What does the word "Republic" mean? That sovereign term in eighteenth century political thought, the common property of Montesquieu and Marat, of John Adams and Daniel Shays, of Swift and Rousseau, of Hume and the Jesusists, has been used since with an ambiguity so poetic and an abandon so blithe that not even constitutional lawyers seem to know what it means. France established a "first republic" (of five) in 1792, the United States in 1776, Hungary in 1848 and again in 1945, China in 1912; yet today the word, though not uncommon, is problematical in every western language and in not a few non-western ones. It is obviously not one of those metaphors that science defines so well, nor is it a term in which poets have taken great interest. Lawyers and courts often fix the meanings of less universal terms, but only two United States courts seem yet to have tested "Republic", despite its prominence in constitutions old and new. The precise fixing of this word has been left since its invention to historians and to what we now call political scientists. Perhaps it is no wonder that it has become so protean, contradictory, and etymology than "republic", but problems of its own. In 1790, John Adams wrote that "there is not in lexicography a more remarkable and oddly obscure article than the word "republic"; Adams, who had done so much to found the American Republic and had tried all his life to define the creature, threw up his hands and wrote that he had never known what republic meant and never expected to. Actually, Adams had once known with all the assurance of a Harvard graduate. In 1775 and 1776 he had written that according to Aristotle, Livy and James Harrington, the "definition of republic is an empire of laws and not of men." In 1787 he found the definition that he proposed in 1789 to Roger Sherman: "In the first place, what is your definition of republic? Mine is this: A government whose sovereignty is vested in more than one person."  

I think Adams was close in 1776 and (for 1987) exactly right in 1787-89; but Adams, as he so often managed to do (with the help of American histrography), avoided getting his due by under-cutting his own argument. I think, too, that Adams's definition was not a metaphysical construct but a thoroughly empirical and historical one, like Aristotle's definition of poiesis. Adams knew his history much better than American provincials were then given credit for. While ambassador to England he had, in fact, written and hastily cleaned out of his mind, the "definition of republic is an empire of laws and not of men." For Adams to be wrong in his definition, the one who must be right is Jean Bodin, that polythetic genius of the sixteenth century, who believed that a republic was nothing more than "a just government of several households and of what they hold in common with the power of sovereignty." Nothing more, in other words, than what we would call a state, under any "just" government, however monolithic or monocratic. Bodin published his definition in 1576, the year that both Calvinists and Catholics in his native France were calling for a withdrawal of obedience from their apparently lawful king, and the "Republic" was convulsed with civil war. Bodin's definition of republic, together with his definition of sovereignty as indivisible, was found useful by the succeeding generations of Bodinians who, no less than Herbert Marcuse, it will not escape students that much of this ground was most thoroughly covered by Pocock, who was after larger game than mere etymology. I can only plead that Pocock, too, uses the word republic when the texts he studies are not using it, a practice that can both confuse the reader and be untrue to the evidence.

However, the subject is very far from being exhausted. The Adamsite, or revolutionary meaning of the word republic was set in the late 17th and early 18th century, well before John Adams. Adams borrowed it from Johnson's dictionary. Johnson was recording the usage of Addison, Montesquieu and Hume. That usage, in turn, emerged out of a long convoluted, and somewhat arcane prehistory, which began long before Bodin and which involves events and writings from Italy and Germany as well as from France and England. Bodin's definition, which held sway for nearly a century, was a precise formulation of the usage seen in Cicero, Augustine, and the Middle Ages, and one which had been fathered on Aristotle by translation. Adams's goes back to the political language of the Italian city-states which predated Bodin and narrowly survived him. In this paper I shall try to construct a narrative history of res publica and its descendants, based on close analysis of its usage in both sensitive indicators of change in the French Revolution. We shall consider the classical-medieval stage first, followed by the humanist. Third we must consider the contribution of religious war and an odd convergence of Calvinist and Jesuit. Fourth and last, we map the slow failure of the Bodin synthesis and the revival of the words republic and republican first in England and subsequently in France between 1649 and 1690.

The method is to try to measure the word in the context in which it
is found, determining, if possible, the extent to which it excludes monarchy, or any other form of one-man rule. For example, the mere apposition, "princes and republics," is not sufficient to imply mere exclusion of monarchy and republic is usual practice in a diplomatic sense, as a way of including all sovereign nations (as we shall see now) in a phrase. Very rarely, we may find an extended, dictionary sort of definition, like Bodin's or Adam's, of the sort we might now take for granted in a work on political theory. Aristotle's own definition, as we shall see, is frustratingly ambiguous. The best of the pre-modern definitions, besides that of Bodin, may be the one on Thomas Floyd's Picture of A PerFEct Commonwealth in 1600. "A Commonwealth," he began, "is a lasting body compact of sundry estates and degrees of men: this body is composed of two sorts, (soul and members). The soul is the King or supreme governor. This word Common wealth is called of Latin word, Res publica, quasi res populea, the affairs of the people: which the Latines call the Government of a commonwealth, or a civil society, and is termed of the Greeks a politicall government, derived of the Greek word politeia, which signifieth the regiment and estate of a citie, disposed by order of equitie, and ruled by moderation of reason."

Several results of this investigation may help to redirect historical attention. One is that Machiavelli's definition of república is very original and premature, and that the word gives a further clue to the contemporaneous chronology of The prince. Discourses. Another is that the modern, or Adamsite definition of republic is clearly in use in both France and England by 1650, forty years before the standard historical dictionaries have placed it. Another is that Locke's famous Second Treatise contains ironies both intended and unappreciated. Still another is the implication of the fact that Montesquieu, though he followed Bodin with admiration and care in so much, abandoned him on his definition of republic, using the term as early as 1721 exactly as Adams later defined it, to refer to any state regime that was not a monarchy. Finally, among its more disconcerting results is that the republicans of around 1700, in Europe if not in America, may not quite fit the image of projectors of "classical" virtue that recent United States historiography has been missing on. The great revolutionary word of 1776-1799 implies pluralism and popular sovereignty as much as it does virtue.

II

We must be careful here. If the word republic is not fraudulent, as Adams said, it is certainly slippery, perhaps a classic case of fixing the ambiguous with a memorable ambiguity. Our problems begin with the original Latin word which leaves us in considerable doubt what "thing" (res) meant or in what sense that thing is "public" (publica). There is, for example, no doubt that res publica bears the sense of "just" government that Bodin carried over into the French republique. No doubt, either, that this meaning is the essential forerunner of Harrington's "empire of laws and not of men." It is both under and over the definition used by Cicero of Latine word. Res publica is clearly in use in both France and England by 1650, forty years before the standard historical dictionaries have placed it. Another is that Locke's famous Second Treatise contains ironies both intended and unappreciated. Still another is the implication of the fact that Montesquieu, though he followed Bodin with admiration and care in so much, abandoned him on his definition of republic, using the term as early as 1721 exactly as Adams later defined it, to refer to any state regime that was not a monarchy. Finally, among its more disconcerting results is that the republicans of around 1700, in Europe if not in America, may not quite fit the image of projectors of "classical" virtue that recent United States historiography has been missing on. The great revolutionary word of 1776-1799 implies pluralism and popular sovereignty as much as it does virtue.

II

Nevertheless, the Middle Ages, especially in Italy was fertile in city-states. We are now accustomed to using the word republic to describe 13th century Florence, Milan, and Genoa, even Bruges and Basel. That the word res publica was not applied to them exclusively then, and was used just as often for the kingdom of France, the duchy of Burgundy, or the Church, seems to be the result of Augustine's insistence in "City of God that Cicero's res publica was simply a "just government" of a people (populus) with a common love or interest. The domestication of Aristotle in the thirteenth century, however, did provide another possibility and that possibility requires careful examination.

The book, of course, is Aristotle's Politics. Augustine had not read it, knowing no Greek. It was first written back into the western tradition by Aegidius Romanus and Albertus Magnus, who was Thomas Aquinas' teacher. When Aquinas took it up, in his De regimine principium in about 1250, this difficult text, arriving in sloppy translation, began to cause difficulties. One of Aristotle's workhorse terms in the Politics and Nichomachean Ethics was politeia, roughly meaning how things work in a polis, the general term for the form of any state. Aristotle had, however, insisted on using politeia in a second, more precise and technical sense to mean the third of the three famous classical forms of the state: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. As we know, Aristotle thought demokratia to be a bad thing, a sort of mob-rule. So he added this second politeia to his list and suggested that this was the proper word for a state in which the people, though sovereign, obeyed the law and tolerated elements of the other two kinds of rule. In Sinclair's translation, the key passage from Politics, Book 3, runs as follows. "There are besides democracy and oligarchy two constitutions, one of which aristocracy is generally included in the list of four - monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, aristocracy. The other makes a fifth on that list; it is called the name which is common to them all for we call it politeia, and we shall see this closely related to the Latin res publica would become irresistible by 1600, and that which happened the continued tension of the two meanings in Aristotle's book would be built automatically into the old Latin word.

Aquinas did not, as it happens, translate politeia, either as res publica or anything else. What he did do was draw an important and influential distinction between constitutions, based on Aristotle's ambiguous term, "polity". In De regimine principium he called government (regnum, imperium) "reiga" if it was plenary and "politica" if it was limited. As a result the adjective, "politic" or "politique" came into several western languages with the meaning of "constitutional."

In about 1300 one Tholommeo of the Italian commune of Lucua wrote a continuation of Aquinas' work in which the distinction of "politic" and "regal"
was broadly extended with examples. France, said Tholommeo, was "regale", but England, ancient Israel and Rome are "politicae". Tholommeo also viewed the Roman Republic after 509 BC as an "aristocracy" and ancient Athens and modern Italian city-states as "polities", using Aristotle's term precisely in the sense of limited democracy.

Tholommeo then went on to make a further category, whose importance for our study was still very great three centuries later. (Tholommeo of Lucania, 1535) Through his many works run sat the increasing legal recognition of the de facto sovereignty of city-states like Perugia. In addition he wrote short treatises on tyranny (Tyrannus, vita e tyrannia), on the regimes of city-states (De regimine civitatis), and on the Guelfs and Ghibellines (De Guelfa et Ghibellina) all in the 1350s. Though all anticipate the civic humanist "republicanism" of the next century, only the last uses the word res publica. However, this is a telling use, because Bartolus in discussing the right of resistance to tyrants by a party or faction, and he finds it lawful, in his words, "against those who would destroy the res publica and bring it into servitude to themselves".

Baldus, together with his student Baldus and contemporary Marsilius of Padua, shows how the word res publica was positioned to move in the direction of polyarchy, or complex rule by many.

Gathering the available meanings at the outset of the Renaissance, we can summarise them as follows: the Ciceronian common or public interest, the Augustinian just state, the Aristotelian mixed or constitutional state with popular sovereignty. Nearly every actual use, however, is Ciceronian and lies near one of two close pairs. In one, res publica means a political society, Christian republic as a whole or any sub-society, and its common life, the form of the "body politic". In the other, res publica means the universitas, the society considered as a single agent in the society of the other relatively autonomous collective agents. Neither of these two poles of meaning implies any particular form of government. Indeed, it might be said particularly of the second that it argues a point, while the first is a moving target. The increasing normality of a state where there is not only no prince but where the whole people are thought of as the sovereign.

Even Coluccio Salutati, the great humanist chancellor of Florence and scourge of Giangaleazzo Visconti, agreed with Aristotle that monarchy was best and found himself unable to use the word res publica anti-monarchically. In De tyranno (1400), he wrote that the "form of state which Caesar represented inclined not to tyranny but to a res publica"; and, going further, asked the ignorant question, "Is there no such thing as a res publica under a single rule?" Was there no res publica at Rome so long as it was under kings? (Emerton, 108).

This fact makes quite clear just what the contribution of Renaissance humanism was. More than thirty years ago, Hans Baron pointed out the contrast between Machiavelli's anti-monarchism, his generation to the self-understanding of Florence and her sister cities. We need only add that Bruni's language is no less symptomatic than his arguments, and that he and other civic humanists used the words res publica and repubblica for the first time in modern history in the sense of a state without a king. They drew, of course, from Aristotle, Plutarch, Livy and the other classical authors, but at least one of them, Machiavelli, was writing no more than the classical authors in excluding monarchy from the conceptual shadow of the word res publica. If it is not tautological to call Bruni the Masaccio of civic humanism, then Machiavelli should be called its Michaelangelo.

Bruni's Laudatio fiorentinae urbis, which Baron famously dated to 1404, uses res publica relatively in six separate times. What he meant by the word is obscured by an otherwise helpful English translation by Benjamin J. Kohl. Kohl uses the English word "public" only five times, while substituting "city", "Florence", "republic", "state", "government", "nation" and "community" for the other 31. Bruni used the word res publica more precisely to mean the whole that is governed by the Florentine magistrates, that which practices civic virtues, creates institutions, and has a historical way among its parts. This is Ciceronian. There is a tautological, that Bruni uses res publica to mean the state as a unit making foreign commitments, and certainly he can and does use words like urbs, oppidum, civitas, natio, patria, populus, regnum and imperium, for concepts akin in meaning; but the key use of res publica for Bruni was to designate that which was overthrown by Julius Caesar the old king-free Roman constitution.

A year earlier, Bruni put res publica into a speech of Niccolò Niccoli attacking Dante and Salutati's De tyranno for putting the two Bruti, Tarquin's enemy and Caesar's murderer, in Limbo and deep Hell respectively. Bruni's bracketing of the Roman res publica between the fall of Tarquin in 509 and the rise of Caesar in 50 BC may be the earliest modern instance of this historiographic distinction, which is now not only standard but also one of the principal pegs fixing of meaning. Bruni makes clear in his translation of Aristotle's Politics and in the essays he wrote in Greek on the Florentine system (c.1430) that he has taken over the classical equivalency between res publica and politia.

We know that Bruni's influence was limited by the fact that he never attained the contemporary fame of Salutati and none of his works was printed or translated. Despite these limitations, Florence it provided an exemplary norm. It was confirmed not only by other humanists like Biondo and Bracciolini, but even by newly published classics like the Annals and Histories of Tacitus and the Catiline and Jugurthine War of Sallust.

IV

Humanist language was, of course, not popular language, and we should not overlook another development of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries; the development in the vernacular of the term repubblica to mean a state where there is not only no prince but where the whole people are thought of as the sovereign. Evidence is problematical and slim, but if we may accept the well-known French text called the Memoires de Bouicault, the Pisani could call on the Genoese in 1410 in these revolutionary terms: "Do better, take the lordship away from your king (Charles VI of France) and kill Bouicault and all his Frenchmen and live in a republic like us." Again, Florence gives some of the best evidence. Dino Compagni in the 1270s described Florence only as the "commune", Gregorio Dati in the 1390s referred to his sovereign as "popolo e commune", but Luca Landucci, at the time (1494-1512) of what is now often called the Second Florentine Republic, was already using "government popolare" and "vero popolare" as a description of the regime. Once the word repubblica became attached, in the manner of Aristotle's second aristocracy, to these early "vernacular equivalents for the Greek demokratia, even the rise of the despots in Italy could not bring back the old words.

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This brings us to Machiavelli and Guicciardini. It will not surprise anyone to learn that in his small etymological area, as in so many greater ones, they took the longest step forward. It was Machiavelli and Guicciardini who attached republica to governo popolare and to the old Greek concept of demokratia. It was also these two, especially Machiavelli, who pushed the Italian word republica further into anti-monarchical territory than anyone before the French Revolution.

In 1512, in the Discorsi di Logroino on what he, like Landucci, called governo popolare, and in his earliest Ricordi, Francesco Guicciardini had already begun attaching the word republica to “rule by the many”, the classical third form of state. The Second Florentine Republic fell on September 1 that year, and Guicciardini’s friend Machiavelli probably wrote in the Discourses on Livy not long after. In the Discourses we can actually observe the shift at close quarters. Early in his first book, Machiavelli used republica as a general term for all states. “I say, like others who have written of repubbliche, that they are of three kinds, namely, Principato (of or by a prince), Ottimato (by the best), and Popolare (by the people).” But by the time he had reached Discourse 16, he was apologising for “speaking sometimes of a republica and sometimes of a prince (principato)”. In number 17, he was talking of the relation of a leader to a people, and clearly finding a difficulty Salutati had never experienced in describing an executive as maintaining or controlling a republic (tenere forma di republica). In 18 he is considering whether a person or persons can hold a corrupted people in self-government (mantenere uno stato libero) and he shifts from republica to stato libero or “free-state.”

It is if it is indeed the case, as Chabod argued, that Machiavelli broke off writing the Discourses in order to write The Prince, it may be precisely here that he did so, for all subsequent sections of the Discourses use republica to mean a state without either a prince or hereditary landowning aristocrats. Meanwhile (if it is indeed “miserably late”, as Machiavelli probably wrote in the Discourses on Livy) the very first sentence of the Prince that all past states had been, not monarchies, aristocracies, or democracies, but “other monarchies or republics.” This new, dichotomous usage, which grows stronger from one end of his book to the other, seems to me to be of pivotal importance to the influence of Machiavelli as a seminal political thinker — particularly his recent historiographical incarnation as a republican thinker; but the massive literature seems not yet to have discussed it.

It is true, of course, that Machiavelli did not entirely follow through with his dichotomy. Great tension remains in his use of his new republica. In one celebrated passage, he writes that for the last two hundred years his beloved Florence had “not had a state that could truly be called a republica.” That would have been news to him, but Machiavelli seems only to have meant to bring to the republican concept the “justice” and “good order” which Cicero and Augustine had insisted on and which Guicciardini occasionally reproached him for finding only in Rome. Similarly, calling all states either “monarchies or republics”, would suggest placing the classical “aristocracy” among “repubblies”. Machiavelli seems almost to preclude that option in Book I, discourse 55. “Where there are generality and gentilium as in my opinion in a republica cannot be established.” Yet throughout Book III, he insists that a proliferation of excellent leaders is the hallmark of a republica. To avoid a contradiction and confront the Venetian example, he defines gentilium in as landed aristocrats who live idly, a class which, he says, is not only compatible with monarchy but indeed makes monarchy (forintezzo) inevitable. To sum up, the “Machiavelian republica is a state constitutionally organised to maintain a steady level of justice, energy and virtue over time, and which, without a king or hereditary aristocracy, lies under the sovereignty of its entire citizenry, and is governed in rotation by groups of many of its leading citizens.”

Viewed alongside such a Roman standard, Florence was a distinct disappointment, and Machiavelli may well have written The Prince in a despairing effort to move his beloved city quickly forward through the despoticon stage of the old classical cycle so that a new and more satisfactory republica might emerge at last from the wreckage. Whatever its motives, Machiavelli’s works were all launched into the sea of print by 1532, with immediate and uninterrupted appeal, and they have carried the most extreme humanist definition of republic with them ever since.

Princes and despotas took over almost every city during the 15th and 16th centuries, but Machiavelli’s republica did not disappear. The association of republica with demokratia or popular rule (“governed by the many”) in Florence, does not last much beyond the tail of the Second Florentine Republic in 1512: but the more moderate Aristotelian association with popular sovereignty is clear in Contarini’s famous book on Venice, written in 1523-24, in Donato Gianioni’s on Florence, printed in 1531, in Gianotti’s work on the Venetian constitution, published under the Venetian Gianmiel bro’s editorship in 1571, in Bruto’s translation on Florence printed in 1562, and in Felice Figuicic’s De la Politica, Overo Scienza Civile Secondo la Doctrina D’Arististo, printed in 1583.

As for the key concept that republica cannot be ruled by one, or by a monarch, it is clear in Francesco Patrizi’s Della historia dieci dialoghi and De institutione Republicae printed in 1540 and 1578, Paolo Paruta’s Della Perfezione della vita politica of 1571 and 1579, Giovanni Botero’s Relazioni universali of 1593, and a sentence in Campanella’s La Ciuta de Sol, written in 1602.

And most of those, beginning with Machiavelli himself, were translated. Each translation has its importance, but especially those of Machiavelli, Contarini, Patrizi and Botero. Machiavelli’s key concept of republica entered French as republique in 1544 and 1553, Spanish as republica in 1555, Latin as res publica in 1570 and 1581, Dutch as republiick in 1615, and English as commonwealth in 1636 and 1640.

Contarini’s slightly less anti-monarchical concept was not even first printed in his native Venice but instead in Paris in 1543. This Latin edition was followed within the year by an elegant French translation, while the English translation had to wait until 1599. Guicciardini’s Ricordi saw its first printing in Oine in 1576. Patrizi was put into English in 1574, Botero in 1601. 1603 and 1608. Paruta was not translated, but his view was that there were two kinds of repubbliche, “degli ottimati” and “di molti”, the few (and best) and the many. Monarchies were something else. Similarly, Paruta’s Italian Discorsi politici in 1599 describes Rome “sotto nome di repubblica” as a state ordered by laws allowing true rule in which many magistrates had freer power than a single prince.

In English, Contarini’s commonwealth is a mixture of rule by the one, the few, and the many, and as such, is acknowledged to have had a considerable effect on English thinkers’ developing view of their own constitution. The English version of Patrizi’s De institutione Republicae, the 1579 A Moral Method of Civil Policie... of the institution, state, and government of a common Weale is that “the lye of a Civil and well instituted common weale is to be thought far more safer than of everye Prince”. It also includes an early version of Harrington’s “empire of laws.” “That is counted the best Common weale wherein not every man that listen the more parte doe b eare authority, at ye Becke and Checke of wyll, but that common weale wherein the Lawe onely beare a swaye.”

The 1599 translation of Patrizi’s Dediti dialoghi takes off from Aristotle’s six forms of governments in pairs of good and bad (probably from the Nichomachean Ethics). Since these are translated into English as “a Kingdome, a Tyrannye, the rule of many good men, the rule of few, mighty in power: a common weale, and the rule of the base sorte of people”, a common wealth becomes the good form of democracy. Such states don’t have princes, lords, kings or tyrants, but “Magistrates.”

Botero’s little guide to world politics required an addition to its title between 1601 and 1603. The second edition includes the word common-wealths in addition to “kingdomes.” All this helps to explain why, when John Florio publishes his Italian-English Dictionary in 1598 and 1611, we are not surprised that his definition of republica includes a “free state”, going farther, as we shall see, than contemporary English usage.
The steady beat of translations from the Italian, however, was not enough to bring the Machiavellian, much less the modern meaning of republic into French and English. For most northern humanists writers res publica, republic and republique remained synonymous with constitutional law and legalities. As we have seen, Thomas Elyot and Thomas Starkey in the 1530s were using publick weald and commonwealth in an entirely Cicerronian, even an Augustinian sense. Thomas Smith was using the same word in the same way in De Republica Anglorum in 1572, Richard Hooker in 1559, and Thomas Floyd, as we have seen, in 1600. No less than James I used the then petulant equivalent, republique and democraete. Though Aristotle's politieia number 2, with its idea of sovereignty of the people, made steady gains, marked by the celebrated French translation of the Politics by Louis Le Roy in 1568, and though anti-monarchical trends never ended in this age of royal power, no sixteenth century writing in either monarchy suggests that a res publica could be thought of essentially as kingless. On the contrary, in 1560, Guillaume Postel was able to refer to the Republique of the Turks, a monarchy already proverbially absolute and tyrannical to Europeans. In this process, the growing fashion for Contarini's Venice, with its princely and lifetime (but elective) dogeship, did not help.

The historical discipline was remade in 16th century France. One of the early writers who redefined it was Nicolas de Grouchy, but his analysis of the ancient Roman constitution, published in 1558, used res publica with almost comic ambiguity. In the Roman res publica, he wrote, the people should be thought of as having sovereignty (imperium, regnum maiestati); yet he described this same Res publica in the same paragraph as a combination of three kinds of Regni publici, which he gives in the Greek of Aristotle, certainly, and probably Polybius: basilea, aristoekratia and demokratia. Such work may well have been on the mind of Grouchy's fellow lawyer, Jean Bodin, when he began writing his diatribes against the jargon of mixed government in the 1560s.

Guillaume de la Perriere in Le motir politique in 1567 used Aristotle's list of state forms from the Nichomachean Ethics (aristokratia, basileia, timokratia, oligarchia, demokratia, tyrannia — a bit like Plato's) instead of the one from the Politics. Like Grouchy, he also gave them in Greek. The Ethics, we may conclude, led to less confusion than the Politics, but not much. To all six of his constitutions la Perriere applied the same term, republique, Aristotle's politieia 1, which reduced the word to a simple synonym for civitas or state. Louis Le Caron's Dialogues of 1565 illustrate what may be the immediate influence of Plato, whose Politieia first saw print in 1513. Translated as Res Publica, its title came to mean to readers either simply "state" or, more interestingly, "ideal state," what More had produced in Utopia, and Louis Le Caron meant by "une perfaite Republique".

The most passionate "republican" among northern humanists was surely Etienne de la Boetie, but his use of the word republique was entirely Cicerronian. In Discours sur la servitude was entirely Cicerronian. In Discours sur la servitude, written between 1546 and 1555, long before the Huguenots published it in the religious wars, he asks two revealing questions: whether the other kinds of republique are better than monarchy or whether monarchy belongs in the ranks of republiques at all, since "it is difficult to believe that there is anything public in this government, where everything belongs to one." Answering such a question might one day have led to a Machiavellian usage of the word, but to ask it rhetorically implied a classical-medicval one. Certainly, La Boetie hated kings, but, as Nanneri Keohane has pointed out, he hated their creatures more, and his critique of monarchy was fundamentally aristocratic. With Sidney more than a century later, one can be what we would now call a republican without ever using the word republique as a modern republican would.

Indeed, in France the fate of the word republique was for two centuries bound up with the nobles in their long secess struggle with the crown. This meant that to flourish in France republique would have had to shed some of its democratic Italian baggage, and that not one but both of the two classical alternatives to monarchy would have somehow had to come under the definition of republic. This never quite happened, even to rebel Calvinist nobles in the 16th century, though in England, as we shall see, something like it occurred in the next century.

Calvinism, of course, began in the independent republic of Geneva and its unique church organisation took as much from the circumstances of a Renaissance free city as it did from the Acts of the Apostles. The Calvinist organisation, moreover, quickly became an anti-monarchical, revolutionary instrument of the Reformation. In the late sixteenth century, though we lately prefer to speak of gentry and peasants, historians must point to Calvinists as instrumental in damaging royal authority in France, replacing it in Scotland, and overthrowing it completely in the Netherlands. One might expect to see this radicalism reflected in their use of the word republique; but it wasn't.

The Huguenot "monarchomachs", enemies of kings, were at no time in the sixteenth century described as republican. Nor did they, or anyone else describe their great opponents, the Catholic monarchomachs, as republican. In fact this word did not yet exist in any language, even Italian. Both parties flirted with and occasionally praised tyrannicide, both approved of the ultimate sovereignty of the people; but neither pushed the word res publica as a synonym for in the Ciceronian sense. The first use of the word in France was for two years, in 1560, and in The States General of 1566. Those who remade it was Fénéret, and he also gave them in Greek. The Res publica was superior to the res regis, res regni, and res regis in 1573. This famous Huguenot attack on Catholic kings and unconditional monarchy was read right down to the eighteenth century. It did not use res publica in Machiavelli's sense, but instead in the second Aristotelian sense. France is a Res publica where principe is a state with agreeable mix of sovereignty (imperium, regnum maiestati); yet he described this same Res publica in the same paragraph as a combination of three kinds of Regni publici, which he gives in the Greek of Aristotle, certainly, and probably Polybius: basilea, aristokratia and demokratia. Such work may well have been on the mind of Grouchy's fellow lawyer, Jean Bodin, when he began writing his diatribes against the jargon of "mixed government" in his Methodus of 1566.

Guillaume de la Perriere in Le motir politique in 1567 used Aristotle's list of state forms from the Nichomachean Ethics (aristokratia, basileia, timokratia, oligarchia, demokratia, tyrannia — a bit like Plato's) instead of the one from the Politics. Like Grouchy, he also gave them in Greek. The Ethics, we may conclude, led to less confusion than the Politics, but not much. To all six of his constitutions la Perriere applied the same term, republique, Aristotle's politieia 1, which reduced the word to a simple synonym for civitas or state. Louis Le Caron's Dialogues of 1565 illustrate what may be the immediate influence of Plato, whose Politieia first saw print in 1513. Translated as Res Publica, its title came to mean to readers either simply "state" or, more interestingly, "ideal state," what More had produced in Utopia, and Louis Le Caron meant by "une perfaite Republique".

The best known of the Catholic monarchomachs was Juan de Mariana, and he used the word res publica just as Hotman had. In De regre et regis institutio (1559), Mariana defined the word exactly along the lines of Aristotle's politieia 2, a state with ultimate popular sovereignty which was distinguished from democracy in that it used aristocracy and monarchy to institute its magistracies. Mariana devotes an entire chapter (VIII) to the question of whether the king (rex) or his res publica was supreme, eventually deciding that neither or both were, depending on the circumstances. In the following chapter he argued that the law was superior to the king. The reader familiar with the literature of political science will recognise all these thinkers as belonging to a tradition called "constitutional monarchists", but, having examined their use of the word res publica, he or she may be more willing to set them in other lines of development as well.

Calvinists challenged monarchy by advocating that be limited, and that theoretically the people were sovereign, but Calvinists who stayed out of politics may have had an ultimately larger effect on the meaning of res publica. They did this by joining the intellectual opposition to Aristotle and to the scholastic method with which Aquinas and others had associated him in the Middle Ages. An important leader of this movement, and an important Calvinist, exiled in France and especially in England, a powerful influence on philosophical methodology. This was, of course Pierre de la Ramée of Perus Ramus, the French translator of Plato's Republike. As we shall see, his work was the method of repeated dichotomy, dividing a field of objects of thought into two mutually exclusive parts until a desired category had been reached and precisely described.

Something like this method is now commonplace in computer
programmes with their binary logic. The importance of Ramus's method for political thought is that in fusing opinion upon theories it tended to destabilise the classical commonplace (at least as old as Herodotus) that all states were ruled either by one, by the few, or by many. Ramism favoured instead the analysis that states were rules either by one or by more than one, in other words that aristocracy and democracy must belong in one category, monarchy in the other.

I would like to be able to offer conclusive evidence for this insight, and hope in the future to do so; but here I can only report negatively that he did not use his razor on Plato's political trinities in his translation of the Politia. I can, however, do more than point to the striking relationship between Ramist method and Adam's 1787-89 definition of republic. In Johannes Althusius's Politica Methodica Digesta of 1603, the method of dichotomies is inseparable and its results exactly what might be expected. According to Althusius, a state must have one of two forms: monarchy or polity. Polity, in turn, has two forms: aristocracy and democracy. If he had turned the word republic to mean polyarchy rather than simply "state", Althusius might have found himself cited by Adams as his earliest authority. Praise of Ramus and evidence of Ramist dichotomies in political terminology may also be found in Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World, that favourite book of the English Calvinists, in 1614. 

The Calvinist federal hierarchy of synods elected from below might have provided an excellent example of republican organisation for anyone disposed to see it, but except for an occasional prowl by James I, no one was yet applying political concepts to the organisation of churches within a state. What was happening was the emergence of a new political science to better describe functioning federative political systems like Poland, the Empire, Switzerland and the war-torn Netherlands. A principal figure here was the same Johannes Althusius who pioneered the Ramist approach to political definitions. Althusius, like Polybius and unlike Plato, admired mixed governments of all kinds, including confederations like the Empire in which he lived. It is not that none of these trends survived. It was that Bodin's great work, six livres de la Republique overcome nothing. As is well known, Bodin's work was one of the first great triumphs of Ramist approach to political definitions. Althusius, like Polybius and unlike Plato, admired mixed governments of all kinds, including confederations like the Empire in which he lived.

Third, it was the most useful single work on politics and law in the hands of religious moderates trying to find a political solution to the civil wars. Its authority was as unique as that of the Expeditio Iun on would be two centuries later. As France moved towards absolute monarchy under the stress of assassination and religious war, Bodin's definitions of republique and souverainete simply swept the field, and translations of the work ensured that cognates of republique would enter every European literary language.

VII

Contrary to the almost universal belief of us dix-huitiémistes, it was the Puritan Revolution that finally brought back Machiavelli's use of republic to mean a state without a king. Up until then, it seems, the two connotations of popular sovereignty and of just and complex order were enough in tension to prevent this form of appearance of the rather neat example that the how Cicero's language continues in full revolution is Lord Brooke's exhortation to his roundhead soldiers in 1643, in which he referred to "that great commonwealthman of the Romans, Cicero." The need for a new word only became acute in February, 1649, after the trial and execution of Charles I. In 1647, republic is rare and republican non-existent in the Putney debates which all concern "settling the kingdom". "Kingdom", communwealth, and "nation" are nearly synonymous. But with the abolition of "monarchy" on 7 February, 1649, the words "monarchy" and "kingdom" both became unusable for supporters of the revolution, except to refer to history. On the 11th, there was even a law which replaced "King" in legal documents with "keepers of the Liberties of England", and there are numerous less formal instances of the replacement of "kingdom". Commonwealthe or free-state is, of course, more commonly used than republic and commonwealth's-man seems to force out republican, but three are there by 1650, all four by 1659, in the rhetoric of the English Revolution.

Perhaps the earliest is Commonwealtheyman, spelled in this way in one of the earliest Leveller pamphlets of 14 June, 1647, and used to mean an enthusiast for (more) liberty. Republic is the last to appear. William Walwyn's pamphlet, A Manifestation... on 14 April, 1649, contains the word in the satisfyingly unambiguous clause "even when the Monarchy is changed into a Republice!" May 19 brought the Act of Parliament declaring England "a Commonwealthe or Free-state", upon which the word Free-state is almost immediately turned against the Parliament by a Leveller attack. Mercator Pragensicus of 12 June refers to the "new device of the Republice". Moderate Intelligencer in early July reports unhappily that these days "if you say, 'Caesar or Reigning', they say, 'a republick or nothing'." 06 November a viscous Lord Brooke writes his father, an earl, that the Swiss "ministers... publicly give God thanks for the establishment of the republice." Diplomatically, England is quickly styled the Republic of England: such was the title demanded of the Venetian ambassador by Master of Ceremonies Sir Oliver Fleming in 1651.

In January, 1650, Parliament settled on "The Commonwealth of England" as the subject of oaths of allegiance, "as it is now established, without a king or House of Lords", and this is (probably not intentionally) about as close to Machiavelli's republica, his stato libero of the Discourses I:19ff with neither king nor gentlemen, as anyone had come so far. Marchmont Lord Protector. Parliament's publicist, knew exactly what he wrote in The Case of the Commonwealth of England Stated that "to our present case Machiavelli speaks very aptly... a nation which hath cast off the yoke of tyranny or kingship, for in his language they (tyranny and kingship) are both the same thing." Lord Protector also completed the circle of Aristotelian influence by translating politiea 2 as "free state". The modern meaning of republic had arrived. Once King Charles was dead, the only question was whether the older meanings would return if monarchy were to be restored.

This is the question that makes the Cromwell episode interesting to the republic-hunter. Did Cromwell the monarchist subscribe to the old idea of republic, the new idea, or (like most contemporaries) a bit of both? How would his regime have been different if the ideas had been?

Balstrode Whitelocke records two conversations with the dictator in November and December, 1651, in which Cromwell makes it clear that a mixed monarchy was not, in his mind, a republic. Perhaps Cromwell chose a mixed monarchy, and this is why he emerged with the old royal regent's title of Lord Protector. To this thought what must be called a republic-hunter responds, if you say, "a republick or nothing." Lord Protector included, to name a few, Whitelocke, Ludlow, Sidney, and "William Allen" (who seems to have been Selby?) who had a pamphlet printed in 1657 that advocated killing tyrants and aimed at Cromwell. Whatever the case, it was the end of the commonwealthman. Perhaps Cromwell chose a mixed monarchy, and this is why he emerged with the old royal regent's title of Lord Protector. To this thought what must be called a republic-hunter responds, if you say, "a republick or nothing." Lord Protector included, to name a few, Whitelocke, Ludlow, Sidney, and "William Allen" (who seems to have been Selby?) who had a pamphlet printed in 1657 that advocated killing tyrants and aimed at Cromwell. Whatever the case, it was the end of the commonwealthman. Perhaps the earliest is Commonwealtheyman, spelled in this way in one of the earliest Leveller pamphlets of 14 June, 1647, and used to mean an enthusiast for (more) liberty. Republic is the last to appear. William Walwyn's pamphlet, A Manifestation... on 14 April, 1649, contains the word in the satisfyingly unambiguous clause "even when the Monarchy is changed into a Republice!" May 19 brought the Act of Parliament declaring England "a Commonwealthe or Free-state", upon which the word Free-state is almost immediately turned against the Parliament by a Leveller attack. Mercator Pragensicus of 12 June refers to the "new device of the Republice". Moderate Intelligencer in early July reports unhappily that these days "if you say, 'Caesar or Reigning', they say, 'a republick or nothing'." 06 November a viscous Lord Brooke writes his father, an earl, that the Swiss "ministers... publicly give God thanks for the establishment of the republice." Diplomatically, England is quickly styled the Republic of England: such was the title demanded of the Venetian ambassador by Master of Ceremonies Sir Oliver Fleming in 1651.

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It may be one of the foundations of Hobbes's extraordinary originality that he started with a Bodin sense of the word republic and in Hobbes's translation "city" ("monarchy is no less a city than democracy"), but in chapter 10 he switches to "commonwealth".

Also in 1651, John Milton published his first Defense. It was in Latin and represents a sort of compromise between the new and the old meanings of res publica. Milton recorded in his commonplace book, in a thix of Italian and Latin, the impact of reading Machiavelli in the original around this time, and in at least three of these references he opposed monarchy to republic. Most of the time in the Defense his word means a (good) state without a king, but not always. According to Milton, when the Jews chose King Saul, God allowed their republic to be changed from being administered by many to one ("ab uno pluribus repub. administratur"). It should, of course, be noted that for Milton the Netherlands, in the posthumous Tractatus Politicus of 1677-78, he used civitas for state in general, and republica (uniquely, as far as I can see) for policy or affairs of state.

Other uses of commonwealth, commonwealthman, res publica and republic that seem unambiguously modern (or Machiavellian) can be found in 1652 (Winstanley, John Selden in Netham's translation), and in 1653 (R.H.). In fact, all the uses I have been able to find are modern until the publication of The Commonwealth of Oceana in 1656.

No one could be more of a classical republican — or more classically a republican — than James Harrington, whom John Adams remembered in 1775 defining a republic as "a government of laws and not of men." But Adams's memory was not quite accurate, and the mistake is revealing. What Harrington really wrote was "a government of laws and not of Men," adding later that it was Aristotle's and Livy's "assertion that a commonwealth is an Empire of Laws and not of Men.

Harrington was, of course, a mixed government man, a republican unafraid of a properly limited king or executive, and sanguine for a commonwealth in several ways in Oceana, all of them Aristotelian rather than Machiavellian. "Commonwealths in general are Governments of the Senate proposing, the people resolving, and the magistracy executing," was one. Another was "A Commonwealth is nothing else but the National Conscience.

The variety he called "an equal Commonwealth" (that recommended by Spenger and Milton in 1659) was, he thought, the best and most durable. It was a "Government established upon an equal Agrarian, arising into the superstructures or three orders..." The man said at the time to be the only one in England who "knew what a republic was" still used the word commonwealth in an Aristotelian sense.

Perhaps this helps to explain why Harrington and the bright young Harringtonians found it so much easier to accept the Restoration than the radical "commonwealthmen". One of the latter, in 1657, defined a Commonwealth as a union of families living under a government that it or God has chosen. Cicero and Augustine are invoked to add justice to the definition, and Sophocles is quoted to prove that Tyrannie... loses that name, and is actually another thing", and to recommend tyranny. It is in thinking like this that commonwealth retains its radical character, even when given an old-fashioned definition; but it is clear that the friends of kingless government were fewer than the Restoration approached.

As for the enemies of the commonwealthmen, they seem to have been the ones who invented the word republican, from Prynne and Butler in 1659-60 to L'Estrange in the 1680s. It began as their term of abuse, fully 32 years before the first citation in the OED. Prynne's The Re-Publicans and Others Spurious Good Old Cause gives that logorhetic Presbyterian a very important place in the history, not of republican thought, but of republican semantics. In it, he uses the word Republican just before the storming of the Bastille, in St Giles, England under Richard Cromwell, and to England from 1649 to the Protectorate. It is the contrary of "Monarch" and of "Elector Kingdom", and the equivalent of free-state, of an "Oligarchy", and of any state without a king. Prynne's Republicans in 1659 and 1660 include the leaders of the Rump, the Independents, the Anti-Protestant party, Marcus Brutus, Jesuits, Hollanders, and the Thirty Tyrants of Athens, all of which means that he is not only the first to use the word republican, he is also the first to use republic to include aristocratic tyranny — or any kind of tyranny. Samuel Butler's uses are similar, less extensive, and funnier, as befits the author of Hudibras. Butler may also have been, in 1662, the first to put the relationship between republicanism and Calvinist church movement into verse: "Presbyterian does but translate. The Papacy to a Free State: A Common-wealth of Poperie Where evry Villane is a See"

For twenty years and more after the Restoration, this kind of mutual recrimination is all that keeps the words republican, republican and commonwealthman alive. This is almost the case with republic and to a lesser extent with commonwealth. The only other continuous use of these words seems to have been in diplomacy and geography, to distinguish the small surviving non-monarchical states of Europe from the large monarchies that were so much more usual. We can see this best in the development of the French word republique, which we left under the magistracy of Jean Bodin.
favored literature of religious war in the 17th century, happened in the political struggles of the 17th.

Did this require the direct influence of the Commonwealth of England? Perhaps. The timing is precise, and Philip Knaehel has detailed the genuine English connection with the uprising in Bordeaux. Knaehel also found at least two instances of the use of republican to describe the Frondeurs in 1652 and 1653 in the Conde manuscripts at Chantilly. Hobbes's translator, Samuel Sorbere, seems to have used the word in a letter to Courcet on 1 July, 1652. Since the usage we are measuring seems to disappear from French language after the establishment of Cromwell's dictatorial rule to 1676 (though there is an ambiguous use in the manuscript of Cyrano's Histoire comique), the reasoning may be sound.

In France, even more than in England, the usage was short-lived. The few suggestive uses of republique between 1653 and 1675 are ambiguous, either historical or based on the diplomatic distinction (as in the case of Daniel Defoe, who wrote up his travels in the absolute monarchy of Persia, and published them in both his native France and his adopted England, used republique without exception in talking about the Italian free cities. Louis Moreni's Le grand dictionnaire historique of 1674 begins "la nouvelle republique" in Rome with Brutus. Nicolas-Abraham de la Houssaye Amelot had been a French ambassador to Venice, and returned with a diplomatic, not to mention a Venetian, sense of our word that stands out considerably in this context of the Age of Louis XIV. Clearly, the great power of which the French were subjects had relations with many states that were not only less powerful but also stubbornly and survovably different. The great enemy, the United Provinces of the Netherlands, for example, the Republic of Venice, the Swiss Confederation, and the Republic of Geneva were all named in Amelot's 1675 Histoire du gouvernement de Venetie in a political glossary at the end, and if one adds up the categories (or dichotomizes them), a republique includes aristocracy and democracy, but not monarchy. Amelot, moreover, was a translator of Machiavelli and familiar with the career of Boucicault.

Meanwhile in England both commonwealth and republic were losing some of their revolutionary connotations in the years following the Restoration; but they continued to be used occasionally in more neutral contexts. We hardly know whether the partisan nouns, Commonwealthsman and republican, lost any strength because they all but disappeared from print between 1660 and 1671. All I have been able to find is the memo of a conversation with Charles II in Asherall's new study, reporting that around the time of the signing of the Secret Treaty of Dover in 1670, Charles II called Holland a refuge whose destruction would hurt "the Commonwealth faction in England." Old revolutionaries and regicides survived their defeat, many in New England, the Netherlands and Switzerland; but they seem not to have described themselves in either the enemy's terms or their own.

I cannot help wondering if this was not a bit like the fate of the words "hippie" and "radical" in the United States in the 1970s. In any case, something the ex-revolutionaries still called the "good old cause" took a new lease on life in 1678, that well-known period in British political history called the "emergence of parties". Those who are not political historians may welcome a review. The initial issue was the time by some political leaders to "exclude" the Catholic heir to the throne, James, Duke of York, from the succession; and their excuse was the by now traditional left-wing anti-Catholicism of the British populace, fanned into fury by the apparently false report of a Catholic plot. Partisans of the Exclusion Bill, led by Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, came to be called Whigs, and their opponents, Tories; and in a bewildering decade-long series of political actions, legal and treasonous, public and clandestine, the regime of the restored Stuarts was brought to an ignominious end. Almost immediately, the new rulers and their Whig supporters ran into similar opposition from the Tories which lasted until the roles were reversed in 1701.

In chronological order, this series of events is called the Popish plot, the Exclusion Bill of 1679 and 1680. The Third Exclusion Parliament, or Oxford Parliament, of 1681, the trial and exile of Shaftesbury in 1681, the Rye House Plot of 1683, the Monmouth Rebellion, or Western Rising, of 1685, and the Glorious Revolution of 1688. After the Revolution came the Stuarts and their government (as called the Failed War) in 1697-99 and the impeachment of the Whig ministers in 1701. Each of these gave rise to a voluminous literature in an England of many, relatively free, presses. The literature, in turn, shows a steady increase in the use of the terms Commonwealth, Republican, Commonwealthsman, and Republican, including particularly interesting uses by John Locke and Jonathan Swift.

In 1671, we find both our partisan terms in Samuel Parker's A Defence and Continuation of the Ecclesiastical Policy. In 1675, Shaftesbury gives a speech in Parliament warning of a "Democraticall Republic"; and leading to the suspicion that he was in favour of one. In 1677, we find a very Machiavellian republican in the English translation of Amelot de la Houssaye's book on the Exclusion Crisis. As soon as the Exclusion Crisis begins, however, unless my search has been skewed, the tempo rises. In 1679, the Repubicks of Italy were mentioned in a pamphlet on foreign policy. In 1680 John Maxwell made the assumption, which neither Hotman nor Bodin would have made, that sovereignty of the people by contract is "antimonarchical". On 11 December of that same year, Nathaniel Lee put a self-described commonwealthsman's mum who did not "want to set up a democracy amongst us". 1681 also saw the publication of Brutus (Lee, the frustrated playwright settled for a republic instead of a democracy), and of the extended Harringtonian tract, Plato Redivivus, by Henry Neville. On 13 April that year, with the Third Exclusion Parliament meeting at royalist Oxford, Charles II's new publicist, Cavalier veteran Roger L'Estrange, debuted his weekly periodical, The Observator. The Observator tarred the Whigs as Commonwealths-men and "antimonarchical sectaries" from the first issue to the last. In November came Dryden's great satire on Shaftesbury, Exclusion, and "the General Cry Religion, Common-wealth, and Liberty" in Absalom and Achishophel, the victory piece of the Tories after Shaftesbury's trial.

In January, 1682, White Kennett described the contract theory of government as a "Republican" notion. John Evelyn described the London Gazette as republican. John Northleigh, a prolific Stuart publicist who used the word often, described as "republican designs" efforts to limit the king's power and bring the regime "near... to the nature of a commonwealth." Dryden in The Medallist used the word "republican" twice. The second time, he draw the parallel dear to James I that presbyterian church government as a "Republican" notion. John Evelyn described the London Gazette as republican. John Northleigh, a prolific Stuart publicist who used the word often, described as "republican designs" efforts to limit the king's power and bring the regime "near... to the nature of a commonwealth." Dryden in The Medallist used the word "republican" twice. The second time, he draw the parallel dear to James I that presbyterian church government as a "Republican" notion. John Evelyn described the London Gazette as republican. John Northleigh, a prolific Stuart publicist who used the word often, described as "republican designs" efforts to limit the king's power and bring the regime "near... to the nature of a commonwealth." Dryden in The Medallist used the word "republican" twice. The second time, he draw the parallel dear to James I that presbyterian church government as a "Republican" notion. John Evelyn described the London Gazette as republican. John Northleigh, a prolific Stuart publicist who used the word often, described as "republican designs" efforts to limit the king's power and bring the regime "near... to the nature of a commonwealth." Dryden in The Medallist used the word "republican" twice. The second time, he draw the parallel dear to James I that presbyterian church government as a "Republican" notion. John Evelyn described the London Gazette as republican. John Northleigh, a prolific Stuart publicist who used the word often, described as "republican designs" efforts to limit the king's power and bring the regime "near... to the nature of a commonwealth." Dryden in The Medallist used the word "republican" twice. The second time, he draw the parallel dear to James I that presbyterian church government as a "Republican" notion. John Evelyn described the London Gazette as republican. John Northleigh, a prolific Stuart publicist who used the word often, described as "republican designs" efforts to limit the king's power and bring the regime "near... to the nature of a commonwealth."
however, aware of the new resonance of that word since 1649 and by saying "that all the regular kingdoms of this world are commonwealths", he was in reality arguing that the best "kings" were mere magistrates, and, conversely, that a king who tried to be more was a tyrant to be resisted by force. 100 Sidney's mild judgment, "I should undertake to say, there never was a good government in the world that did not consist of the three simple species of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, I think I might make it good", may have been in aid of the argument Sidney and like writers in his Thoughts on Government said that they proved "that there is no good government but what is republican". 101 Though the words republican and republic are absent from Sidney's work, history does not need to go much further before the implication is irresistible.

A full-blown rebellion occurred two years later in June and July of 1685. John Northleigh wrote of its defeat as The Triumph of Our Monarchy, over the Plots and Principles of Our rebels and Republicans. The indefatigable L'Estrange crowed that there would be "no more... confederates for a Republicque", though two years later he was warning again of "republican conspiracy". He did well to correct himself. Among writers on the rebel side who seem the most reasonable were Andrew Fletcher, Robert Ferguson, John Wildman, and, if we may follow Ashcraft, John Locke. They remained confederates for limited monarchy, and advocates of revolution, always defending themselves against the charge of being republicans. 102

As we know, their day came in 1688, and soon after, Locke published his Two Treatises of Government, both probably written earlier. The circumspection that seems now to have obscured Locke's radicalism is evident in the Treatises in many ways. His use of the word commonwealth now adds another, and incidentally adds a bit of evidence to confirm the judgment that the Treatises were composed long before 1688. In the first Treatise Locke uses commonwealth in the same way as Sidney. He forces Formosus and the reduc. of Adonis to "naming nothing but downright monarchies" instead of only some of them. Then he forks him with the converse: "or else they were a commonwealth and then where was monarchy?" 103 The object is to exclude from the category commonwealth any absolute monarchy, or even any strong one. This is not new, for, as we have seen, an Augustinian definition of res publica could exclude tyranny on the grounds of injustice and an Aristotelian one could do the same on the grounds of disorder. All Locke has done with the word is what Sidney did, melding absolutism and tyranny. 104

In the Second Treatise, however, Locke begins to ironize on the word commonwealth. "I crave leave to use (in)", he writes, "in that sense I find it used by King James the First; and I take it to be its genuine signification; which if anybody dislike, I consent with him to change it": 105 "The prince call one man his subject. I follow Locke's neat trick of avoiding the charge that the commonwealth he meant was the commonwealth of 1649. Later, he mines James I for even more of Property: originally the Field Conventiclers in the West of Scotland. 106"

republic was now, I think, influenced by republican, almost a "back-formation", (as lexicographers say) in English. I take the decade after 1688, to borrow a phrase, to be the Machiavellian moment in the history of the English word republic, because I can find no uses after that date which do not denote a state that has either no single chief executive, or else a highly limited and elected one. Even Swift was using it in this way in his first great satiric pamphlet of 1701. 108

Moreover commonwealth may be observed to have recovered its 1649 meaning in the essays of the ministerial "Trimmer", Halifax, in 1688 and 1694. In 1697 the conservative poet, Matthew Prior, commented that radical Whig opponents of a standing army (like Fletcher and Trenchard) offered two "Extremes A Commonwealth or else King James". In John Toland's 1698 edition of the Memoirs of the old commonwealthman Ludlow, the officers' agreement of 1659 is altered from the original so that the word commonwealth is even more exclusive of monarchy than it had been in 1659. Toland's Ludlow had agreed that the government not be "altered from a Commonwealth, by setting up a King, single person, or House of Peers". The actual agreement was on seven principles "in order to the conservation of this Commonwealth." 109

Walter Moyle used both the non-monarchical republic and commonwealth in his Essay on the Constitution and Government of the Roman State, written in 1699. The title itself illustrates the growing modernity of political language; republican had finally ceased to mean "state", even in the most familiar of its historical contexts. 1701, the year the Tories impeached the Whig ministry, Daniel Defoe published his True-Born Englishman with its neat and clearly pregnant pun: "Titles are shadows! Crowns are empty things! The Good of Subjects is the End of Kings". In 1701 Jonathan Swift published his early masterpiece, a satire on the party struggle disguised as an essay on Greek and Roman history. Here again, the words commonwealth and republican are equivalent and unlike the same words in the writings of Swift's master, Temple, they both exclude monarchies. By implication, England, too, is no monarchy since impeachment is republican. Joseph Addison, who unlike Swift remained a Whig, has the same usage in the Remarks on Several Parts of Italy in 1703 and in the Spectator of 1711. In 1707, a conservative writer, one Henry Gandy, even used the word Republic in its new sense while discussing Aristotle's preference for monarchy in the Ethics. 110

IX

By 1721, with the publications of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, republican in England had come to rest, meaning something close to monarchy by default, or monarchy severely limited. An "arrest Republican... that is, one who is against all Monarchy" was rare. Those who opposed the king's government, even Tories like Bolingbroke, were bound to get called republicans by their enemies, implying that they were against kings and suspicious of government generally. This domesticated the word. In the same way that British politics became domesticated in this period. Only artisan radicals, like Thomas Paine in 1776, remembered the near equivalence of republican and leveller or democrat that had been part of the word before the 1690's. 111

In France, something similar began to happen. Dissidents, particularly Huguenots, grew in numbers, were recognised, and labelled with the word republican, denoting, more and more inescapably, opposition to any monarchy. Thus, the marquis de Duruy in 1676 wrote exasperated of "ce esprit republican" to Louis XIV's war minister. Adjectival uses in English are equally more partisan and less intellectual. Duruy must mean insurgency, dissent, or what the French might now call "l'esprit roupateur". 112

Such usage goes back, in French, to the pro-monarchists in the Fronde, and it goes on in the same vein. Richelieu's Huguenot Dictionnaire, published in Geneva in 1679 (and printed in Rouen in 1719), defines a republican as "Republicae studiosus, qui a l'esprit de Republique. Qui n'aime point l'etat monarchique". He defines Republique as "Repubica. Mot general qui veut dire Eta
libre qui est gouverne par les principaux du peuple, pour le bien commun de l'Etat", adding a poem by De la Vigne opposing Republique to "grands Rois".111

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes raised the stakes of dissidence in France. Porchatraïn in Louisiana implemented the government's ban on Huguenot colonists by saying, "le roi n'a pas chasse de son royaume les herequetes pour en faire une republique". Richard Simon wrote that Huguenot writings tended to "etablir des Republiques". Indeed, Huguenot exile Pierre Jutiez's Lettres pastorales of 1689 proposed a political theory much like Locke's, to justify the Glorious Revolution, popular sovereignty and a sort of passive resistance to Catholic kings. His rival, Pierre Bayle, also used the word republicain, meaning a political egalitarian dissident in a letter of 1691. In his emerging Dictionnaire critique in 1681, 1692 and 1695, Bayle used the word republique, more serious and nearer the modern sense, stronger than the rather bantering Republique des lettres connotation, immortalised in his journal of 1683, would suggest. One sentence found under "Hobbes", appears again under "Pericles", with republicain simply replaced by "democratique".114

Antoine Furetiere's Dictionnaire universel, published in the Netherlands in 1690, was a good deal more explicit, and more generous to republicanism. In the article "Libre", he defines an etat libre like Machiaveli's stato libero and Netham's free state as "une Republique gouverne par des Magistrats elas par des suffrages libres" like those of the Greeks and Romans. Republique he defined as an "etat populaire", a democracy (Landeluce's "gouverno populaire"). As for a Republiquenan, he was "plus populaire que la Royaume". A lover of his country's liberty like the Brutuses and Caesars. Peoples with a "genie republicain", like the Genoese, find it difficult to accustom themselves to "gouvernement monarchique".115

Furetiere's second edition came out in 1694. The Academie française dictionary of that year described a republique as "mieux, sedent plus opprisses a la monarchie". That drew the lines very nicely between the ins and the outs in France. The word did not disappear this time, and the lines did not move. When Montesquieu began his literary career republique had acquired its antimonarchical meaning for good, and any use of it was bound to be somewhat tendentious, even in the Regency.116

This, then, is one of the many subtexts of Montesquieu's famous Lettres persanes, which delighted and twitted the Parisian reader in 1721. Drawing on Chardin's description of Persian despotism, Montesquieu reversed the Bodin term and the Bodin attitude toward monarchy in the mind of his Persian visitor. Monarchy, says Rhedzi, writing home, "est un etat violent, qui degenerere toujours en despotisme ou en republique". In a subsequent letter, Rhedzi speculates on the origins of this strange "gouvernement republicain", a word which he is using to show a love of liberty and hatred of kings among the Greeks and carried on by the Romans and Franks.117

Montesquieu never changed his mind about what a republic was, even after he finally studied Bodin and Machiaveli. He followed it in the 1724 Dialogue de Sylla et d'Eurare, and in 1734 in his essay on the rise and decline of Rome. It is impossible for him to have found it first in England during his famous visit of 1729-31. Much more likely is that his republique was the result of a backformation from republicain, similar to what happened in England. We may have the earliest example of this in the Jesuit Dictionnaire de Trevoux of 1704, which makes a nice symmetry with one of the last uses of the old word by an antimonarchial Jansenist in 1717.118

In 1748 Montesquieu put the modern republicain unequivocally into the foundations of his vast masterpiece, De l'esprit des lois. His is thus the first great work of political science to divide the forms of state into monarchical, despotic, and republiquin, instead of some variation on the Greek triad. Rule of the few and rule of the many became in Montesquieu nothing more than subcategories of republiquin. Though it has not really been recognised, there was nothing like it, except Althusius's idea of "polyarchy". It is a considerable step in political semantics when Montesquieu asserts, in his own quotation marks, "le gouvernement republicain est celui ou le peuple en corps, ou seulement une partie du peuple, a la souveraine puissance, le monarchical, celui ou un seul gouverne, mais par ses lois fixes et etablies, au lieu que, dans le despotique, un seul roi et sans regle, entraine tout par sa volonte et ses caprices."119

Montesquieu's counterpart in England was David Hume. He was - a greater philosopher perhaps, and as we know, not so prominently placed in the development of eighteenth century political thought as others. His great originality was in his theory of political obligation based on habit and association of ideas, and many think of him, correctly, as a Tory historian with unpleasant things to say about revolution and radicalism. Nevertheless, Hume, who had gone to France as a young man in 1734, written his masterpiece there in three years, and met Montesquieu, was bold and clear in his adoption of the modern definition of republic. It is implied in the brief political sections of the Treatise on Human Nature (Book III, 1740), and it is inescapably explicit in the first volume of the Essays, Moral and Political in 1741. The English "mixed form of government . . . is neither wholly monarchial nor wholly republican", wrote Hume in "Of the Liberty of the Press", devoting a separate and second essay to deciding what the proportions were. In England, also, his right to an adequate contribution equates republic with a "free state" ruled by the "few" or the "many", repeatedly contrasting it with "monarchies" of two kinds, "barbarous" and "civilised". It is tempting to conclude that Hume's three categories were conceived in the presence of the three nearly identical categories of the Esprit des lois, yet to be printed.120

In 1755, Samuel Johnson began publishing his great Dictionary, the first with etymological documentation. Johnson defines a republic as "a government of more than one". His citation is from Addison, possibly the Remarks on Several Parts of Italy in the Years 1701, 1702, 1703, certainly the Spectator, but it is only an instance; the utterly succinct formulation of nearly a century of development belongs entirely to Johnson, with perhaps a small assist from Locke's epistemology.122

Adams, who had read Machiaveli early, and who would continue to wrestle with this word republic for a lifetime, found Johnson's definition while working on the reply to Paine, Franklin, Price and Turgot that became the Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America.121 It suited him perfectly. Aristocracy, which he had always regarded as an acceptable, and which he had provided for in the 1780 constitution of Massachusetts, was included by this definition. So were complex constitutions generally, especially those which balanced the classes or otherwise resembled the mixed government of Polybios; such systems he had always favoured. Popular rule, the freedom of the franchise, or the supremacy of democratically elected legislators, which was with him by 1776 and henceforward the meaning of republic, and meant by "republican government", were included too, of course: and thus Adams found it possible to disapprove of the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776 on grounds other than it was unrepublican. Neatly too, though Adams was careful not to say it baldly, Johnson's "government of more than one" could include limited monarchies like the British.

It did more. Strictly applied, it excluded only tyranny and absolute monarchy where the king was legis absolutus - above the law. It thus included all states that Adams would have recognised as just in the Ciceronian-Augustinian sense; and neatly affirmed the old Harringtonian insight that had charmed him in 1775, an "empire of laws". Adopted by a man of fundamentally conservative temperament, mistrustful of human nature and wary of people en masse, but a man who nevertheless called himself a republiquin, its meaning was bound to stabilise. The word still means, primarily in every European language, the absence of kings and tyrants, dictators and despots, and one-man rule of every description, even the unlimited power of a democratically elected executive. So powerful was the modern meaning, even before the Revolution, that in Kentrick's English Dictionary of 1773 (otherwise largely cribbed from Johnson's) there is an entry which is the exact converse of Bodin's so that "state" is defined as "a republic; a government not monarchical".124
At this point Adams may help us approach from a different angle the question that has dogged American historiography for nearly twenty years now. How central to republican ideology is "classical virtue" or public spiritedness? Does this word republic, especially in the hands of an old or dourmongeous like Adams, really imply virtue and class deference? How much?

The fact is that these aspects of Adams's thought about republican government were already old-fashioned, and much grief fell to Adams for not excluding aristocracy from his conception as he had excluded monarchy. To the learned, the old meaning of republic might continue to act as an undercurrent in the new; but to most people who used the word, it was by 1780 no longer a technical term of politics or classical culture, but felt out from Italian Renaissance politics. Republican and commonwealhson — no less republican — had meant radicals opposed to kings and to deference since the words had been invented in 1643-49. Republican, commonwealth, and republicae to these people meant a (relatively) egalitarian society with "democratic" government. It was with these words that Americans baptised the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1776, the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1778, with the motto "Sie semper tyrannis", and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, for which Adams wrote the constitution in 1780. 125

For the French revolutionaries, especially Robespierre and Saint-Just, the republique demanded virtue, classically defined; but the most important implication of the word was that the kings were gone. The thousand-year monarchy given its philosophical underpinnings by Jean Bodin's backward-lookng definition of republique had come to an end, at the will of the people. Republic was now, especially in French, the people's thing.

As far as virtue went, the Republicans who gave the name to Jefferson's party in the 1790s thought to have demonstrated sufficient public spiritedness by plunging into politics and turning rascals out. They did not understand their Republic to be the complex representative democracy, lexicalized by Noah Webster out of Madison's Federalist 10, and fearfully designed to checkmate factions of the propertyless. Instead, as Thomas Paine put it in The Rights of Man, "the government of America, which is wholly on the system of representation, is the only real republic in character and practice that now [1792] exists. Its government has no other object than the public business of the nation, and therefore it is properly a republic" because "a republic . . . with respect to form . . . was the simple democratic form" which America adapted to a large territory by means of a system of representation. 126 This is the last state of the word in America, except for some scholarly types on the right. In other words, as the Supplementary Harriet was among the last to say in 1840, "the word Democrat is synonymous with that of Republican." 127

F O OT N O T E S

Wade H. McCree, "On the Bipartiteness of the Constitution," 22d Street, T. Y. S. 26 February, 1867. The U. S. Supreme Court has held a republic to be the "state" (State v. Harris, 2 Hales (S. C.) 599), whose "administration is open to all citizens." (Hollander, Draft and ensemble I: 28 and II: 202, n. 1), and a government of the people. (In Duncan, 134: S. 449, 351) Oregon holds it to be a government of "representatives chosen by the people." (Kidd and H. Portland, 44 Or 11th: 742 p 710).

2 Noah Webster, Dictionary (1806, NY John Johnson Reprint, 1970), article "Republic.


7 Adams, Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America In works, VI, p. 10.


106. Republican schemes; B.E. Gent., A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern of the Campaign Crew. London, 1690, article: "Republican." "Whigg".


113. Pierre Cesar Richelet, Dictionary, Rouen, 1719, article: "Republic," article: "republic." Another example is the title of the anti-Huguenot pamphlet, Avis sincere de M. Jureau ... par lequel il faut voir que les plus savans et les plus eclairés Docteurs de cette Eglise ont toujours voulu et eru Republicains et des sentiments opposer a la passion abside des Souverains et Monarchies. 1689.

Montesquieu. De l'esprit des lois (1748) Eii. 1-2 in Ibid., p. 532.


Hume, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" Ibid., p. 117; 119, 126-32.


Adams, Defence. Ill (1787) in Works of John Adams, 1851, VI, p. 10.

Davenport, New Dictionary of the English Language. London: Rivington et al., 1773, articles "Republic", "Republican", "State"; (3) The community, the publick, the commonwealth — (4) a republick, a government not monarchical.

