For half a century now scholars have debated why Thomas Hobbes was never made a Fellow of the Royal Society. But no one has ever thought it worth asking why the University of Oxford never gave him an honorary degree – as it gave Oliver Cromwell one in May 1649. Hobbes had been a student at Magdalene Hall between 1602 and 1608, but thereafter he was – one brief attempt at rapprochement aside – one of Oxford’s most inveterate enemies, and indeed an enemy of universities tout court. In fact, nothing he said in Leviathan (1651) aroused more immediate anger than his claim that the book might be ‘profitably taught in the Universities’. Hobbes’s early readers reacted to this statement, as Hobbes himself later acknowledged, with incredulity and disgust. And when members of the English universities were accused


of professing Hobbes’s ideas, as Daniel Scargill was at Cambridge in 1668, they were liable to find themselves in serious trouble.5

But despite Hobbes’s hostility to them, the universities nonetheless have an significant place in all of his major writings. They were a consistent component of his systematic political philosophy between the Elements of law of 1640 and the Latin Leviathan of 1668. The universities also played an increasingly significant role in his understanding of history: both the history of his own time, and also of European history since classical antiquity. And so it seems worth discussing the question of Hobbes’s view of the universities for a number of reasons. It will shed some light on how the relationship between education and the state was conceived in the political thought of the period. It will help draw attention to the increasingly important place of the history of philosophy in his thought. And it will help shed light more generally, on how the persona of the early modern philosopher came to be defined in opposition to the philosophy of the schools.

Indeed, the question of Hobbes’s relations to the schools derives a further impetus by a number of recent studies that have emphasized the extent to which his ideas can be seen as arising out of a body of literature he always insisted he despised: the writings of scholastic Aristotelians. Brett has explored his relations to the writings of the Spanish second scholastic.6 Schuhmann emphasized the importance of a broad Renaissance Aristotelian philosophical culture for understanding Hobbes,7 and Schuhmann’s student Leijenhorst has explored in some detail how the account of prima philosophia in Hobbes’s De corpore can be regarded as being in some sense a ‘mechanization’ of contemporary Aristotelian natural philosophy.8 Indeed, Hobbes’s own obligations to the schools were polemically acknowledged by one of the first critics of Leviathan, Alexander Ross, who asserted that ‘in speaking against the Schools, he fouls his own nest: for whence had he the knowledge which he now rejects, but out of them’.9

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9 Ross, Leviathan drawn out with a hook, p. 7. For an instance of Hobbes using a standard scholastic quaestio to structure his early philosophy compare The elements of law natural & politic, ed. F.
Here I shall raise both a general and a specific question about Hobbes’s relations to the schools. I shall develop a general argument about Hobbes’s changing views of the universities in the thirty years between 1640 and 1670. And as the centrepiece of this account, I shall offer a specific interpretation of Hobbes’s most thoroughgoing attack on the universities and their ‘vain philosophy’, in chapter XLVI of *Leviathan*.

I

Hobbes’s views on the universities developed in a number of important ways throughout his publications. In certain key respects, however, his underlying position also remained constant, and it is with his constant position that I wish to begin. From the *Elements of law* (1640) to the Latin *Leviathan* (1668) and *Behemoth* (1670), Hobbes’s view of the universities was characterized by a sense of their importance as places of education, and above all, education in political ideas. It was in the universities that young men received their political opinions, and the same young men then transmitted those opinions to the people by their conversation and preaching. This view is present in the *Elements of law*.10 It remains in the *De cive* (1642), in which Hobbes asserted that ‘anyone who wants to introduce a sound doctrine has to begin from with the Universities (Academiae)’.11 And it was memorably reformulated in the review and conclusion of the English *Leviathan* (1651), in which Hobbes emphasized his point with a striking metaphor. ‘For seeing’, he wrote there,

the Universities are the Fountains of Civill, and Morall Doctrine, from whence the Preachers, and the Gentry, drawing such water as they find, use to sprinkle the same (both from the Pulpit, and in their Conversation) upon the People, there ought certainly to be great care taken, to have it pure, both from the Venime of Heathen Politicians, and from the Incantation of Deceiving Spirits.12

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Hobbes is quite consciously picking up here on an established metaphor for the universities’ purpose. He is also drawing on the appropriation of this language for the purpose of reform: the Grand Remonstrance of 1641 had spoken of Parliament’s intention to ‘purge the fountains of learning, the two Universities, that the streams flowing from them may be clear and pure’. The metaphor of the fountain in its turn perhaps also picks up on the motto of the University of Cambridge: hinc lucem et pocula sacra (‘From here [flow] light and sacred draughts’).

Hobbes’s emphasis on the universities as the most effective means of teaching civil doctrine stems from his more general conviction of human educability. In the Elements of law, Hobbes spoke of the young men entering the universities as having minds ‘yet as white paper, capable of any instruction’. In Leviathan, similarly, he spoke of the ‘Common-peoples minds’ as being ‘like clean paper, fit to receive whatsoever by Publique Authority shall be imprinted in them.’ Hobbes gives a formal explanation for his emphasis on human educability in the account of human nature in De homine (On man, 1658), the second part of his tripartite treatment of the ‘elements of philosophy’. Here he ascribes the various sources of human ingenia (‘wits’, defined as ‘the tendencies of men to certain things’), to temperament, custom, experience, good fortune, self-regard, and authorities. Of the last of these – authorities – Hobbes curtly noted that ‘if they are good, the wits of youths are formed well; if corrupt, then corruptly, whether they are Magistrates, or Fathers, or any others of those whom they hear praised by the people for their wisdom’. From which it follows, Hobbes continues, that fathers, magistrates and tutors had better both impart

15 Hobbes, Elements of law, p. 146 (II. ix. 8).
16 Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 176 (ch. XXX)
18 Hobbes, De homine, p. 74 (XIII. 7): ‘Ab his si boni, Ingenia adolescentum formantur bona; prava si pravi, sive Magistri iis sint, sive Patres, sive alii quicunque quos vulgo a sapientia laudari audiant; nam laudatos reverentur & dignos existimant quos imitentur.’
good precepts and provide a good example in following them; and that the books which are read should be ‘healthful, chaste and useful’.19

A further explanation for Hobbes’s insistence on the educational importance of the universities arises from their legal status. The universities in Hobbes’s England, as elsewhere in early modern Europe, were ‘public’ foundations. Unlike the first education that parents provided for their children,20 the education that universities provided to their charges was licensed and authorized by the commonwealth itself by means of privileges, exemptions and laws specific to them – as a number of contemporary political writers pointed out.21 As we might expect, Hobbes took this ‘public’ aspect of the universities extremely seriously. Moreover, when he speaks – as he does in chapter xxix of Leviathan – of seditious books being ‘publikely read’, he means that they are lectured upon in the schools.22

At a more general level, Hobbes’s conviction about the importance of the universities relates to his emphasis on the political importance of opinion. In his later writings in particular, Hobbes increasingly stressed a view more commonly associated in the history of political thought with David Hume: that political power follows opinion.23 Since (in Hobbes’s view) the ‘common people’ derived their opinions from preachers and the gentry, and since the preachers and the gentry learnt their opinions in the universities, what the universities taught was of fundamental importance.24

II

Hobbes’s consistent emphasis on the public function of the universities as the places where the blank paper of the ruling classes minds’ was imprinted with civil doctrine has an important consequence for his political philosophy. In all his major political works, Hobbes asserts that a concern for university education is a formal duty or

19 Hobbes, De homine, p. 75 (XIII. 7): ‘Secundo, quam, quos lecturi sunt libros, sunt sani, casti, & utiles.’
22 Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 171 (ch. XXIX).
23 See David Hume, Essays: moral, political, and literary, ed. E. F. Miller, rev. edn (Indianapolis, 1985), esp. p. 32 (‘Of the first principles of government’) and p. 51 (‘Whether the British government inclines more to absolute monarchy, or to a republic’).
24 On this point see also G. M. Vaughan, Behemoth teaches Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on political education (Lanham, MD, 2002), p. 38.
‘office’ of the sovereign.25 Hobbes first made this point in the Elements of law.26 It is repeated in De cive, where Hobbes writes: ‘I hold therefore that it is a duty of sovereigns to have the true Elements of civil doctrine written[,] and to order that it be taught in all the Universities in the commonwealth.’27 And it is emphasized again in the English Leviathan.28

Leviathan is not often considered in the context of the systematic or encyclopaedic political philosophy generated by the schools in the earlier seventeenth century – which historians have disparaged when they have considered it at all.29 But although not in terms of its doctrines, then at least in terms of its structure and comprehensive scope, Leviathan picks up on the encyclopaedic accounts of politics produced by authors such as Pierre Gregoire, Lambert Daneau, Bartholomew Keckermann, and Johannes Althusius – with the last of whom, as we shall shortly see, there is clear evidence of Hobbes’s engaging. More generally, in stressing the responsibility of the magistrate to the schools Hobbes was simply picking up a well-developed aspect of late Renaissance political philosophy. Several of these authors and their followers went so far as to regard ‘scholastics’ (scholastica) as a subalternate discipline to politics.30 How this played out can be seen from a treatise on the Lineamenta politica (Outlines of politics), written by John Prideaux (1578-1650) whilst he was Rector of Exeter College, Oxford, between 1612 and 1641.31 Prideaux’s

25 On this point see also D. M. Jesseph, Squaring the circle: the war between Hobbes and Wallis (Chicago, 1999), p. 57.
26 Hobbes, Elements, p. 146 (II. ix. 8).
28 Hobbes, Leviathan, pp. 180-1 (and see also p. 4): ‘It is therefore manifest, that the Instruction of the people, dependeth wholly, on the right teaching of Youth in the Universities.’ The Latin Leviathan reads here: ‘Manifestum ergo est, populi instructionem dependere omnem a rectitudine opinionum, quas docent Universitates’ (it is therefore manifest that the instruction of the people depends wholly on the rightness of the opinions that the Universities teach). See Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, in Opera philosophica, quae latine scripta, omnia, 2 vols, vol. ii (Amsterdam, 1668), p. 161 (henceforth cited as ‘Latin Leviathan’).
31 The Lineamenta politica was published as the eighth and final part of Prideaux’s Hypomnemata (Oxford: Excudebat impensis suis Leonar: Lichfield Academiae Typographus, [1650]), pp. 335-73. (I follow Wing in dating this work rather than the BL catalogue’s ‘[1620?]’, since Leonard Lichfield (senior) was active in Oxford between 1635 and 1657 (Henry R. Plomer, A dictionary of the booksellers and printers who were at work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1641 to 1667
work (which is part of a larger *vade mecum* on all the philosophical disciplines) treats education as one of the seven ‘parts’ of politics, alongside topics such as the best form of a commonwealth, laws, magistrates, the status of subjects, and commerce.32

There was a wide variety of ways, though, in which the relationship between the schools and the commonwealth was considered in late Renaissance civil philosophy. A few authors of the period still followed the Renaissance tendency of treating politics in terms of the virtues.33 Justus Lipsius, in his *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* (*Six books of politics or civil doctrine*, 1589) is a case in point. Lipsius treated the encouragement of learning not as a duty, but as a princely virtue.34 By extension, for a prince to suppress the schools of learning was – as the English philosopher John Case argued – a mark of tyranny. This was the behaviour of Julian the Apostate, or of the Turks in Hungary, not of a virtuous Christian monarch.35

For most late Renaissance writers on politics, however, care for education was rather more than a virtue: it was, as Hobbes also thought, a duty. Hence Jean Bodin in the *Six livres de la république* (1576) described the bringing up of youth as ‘l’une des principale charges d’une Republique’, albeit one that was unduly neglected.36 The Huguenot Lambert Daneau in his *Politices Christianae libri septem* (*Seven books of Christian Politics*, 1596), asserted that the chief magistrates (*optimi magistratus*) ‘ought always to have the greatest care for the proper and pious education of his citizens’ children’.37 And for the widely read Reformed philosopher, Bartholomew Keckermann, the education of his subjects was a formal responsibility of the prince (a *cura principis*), and something that he ought to keep under his own eye.38

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All these authors draw, explicitly or implicitly, on the fundamentally humanist assumption that education plays a vital role in making good citizens. This point was made by numerous authors writing in the century before Hobbes, and was fully shared by him. It was made particularly strongly by Jacobus Simanca, whose popular *De republica recte institutenda, conservanda & amplificanda libri IX* (*Nine books on the proper founding, preserving, and enlarging of a republic*) of 1609 is a *cento* of quotations from classical, medieval and Renaissance authors on a comprehensive range of political topics. Like numerous other late Renaissance authors, the list of authorities that Simanca cites in support of his contention about the importance of education to the commonwealth is headed by book VIII of Aristotle’s *Politics*, followed by Plato’s *Republic* and *Laws*, Plutarch’s *Life* of the Spartan founder Lycurgus, book i of Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*, and the epistles of the imperial moralist Seneca, who had said that ‘education forms the morals’ of the citizen.

For these reasons, it was often argued that the schools were not only useful but also actually necessary to a well-ordered commonwealth. For John Case, schools were necessary because they give rise to amity and order in the commonwealth. The French author Pierre Gregoire – whose book *De republica* (*On the Commonwealth*) of 1609 seems to have been one of the most widely read political works of the earlier seventeenth century after Bodin’s – followed Clement of Alexandria in asserting the necessity of schools to the commonwealth. And the Calvinist political theorist Johannes Althusius wrote at length on this theme in his *Politica* of 1603, arguing that ‘if we wish to have good leaders, governors, and ministers in the Commonwealth and in the Church, it is necessary that we guard the schools in which such people are

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41 Jacobus Simanca, *De republica recte institutenda, conservanda & amplificanda libri IX* (Cologne, 1609), pp. 587, 594.


moulded. As Gregoire noted, the consequences of failing to do so could be serious, since it was from education that ‘prosperity or subversion (or at least great corruption) can appear in a commonwealth."

For all these reasons, a number of early seventeenth century writers on the role of the universities in the commonwealth set out what such schools required. Important among these was a suitable, permanent and healthy location. (As Robert Burton suggested in the *Anatomy of melancholy* (1621-51), some special pleading had to be made for Cambridge in this respect.) No less important were the privileges and immunities proper to *ancien régime* corporations, whether granted by the Pope (for Catholic authors) or the local prince, as well as the laws specifically pertaining to the schools. Pious and well-affected teachers and professors were of course also often listed as a desideratum. Finally, not the least important consideration for early modern writers on the relationship between the universities and the state was that they be sufficiently well funded.

Again, these views are consistent with the ones Hobbes expresses in the *Elements of law*, *De cive*, and *Leviathan*. Indeed, even Hobbes’s early Restoration critic William Lucy grudgingly acknowledged that, despite his criticisms of the universities, Hobbes did not want to see an ‘utter extirpation’ of the schools, and that he did ‘reserve a room and office for them in the Commonwealth’.

But while late Renaissance political theorists tended to agree about the value of schools and universities to the commonwealth, they showed no such agreement.

45 Gregoire, *De republica*, II, p. 70 (lib. XVIII, cap. 1): ‘salus, vel subversio aut saltem corruptio major, ori re potest in republica.’
46 For general lists of all or most of the points below, see especially Gregoire, *De republica*, lib. XVIII (in great detail); Althusius, *Politica*, pp. 586-87 (giving copious authority); Alsted, ‘Politica’, in his *Encyclopaedia*, p. 1417, cols. 1-2; Scheibler, *Philosophiae compendiosa*, pp. 108-9. See also Johann Himmel, *Idea boni gymnasi* (Speyer, 1614), esp. p. 5.
51 See, in addition to the references given above, Keckermann, *Systema*, p. 195.
over the question of who should have governance of the such academies. For Hobbes, as we have seen, oversight of the universities is one of the duties of the sovereign. In holding this view he was not alone. We have already seen how Bartholomew Keckermann regarded the schools as falling within the responsibility of the prince, and John Prideaux in Oxford comparably regarded the power to found and dissolve academies or schools as one of the ‘prerogatives of majesty’ (majestatis praerogativae).  

There was, however, a notable tendency among certain Calvinist writers on politics to give a different account of where the authority over the schools should lie. These Presbyterian authors, following the lead of Johannes Althusius in his Politica above all, argued that the right of schooling belonged not to the civil, but to the ecclesiastical magistrate. According to Althusius, the justification for founding public schools was first and foremost a religious one. The schools ‘provide for the conserving of true religion and the passing of it on to later generations’; moreover, they are ‘the custodians of the keys of science and doctrine, by which the resolution of all doubt is sought and the way of salvation is disclosed.’ Althusius’ Presbyterian view was quite influential. In particular, it made its way into Christoph Scheibler’s Philosophia compendiosa (Succinct philosophy, 1628) – a book that seems to have been one of the principal textbooks for the undergraduate arts course in 1630s Oxford. As we shall see, this Presbyterian claim for the schools’ independence from the state forms a crucial but – in Leviathan – rather covert target for Hobbes.

III

Let me turn now from considering the aspects of Hobbes’s treatment of the universities that remained constant throughout his works to those that changed significantly over the thirty years from 1640 to 1670. We have already seen that

Hobbes regarded ‘the Instruction of the people’ as depending ‘wholly, on the right teaching of Youth in the Universities’. But according to Hobbes, the role of the universities in educating the subjects of commonwealths had historically been malign, not beneficial. Indeed, he came increasingly strongly to believe that the universities had been instrumental in helping to sow the seeds of rebellion in England. It is for this reason that he consistently associates them with the causes of rebellion and ‘those things that Weaken … a Common-wealth’.

The universities, in Hobbes’s view, had been guilty of encouraging false and seditious notions about conscience, law, property, and tyranny, all of which presented significant dangers to the rightful sovereign power. Thus in the chapter of the *Elements of law* on the preservation of the commonwealth, the opinions that Hobbes declares to dispose men to rebellion are said to have ‘proceeded from private and public teaching’, and their teachers are said to have received them ‘from grounds and principles, which they have learned in the Universities’. In the corresponding chapter of *De cive*, Hobbes likewise asserts that the political errors tending to sedition have ‘crept into the minds of uneducated people’ partly from ‘the pulpits of popular preachers’ and partly from conversation with the gentry. And both groups imbibed these errors ‘from those who taught them in their young days at the Universities’.

In *Leviathan*, the universities are attacked on a much broader range of fronts than in *De cive*, but this central charge remains: ‘From Aristotles Civill Philosophy’, Hobbes asserts, men educated in the schools ‘have learned, to call all manner of Common-wealths but the Popular, (such as was at that time in the state of Athens,) Tyranny.’

The English *Leviathan* has a special place in this account of Hobbes’s relations to the universities, since it was in this book that he first unleashed the full force of his criticisms upon them. The universities, and the philosophy and theology that they teach, are subjected to several passing attacks throughout *Leviathan*, but it is in the penultimate chapter of the book that Hobbes turns to consider them systematically. Chapter XLVI of *Leviathan* belongs to the fourth part of the book, which is entitled ‘Of the Kingdome of Darknesse’; and the darkness treated in this

60 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 377 (ch. XLVI); see also p. 111 (ch. XXI) and ch. XXIX, and also Hobbes, *De homine*, p. 75 (XIII. 7), where the association between the reading of ancient writers on democracy and the universities is left implicit.
chapter is the darkness that arises *from VAIN PHILOSOPHY, and FABULOUS TRADITIONS*. 61

Hobbes begins the chapter by giving a definition of philosophy that is an extension of Aristotelian conceptions of science as the knowledge of the effects of causes and the causes of effects, with, however, a polemical restriction to efficient (rather than formal, material or final) causation. 62 More strikingly, he then offers an account of the origins and history of philosophy. Hobbes’s deep and well-formed interest in history has attracted increasing attention from scholars in the past decade or so. 63 Less has been said, however, about Hobbes’s no less well-developed interests in the history of philosophy. 64

Hobbes’s brief account of the history of philosophy at the beginning of chapter XLVI is, like most other histories of philosophy at the time, doxographical. 65 That is, it follows the lead of ancient historians of philosophy such as Diogenes Laertius in tracing philosophy not through the history of its ideas, but through its principal


64 Thomas Hobbes, *Decameron physiologicum* (London, 1678), pp. 4-10 is a further important passage in this regard; see also the comment by ‘A’ at p. 14: ‘This History of the old Philosophers has not put me out of love, but out of hope of Philosophy from any of their Writings.’

protagonists and the schools that followed them. Hobbes’s explanation for the origins of the subject is in content conventional, but in import satirical. At the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle had argued that philosophy is not pursued for its utility, and had invoked in proof the ‘first philosophers’, who only began to pursue it once the necessaries and eases of life had been obtained. Hobbes similarly asserts that ‘Leasure is the mother of Philosophy’; and since ‘Common-wealth’ is ‘the mother of Peace, and Leasure’, philosophy first arose in ‘great and flourishing Cities’. It was only after the Greek cities, and above all Athens, had grown great enough to support a wealthy class of men ‘that had no employment’ that philosophers like Plato and Aristotle emerged. It is in having nothing else to do, too, that Hobbes finds the origin of the schools, since *schola* in Greek ‘signifieth leasure’, and the disputations in which these philosophers engaged were called *Diatribae*, ‘that is to say, Passing of the time’. Hobbes’s joke becomes increasingly pointed as he tells us that the different schools of philosophy took their names from the places in which their masters taught, ‘as if we should denominate men from More-fields, from Pauls Church, and from the Exchange, because they meet there often, to prate and loyter.’

Having baited his trap, Hobbes now springs it. Without any warning or preamble he turns to ask bluntly: ‘But what has been the Utility of those Schools? what Science is there at this day acquired by their Readings and Disputings?’ According to Hobbes, the Greek schools neglected geometry, taught a natural philosophy that was ‘rather a Dream than a Science’, and inculcated specious and dangerous doctrines in moral and political philosophy.

And after this brief and defamatory history of the schools, Hobbes then turns, without further warning, to give a formal definition of a university: ‘a Joyning together, and an Incorporation under one Government of many Publique Schools, in one and the same Town or City.’ His account has taken him down to his own time, and was about to land him in some very hot water. The universities of Christendom, according to Hobbes, are irredeemably tainted by Roman Catholicism. The ‘principall Schools’ of the early modern Universities ‘were ordained for the three Professions, that is to say, of the Romane religion, of the Romane law, and of the Art of

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66 Hobbes, *Decameron physiologicum*, p. 4, notes that his source for the earliest history of philosophy is Diodorus Siculus.
68 A similar point about philosophy being the province of ‘such as have not otherwise much to do’ is made in Hobbes, *Decameron physiologicum*, p. 1.
69 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 368-9 (ch. XLVI). Moorfields, St Paul’s churchyard, and the Royal Exchange were acknowledged meeting places in London for the passing on of news – partly owing to the presence there of Stationers’ shops.
Medicine’. (Even Hobbes could not find a way of accusing Galenic medicine of being Roman.) ‘And for the study of Philosophy,’ he continues ‘it hath no otherwise place then as a handmaid to the Romane Religion: And since the Authority of Aristotle is onely current there, that study is not properly Philosophy, (the nature whereof dependeth not on Authors,) but Aristotelity’. The rest of chapter XLVI consists of an polemical assault on the putative errors of the Aristotelian schools in all the philosophical disciplines.

Perhaps in the light of all this we should not be surprised to find one of Hobbes’s earliest critics, Alexander Ross, writing in 1653 that:

In his forty-sixth chapter he [i.e. Hobbes] spurnes at all learning except his own, and that with such a magisterial spirit, and so supercilious scorn, as if Aristotle, Plato, Zeno, the Peripateticks, Academicks, Stoicks, Colledges, Schooles, Universities, Synagogues, and all the wise men of Europe, Asia, and Affrick hitherto, were scarce worthy to carry his books.

IV

We need to remind ourselves of the structure and development of Hobbes’s argument in chapter XLVI if we are to understand properly the nature of the attack he is making here on the universities. We might simply note, of course, that Hobbes is having a pointed joke at the expense of philosophers by accusing them of having too much time on their hands, and leveling the rather more serious charge at the English universities – made by others besides Hobbes – that they have failed to purge themselves sufficiently of their Popish origins.

And indeed, we should not lose sight here of how far Hobbes has the Roman Catholic universities in general, and the University of Paris in particular in his sights here. Many of Hobbes’s targets in Chapters forty-six and forty-seven of Leviathan are specifically and unambiguously Roman Catholic. Hobbes criticizes, for instance, the philosophical justification for ‘denying of Marriage to the clergy’; he gives the

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71 Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 370.
72 Ross, Leviathan drawn out with a hook, p. 81. Ross was a doughty defender of Aristotle and the learning of the schools against all forms of new philosophy, including even Sir Thomas Browne. On him, see A. Johns, 'Prudence and pedantry in early-modern cosmology: the trade of Al Ross', History of Science, 35 (1997), 23-59.
73 On this point, see also Sorell, 'Hobbes's uses of the history of philosophy', p. 89, who argues that the purpose of ch. XLVI is to associate his materialist doctrines with a reputable anti-Catholicism. But this does not take account of Hobbes’s willingness to conflate the English universities with the Roman Catholic ones.
example of a Christian who may not preach to the unconverted until he has ‘received Orders from Rome’; and his first example of errors derived from tradition includes ‘all the Histories of Apparitions, and Ghosts, alleged by the Doctors of the Romane Church, to make good their Doctrines’. And Hobbes always insisted that the reason he returned to England from France in 1652 was ‘because he would not trust his safety with the French Clergy,’ and in the light of these kind of criticisms one can see why.

We should suggest, I think, that the French clergy Hobbes particularly distrusted were the clergy of the University of Paris. Paris was where Hobbes had been living since he had been ‘the first of all that fled’ England in 1640. And Paris was much more thoroughly committed to Aristotelianism in metaphysics and in natural philosophy than were the universities of Oxford and Cambridge by 1651. It was in Paris in 1624 that the Faculty of Theology had formerly censured opponents of Aristotelian philosophy, in part in response to Pierre Gassendi’s *Exercitationes paradoxicae adversus Aristoteleos* (*Paradoxical Exercises Against the Aristotelians*) which had come out anonymously that same year. (Hobbes’s own attack on Aristotelianism may be regarded as owing something to his friend Gassendi’s book: Gassendi preceded Hobbes in describing Aristotelian natural philosophy as a ‘dream’ and in criticizing the schools for neglecting geometry. Similarly, where Hobbes had complained that the schools brought philosophy in religion, Gassendi had made previously the parallel criticism that the schools have (wrongly) derived abstruse questions in philosophy from theology.) The first position that the Parisian theologians had upheld in their censure was one that Hobbes specifically attacks in

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Leviathan: the metaphysical doctrine of materia prima. And it was the University of Paris that encouraged attacks such as the oration given by Gabriel Cossart against the new philosophy in 1650, in which he argued that novelty of doctrine was the quickest means to destroy commonwealths. The irony that the University of Paris had thus become more, rather than less committed to Aristotle since its founding was not lost on the theologian Jean de Launoy, who drew attention to it in his book De varia Aristotelis in academia parisiensi fortuna (On the changing fortunes of Aristotle in the University of Paris, 1653). Moreover, Hobbes had explicitly attacked the University of Paris for condemning Luther’s attack on ‘School-theology’ in the Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity and Chance (1656).

But it would be a mistake to imagine that Hobbes is only or simply attacking Roman Catholicism here. In fact, we cannot understand the force of Hobbes’s attack if we restrict our interpretation simply to Hobbes’s own writings. If we want to understand the historical import of Hobbes’s attack we need to ask this question: where else had Hobbes’s contemporaries treated the topic of the history and purpose of the schools?

The answer lies with the schools themselves. The universities and academies of early modern Europe generated a flourishing literature on the history and uses of the schools. One genre in particular comes very close to what Hobbes is doing in chapter forty-six of Leviathan. This genre was the oration in praise of the schools, commonly pronounced by a rector or professor at a commencement or at the beginning of the academic year. This genre is principally associated with the universities and academies of the Low Countries and the Protestant German-speaking lands, which tended to be rather more forward about printing academic-related material than did the English universities. But English examples of the genre are also extant, such as Samuel Fell’s oration entitled Primitiae (First fruits, 1627); and German specimens of the genre were also reprinted in England in the first half of the seventeenth century, such as the one by Philip Pareus.

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82 See Jean de Launoy, De varia Aristotelis in academica parisiensi fortuna (Paris, 1653), pp. 125, 128.
84 Launoy, De varia Aristotelis ... fortuna, p. 139. On Launoy’s book see further A. C. Kors, Atheism in France, 1650-1729 (Princeton, 1990-), i, p. 229 and n. 24, who notes that there may have been an edition before 1653.
These orations are in the *genus demonstrativum*; that is to say, they employ the rhetoric of praise and blame. They come to praise the schools, as Hobbes came to blame them. Earlier seventeenth century examples of these orations often follow a rather stereotyped arrangement. It was an arrangement that had been formalized by an author we have already encountered: the Presbyterian political theorist Johannes Althusius. At the end of each of the four editions (in five printings) published before 1651 of his widely-read *Politica* (1603, 1610, 1614, 1617, 1625), Althusius published as an appendix a panegyric praising ‘the antiquity, utility and necessity of the schools’. This oration served as an implicit or explicit model for a number of later authors, including Johann Himmel in his *Idea boni gymnasii* (*Idea of a good gymnasium*), 1614, Johann Alsted in his *Encyclopaedia* (1630), and Theodore Schrevelius in his suggestively titled *Diatribae scholasticae* (*Scholastic diatribes*, 1643).

As Hobbes does in chapter XLVI of *Leviathan*, these orations characteristically begin by discussing the question of the antiquity of the schools of learning. Several writers trace this history back beyond the Greeks to the schools of the Jews in the Old Testament. Hobbes too does this in *Leviathan*, although he is at pains to point out that the Jewish schools did not teach philosophy, but law. The authors of these orations then commonly turn to praise the necessity of the schools, sometimes noting – as Alsted does – that knowledge of the arts and sciences is what separates social men from isolated beasts. But if these orations regard the schools as necessary, they are even more emphatic about their usefulness. The schools are said to be useful because of the benefits that each of the disciplines they teach bring to human life. Indeed, to make this point, authors often ran through each of the disciplines taught in the schools – from grammar, logic and rhetoric, through moral and natural

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93 See Alsted, *Encyclopaedia*, p. 1544.

94 See Schrevelius, *Diatribae scholasticae*, p. 26: ‘Magna (ita me Deus amet) Scholarum necessitas; magna itidem, si non maior, utilitas.’
philosophy, to medicine, law and divinity – praising the profit that each of them brings.95 We are also told by these authors that the schools are useful because of the political function that we have already heard about. They are there to send forth ‘learned, wise, excellent, and erudite men’ for the ministry of the Church and the governance of the commonwealth.96 For Calvinist authors such as Alsted and Althusius, the schools were above all useful in that they provided remedies for the intellectual defects that humans had acquired by the Fall.97 For one author, this even provoked the happy thought that life in the university was comparable to that of paradise.98 But the invocation of heaven was also matched by an invocation of hell. According to Althusius, the loss of the schools would lead to ‘atheism, Epicureanism, and the kingdom of darkness’.99

I hope, then, that the nature of Hobbes’s attack in this chapter of Leviathan has come into sharper focus. Where it had been conventional to praise the antiquity of the schools, he does so – although he ascribes their origin not to God, but to wealth and leisure. But where it had been conventional to praise the necessity of the schools, Hobbes suggests that they have only encouraged sedition. And where, above all, it had been conventional to praise the usefulness of the schools to the commonwealth, Hobbes asks only ‘But what has been the Utility of those Schools?’, and asserts that their learning has been ignorant, captious, absurd, and unprofitable. Finally where it had been conventional to suggest that without the schools, society would lapse into the kingdom of darkness, Hobbes suggests that they have already been instrumental in bringing it about.

Let me make my point quite clear. I should like to propose that we should regard chapter XLVI of Leviathan as a deliberately parodic inversion of many conventional sentiments about value of the schools in general, and in particular about their antiquity and utility. In fact I find the structural similarities to be so close that I think we must conclude that Hobbes had the Presbyterian Althusius or one of his imitators directly in his sights here.

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98 Johannes Scholtzius and Petrus Kirstenius, Orationes duae introductoriae in gymnasio Wratitshaviensium (Breslau, 1650), p. 000.
As I turn now to consider Hobbes’s relations with the universities in the decade after *Leviathan*, Presbyterianism comes to play an increasingly significant role. For Hobbes’s career in the 1650s is characterized by running battle – Jesseph has called it a ‘war’ – between Hobbes and John Wallis, over Hobbes’s geometrical claims, and in particular his claim to have squared the circle. Wallis was the Savilian Professor of Geometry at Oxford, and he was also a Presbyterian. Hobbes’s quarrel with him saw him make one of his most startling claims about the universities. But it also saw him, briefly, trying to make his peace with his *alma mater*, if not its mathematical professors. Both aspects are connected.

We have seen how in *Leviathan*, Hobbes had concealed a thinly-veiled attack on Presbyterianism under his critique of Catholic claims to ecclesiastical autonomy. In his *Six lessons* (1656) to Wallis and his colleague Seth Ward (responding in part to Ward’s *Vindiciae academiarum* of 1654), Hobbes took this still further, making a suggestion that in Protestant Europe in the seventeenth century was still scarcely thinkable: that university education should cease to be in the hands of the clergy.

How would you have exclaimed, if instead of recommending my *Leviathan* to be taught in the Universities, I had recommended the erecting of a New and Lay-University, wherein Lay-men should have the reading of Physiques, Mathematicks, Morall Philosophy, and Politicks, as the Clergy now have the sole teaching of Divinity?102

This may sound as if Hobbes had burnt his last boat with the universities. In fact, however, it heralded a concerted bid on his part to gain the favour of a number of people in a position of authority at Oxford. He sent a copy of the English translation of *De corpore* (including the *Six lessons*) to Bodley’s Librarian, Thomas Barlow, with a conciliatory letter. He also cooked up with his young Oxford

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103 See also the account in J. R. Jacob, *Henry Stubbe, radical Protestantism and the early Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 22.

correspondent Henry Stubbe a plan to praise Oxford in a way that would reflect well upon its Vice-Chancellor. This was Cromwell’s ecclesiastical right-hand man, the Independent John Owen, whose attempts to reform the University were running into increasing difficulties at the time. In this piece of praise, published in *Markes of the absurd geometry ... of John Wallis* (1657), Hobbes went so far as to call Oxford and Cambridge, ‘the greatest and Noblest means of advancing learning of all kinds’.

Why? The best explanation seems to be that Hobbes genuinely thought that England in the middle years of the 1650s was actually responding to his call for the subordination of ecclesiastical to civil power. Oxford was in the hands of an Independent, John Owen, and Hobbes had ended *Leviathan* with a remarkable praise of Independency as ‘perhaps the best’ form of church government. Moreover, Owen was known to act with Cromwell’s authority, and, as we have seen, was regarded by Stubbe as being hostile to Wallis (and also indifferent to Seth Ward). Furthermore – and this seems to me to be a most important aspect of the story – Presbyterianism was an increasingly spent force, both in the Universities and in the country at large. The episode that had made this particularly clear was the intense debate that had accompanied the two Commissions set up in 1654, one for the Approbation of Godly Ministers (the ‘Triers’), and the other for the Ejection of Scandalous Ministers (‘Ejectors’). Many clergymen at the time regarded these commissions as a quite unwarranted intrusion of civil power upon ecclesiastical prerogatives, and Hobbes was well aware of this controversy, since he alludes to it elliptically in the *Six lessons* as a ‘Competition between the Ecclesiastical and the Civill power [that] hath manifestly enough appeared very lately.’ It was the failure of the Presbyterians to consolidate their classis system of church government during this episode that emboldened Hobbes to come out with his first explicit attack on ‘Scottish Church-Politicks’.

Here, in fact, is the larger significance of Hobbes’s ongoing quarrel with a professor of the University of Oxford in the middle years of the 1650s. It is the first

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point that Hobbes’s critique of Presbyterianism becomes explicit. This is not to say that Hobbes had not been antagonistic to the Presbyterian system of church government for a long time. The claim that the government of the church should be distinct from the government of the commonwealth is a doctrine repeatedly attacked in De cive and in Leviathan. In fact, in 1662, Hobbes even retrospectively described De cive as an attack on Presbyterianism.\(^{112}\) And it is essential for what I have already argued about Hobbes’s target in chapter XLVI of Leviathan that he should have been familiar with the kind of Presbyterian literature that yoked praise of the schools with their subordination to the ecclesiastical magistrate. But what is notable is that, before his attack on the ‘Scottish Church-Politicks’ of John Wallis in 1657, Hobbes aimed his explicit attacks on competing church-state authority at Papal claims to temporal power. Before then, he had glanced only elliptically at Presbyterianism.\(^{113}\) After the bruising encounter with Wallis, however, the attack on Presbyterianism became increasing unguarded.\(^{114}\) And the civil war universities were the place where Presbyterian doctrine had flourished most.

VI

If Hobbes’s attitude to the English universities thawed briefly in 1656-57, a deep and bitter frost set in with the Restoration. At several points in his late writings, Hobbes sharpened and developed his charge that the universities had been fundamentally to blame for the civil wars in England. Moreover, he believed that they continued to pose a serious threat to peace in the commonwealth.

It is very striking, in the first place, how Hobbes uses the opportunities presented by the translation of Leviathan into Latin in 1668 to make his attack on the Universities more explicit. Where, for instance (he asks in his modified account of sovereign duty in chapter XXX) did the seditious preachers who incited the people against Charles I obtain their authority? From the universities.\(^{115}\) But Hobbes also sharpens his account of the essential function of the universities as formers of opinion.

\(^{112}\) Hobbes, Considerations, p. 7.

\(^{113}\) Such as in the last paragraph of the final chapter of Leviathan. See Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 387: ‘For it is not the Romane Clergy onely, that pretends the Kingdome of God to be of this World, and thereby to have a Power therein, distinct from that of the Civill State.’


This point appears at the very end of the new conclusion he wrote for the final chapter of the Latin version. The ‘democratic ink’, he wrote there, ‘must be erased by preaching, writing and disputing. I cannot conceive that that can be done in any other way than through the Universities.’

But it is in *Behemoth* – his dialogic history of the civil wars – that Hobbes’s assault on the universities reached its most vehement heights. The end of the first dialogue of *Behemoth*, in fact, constitutes a sustained assault on the role of the universities. In it, Hobbes asserts that ‘the core of rebellion, as you have seen by this, and read of other rebellions, are the Universities.’ (It is worth emphasising the scope of Hobbes’s attack here: he does not just have England in mind. We are perhaps intended to think of the Low Countries as well, and the founding of the University of Leiden in particular as a means of furthering the aims of Dutch Revolt.) But even this is not Hobbes’s strongest charge: for that, he resorted to an epic simile: ‘The Universities have been to this nation, as the wooden horse was to the Trojans.’ Why have the universities been so dangerous? Again we encounter a development in Hobbes’s account, but by now not an unexpected one. The Presbyterian clergy are now for the first time explicitly joined to the ‘democratical gentleman’ as the joint instigators of the civil wars. And both had their opinions formed in the schools.

The most immediate consequence of the hardening of Hobbes’s views was that he became increasingly explicit about calling for university reform. Despite their deep complicity in rebellion, the universities were still not to be wholly rejected. As he added to the Latin *Leviathan*, ‘before everything else they must be reformed’. This was a note he returned to again and again in *Behemoth*: ‘the Universities […] are not to be cast away, but to be better disciplined’. In fact, he went on, ‘We never shall have a lasting peace till the universities themselves be … reformed’. The consequences of failing to carry through this reform would be dire; so dire, that Hobbes only alludes to them by the means – highly unusual for him – of a quotation from the classics: ‘unless the Preachers teach the people better, and our Universities

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122 Hobbes, *Behemoth*, p. 59 (dialogue I); see also p. 56 (dialogue I): ‘I despair of any lasting peace amongst ourselves, till the Universities here shall bend and direct their studies to the settling of it’.
teach the those Preachers better, then perhaps mighty Achilles will again be sent to Troy.’123

As well as hardening his criticism of the role of the universities in the civil wars, Hobbes now also develops his long-term historical critique of the schools. The account of the origin and progress of the schools of philosophy in chapter LXVI of the Latin Leviathan is almost entirely rewritten, and it emerges with a notably different character from the English version.124 In the first place, Hobbes largely excises the allusions to a specifically English context. The jokes about the men who gather together in Moorfields or the Exchange, ‘to prate, and loiter’, disappear. The jibe about ‘Aristotelity’ is located in some unspecified past rather than the present. The deliberately contrived confusion – which had proved so contentious – between the Roman Catholic and the Reformed universities in respect of their use of philosophy as the handmaid of theology is also altered. The explanation for this phenomenon is given a much more historical emphasis, and the University of Paris is this time specifically mentioned. In fact, Hobbes’s account of the development of the schools, and their transformation into universities under (according to him) Charlemagne, is given a great deal more historical specificity, and the account also pays a great deal more attention to the relationship between philosophy and theology in the early Christian church.125 All these developments are paralleled in a new history of ‘the Pope’s design in setting up the Universities’ that Hobbes also gives in the first dialogue of Behemoth.126

How can we explain this shift in historical emphasis? One answer lies in Hobbes’s response to his most dangerous encounter with a newly revived ecclesiastical authority in the Restoration. In 1662 it was rumoured that some Bishops in the newly restored Church of England might try, as John Aubrey put it, ‘to have the good old gentleman burnt for a heretic’; and in 1666 the Commons convened a committee to investigate Leviathan.127 Hobbes’s response to these threats was to pursue some extensive research into the history and legal status of heresy both in England and more generally.128 The fruits of this reading make their way into the new

125 Latin Leviathan, pp. 314-19 (ch. XLVI).
Appendix to the Latin _Leviathan_.\textsuperscript{129} Hobbes’s research into heresy also crops up in his late _Dialogue between a philosopher and a student of the common laws of England_.\textsuperscript{130} One of the central points of both of these works is that ‘heresy’ from its Greek origins, signifies ‘singularity of Doctrine, or Opinion contrary to another Man, or Men’, and consequently, that the positions of the philosophical schools that arose in support of the doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras and Zeno were, in effect, heresies.\textsuperscript{131} A perhaps unintended consequence of this research was that Hobbes felt obliged to develop his initially schematic and parodic account of the history of the schools into a more thoroughgoing argument about the history of the corruption of theology by philosophy (and vice-versa).

In fact, it is hard to avoid the feeling that Hobbes is not pulling his punches in the rewritten chapter forty-six of the Latin _Leviathan_. Given what we have seen about his really serious desire to have his doctrine taught in the schools, it is perhaps not too speculative to suggest that he did not wish to make unnecessary enemies there.

VII

At what is almost the close of Hobbes’s career let us recapitulate the trajectory we have identified. Hobbes, I have suggested, was consistent in regarding a close attention to the teachings of the universities – and, above all, their political teachings – as a formal duty of the sovereign. And conversely, he became increasingly hostile towards the universities as he saw them as behaving in ways contrary to that duty. He sharpened his attack on them between the _Elements of law_ and _Leviathan_. And he did so in a parodic account of the antiquity and utility of the schools, which deliberately turned some of the most cherished commonplaces of scholastic panegyric on their heads. Notwithstanding his brief bid to cultivate Oxford in 1656-7, Hobbes further accentuated and developed this attack in his writings of the Restoration: in the Latin _Leviathan_, in _Behemoth_, and even the in _Dialogue_ on the common laws. The most important way in which his attack on the universities developed between these works was historical. As he read his way into the history of heresy, so his understanding of how the universities and Pope had colluded to undermine sovereign authority. But there was also a further and vitally important element to his historical

\textsuperscript{129} Latin _Leviathan_, p. 346-59 (Appendix, ch. II).


attack on the universities: after the Restoration, Hobbes came to blame them increasingly openly for the disaster of the 1640s. If the universities had been a tool of Papal power in Christendom as a whole, they had been a Trojan horse to England in particular. The schools were the unsuspected gift bearing sedition, which had been left to do their malign work in England after the Reformation. The gift may originally have been the pope’s, but the armed warriors that sprung out of its belly during the Long Parliament were the Presbyterian clergy, who had imbibed their seditious doctrines from exposure to Aristotle and Cicero during their education in the schools.

How should we explain this trajectory? As Geoffrey Vaughan also suggests in his account of what he calls ‘political education’, Hobbes needed the authority of the universities to achieve his ends. The reason their teachings had been so devastating was because they were so effective at forming opinion, and as Hobbes put it in Leviathan, ‘the Actions of men proceed from their Opinions’. On Hobbes’s own rather tendentious subsequent account of his purposes in his civil war writings, the most dangerous opinion that had been formed was that the civil power and the ecclesiastical power were distinct. The schools set this view in stone, and the Presbyterian political theory that they taught set it in print.

However, it was only during the quarrel with Wallis in the middle years of the 1650s that Hobbes’s bitter antipathy to Presbyterianism became explicit, rather than just very strongly hinted at. Leviathan confines itself to hints about the perils of the presbyter: it was with Wallis’s ‘Scottish Church-Politicks’ that Hobbes came out fighting. Once it had been ventilated, Hobbes’s critique of Presbyterianism became one of the guiding threads in Behemoth. After the Restoration, with no prospect whatsoever of new presbyter replacing old priest, it finally became possible for Hobbes to say what he thought about the system. But why did Hobbes remain as hostile to the post-Restoration universities as he had been to the pre-civil war ones? The answer to this question is again perhaps relates to his close encounter with the heretic’s stake. As I have suggested throughout this paper, Hobbes’s fundamental objection to the universities was that they were the principal source of competition between ecclesiastical and civil power in the commonwealth. It seems possible that Hobbes may have associated the universities with his own warm encounter with ecclesiastical power in 1662.

In closing, I should like to turn from explaining the reasons for Hobbes’s changing views of the universities to explore some of the implications of the debate, and to suggest some reasons why we might regard it as an interesting, and perhaps

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133 Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 91 (ch. XVIII).
even an important episode in European intellectual history. Let me draw attention to two aspects in particular. The first concerns the role of the schools in intellectual and political life. Hobbes’s quarrel with the universities was a notable contribution to the death-knell that was being sounded across Europe in the middle years of the seventeenth century for the unity of the university curriculum in general, and for the fruitful association of philosophy and theology in particular. This conception of unity and association was coming under serious threat by this point, fatally undermined by a combination of factors. These factors included the increasing prevalence of the vernaculars, and consequently the growing insularity of European intellectual culture; the economic and social depredations of the Thirty Years War; the catastrophic decline in the confidence and reach of the learned book trade that centred around the annual Frankfurt book fair; and finally and perhaps most importantly, the emergence of a range of institutions that competed with the universities. These included Jesuit Colleges in the Catholic world; non-degree granting Academies such as that of Amsterdam in the Protestant world; and both cultures saw the emergence of anti-scholastic learned societies for the promotion of natural, literary, and historical knowledge. These institutions, which were new and lay universities in their way, presented challenges to the existing European universities that they comprehensively failed to meet at the time.

And so with an allusion to the Royal Society I end as I began, but for one final thought. Hobbes was adamant that the universities needed to teach his doctrine if it was to have any real effect. And given the prohibition on printing *Leviathan* in England, and the trials of professed Hobbists such as Daniel Scargill at Cambridge, it is easy to imagine that Hobbes failed in this ambition. And yet how far is this view justified? In the English universities of the Restoration a great deal of intellectual energy was expended by, in particular, the Cambridge Platonists on refuting (and thereby giving currency to) Hobbes’s doctrines. This is a more or less negative or reactionary case. But there is also firm positive evidence for Hobbes’s success in

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134 See Althusius, *Oratio*, p. 979, on the *necesitas* of the schools for all the goods of human arts and sciences.


138 The two lifetime Latin editions purporting to have been printed at London in 1676 and 1678 seem not to have originated from there: Milton, ‘Hobbes, heresy, and Lord Arlington’, p. 535 n. 162.
having his views ‘taught in the Universities’. I have mentioned that politics was rarely taught explicitly as a distinct discipline in the English universities in the half-century before the publication of *Leviathan*, and in fact this is broadly true of European universities more generally. But the middle years of the seventeenth century onwards saw the emergence of a new conception of politics in the form of the law of nature and nations. This post-Westfalian discipline, which was distinct from both moral philosophy and public law, established itself quickly in the universities of protestant northern Europe, and also made its way back to England itself. The first formal course on the subject was taught at the University of Leiden in 1658; one of the first people to take up a chair in the subject was Samuel Pufendorf, at Heidelberg, in 1661. The Pufendorfian natural law theory of the later seventeenth century was heavily inflected by Hobbes’s ideas. There is a sense in which Hobbes’s struggle to have his doctrine ‘taught in the universities’ was not in vain.

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143 See also the related argument of Parkin, ‘Hobbism in the later 1660s’, esp. pp. 107-08 and Parkin’s forthcoming account of Hobbes’s response to the Scargill affair.