presumably acquired before the publication of the translation (*Christian Policie: Or, The Christian Common-wealth: Published for the good of Kings, and Princes* (London, 1632)); but the manuscript is not listed in MS Hobbes E. 1. A. (The manuscript is a bound volume, containing enough paper for the complete translation, but only the first few leaves are used, giving the dedicatory epistle and chapters 1–4; perhaps a commission to transcribe the entire text was cancelled when it became known that the translation was about to be—or had already been—printed.) On de Santa María's work see Fernández-Santamaría, *Reason of State and Statecraft*, pp. 101–4.

Ragguagli dal Parnaso and *Pietra del paragone* of Boccalini.[56] While some other modern French writers were represented (such as de La Noue and Bodin), it is striking that Italians formed the main concentration of contemporary authors in a foreign vernacular; this suggests that the stay in Venice in 1614–15 may have been an intellectually formative period for both Hobbes and Cavendish (who seems to have cultivated Italian to a much higher level than any other language). And although there is a smattering of Italian belles-lettres, it is also striking that the Italian authors are best represented in the areas of political history, Tacitism, and reason of state. Hobbes may have been responsible for the purchase of many of these books.[57] But the pattern here also tends to confirm what Hobbes himself wrote about the second Earl of Devonshire: 'For his own studie, it was bestowed, for the most part, in that kind of Learning, which best deserueth the paines and houres of Great Persons, *History*, and *Ciuill knowledge*, and directed not to the Ostentation of his reading, but to the Gouernment of his Life, and the Publike good.'[58]

The sheer concentration of editions of, and commentaries on, Tacitus is another noticeable feature of this collection: here too, history and civil knowledge were combined. Among the books listed we find 'Ammiratus in Tacitum' (Scipione Ammirato, *Dissertationes politicae, sive discursus in C. Tacitum* ('Helenopolis', 1609), the Latin version of his *Discorsi sopra Cornelio Tacito* (Florence, 1594)); 'Lipsij opera' (which included Lipsius's commentary on Tacitus); 'Tacitus English' (*The Annales of Cornelius Tacitus*, tr. R. Greenwey (London, 1598)); 'Ammirato. Discorsi sopra Tacito'; 'Tacito Lat. Italian by Dati. 2. vol.' (*C. Cornelij Taciti opera latina, cum versione italica* (Frankfurt, 1612), which included the translation by G. Dati, first published in Venice in 1563); 'Tacito Ital. by Politi' (*Annali, et istorie, di G. Cornelio Tacito*, tr. A. Politi (Venice, 1615–16)); 'Tacitus wth Aphorismes in Spanish' (*Tacito español, ilustrado con aforismos*, tr. B. Alamos de Barrientos (Madrid, 1614)); and 'Tacitus in french' (*Les Oeuvres de C. Cornelius Tacitus*, tr. C. Fauchet and E. de la Planche (Paris, 1584)).[59]

The 'Discourse upon the Beginning of Tacitus', which may have been written by Cavendish with some assistance from Hobbes and was published with Cavendish's other discourses and essays in 1620, shows not only the fruits of a careful study of the Roman historian, but also some familiarity with the reason of state tradition. Self-interest

[56] Chatsworth, MS Hobbes E. 1. A.
[57] See above, Ch. 1 n. 31.
[58] Thucydides, *Eight Bookes*, sig. A1r.
[59] Chatsworth, MS Hobbes E. 1. A.

is taken as fundamental: 'most men measuring others by themselves, are apt to think that all men will . . . in all their actions more respect what conduces to the advancing of their own ends, than of truth, and the good of others.'[60] Human beings are naturally foolish and self-deceiving: 'men have generally this infirmity, that when they would fall into consideration of their hopes; they mistake, and enter into a fruitless discourse of their wishes; such impression do pleasing things make in man's imagination.'[61] Dissimulation is given due prominence: Agrippa's failing was that he lacked the 'ability upon just cause, to contain and dissemble his passions, and purposes; and this was then thought the chief Art of government', whereas Tiberius 'knew best of all men how to dissemble his vices'.[62] And the importance of reputation is also acknowledged, in a passage which begins by nodding in the direction of traditional just war theory but then adds:

> But this war against the Germans, was to defend the reputation of the Roman Empire, and was necessary, not for the curiosity alone, and niceness, that great Personages have always had, in point of honor, much more great States, and most of all that of Rome, but also for the real and substantial damage (for some man might account the other but a shadow) that might ensue upon the neglecting of such shadows.[63]

Another justification, even further removed from traditional theory, was also put forward: 'And besides this, Augustus might find commodity in this war, by employing therein the great and active spirits, which else might have made themselves work at home, to the prejudice of his authority'; this too was a point made familiar by writers on 'ragion di stato' such as Botero, who had commended foreign wars as a useful safety-valve through which the energies of potentially troublesome subjects could be vented.[64]

The author of this discourse seems to have sympathized in some ways with Tacitus' nostalgia for Republican Rome. On the one hand he took

[60] Hobbes (attrib.), *Three Discourses*, pp. 40–1. [61] Ibid., p. 62.

[62] Ibid., pp. 57, 64.

[63] Ibid., p. 59. Cf. the comment made nearly twenty years later by the duc de Rohan: 'It is a thing that seems empty, but produces solid effects' (above, at n. 37).

[64] Ibid., p. 59; Botero, *Della ragion di stato*, III.3, pp. 110–11 (Botero, *Reason of State*, p. 77). The idea can be found in Machiavelli: 'Ambition uses against foreigners that violence which neither the law nor the king allows her to use internally; as a result, internal trouble almost always ceases' (N. Machiavelli, *Opere letterarie*, ed. A. Borlenghi (Naples, 1969), p. 154: l'ambizion contra l'esterna gente | usa il furor ch'usarlo infra se stessa | né la legge né il re gliene consente; | onde il mal proprio quasi sempre cessa').

care to explain that the establishment of a republic (after the expulsion of King Tarquin) 'is by the Author entitled, Liberty, not because bondage is always joined to Monarchy', but only because monarchy had been abused by those who held it.[65] On the other hand, the shift to Triumvirate and Principate was referred to by him, repeatedly, as a loss of 'liberty' by 'the people' or by 'Rome'.[66] Of the consolidation of power by Augustus he wrote: 'This encroaching on the liberty of the State, in former times never wanted opposers; but now the stout Patriots were rooted out.'[67] And, most strikingly, he observed:

> For though other virtues, especially deep wisdom, great, and extraordinary valor, be excellent ones under any sort of government, and chiefly in a free State . . . yet in the subject of a Monarch, obedience is the greatest virtue . . . Therefore they now study no more the Art of commanding, which had been heretofore necessary for any Roman Gentleman . . . but apply themselves wholly to the Arts of service, whereof obsequiousness is the chief.[68]

Although there are touches or echoes of Hobbes's prose-style in this Discourse, the overall position taken by its author seems to fit what is known about the political attitudes of Lord Cavendish: here is a Tacitist with some sympathies on the red side of the divide (inclined to think, perhaps, that the duty of a 'stout Patriot' in 1620s England was to resist the sort of 'encroachment' represented by extra-parliamentary taxation), who also has a robust 'reason of state' approach to international affairs. Such a person might well have felt that a foreign war could be justified on grounds—such as the defence of reputation and the need to act pre-emptively against Habsburg encirclement—that were rather different from those put forward by Puritan preachers in their pulpits.

For the period of the 1620s, as we have seen, there is too little evidence to enable us to judge exactly what position Hobbes took on such political issues. But there are at least some signs that his judgements, whatever they were, would have been influenced by Tacitist and 'reason of state' ways of thinking. His proximity to Cavendish, and the evidence of the Hardwick library, have already been mentioned. The strongly Tacitist flavour of the letter to Hobbes from Robert Mason in 1622 (which applies to England a quotation from the first book of Tacitus' *Historia*, and invokes the Tacitean concept of 'arcana imperii') should also be borne in mind.[69] A few further indications can be found in

[65] Hobbes (attrib.), *Three Discourses*, p. 33.
[66] Ibid., pp. 34, 36, 38.
[67] Ibid., p. 46.
[68] Ibid., pp. 60–1.
[69] Hobbes, *Correspondence*, i, pp. 1–4.

the prefatory materials to Hobbes's translation of Thucydides. In his Preface to the Readers he famously characterized Thucydides as 'the most Politique Historiographer that euer writ'; in early modern English the adjective 'politique' or 'politic(k)' implied skill and shrewdness in the contrivance, conduct, or understanding of policy, but the notion of 'policy' often had slightly Machiavellian overtones of expediency and the pursuit of secular advantage as opposed to morality or religion.[70] Expanding on this theme, Hobbes wrote that Thucydides excelled at enabling the reader 'to trace the drifts and counsailes of the Actors to their seate': in other words, he made it possible to cut through the public pretexts and official explanations, identifying the motivations that the actors themselves had usually dissembled.[71] In his essay 'Of the Life and History of Thucydides' he defended (against the criticisms of Dionysius of Halicarnassus) the author's method of 'putting first the Narration of the Publique, and auowed cause of this Warre, and after that the true and inward motiue of the same', and commented: 'for without a pretext, no Warre followes. This pretext is alwayes an iniury receiued, or pretended to be receiued. Whereas the inward motiue to hostility is but coniecturall . . . as enuy to the greatnesse of another State, or feare of a iniury to come.'[72] It was in the spirit of the 'reason of state' literature both to think that pre-emption might be an important reason for going to war, and to suppose that such reasons were sometimes best hidden. More generally, Hobbes commended Thucydides as someone who penetrated the façade of dissimulation: his writings offered 'contemplations of those humane passions, which either dissembled, or not commonly discoursed of, doe yet carry the greatest sway with men, in their publique conuersation'.[73] Yet although Thucydides himself had seen through all pretences, his writings still cleverly respected the 'ragion di stato' principle that the common people should not have easy access to the arcana of state: '*Marcellinus* saith, he was obscure on purpose, that the Common people might not vnderstand him. And not vnlikely; for a wise man should so write (thogh in words vnderstood by all men) that wise men only should be able to commend him. But this obscurity is not to be in the Narrations of things done . . . in all w^{ch}, *Thucydides*

[70] Thucydides, *Eight Bookes*, sig. A3v. *OED* 'politic', adj. 2: 'of persons: apt at pursuing a policy; sagacious, prudent, shrewd; of actions or things: judicious, expedient, skilfully contrived'. For a characteristic example of the use of the term, cf. Ben Jonson's naming of the character 'Sir Politick Would-be' in *Volpone*.

[71] Thucydides, *Eight Bookes*, sig. A3v.

[72] Ibid., sig. a4r–v.

[73] Ibid., sig. a4v.

is most perspicuous'.[74] Hobbes's meaning here is partly explicated by an earlier comment in the same essay, which makes intriguing use of the notion of 'secrecy': he describes Thucydides as 'hauing so cleerely set before mens eyes, the wayes and euents, of good and euill counsels, that the Narration it selfe doth secretly instruct the Reader, and more effectually then possibly can be done by Precept'.[75] Here is a form of 'secret instruction' that passes, like a coded message, from a writer who has understood true reason of state to those readers who have the capacity to understand it when the causes and consequences of policies are properly set out. And the origins of this comment are revealed when, at the end of his essay on Thucydides, Hobbes invokes 'the most true and proper commendation of him, from *Iustus Lipsius*', quoting the eulogy of the Greek historian in the *Politicorum libri sex*: 'sound in his iudgements; euery where secretly instructing, and directing a mans life and actions'.[76]

If we now turn to Hobbes's mature political writings, we can find a number of themes and lines of argument that seem to echo the teachings of 'ragion di stato' theory. Of course, beyond a certain level of generality, the fact that Hobbes's attitude was similar to that of the reason of state writers need not mean that his thinking was influenced directly by theirs. That he too regarded human beings as naturally conflictual, and looked to artifice (backed by force) to create viable political structures, might indicate merely that he shared with those writers some of the available range of anti-Aristotelian assumptions. Nevertheless, there is a pattern of similarity that deserves notice.

That human beings follow what they believe to be their own interests is a fundamental principle in Hobbes's theory. 'Every man by nature seeketh his own benefit, and promotion.'[77] Unfortunately, 'the Passions of men, are commonly more potent than their Reason.'[78] Only the proper application of reason can tell people where their true interests lie, and most people will fail to apply reason because they are pursuing those short-term or seeming benefits to which their passions propel them; 'as oft as reason is against a man, so oft will a man be against reason.'[79] The

[74] Thucydides, *Eight Bookes*, sig. a4v. [75] Ibid., sig. a3r. [76] Ibid., sig. b1r.

[77] T. Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London, 1651), p. 97. (Page-numbers of this edition can be found in most modern editions, including those by J. C. A. Gaskin, C. B. Macpherson, W. G. Pogson Smith, and R. Tuck.)

[78] Ibid., p. 96.

[79] T. Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, ed. F. Tönnies (London, 1889), Epistle Dedicatory, p. xv.

constant threat to political order comes from the fact that people seek a version of their own 'interest' that has been inadequately conceived by them: as one of the speakers in *Behemoth* puts it, 'people always have been, and always will be, ignorant of their duty to the public, as never meditating anything but their particular interest'.[80] What they lack, then, is a proper understanding of what Hobbes calls 'the common interest' or 'the publique interest'; that is what his theory aims to supply. And in so doing, he also aims to persuade them that monarchy is the best form of government, because in it 'the private interest [*sc*. of the monarch] is the same with the publique'.[81]

Another general point of similarity between Hobbes's theory and that of the 'ragion di stato' tradition is the importance both attributed to opinion. As we have seen, for the reason of state theorists, political rule rested on reputation, which was a matter of the opinions held about the ruler by the ruled. This approach involved what might be called a radical psychologizing of political theory: the foundations of rule were to be located not in natural harmony, nor in armies, fortresses, or treasuries, but inside the skulls of the people. Hobbes's views were congruent with this: 'the power of the mighty', explained one of the speakers in *Behemoth*, 'hath no foundation but in the opinion and belief of the people'.[82] In all his political treatises he emphasized the role of false opinion and false doctrine in bringing about the destruction of legitimate rule.[83] It followed that the sovereign power must take an interest in such matters of doctrine and opinion, promoting true and beneficial doctrines and curbing others: 'For the Actions of men proceed from their Opinions; and in the wel governing of Opinions, consisteth the well governing of mens Actions, in order to their Peace, and Concord.'[84]

[80] T. Hobbes, *Behemoth: Or, The Long Parliament*, ed. F. Tönnies (London, 1889), p. 39.

[81] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 96. In his first political treatise, *Elements of Law*, Hobbes did not use the term 'interest' (perhaps because of his awareness of the ways in which its use might conceal the difference between real and ill-conceived interest), preferring terms such as 'benefit' and 'profit' instead; but the argument was essentially the same (e.g. II. V. 1, p. 138: 'the profit of the sovereign and subject goeth always together'). (References to *Elements of Law* include part-, chapter-, and section-numbers, as well as the page-numbers in Tönnies's edition.)

[82] Hobbes, *Behemoth*, p. 16.

[83] Hobbes, *Elements of Law* II. VIII. 4–10, pp. 170–5; *De cive: The Latin Version*, ed. H. Warrender (Oxford, 1983), XII.1–8 (*On the Citizen*, ed. and tr. R. Tuck and M. Silverthorne (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 131–7); *Leviathan*, pp. 168–72.

[84] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 91.

Where specific recommendations about the 'well governing of mens Actions' were concerned, Hobbes's writings were much less detailed than those of the reason of state theorists. As he put it in *The Elements of Law*, he wrote 'Not purposing to enter into the particulars of the art of government, but to sum up the general heads, wherein such art is to be employed'.[85] Nevertheless, some suggestions about 'the art of government' do appear in his works, and several of them agree with those of the 'ragion di stato' writers. In *De cive*, for example, he emphasized the importance of spies or intelligence agents ('exploratores'), who could supply the state with information about 'the plans and movements of all those who have the capacity to do it harm'.[86] Similarly, he explained in *Leviathan* that 'to be able to give Counsell to a Common-wealth, in a businesse that hath reference to another Common-wealth, *It is necessary to be acquainted with the Intelligences, and Letters* that come from thence'.[87] Indeed, when discussing the role of state counsellors (to which he gave special attention), he wrote that they must have a deep knowledge 'of the Strength, Commodities, Places, both of their own Country, and their Neighbours; as also of the inclinations, and designes of all Nations that may any way annoy them'—very much the sort of information that works such as Botero's *Relationi universali* were meant to supply.[88] In *The Elements of Law* he commended 'the aristocracy of Venice' for its wise decision to 'commit the handling of state affairs to a few'; expanding this point in *Leviathan*, he wrote that 'in Deliberations that ought to be kept secret, (whereof there be many occasions in Publique Businesse,) the Counsells of many, and especially in Assemblies, are dangerous'.[89]

Where the ruler's day-to-day government of his own subjects was concerned, Hobbes paid much more attention in *Leviathan* to the promulgation of laws and the instilling of correct doctrines than he did to such matters as the promotion of commerce; but he did make some suggestions about taxation, public welfare, and the role of organizations 'for the well ordering of forraigne Traffique'.[90] In his earlier works he had attempted a more systematic listing of the forms of 'temporal good' which it was the sovereign's duty to promote. Thus in *The Elements of Law* he declared that 'the temporal good of people . . . consisteth in

[85] Hobbes, *Elements of Law* II. IX. 1, p. 179. [86] Hobbes, *De cive* XIII.7, p. 145.
[87] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 135. [88] Ibid., p. 134.
[89] Hobbes, *Elements of Law* II. V. 8, p. 143; *Leviathan*, p. 136.
[90] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 119, 181.

four points: 1. Multitude. 2. Commodity of living. 3. Peace amongst ourselves. 4. Defence against foreign power.'[91] In *De cive* the list was slightly different: 'Regarding this life only, the good things citizens may enjoy can be put into four categories: 1) defence from external enemies; 2) preservation of internal peace; 3) acquisition of wealth, so far as this is consistent with public security; 4) full enjoyment of innocent liberty.'[92] This last formulation is quite similar to Botero's statement (quoted above) that 'he who wishes to keep his subjects contented and quiet should procure for them plenty, justice, peace, and a certain virtuous liberty' (where 'virtuous' translates 'honesta').[93] For Hobbes, all these temporal goods could be summarized in the phrase 'salus populi', 'the safety of the people'; 'salus' here had as its most important component the preservation of the people by the maintenance of peace, but also included other forms of well-being. 'The Office of the Soveraign . . . consisteth in . . . the procuration of *the safety of the people* . . . But by Safety here, is not meant a bare Preservation, but also all other Contentments of life, which every man by lawfull Industry, without danger, or hurt to the Common-wealth, shall acquire to himselfe.'[94]

The Latin phrase was derived from the precept 'salus populi suprema lex esto', 'let the safety of the people be the supreme law'. This was a tag often cited by writers in the 'ragion di stato' tradition, as it seemed to express the principle (formulated most clearly by Scipione Ammirato) that reason of state was a higher norm that could supervene on ordinary laws or policies and overrule them. And the idea that the safety and well-being of the people (as assessed and defended by their sovereign) must trump the ordinary norms of behaviour, both legal and moral, was propounded quite emphatically by Hobbes. In his discussion of 'the defence of the people' in *De cive* he argued that sovereign rulers 'may also do anything that seems likely to subvert, by force or by craft, the power of foreigners whom they fear'; this fully encompassed Lipsius's

[91] Hobbes, *Elements of Law* II. IX. 3, p. 179.

[92] Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, p. 144 (*De cive* XIII.6, p. 197: 'Commoda ciuium quae hanc tantùm vitam spectant in quatuor genera distribui possunt. 1. vt ab hostibus externis defendantur. 2. vt pax interna conseruetur. 3. vt quantum cum securitate publica consistere potest, locupletentur. 4. vt libertate innoxiâ perfruantur'). In the translation, 'innocent' should be taken in its literal sense of 'harmless'.

[93] See above, n. 40. Botero's 'peace' referred primarily to not being at war with other states, and 'justice' to one of the essential conditions of internal peace.

[94] *Leviathan*, p. 175; cf. *Elements of Law* II. IX. 1, p. 179: '*Salus populi suprema lex*; by which must be understood, not the mere preservation of their lives, but generally their benefit and good'.

category of 'medium' frauds, and, in its use of the term 'anything', may have gone quite a long way beyond it.[95] Occasionally, indeed, Hobbes's willingness to sanction extreme breaches of moral norms far exceeded anything in the reason of state tradition (with the possible exception of Naudé's admiring account of 'coups d'état'). In *Behemoth* the principal speaker first explains that the Civil War was caused by 'the incitement of Presbyterian ministers' and then estimates that 'near 100,000 persons' died as a result. He suggests: 'Had it not been much better that those seditious ministers, which were not perhaps 1000, had been all killed before they had preached? It had been (I confess) a great massacre; but the killing of 100,000 is a greater.'[96]

In various ways, then, it seems reasonable to align Hobbes's political theory with that of 'ragion di stato': there are general congruities, specific points of agreement, and some elements of a reason of state mentality taken *à l'outrance*. And yet the overall flavour of his work is very different. Just as his writing lacks detailed instructions on 'the art of government', so too it virtually ignores all the case histories of political and military actions and policies, from ancient Greece and Rome and contemporary Europe, which filled so many of the pages of the 'ragion di stato' authors. This is not just a matter of stylistic preference; it reflects Hobbes's most basic assumptions about the nature of political theory. For the study of case histories will yield only the sort of 'prudence' that is derived from 'experience'. Hobbes admits that 'by how much one man has more experience of things past, than another, by so much also he is more Prudent, and his expectations the seldomer faile him.'[97] He allows that a high degree of such prudence is important in a counsellor, and grants that it is necessary in order to govern a kingdom well.[98] But, in the end, prudence offers only a form of conjecture, in which extrapolations are made from past chains of events to future ones; 'such conjecture, through the difficulty of observing all the circumstances', is 'very fallacious'.[99] And in any body of doctrine or belief where certainty is lacking, people are much more likely to twist the doctrines to suit their

[95] Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, p. 146 (*De cive* XIII.8, p. 198: 'Quibus etiam addi potest quicquid ad potentiam externorum à quibus metuunt, vel arte vel vi minuendam conducere videbitur').

[96] Hobbes, *Behemoth*, p. 95. Richard Tuck has portrayed *Behemoth* as a very Tacitist work, particularly where its account of Cromwell is concerned ('Hobbes and Tacitus'); for a more qualified judgement see N. Malcolm, '*Behemoth Latinus*: Adam Ebert, Tacitism, and Hobbes', *Filozofski vestnik*, 24 (2003), pp. 85–120.

[97] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 10. [98] Ibid., pp. 34, 134. [99] Ibid., p. 10.

particular passions and interests: hence Hobbes's declared disapproval of those 'pretenders to Politicall Prudence' (who may perhaps have included amateur reason of state theorists of the sort satirized by Ben Jonson), whom he compared to little worms nibbling at the bowels of the commonwealth.[100]

What Hobbes aimed to supply was not prudence but science—a system of certain knowledge. This was intended to be not a science of the art of government, but rather, a science that would demonstrate the necessity of government and the need for any government to have certain essential features. Hobbes allowed that the day-to-day management of affairs required prudential and practical skills, and compared those skills to those of a good player at tennis.[101] But, he observed, 'the skill of making, and maintaining Common-wealths, consisteth in certain Rules, as doth Arithmetique and Geometry; not (as in Tennis-play) on Practise onely'.[102] Hobbes's 'scientific' political theory was, at least in part, a science based on definitions and their entailments: an action could be identified with certainty as unjust, for example, if and only if it was in breach of covenant, since justice was defined as action in accordance with covenants made. At the same time, these seemingly analytic jural categories (involving rights and the transfers of rights) were grounded in a descriptive account of human behaviour and the consequences of actions; what exactly the overall nature of this Hobbesian 'science' was, and the extent to which its essential components (a science of 'names' and a science of 'causes') diverged, are questions that have long bedevilled modern commentary on Hobbes. But it is at least clear that he was attempting something that went significantly beyond the sort of theorizing performed by the reason of state writers. This is also shown by the fact that the key categories of his political philosophy were jural ones, such as rights, covenants, and authority—terms little used in the reason of state literature, where the vocabulary was almost entirely descriptive.

To say that Hobbes was going beyond the mental world of the 'ragion di stato' writers does not mean that he was simply dismissing its concerns as irrelevant. In some ways, his political theory can be seen as solving problems which the reason of state literature had raised. The concept of 'interest', for example, had always occupied

[100] Ibid., p. 174. [101] Ibid., p. 136.

[102] Ibid., p. 107. 'Maintaining' here referred not to ordinary government business, but to maintaining the state as a state—for example, not giving away any of the essential powers of the sovereign, as someone ignorant of the true political science might do.

a rather uncertain, intermediate position between the subjective and the objective. Hobbes set out a system of value-terms in which the subjective (and therefore conflicting) use of simple terms such as 'good' and 'bad' was acknowledged, but from which there emerged a higher-level set of values (those relating to the attainment of the one good, self-preservation, on which all subjective evaluators must agree). Those higher values were the ones embodied in the Laws of Nature, the principles of morality, which were objective; the Laws of Nature would never change, though they might in any given set of circumstances be overridden by the immediate requirement of self-preservation. A person's 'interest' would thus have a primary and objective component (whatever increased that person's chances of self-preservation was in his or her true interest), and a secondary, subjective one (relating to the attaining of subjective goods).

Hobbes used the vocabulary of 'utile' and 'turpe' as subjective value-terms, and explained that traditional moral vocabulary expressed the dictates of the Laws of Nature, which set out the optimum rules for the attainment of one's objective interest.[103] But at the same time his argument explained how breaches of the Laws of Nature—immoral acts—might be justified: in any set of circumstances where self-preservation was endangered, an action that would secure it would be not only permitted but required, no matter how contrary it might be to the normal rules of morality. The application of this argument to the case of a sovereign state and its external relations was not straightforward, as Hobbes did not simply transfer the notion of 'self-preservation' to the level of the state itself; a more complex pattern of argument was deployed, involving the natural-law duties of the sovereign.[104] But a similar outcome was achieved: a system of values which could itself explain why its normally applicable values must sometimes be contravened. Unlike the 'ragion di stato' theorists, Hobbes did not have to juggle with two opposing value-scales that proceeded on fundamentally different bases; rather, he showed how they were necessarily related within a single overall system.

Similarly, Hobbes's account of the essential role of consent resolved the ambiguities of the reason of state writers. Consent, for Hobbes, was not merely a psychological prop which it was in the sovereign's interests to strengthen; rather, it was what constituted the very authority

[103] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 24–5 (where Hobbes uses 'pulchrum'/'turpe' for the apparent good/bad, and 'utile'/'inutile' for the means towards it); pp. 79–80.

[104] See Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, pp. 432–56.

of the sovereign.[105] Hobbes agreed that 'opinion' was thus of essential importance; and what mattered was not just the opinions the subjects held about particular actions or policies adopted by the ruler (the basis of his 'reputation' at any given time), but rather their opinions about the nature of his authority as such. In this way, Hobbes's attention to the topic of 'opinion' was deeper than that of the reason of state writers; and it was also wider, insofar as he had to consider all the other forms of opinion (including, but not confined to, religious beliefs) that might affect people's beliefs about the nature of the sovereign's authority. The control or management of people's beliefs thus became even more important for Hobbes than it was for any of the reason of state writers. And since, as he explained, belief was not subject to the will, and could therefore not be commanded or forced, the only long-term way of ensuring that the right sort of belief was held by the people was to engage in teaching and persuasion.

Could that teaching and persuasion include the inculcating of beliefs which, while politically convenient, were known (by the inculcating ruler) to be false? Hobbes certainly allowed that such a process had taken place in some cases, and that it had conferred some advantage at the time. He noted that 'the first Founders, and Legislators of Commonwealths amongst the Gentiles' had done this, not only with regard to religious practices ('So *Numa Pompilius* pretended to receive the Ceremonies he instituted among the Romans, from the Nymph *Egeria*') but also more generally, when they took care 'to make it believed, that the same things were displeasing to the Gods, which were forbidden by the Lawes'.[106] But there is plenty of evidence elsewhere in Hobbes's writings, in his extended discussions of superstition, priestcraft, and the 'kingdom of darkness', that he regarded such a method as far from optimal: people whose heads were filled with absurdities and false beliefs were much more open to manipulation by interested parties, who could use those beliefs to turn them against their sovereign. The optimal

[105] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 250: 'the authority of all . . . Princes, must be grounded on the Consent of the People'. For an exploration of some aspects of this difference between the reason of state theorists and Hobbes, contrasting the former's techniques for the conservation of power by the ruler with the latter's 'two-way exchange' between authority and obedience, see G. Borelli, *Ragion di stato e Leviatano: conservazione e scambio alle origini della modernità politica* (Bologna, 1993).

[106] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 57. This theme (and the citing of Numa Pompilius as a prime example of it) was a commonplace of the Machiavellian tradition. For a similar attitude to the role of religious beliefs cf. also Hobbes's comments in 1636, cited above, Ch. 5, at n. 44.

strategy involved inculcating true beliefs about the necessity and nature of political rule—the truths which Hobbes's 'science' established. Thus at the outset of his discussion of the duties of the sovereign, Hobbes wrote that 'it is against his Duty, to let the people be ignorant, or mis-informed of the grounds, and reasons of those his essentiall Rights . . . the grounds of these Rights, have the . . . need to be diligently, and truly taught'.[107] Some element of noble lie or pious fraud might have served a purpose at the original foundation of a state, when unruly men had to be quickly brought to order, but it was in the long-term interests of peace and stability that the people should be led towards a true understanding of the nature and justification of authority. Hobbes thus subscribed to a version of the 'principle of publicity' (the principle that the public should have true knowledge about the nature of the state and the rationale of its exercise of power); and his long-term programme for mankind can reasonably be characterized as a project of enlightenment.[108]

This does not mean, of course, that Hobbes elevated truth-telling into an absolute moral requirement. His own political theory, with its strong version of the private/public distinction and its insistence that the externalities, including speech and writing, were all subject to the command of the sovereign, clearly envisaged situations in which simulation or dissimulation might be required; and even a truth-telling philosopher, when it came to such delicate matters as discussion of the publicly authorized religion, might well find himself in such a situation.[109] More generally, Hobbes had a subtle sense of the ways in which ordinary human life requires a kind of theatrical self-presentation, both simulative and dissimulative: once again, there was a gap between the private and the public, and not all the thoughts that ranged freely in a person's mind could be freely expressed to other persons.[110] Moreover, while truth-telling about the necessity and nature of the state was, in

[107] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 175.

[108] See D. Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation* (Princeton, 1986); R. P. Kraynak, *History and Modernity in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes* (Ithaca, NY, 1990); J. Waldron, 'Hobbes and the Principle of Publicity', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 82 (2001), pp. 447–74; Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, pp. 537–45.

[109] For a valuable discussion of this issue, making some connections with writers in the reason of state tradition (but possibly overstating the case where Hobbes's basic concept of philosophy is concerned) see K. Hoekstra, 'The End of Philosophy (The Case of Hobbes)', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 106 (2006), pp. 23–60.

[110] For an original investigation of this theme, see M. Brito Vieira, 'Elements of Representation in Hobbes: Aesthetics, Theatre, Law, and Theology in the Construction of Hobbes's Theory of the State', Cambridge University PhD thesis (2005).

his view, important for maintaining the state's authority, it was not the only way, nor, perhaps, the most effective way for at least some elements of the common people: in addition to threats of punishments (which required subjects rational enough to make simple calculations about the costs and benefits of their actions), a certain theatricality of power might also be needed—as expressed in the image of a 'leviathan' that would keep proud people in 'awe'. As for the use of secrecy, dissimulation, and simulation in the actual conduct of government business, Hobbes had no difficulty, as we have seen, in accepting their value in particular circumstances. Nevertheless, his 'principle of publicity' implied that, as a population became more enlightened and therefore more able to accept the true reasons for government policies, the degree of concealment and misdirection should gradually decline: if the people understood that, for example, a pre-emptive war was justified by true political principles, they would not need to have that war presented to them under a simulated pretext. The world of the *Altera secretissima instructio*, in which the most important political truths were always 'most secret' because they could not be publicly avowed, was a world Thomas Hobbes knew well enough. But his aim was to replace it with a better one.