

THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF ADAM BLACKWOOD

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ABSTRACT. *The Scot Adam Blackwood (1539–1613), often cited though seemingly no longer much read, studied in Paris under two of the leading humanist scholars of his time, their influence upon his thinking being profound. A staunch supporter and protégé of Mary, queen of Scots, he published in 1575 the first of his political tracts, the De coniunctione religionis et imperii, in which he argued for stability in religion as the necessary underpinning of political order, and against resistance to the monarch, seen as divinely authorized and the sole law-giver. Six years later he produced his Pro regibus apologia, a rebuttal of George Buchanan’s De jure regni apud Scotos. Polemical in tone, this work of Blackwood’s nevertheless developed further his view of the monarch as the principle of unity and cohesion necessary to the existence of any body politic. In both of these works he deployed a sophisticated array of legal and philosophical arguments whilst pursuing ultimately irenic purposes. But Mary Stewart’s execution in 1587 drew from him a diatribe against Elizabeth I where such purposes succumbed to his outraged sensibilities and his combative rhetorical style.*

The enforced abdication, or deposition, of Mary Stuart in 1567 and her execution twenty years later at Fotheringhay Castle created a sensation amongst the politically aware in many parts of Europe. In a continent where royal power appeared so widely to hold sway, these events exposed afresh the vulnerability of every monarch to challenge, and possibly to overthrow, at the hands not only of his or her subjects, but also of rivals already wielding or aspiring to wield comparable power on their own account. Amongst intellectuals who considered such matters, Mary’s misfortunes added fresh vigour to long-standing debates concerning the origins and nature of public authority, the ethical basis of its exercise, and the proper regulation of the interrelationship between ruler and ruled. Scotsmen participated prominently on both sides of the argument: most notably, George Buchanan, whose *De jure regni apud Scotos* was composed in consequence and in justification of Queen Mary’s removal;¹ and William Barclay, author of the *De regno et regali potestate*, in which she figures as the victim of ‘false accusations and subverted innocence’.²

¹ Published ostensibly at Edinburgh in 1579, the work was evidently in preparation for ten or even twelve years previously, and then went rapidly through several reissues: see I. D. McFarlane, *Buchanan* (London, 1981), pp. 392–415.

² William Barclay, *De regno et regali potestate, adversus Buchananum, Boucherium & reliquos monarchomachos, libri sex* (Paris, 1600), p. 347.

In modern accounts of the debates in question, the name of Adam Blackwood often occurs. Its occurrences, however, are largely incidental, supplementary illustrations of a theme which itself has generated much scholarly dispute. The theme is ‘absolutism’, the meaning and relevance of which historians of political thought continue critically to ponder³ whilst, from time to time, citing Blackwood as a ‘legist’ of ‘truly absolutist’ persuasion.⁴ It is true that judgements upon his ideas have evolved since their dismissal, over sixty years ago, as ‘somewhat crude’ and showing ‘little acquaintance with contemporary conditions and theories’.⁵ We are now assured that some at least of Blackwood’s ‘increasingly strident’ views were ‘sweeping and revolutionary’, that he ‘provided an original defence of absolute monarchy’ featuring ‘a doctrine of non-resistance in which religious and secular authority complemented each other’, that he was nevertheless ‘remarkably secular in his modes of argument’ whilst making ‘little attempt to justify [monarchy] in moral terms’.⁶ Yet such judgements, though sufficiently confident to all appearances, are not to be accepted without pause. For Blackwood’s published works on political issues have never been studied in extenso; and important questions to which they give rise remain unanswered and, indeed, unexplored. The purpose of the present article is to examine his political writings of the 1570s and 1580s in context; to take account not only of the changing circumstances in which he wrote, but also of the intellectual traditions, philosophical as well as legal, to which his views relate; and so to shed some light not only upon the nature and significance of the ideas canvassed by this relatively neglected thinker, but also upon the vexed theme of ‘absolutism’ itself with which his name has so readily been associated.

I

Our main source of information about Adam Blackwood’s life is the ‘*elogium*’ which prefaces his collected works, issued in 1644.⁷ In that year a flag-waving mob descended upon the Paris *parlement* to encourage its resistance to arbitrary measures of royal taxation to be enforced by means of judicial process outside the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts. The Paris riots against the *toisé* figured among the series of popular protests and revolts which, in the 1630s and 1640s,

³ Not least in respect of seventeenth-century England, concerning which see especially G. Burgess, *Absolute monarchy and the Stuart constitution* (London, 1996), and the works cited there.

⁴ W. F. Church, *Constitutional thought in sixteenth-century France: a study in the evolution of ideas* (Cambridge, MA, 1941), p. 245; R. A. Mason, *Kingship and the commonweal: political thought in Renaissance and Reformation Scotland* (East Linton, 1998), p. 222.

⁵ R. W. and A. J. Carlyle, *A history of mediaeval political theory in the West*, VI: *Political theory from 1300 to 1600* (Edinburgh [reissue], 1970), p. 437.

⁶ Church, *Constitutional thought*, p. 260; J. H. M. Salmon, ‘Catholic resistance theory, Ultramontanism and the royalist response, 1580–1620’, in J. H. Burns and M. A. Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge history of political thought, 1450–1700* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 234; Mason, *Kingship and the commonweal*, pp. 3, 222.

⁷ ‘Adami Blacuodaei elogium auctore Gabriele Naudaeo’, in *Adami Blacuodaei in curia praesidiali Pictorum et urbis in decurionum collegio regis consiliarij opera omnia* (Paris, 1644), sigs. [a.iiiij^{ro}]-I.ij^{vo}.

challenged France's agencies of orderly governance, and would culminate in the Fronde. Reissued, Blackwood's writings kept fresh company with a stream of publications, ranging from pamphlets to substantial political treatises, whereby protégés of the cardinals Richelieu or Mazarin disseminated countervailing doctrines of necessary obedience to the French monarchical regime. The author of the *elogium* was one such protégé: Gabriel Naudé,⁸ physician, bibliophile, librarian to both cardinals, and, in effect, creator of the *Bibliothèque Mazarine*. A member of a group of independent-minded humanists heterogeneous in religion, sceptical and empirical in their philosophical outlook, Naudé aligned himself in his own political writings firmly with the advocates of *raison d'état*. Adjoining 'anyone who wishes to be considered wise and prudent to treat with suspicion everything that pleases the people',⁹ he himself interpreted prudence in terms of political craft applied to the promotion of a kingdom's interests even in defiance of the precepts of natural law. It followed, *inter alia*, that spiritual must be subordinated to temporal concerns – and certainly that innovations in religion likely to disrupt the interests in question were wholly unacceptable.¹⁰

However, not much of this is apparent from Naudé's essentially factual essay on Blackwood. Beginning by associating his subject with the names of Buchanan, Lesley,¹¹ Balfour,¹² and other learned Scots, he notes how Blackwood's father, William, died in battle against the English, and then how Blackwood himself was taken into the household of his mother's uncle Robert Reid, bishop of Orkney. Patron of learning and supporter of that hammer of heretics, Cardinal Beaton, Reid was a trusted servant of James V, went repeatedly for him and his successor on diplomatic missions to England and also to France, and died at Dieppe in 1558 in the course of returning from negotiations concerning Mary Stuart's marriage to the future Francis II. Blackwood himself had in the meantime been sent to the University of Paris where he studied under two of France's most distinguished scholars. Such was

⁸ Protégé rather of Mazarin than of Richelieu: despite his contacts with the latter, Naudé's main political writing was 'entirely apart from those that were in any way related to Richelieu's ideas or policies' (W. F. Church, *Richelieu and reason of state* (Princeton, NJ, 1972), p. 416 n. 376).

⁹ Gabriel Naudé, *Apologie pour tous les grands personnages qui ont été faussement soupçonnés de magie* (1625), quoted in D. E. Curtis, *Progress and eternal recurrence in the work of Gabriel Naudé* (Hull, 1967), p. 47.

¹⁰ N. O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the state in France: the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ, 1980), p. 172; R. Pintard, *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVIIe siècle* (2 vols., Paris, 1943), 1, pp. 547, 562–3; P. O. Kristeller, 'Between the Italian Renaissance and the French Enlightenment: Gabriel Naudé as an editor', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 32 (1979), pp. 59–61. On Naudé as a proponent of rulership in terms of *arcana imperii* as evinced in Machiavellian doctrines, see P. S. Donaldson, *Machiavelli and mystery of state* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 141–85.

¹¹ The reference is probably to John Lesley (1527–96), bishop of Ross, author *inter alia* of *De origine, moribus et rebus gestis Scotorum libri decem* (1578), and, in common with Blackwood, an apologist for Mary, queen of Scots.

¹² Probably Robert Balfour (?1550–?1625), distinguished philosopher and philologist, 'the phoenix of his age'.

Adrien Turnèbe's learning that, as the humanist Naudé observes, 'only those who know nothing of letters are ignorant' of it; and such was the genius of Jean Dorat that 'not many came forth from Parnassus who were not of that poet's school and muse'.

In the 1550s, when Blackwood was first in Paris, Turnèbe held the post of *lecteur royal* in Greek and was at the height of his scholarly powers. These were the years – few decades can have been more stimulating to youths of intellectual and literary inclination – when French humanism reached its full flowering, informing the activities of the Pléiade with classical themes, inspiring Pierre de Ronsard's emergence as a philosophical poet, and in Turnèbe's own case evoking most of the wide-ranging critical and editorial work on Greek and Latin texts upon which his reputation chiefly depends. A devoted exponent of classical rhetoric, Turnèbe admired Cicero above all other Latin writers, and especially for his success in demonstrating that blend of eloquence with philosophy which was central to the humanists' educational approach.¹³ The basis of Ciceronian philosophy Turnèbe explored most notably through his editions of the *De fato* and the *De legibus* which he showed to derive rather from Stoic than from Platonic sources. But his editorial work also included prefaces to Plato's *Timaeus* in 1552 and *Phaedo* in 1553; while in the following year he printed in Greek for the first time the *Pimander* and *Asclepius* ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, together with Marsilio Ficino's Latin translation of the former. In his preface to the *Timaeus*, apparently written to introduce a course of lectures, Turnèbe described Plato as the most profound of philosophers, greater than Aristotle.¹⁴ As for Dorat, the Pléiade's 'spiritual father', expert in the Greek and Latin languages, only an inattentive pupil could have overlooked his key messages on the interplay between artistic forms, on how the humanist-poet should strive for synthesis specifically in the realm of music and verse – and, by extension, aid its achievement in the world beyond:

I modulate harmonies, and changing sounds, and rhythms and measures,
And I show how assonance may be derived from discord.¹⁵

Nor were the affairs of that world to be treated as others' concerns. On the contrary: upon the prime political issue of later sixteenth-century France,

¹³ J. Lewis, *Adrien Turnèbe (1512–1565): a humanist observed* (Geneva, 1998), p. 224, cf. 54. On the blend in question see J. E. Siegel, *Rhetoric and philosophy in Renaissance humanism: the union of eloquence and wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* (Princeton, NJ, 1968). The significance of Ciceronian rhetoric for humanist conceptions of civic virtue is well enough recognized. No less significant, in the context of the present discussion, is the position as expounded by Crassus in the third book of the *De oratore*, that poetic compositions informed by rhetoric reveal 'the internal organic and thus living rationality of the work of art'; while prose work, through rhetoric, 'escapes from its immediate context to harmonize with the profound and musical order which governs the world' (Marc Fumaroli, *L'Age de l'éloquence: rhétorique et 'res literaria' de la Renaissance au seuil de l'époque classique* (Paris, 1980), pp. 50–1).

¹⁴ Lewis, *Turnèbe*, pp. 133–4, 334–5, 156–7, 172.

¹⁵ 'Concentus, uariosque sonos, numerosque modosque/tempero, et ostendo quae sit discordia concors': quoted in G. Demerson, *Dorat en son temps: culture classique et présence du monde* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1983), p. 70.

Dorat pronounced unambiguously, and in terms which would reverberate in Adam Blackwood's writings:

Religion depends upon kingship, kingship upon religion,
And each flourishes through the other's strength.¹⁶

Upon his uncle's death, Blackwood returned for a time to Scotland, but found it 'full of contentions and strife'. Prospects of munificence on the part of Queen Mary drew him back to France, first to continue his philosophical and related studies in Paris and then, emulating his mentor Turnèbe, to spend two years in Toulouse, in his own case for the study of law. Back in Paris once more, he worked as a teacher and gained a reputation which brought him to the attention of James Beaton, émigré archbishop of Glasgow, Mary's ambassador to the court of France, and administrator of her resources there as queen dowager. Those resources included rights in the province of Poitou, recently conferred by Henry III, which empowered Mary to appoint judicial personnel in the *parlement* of Poitiers.¹⁷ Hence Blackwood's appointment as *conseiller* in that court, a position which he enjoyed in conjunction with a stipend from the queen. But these benefits were not simply the reward of his scholarly and pedagogic reputation. In 1575 he published the first of his three political works, the *De coniunctione religionis et imperii*, dedicated to his royal patron.¹⁸ This was followed, six years later, by his *Pro regibus apologia*, dedicated again to her and to her son James VI.¹⁹ In these tracts, and especially the second, Blackwood made abundantly plain his intention to defend the cause of Queen Mary whom, according to his biographers, he visited several times during her imprisonment in England.²⁰ His third tract, the *Martyre de la Royne d'Escosse, douairiere de France* appeared in 1587, the year of her execution to which Blackwood reacted in extreme polemical style. In the meantime he married Maria Courtinier, daughter of one of his fellow-judges, and had by her eleven children. Apart from his overtly political writings, his literary output included a number of occasional pieces, a good many of them in verse, as well as a commentary on some of the psalms of David. He died in 1613, 'steadfast', as his

¹⁶ 'Religio regno, de religioneque regnum/pendet, et alterno robore nixa uigent': quoted in *ibid.*, p. 301.

¹⁷ For the extent of Mary's dowry rights in Poitou and elsewhere, and difficulties arising from their exercise, see M. Greengrass, 'Mary, dowager queen of France', in M. Lynch, ed., *Mary Stewart, queen in three kingdoms* (Oxford, 1988), especially pp. 172–5.

¹⁸ Published in Paris, the work consisted of two books to which a third was added in 1612, shortly before Blackwood's death. The discussion in the present article is confined to the material published in 1575.

¹⁹ The title reads in full: *Adversus Georgii Buchanani dialogum de iure regni apud Scotos, pro regibus apologia per Adamum Blacuodaem senatorem apud Pictanos* (Poitiers, 1581).

²⁰ Though from such soundings as I have been able to take, the visits have not left much trace in the surviving documents. But cf. the *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne*, iv (Paris, 1843), *s.v.* 'Blackwood'; also *DNB*; both accounts owe much to Naudé. According to the latter, Blackwood was treated by the queen as one of her 'most private' advisers. See also his letter to James VI after her death, below, p. 932.

funerary monument records, ‘for every degree of honour and virtue, for justice, and most zealous for religion’.

II

In France, the Massacre of St Bartholomew (1572) and the subsequent death of Charles IX (1574), widely perceived as its royal perpetrator, generated a furious pamphlet war. Much scholarly attention has been devoted to the Huguenot side of the argument, and especially to Calvinist success in developing a secular theory of resistance, notably through Beza, Hotman, and the author of the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*.²¹ Less notice has been taken of the royalist counterblasts. To this there are two notable exceptions: Dorat’s bristling poetic apologia for the massacre’s royal perpetrators and the event itself;²² and, far weightier than any of its rivals, Jean Bodin’s *Les six livres de la république* (1575) with (as has recently been reasserted) its ‘systematic elimination ... of all enforceable limitations on the king’s authority’.²³ Yet other writings to vindicate the royalist/Catholic cause appeared in profusion during the years in question: among them Louis le Roy’s *De l’excellence du gouvernement royal* (1575); Matteo Zampini’s *Degli stati di Francia e della lor potenza* (1578); and the Sieur de La Serre’s *Remonstrance au roi ... sur les pernicioeux discours contenu au livre de la république de Bodin* (1579) – this last a denunciation of Bodin’s opinions for indulging Huguenot positions on key issues to excess.²⁴ The controversy was thus at its height when in 1575 Blackwood produced his *De coniunctione*.

Blackwood’s principal thesis is as follows. He begins in almost Hobbesian style by observing that, as men are so given to discord and mutual hatred, human society would be impossible without some countervailing impulse or power.²⁵ He proceeds to offer two sufficiently well-worn propositions to indicate the presence of both. First, throughout the natural world every species is dominated by one of its kind: fire takes precedence over all other elements, gold over all other metals, the lion over beasts, the eagle over birds, and so on.²⁶ Secondly, men are – as Aristotle has shown – brought together by nature into social life.²⁷ Yet, in order to promote the unity implicit in social life (*ut in unum*

²¹ On this, see Q. Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1978), II, pp. 302–37; cf. R. M. Kingdon, ‘Calvinism and resistance theory, 1550–1580’, in Burns and Goldie, eds., *Cambridge history of political thought*, pp. 193–218; in particular, pp. 197–200, correcting Skinner’s view of the radicalism of John Knox, on whom see also the ‘Introduction’ to R. A. Mason, ed., *John Knox: On rebellion* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. viii–xxiv.

²² Most notably in his *In Gasparem Colineum dum viveret Galliae thalassarchium*, but also, and frequently, in other poems of the mid-1570s: Demerson, *Dorat*, pp. 290ff.

²³ J. H. Franklin, ‘Sovereignty and the mixed constitution: Bodin and his critics’, in Burns and Goldie, eds., *Cambridge history of political thought*, p. 308.

²⁴ Some discussion of these and other relevant tracts is provided by Georges Weill, *Les théories sur le pouvoir royal en France pendant les Guerres de Religion* (Paris, 1891), pp. 170–97.

²⁵ Blackwood, *De coniunctione*, fo. 3r.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, fos. 7r–v.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, fo. 18r.

cogamur, 18r), there must be law; and law in turn implies a law-giver. That law is religion, its legislator God, and so upon religion all human laws depend. Thus, on earth, religion is the bond (*vinculum*) of *imperium*, the power of command; and unity and harmony (*concordia*) among men are generated in so far, and only in so far, as *religio* and *imperium* are conjoined.²⁸

All this being the case, it follows that alteration of religion brings ruin to *imperium* and to the commonwealth concerned.²⁹ Of this, biblical and other historical proofs are ample,³⁰ but none is more convincing than the impact of the Calvinist sects or factions, those manglers of jurisdictions, rebels against *imperium*, contrivers of ruin and destruction on every hand.³¹ In Scotland, France, Geneva, Holland, Germany alike, the tally is the same.³² Especially pernicious are the doctrines of John Knox who incites the people to rebel, holds that ‘kingdoms are not hereditary, but given in trust by the vote of the people’,³³ and would refer everything to the popular will.³⁴ It is God, the source of *imperium* itself, who, ‘by decree of the divine will has placed [the prince] at the summit of human affairs’.³⁵ Hence, for all Christians, the duty of obedience, in accordance with Christ’s own example.³⁶ And the corollary of that duty is rejection of claims that ‘according to nature we should repel force and injury’, that ‘everyone is by nature his own preserver’, that ‘everyone is reckoned to be by right appointed guardian of his own body’.³⁷ If princes, tyrannical or otherwise, may be resisted at all, it is ‘by entreaties and prayers, not by force nor arms’.³⁸ For ‘it is God, not men, who has the judgement of whatever offences are imputed to kings; for they are his vicegerents on earth, so that they may command others, so that they may restrain, not that they themselves should be restrained by someone else’.³⁹

Blackwood’s thesis, then, might seem to present princes with a warranty on religious grounds for ‘absolute’ rule. But there is more to it than that. There emerges after all a significant role for the people in the originating and making of kings. At the foundation of the commonwealth, the ‘most wise founders’ recognized that, if power were to reside with ‘that many-headed monster, everything would go to ruin in endless discord’. Therefore they resolved to

²⁸ Ibid., fos. 18r–21v.

²⁹ Ibid., fo. 39r.

³⁰ Ibid., fos. 40rff.

³¹ Ibid., fos. 56v–7r.

³² Ibid., fos. 60v–7r.

³³ Ibid., fos. 67v–8r: ‘hereditaria non esse regna, sed populi suffragio committenda’.

³⁴ Ibid., fo. 85r. These comments on Knox indicate familiarity on Blackwood’s part with the latter’s outline of a *Second blast of the trumpet*, appended to his *Letter to the commonalty* (1558).

³⁵ Blackwood, *De coniunctione*, fos. 83v–4r, 74v: ‘[principem] ordinatio diuinae voluntis in rerum humanarum fastigio locauit’.

³⁶ Ibid., fos. 77r–8v.

³⁷ Ibid., fos. 89v–90r: ‘naturae consentaneum esse ut vim atque iniuriam propulsemus ... omnis natura conseruatix sit sui ... quisque ob tutelam corporis sui fecerit, iure fecisse existimabitur’.

³⁸ Ibid., fos. 87r–8r, 91r: ‘supplicationibus ac precibus, non vi, non armis amolienda est iniuria’.

³⁹ Ibid., fo. 88r: ‘si quid a regibus peccatum est, non homines, sed deum habent iudicem, cuius in terris vicem gerunt, ut imperent aliis, ut coërceant, non a quo quam ipsi coërceantur’.

commit ‘all power over themselves to princes, by the *lex regia*, so that, as Plutarch says of Philopoemen, they should rule not so much in accordance with laws, but as if they were laws themselves’.⁴⁰ Hence an agreement, with the status of a contract: ‘When we contracted with the prince, we agreed to pledge perpetual *imperium* [and] perpetual obedience ... Is it licit for us to withdraw from that compact?’⁴¹ Even so, royal power has a basis in law, and its perpetuation is confirmed ‘not only by anointing with holy oil from heaven, but also by the voice and consent of the people’.⁴² Further, its proper exercise is dependent in good measure upon the magistrates. Magistrates are the ‘interpreters and ministers of the laws’. It is through their ‘learning’ that ‘the *imperium* of the mightier is maintained’.⁴³ But their function is not confined to learned interpretation. For ‘the virtue of law, and hence of the magistrates, is to command, to prohibit, to allow, to punish’.⁴⁴ Thus the magistrates in effect participate in the exercise of *imperium* itself, a position scarcely uncongenial to the learned judge from Poitiers.

All this prompts the question of the nature of laws. The issue lies at the heart of Blackwood’s thesis. At an early stage he draws a distinction, in essence familiar enough, between human and divine laws. Human laws are ‘mutable’, just as human nature in itself is ‘feeble’; nothing human is perpetual and ‘free from the compulsion of fate [*fati necessitate solutum*]’.⁴⁵ In contrast, divine law is ‘constant, sempiternal’. Further, ‘divine *imperium*’ is ‘highest reason, implanted in nature’. Now, the commonwealth exists in nature, as Cicero has affirmed; and nature aspires to ‘perfection’, though it cannot abide in that highest place. Nevertheless, to the degree that human laws are informed by divine reason and administered accordingly, to that degree the natural aspiration of the commonwealth is fulfilled and its continuity assured.⁴⁶ Here Blackwood resorts to myth and metaphysics:

Plato says that the ancient proposers of laws were sons of God, and that the laws were brought by heroes (who themselves had sprung from gods). Those heroes he calls sublunar gods, and sometimes angels ... But what laws? Not written ones, but

⁴⁰ Ibid., fos. 88v–9r: ‘non tantum secundum leges, verumetiam legibus ipsis imperarent’. Cf. fo. 31r: ‘principes qui liberi ac soluti sunt legibus, legibus tamen vivant’. The *lex regia* (‘Quod principi placuit legis habet vigorem’) is at *Digest* 1.4.1 and *Institutes* 1.2.6. The sentiment ascribed to Plutarch does not in fact occur in his account of the life of the soldier and statesman Philopoemen of Megalopolis (c. 253–182 BC).

⁴¹ Blackwood, *De coniunctione*, fo. 93v: ‘cum principe velut contraximus, perpetuum imperium, perpetuam obedientiam stipulanti respondimus ... Licet nobis a conuentione resilire?’

⁴² Ibid., fo. 89v: ‘non tantum oleo sacro diuinitus vncta, verumetiam populi suffragio & consensu firmata’. The allusion to holy oil specifically invokes the ritual at the crowning of France’s kings, a ceremony which, at the time of the publication of Blackwood’s book, Henry III had recently undergone.

⁴³ Ibid., fo. 29r: ‘legum interpretes ac ministri sint magistratus, quorum imperio maiorum disciplina sustinetur’.

⁴⁴ Ibid., fo. 9v: ‘quemadmodum enim legis, sic & magistratus virtus haec est, imperare, vetare, permittere, punire’.

⁴⁵ Ibid., fo. 26v.

⁴⁶ Ibid., fos. 26r–7r.

something transferred by supernatural inspiration from the divine minds into the souls of men.⁴⁷

Hence the role of learned magistrates as interpreters of such laws. And hence, too, the dangers and disasters that inevitably will accrue from rejection of magisterial authority, of laws generated from such a source, and of the religion upon which everything depends.⁴⁸

Of course, the jurisdiction of magistrates does not embrace princes who are answerable only to God and, as the *lex regia* indicates, free from the laws (*legibus solutus*) – though their *imperium* is greatest when they submit the realm to the laws.⁴⁹ But Blackwood has in view more than discrete rulers in particular realms. In his view, the rivalries and conflicts that continually occur among all manner of men and nations yield some moral benefits and, potentially, political ones too. On the one hand, they serve as reminders of human weakness, of the ‘frailty of human affairs and the variety and inconstancy of fortune’.⁵⁰ On the other, concord in a commonwealth, as Cicero has shown, is achieved through reconciling conflicting elements – just as in music it is the blending of very different sounds that produces harmony.⁵¹ And just as the functions of the various members of the human body ‘are integrated by the impulse of the mind and are harmonised by the rational soul’, so religion controls men’s contentions and induces ‘concord’.⁵² But religion is universal; its source, and its object too, is God, the *primum mobile*, the first cause – and ‘in the universal world all causes depend from the first and return to it’.⁵³ As for men’s contentions, the conflicts that disrupt commonwealths internally occur, time and again, between nations also. It is obvious enough why this should be so. Internecine strife makes manifest the frailty of the human condition, its ‘greatest weakness’, which consists in the ‘dispersion and disjunction’ of mankind. Conversely, in the highest union lies the highest virtue, and power with it.⁵⁴ The implication is no less plain. There should be on earth one religion in conjunction with one *imperium*, ‘one kingdom not unlike that of heaven’, under one supreme prince.⁵⁵ With inexorable logic Blackwood arrives, in his peroration, at the case for a commonwealth of the world.

⁴⁷ Ibid., fo. 29v: ‘Plato priscos legmulatores [sic] dei filios fuisse dicit, legesque heroibus (qui & ipsi ex diis orti erant) tradidisse. Heroas istos sublunares deos appellat, interdum etiam angelos ... Sed quas leges? Non scriptas, sed inspiratione quadam & enthousiasmo a mentibus diuinis in animos hominum transfusas’; comment on features of this passage below, n. 102.

⁴⁸ Ibid., fos. 29r–31r, 39r–41r.

⁴⁹ Ibid., fos. 94v, 31v.

⁵⁰ Ibid., fos. 100v–11r: ‘rerum humanarum imbecillitatem, ac varietatem & inconstantiam fortunae intueantur’.

⁵¹ Ibid., fos. 104v–5r. See Cicero, *De re publica*, 2.42; also St Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, II. XXI.

⁵² Blackwood, *De coniunctione*, fo. 105v: ‘mentis impulsu conspirant in unum, & ab animo in concordiam redignatur’.

⁵³ Ibid., fo. 105r: ‘in mundo universo causae omnes pendent a prima, ad eamque referuntur’.

⁵⁴ Ibid., fo. 106v. ⁵⁵ Ibid., fo. 105v: ‘unum regnum caelestis illius non absimile’.

III

Six years after the appearance of his *De coniunctione*, Blackwood published at Poitiers the second of his political tracts, the *Pro regibus apologia*. In the intervening years France had drifted into a condition which successive scholars have described as one of ‘anarchy’,⁵⁶ with recurrent outbreaks of civil war punctuated by ineffectual attempts at establishing a negotiated peace. The case for resistance to royal authority oppressively wielded was made with renewed vigour in the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1579). What provoked Blackwood to renew his counter-advocacy, however, was the publication in the same year of George Buchanan’s dialogue, *De jure regni apud Scotos*. That dialogue set out to show how the enforced abdication of Mary Stuart from the Scottish throne ‘was in full accord both with the basic principles of political society and with the specific norms of the Scottish constitution’.⁵⁷ The offensiveness of its message, in Blackwood’s eyes, was exacerbated by the perversity of its author. For influences of the kind to which Blackwood had been exposed in his youth and early manhood had, or ought to have, been formative upon Buchanan and should surely have shaped the latter’s conduct too. Here was a Scot who had dwelt repeatedly in Paris both as student and as teacher, had experienced at first hand both the rise and the heyday of humanist studies there, had mastered Latin and Greek, had formed friendships with Turnèbe and Dorat among many other leading scholars, and had received support in financial and other forms from none other than Mary, queen of Scots. That such a man, tutor to Mary herself and then to her son James VI, fêted as a Latin poet, celebrated for his learning, should have succumbed to the Calvinist faith and turned upon his royal patroness was plainly outrageous.⁵⁸ So Blackwood picked up his pen once more, this time with objurgatory intent vis-à-vis the renegade who, as Buchanan’s former pupil Montaigne would express it, ‘puts kings in a worse condition than a carter’.⁵⁹

The *Pro regibus apologia* begins with a dedicatory epistle to Queen Mary and her son, urging ‘constancy’ in relation to the ‘fates’ which govern their lives.⁶⁰ Most of the main body of the work thereafter consists of a swingeing attack upon arguments offered and positions adopted in the *De jure regni*. The learned ‘ingrate’⁶¹ Buchanan is ridiculed as unsound no less in his views on basic issues of political philosophy than in his accounts of Scottish history, his readings of biblical and classical texts, even his grasp of etymology and choice of analogies. If Buchanan wishes to derive authority to rule from the law of nature, why

⁵⁶ For instance, J. H. M. Salmon, *Society in crisis: France in the sixteenth century* (London, 1975), ch. 9 (‘The drift to anarchy’); N. M. Sutherland, *The Huguenot struggle for recognition* (London, 1980), pp. 276–7.

⁵⁷ J. H. Burns, *The True law of kingship: concepts of monarchy in early-modern Scotland* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 188–9. ⁵⁸ McFarlane, *Buchanan*, especially pp. 5, 33–4, 40, 97, 163, 208, 213, 445.

⁵⁹ ‘rend le Roy de pire condition qu’un charretier’ (Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, ed. Albert Thibaudet (Bruges, 1946), III.vii, p. 890. ⁶⁰ Blackwood, *Pro regibus*, Sig. *ijv.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29: ‘ingratus’.

should he treat it as being in some way peculiar to the Scots? Conversely, why does he ground the authority of the Roman princes and the Scottish kings upon the same right? The power of the former was limited by the Senate and the people, the latter are entirely free; and comparable differences have applied historically between other countries, many of which were not true monarchies.⁶² But historical understanding is scarcely Buchanan's strength. In particular, he quite misrepresents the significance of the means whereby Kenneth III and afterwards Robert the Bruce won the Scottish kingdom, neither episode furnishing any proof of his claims for the people's right to elect their king.⁶³ More culpable still is his treatment of the Pauline directive that 'a bishop ought to be the husband of one wife', a misinterpretation which Blackwood dismisses with the aid of text after text coupled with strictures upon his rival's alleged motive to 'gratify the incontinence and unbridled lust of your patron'.⁶⁴ Careless of Plutarch or Livy, Buchanan is ignorant in the spheres of canon and especially civil law, and wrong above all in his readings of Cicero which at one point evoke a heavily documented refutation at chapter length.⁶⁵ His opinion on what the term 'tyrant' signified in Greek and Latin is 'false, as everyone knows, however poorly versed in the histories'.⁶⁶ Yet most foolish of all is his use of the analogy of the body, and in particular the comparison which he draws between physician and patient on the one hand and king and people on the other – as if the former were subordinate to the latter in either case, and bound to formulate remedies or laws as the sick or the multitude might dictate.⁶⁷

What would you say, demands Blackwood of Buchanan at one juncture, 'if at St Andrews a boy of St Salvator's or St Leonard's college, where you are principal, were to argue so laughably?'⁶⁸ The insult typifies the tone of the entire work.⁶⁹ However laden with learned apparatus, the *Pro regibus apologia* is first and foremost a polemical tract. This is the context in which the statements it contains of Blackwood's own political credo has to be assessed: a context that

⁶² Ibid., pp. 22–4, 51–5; cf. J. H. Burns, 'George Buchanan and the anti-monarchomachs', in R. A. Mason, ed., *Scots and Britons: Scottish political thought and the Union of 1603* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 149.

⁶³ Blackwood, *Pro regibus*, pp. 65–7, 167, 171–2.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 127–9: 'ut incontinentiae praesulis vestri ac effraenatae libidini satisfaceretis'. Cf. pp. 229–36 for Blackwood's assault upon Buchanan's interpretation of the much-cited account (in 1 Samuel viii) of the Israelites' demanding a king, on which see also Mason, *Kingship and the commonweal*, pp. 221 ff. The 'patron' to whom Blackwood refers in the passage cited above may have been James Stewart, earl of Moray, but the vigorous sexual habits of James Douglas, earl of Morton, make him a possible candidate, even though Buchanan's relations with the latter deteriorated in the course of his regency during the minority of James VI.

⁶⁵ Blackwood, *Pro regibus*, pp. 116–19, 263–70, 89–102.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 146–7: 'quod falsum esse nemo non ignorat, quamvis mediocriter in historiarum lectione versatus'.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 57–61, 76–80.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 140: 'Quid super Andrepoli in sancti servatoris auditorio, vel Leonardi, cui praefectus es, sic ridicule ratiocinaretur?' In fact Buchanan seems to have been principal of St Leonard's from 1566 to 1570 (McFarlane, *Buchanan*, pp. 224–6).

⁶⁹ Invited as it is by Buchanan, early in the *De jure regni*, with his suggestion that apologists for the queen of Scots must be motivated either by self-interest or by ignorance.

fosters contradiction and exaggeration as the author, eager to score debating points, intent upon refuting his opponent's contentions at every turn, is drawn towards positions more extreme than the views presented in the *De coniunctione*. Kingdoms, Blackwood tells us, are gained in the first instance by armed force rather than by popular vote: though they may also be gained by birth, by means of the best of the people, or through some other right. Once gained, however, they are thereafter retained and handed down in accordance with laws of hereditary succession, not via some voting procedure as Buchanan would suggest.⁷⁰ Those same laws are the work of God. So, too, are the kingdoms themselves. Yet 'the royal office is the gift of law and of nature': while kings also, as the poets say, are begotten and maintained by God; indeed, they are accounted gods among men.⁷¹ Thus, by Blackwood's account, the divine and the natural order converge. Now divine laws are perfect and perpetual, while human laws are unstable and in continual need of renewal. It follows that kings are superior to and free from the control of the latter (*legibus solutus*). Further, kings are the vital, the indispensable means whereby those acts of men are brought into assonance with that higher order and so are animated into law.⁷² 'I call a law', says Blackwood, 'what is pleasing to the prince by his right, not at the request of the ruled, for not only the laws and customs of every city and township, but also the public laws are subject to his will'.⁷³ Of course, law-making is no exact science. Laws are matters of 'practical judgement (*prudencia*)'; and, while the king excels in this, he ordains laws 'with the advice of the most prudent'.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the king is sole legislator. By virtue of inheriting the kingdom as such (as distinct from being simply heir to his predecessors and thereby to their acts), he, and he alone, wields the *summum imperium* without which the kingdom by its very nature cannot exist; and the *imperium* is indivisible. Therefore the magistrates, albeit ministers of law and contributors to its interpretation, derive their authority from the king, are always subordinate to the holder of *imperium*, and have no power concerning laws unless he allow it.⁷⁵

Yet, *pace* its polemical purpose and frequent asides, the work is informed by a single theme. The theme is unity. And, apart from considerations of personal and religious allegiance, it is Blackwood's fundamental objection to Buchanan's position that, by assigning as the latter does so substantial a role to the people,

⁷⁰ Blackwood, *Pro regibus*, pp. 63–4, 71–2, cf. 237, also 133. As Blackwood insists (p. 72), the laws in question are informed by principles of agnation and consanguinity, and owe nothing to considerations of popular suffrage through secret ballot as stipulated in the *lex Gabinia* and *lex tabellaria Cassia* (on which see Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 103). Cf. also Burns, 'George Buchanan and the anti-monarchomachs', p. 150; and Burns, *True law of kingship*, p. 227.

⁷¹ Blackwood, *Pro regibus*, pp. 75, 72, 250, 97.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 92, 115, 96.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 111: 'Legem voco principis placitum iure suo, non precario regnantis, cuius imperio non modo singularum ciuitatum ac municipiorum iura consuetudinesque, verumetiam publicae leges sunt obnoxiae'. Cf. p. 112 on custom validated by *praescriptio longi temporis*: an issue of some complexity for Blackwood, the same rule serving to legitimize long-term possession of a kingdom seized initially by force (p. 174).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 82–3, 140.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 55, 99, 56, 100–1, 120, 138.

he concedes to plurality the status of the determining political force. In contrast, Blackwood treats 'the multitude' as invariably subordinate. Their private affairs may be matters severally for them, but even here everything converges at the last upon the king, ultimate proprietor of all things, 'supreme patron of all patrons; every client of the king's client is client also of the king'.⁷⁶ For the rest, it is the king who 'maintains the person of the entire people'.⁷⁷ And as he moves into his concluding chapters, Blackwood shifts from overtly polemical into overtly philosophical mode. According to all philosophers and juriconsults, he roundly declares, 'the *summum imperium* cannot be shared', for those concerned would be 'altogether in dispute, there would be no harmony, no consensus, no concord'. It must therefore repose with 'that which cannot be divided ... for what is highest is one'. That is why, in nature, the neuter gender (*neutrum*) 'is said to be the highest' as it unifies others by its bond (*eo vinculo*) and yet itself can stand alone.⁷⁸ But there are still more powerful arguments. The 'wise men' of the Greeks, Plato chief amongst them, held 'unity to be the universal cause, from which all things would originate and to which they would return'.⁷⁹ And the same philosophical school yields Blackwood his clinching argument, an argument which, moreover, exposes afresh the triviality of Buchanan's use of the body analogy:

A people is like the body, a king like the rational soul. But the body by its nature does nothing unless it is impelled by the soul to act. For it is well known, as the Platonists hold on the basis of matter and quantity, that nothing is other than extension of matter. Further, they call extension a state of mind or passion which is always subject to infinite division. This is why the body can do nothing of itself, as it is brought into a certain state of mind always by extension of matter which would flow into infinity unless it were stabilized by the rational soul into some form.⁸⁰

This, Blackwood concludes triumphantly, is what the analogy of the body really signifies: the unity of princely rule, diffused throughout the whole body whilst, in stark contrast to the 'multitude' with its 'innumerable factions', remaining indivisible. But it is Seneca who puts the point most elegantly, calling the king 'the mind of the *imperium*, the vital spirit upon which a thousand men draw, and the bond by which the commonwealth coheres'.⁸¹ That cohering mind is expressed in law, the 'mature' form of which is

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 274: 'Rex patronorum omnium supremum est patronus: eoque clientis regii cliens regius etiam cliens est.'

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 111–12: 'princeps universi populi personam sustinet'. ⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 292–4.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 296: 'Graeciae sapientes unitate in rerum omnium causam esse censuerunt, ex qua orirentur, in quam redirent.'

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 303: 'Populus certe corpori similis est, rex animo. Corpus autem natura sua nihil agit, nisi ab animo ad agendum impellatur. Constat enim, ut Platonici voluerunt, ex materia & quantitate, quae nihil aliud est quam extensio materiae. Extensionem porro affectionem, siue passionem, vocant, quae divisioni semper obnoxia sit infinitae. Quo sit, ut corpus sua sponte nihil agat, cum pati cogatur, & afficiatur semper extensione materiae, quae fluere in infinitum, nisi ab animo tanquam forma sisteretur.'

⁸¹ Blackwood, *Pro regibus*, p. 304: 'mentem imperii, spiritum vitalem quem tot hominum millia trahunt, & vinculum per quod respub. cohaeret'. Cf. Seneca, *De clementia*, 1.3.5.

universal; and thereby, as Cicero has indicated, men are brought into kinship with the gods and contemplation of a commonwealth of the world.⁸²

IV

In common with all political controversialists, Blackwood aimed through his writings at once to discredit his opponents and to persuade his readers to his own point of view. To these ends he could deploy the instruments of rhetoric, with the uses of which for constructing and presenting argument he, like Buchanan, would have grown familiar as a student and afterwards a teacher in Paris. The art of rhetoric had been expounded and exemplified by a multitude of classical and later writers whose treatments sixteenth-century masters continued to recommend, no doubt modifying or amplifying them for classroom purposes as they themselves saw fit.⁸³ Chief among a handful of texts well established as authoritative were those of Cicero and Quintilian, with the authorship of the long influential *Rhetorica ad Herennium* still being credited for practical purposes to the former despite persuasive airings of scholarly doubts. Turnèbe himself produced a set of commentaries on Quintilian, and on a selection from the second book of Cicero's *De oratore*.⁸⁴ Of course, no more than any other disputatious writer of his time should Blackwood be expected to have approached his task strictly in accordance with some precise model of literary composition. In any case, although the classical rhetoricians recognized the 'deliberative' or 'discussion of policy' as one of the three main kinds of oratory, their prime concern was with techniques for speeches in forensic settings, rather than the construction of learned discourse for presentation in written form. Even so, the readiness with which Blackwood exploited a range of the rhetorical devices available to him is abundantly apparent.

Neither in the *De coniunctione* nor in the *Pro apologia* does he adopt a textbook pattern of structure such as the leading authorities prescribe.⁸⁵ The latter work is in any case designed rather along scholastic lines, its author providing a series of commentaries on statements extracted one by one from Buchanan's dialogue. As for the former, Blackwood does follow Quintilian's advice at least to the extent of supplying at the end of what amounts to an introductory section a summary statement of his main line of argument: that nothing so unites men as veneration of the divine will; and that political harmony (*concordia*) depends

⁸² Blackwood, *Pro regibus*, p. 311.

⁸³ Cf. L. W. B. Brockliss, *French higher education in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a cultural history* (Oxford, 1987), p. 126. On the importance of rhetoric in educational curricula throughout Renaissance Europe, see B. Vickers, 'Rhetoric and poetics', in C. B. Schmitt and Q. Skinner, eds., *The Cambridge history of Renaissance philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 741. On Buchanan's colleagues at the Collège de Sainte-Barbe, McFarlane, *Buchanan*, pp. 29–30.

⁸⁴ Lewis, *Turnèbe*, pp. 185–6, 136. Although Turnèbe's authorship of the Quintilian commentaries is to some extent conjectural, it remains very likely.

⁸⁵ Four successive parts according to Aristotle, six according to the *Ad Herennium*, seven by Quintilian's account – *proemium*, *narratio*, *confirmatio*, *propositio*, *partitio*, *refutatio*, *peroratio*: see Q. Skinner, *Reason and rhetoric in the philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 47.

upon the conjunction of religion and *imperium*, disturbance of which threatens the commonwealth with ruin.⁸⁶ In contrast, rather than settle in his peroration for a summary of key points amplified with axioms attributable to acknowledged authorities, he elects at that juncture in both his treatises to carry his discussion to fresh metaphysical and political heights, albeit drawing freely the while upon his most favoured philosophers.⁸⁷ None the less, both tracts bristle with weapons from the armoury of the *ars rhetorica*. With varying emphasis, all the masters urge the uses of *loci communes*,⁸⁸ of redefinition or redescription,⁸⁹ of repetition,⁹⁰ of rhetorical questions as well as question-and-answer constructions,⁹¹ of the ‘colon’ and the ‘comma’,⁹² and a great deal more.⁹³ All of these and much else by way of rhetorical stratagems pervade Blackwood’s works, from which only one example of each of the specified devices in turn can be provided here.

An alleged commonplace supports the argument for the king’s supremacy vis-à-vis the law: ‘you will find this axiom always accepted in political doctrine, that all the power of the laws is in the power of him who has pre-eminence of *imperium*’.⁹⁴ A definition of religion is formulated at an early stage, both to discredit modern sects and to signal the final universalist thesis: ‘I take religion to mean not this or that rite of worshipping the godhead, but a natural impulse, received by all people in common accord, always urging them together from all countries through some divine providence, queen as it were of all things, and by its venerable character stimulating devotion’.⁹⁵ Later, a series of rhetorical questions coupled with epanaphora drive home the attack: ‘will idle men dare to allege religion as an excuse for their rebellion? Will impious ministers dare in seditious assemblies to stir up the subjects against the prince? Will they dare to protect their perfidious recklessness with good names, and to abuse the king with the authority of sacred letters?’⁹⁶ Elsewhere the

⁸⁶ Blackwood, *De coniunctione*, fo. 21v.

⁸⁷ Cf. *Ad Herennium* 2.30; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 6.1.1ff; also *Ad Herennium* 3.10.18, on the desirability of implanting a ‘powerful argument (*firmam argumentionem*)’ in the listeners’ minds at the end of a speech. And cf. also Skinner, *Reason and rhetoric*, p. 246.

⁸⁸ Literally, ‘commonplaces’, observations of a general nature which the debater could apply to particular purposes: see, for instance, Quintilian 10.5.12–13.

⁸⁹ For instance, *Ad Herennium* 4.25–35.

⁹⁰ *Alias* ‘epanaphora’, repeating the same word or phrase to introduce successive clauses (*Ad Herennium* 4.12.19).

⁹¹ For instance, Cicero, *De oratore* 3.53.203, Quintilian 9.2.6–11, *Ad Herennium* 4.16.23.

⁹² *Ad Herennium* 4.18.26.

⁹³ As convenient an introductory guide as any to the many features of rhetorical argument is, now, Part I of Skinner, *Reason and rhetoric*, though his account far from exhausts the stock.

⁹⁴ Blackwood, *Pro regibus*, p. 60: ‘hoc semper in politica ratione receptum axioma reperies, penes eum potestatem omnem esse legum, qui summam habet imperii’.

⁹⁵ Blackwood, *De coniunctione*, 16r–v: ‘Religionem intelligo, non hunc aut illum colendi numinis ritum, sed instinctum naturae communi gentium omnium consensu receptum, quo semper et ubique terrarum diuina quaedam prouidentia, quasi rerum omnium regina, cogitatur, & ueneratione cultuque afficitur.’

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 75r–v: ‘audebunt homines male feriat rebellionem suam religione praetexere? Audebunt huius religionis impii ministri seditiosis concionibus in principem subditos armare?’

motives of those who so conduct themselves are interrogated, and a devastating answer is supplied: ‘What kind of religion is born of greed and ambition ... ? It is not religion, but an evil omen’.⁹⁷ In any case, using assemblies to settle issues of religion is wholly inappropriate, for reasons indicated with the aid of the comma to telling effect: ‘For there is no wisdom in the multitude, no understanding, no decision, no attentiveness’.⁹⁸ Yet rhetorical emphasis, as through the colon, is applicable in less heated contexts too: ‘The *ius gl[ae]bae* is not acquired by contract, it is acquired by time’.⁹⁹

Blackwood, then, is a practised rhetorician. But, as Cicero observes, in the last resort rhetoric consists of words, while rhetoric and philosophy are ‘closely connected (*cohaerentes*)’.¹⁰⁰ Though not explicitly acknowledged, such a perception powerfully informs Blackwood’s expository style. His treatises are built around concepts signified by certain key words, some of them occurring almost as a refrain throughout, all of them indicative of his thought’s philosophical roots. And those roots lie, unmistakably, in the tenets of Stoicism and Neoplatonism. They are revealed even in his choices of incidental reference – for instance, to the primacy of fire amongst the elements in illustrating the universality of the monarchical principle,¹⁰¹ or to the angels as means of communicating from God to man.¹⁰² Conspicuous among the words in question is *concordia*, the significance of which for Plato and in the context of Renaissance Neoplatonism scarcely requires emphasis.¹⁰³ Among them too are *constantia* and *inconstantia*, the latter associated with *fortuna*, that unpredictable goddess, the former specifying the posture which men and women should adopt towards the *fata*, the unalterable sequences of events, which shape so much of their lives.¹⁰⁴ *Prudentia*, the quality which Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics all

Audebunt temeritatem suam & perfidiam bonis nominibus tueri & regibus auctoritate sacrarum literarum insultare?’

⁹⁷ Ibid., fo. 46v: ‘Quae religio est, quae nata ex auaritia & ambitione ... ? Monstrum est, non religio.’

⁹⁸ Blackwood, *Pro regibus*, p. 209: ‘Non est enim consilium in vulgo, non ratio, non discrimen, non diligentia.’

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 176. The *ius glaebae* refers to a right of possession, not to the tax imposed upon the land of senators under the Theodosian Code, 6.2.10. ¹⁰⁰ Cicero, *De oratore*, 3.37, 16.

¹⁰¹ See above, p. 920. According to Chrisippus, an early leader of the Stoa, fire is the only element which endures for ever (see A. A. Long, *Hellenistic philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (London, 1974), p. 156).

¹⁰² Above, p. 922. From his reference to the angels Blackwood proceeds immediately to develop an extended music analogy. On the angels who, ‘by [their] mediation, make manifest to us’ the ‘thearchic illuminations’, see Dionysius the Areopagite, *The celestial hierarchy*, 9.2 (257D) (ed. R. Roques, G. Heil, and M. de Gandillac (Paris, 1958), p. 130). Note also how the ‘holy order of Archangels ... also belongs to the order of interpreters’ (257C); on magistrates and interpretation, above, p. 923.

¹⁰³ For example, W. R. Bowen, ‘Ficino’s analysis of musical *harmonia*’, in K. Eisenbichler and O. Z. Pugliese, eds., *Ficino and Renaissance neoplatonism* (Ottawa, 1986), pp. 17–27.

¹⁰⁴ On the question of ‘fate’ and its implications vis-à-vis determinism in Stoic thought, see J. M. Rist, *Stoic philosophy* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 112–32.

agree in ranking among the characteristics of the good man, is, in Blackwood's scheme of things, indispensable to the promulgating and interpreting of law, a view attuned to Cicero's more searching analysis of the term, again credited to the Stoics, as the capacity to discern 'first principles in accordance with nature'.¹⁰⁵ Even so, it is not until the closing passages of both treatises that Blackwood gives his convictions full and free rein.

Conducting his thesis to its climax with citations from Plato and the principal Roman Stoics well to the fore, Blackwood presents a vision reaching far beyond the errors of Buchanan, or even the predicament of Scotland or of France. The vision, on the one hand, yields warranty to monarchy on earth as an exemplar of how the very cosmos has come into being and how it retains its form. On the other, it adumbrates a remedy for the troubles by which mankind as a whole must otherwise remain afflicted. Deprived of monarchical rule, human society must revert in effect to the condition of matter, indeterminate, plural *ad infinitum*, existent in no real sense at all.¹⁰⁶ Conversely, its existence as an ordered whole is an effect of monarchy which supplies the requisite stability, unity, and animating force. But to affirm this is to imply the possibility that a society, and a commonwealth with it, may embrace far more than a single people such as the French, the English, or the Scots. That possibility, which provides Blackwood with his *terminus ad quem*, springs once more from Stoic doctrines. According to Zeno, as reported by Plutarch, 'we should consider all men to be of one community and one polity', and 'we should have a common life and an order common to us all'.¹⁰⁷ And according to Cicero, Blackwood's most admired philosopher, despite the changing intellectual fashion of his time,¹⁰⁸ it follows from the universality of the divine will and the law pertaining to the natural order not only that 'man is united with man by the bonds of right (*vincula juris*)', but that the very universe 'is a city or state, common to men and gods,' of which 'each one of us is a part'.¹⁰⁹

V

Less than six years after the appearance of the *Pro regibus apologia*, Blackwood's hopes seemed altogether undermined. His reaction to the execution of Mary Stuart at Fotheringhay in February 1587 was savage. Within the year he had published his *Martyre de la Roynie d'Escosse*, a diatribe against Elizabeth of

¹⁰⁵ Above, p. 926. For Cicero's analysis of *prudentia* in terms of 'first principles ... (*prima secundum natura*)', *De finibus*, 5.6.16ff; quoted phrase at 5.6.18.

¹⁰⁶ Above, p. 927. Plotinus's account of extension of matter is outlined in R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London, 1972), pp. 48–50. For a convenient summary of Ficino's account in the *Theologia Platonica*, A. B. Collins, *The secular is sacred* (The Hague, 1974), pp. 8–13.

¹⁰⁷ Plutarch, *Moralia*, 329A ('On the fortune or virtue of Alexander', 1.6).

¹⁰⁸ See J. E. d'Angers, 'Le renouveau du stoïcisme au XVIe et au XVIIe siècle', in L. Antoine, ed., *Recherches sur le stoïcisme aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Hildesheim, 1975), pp. 1–32; J. H. M. Salmon, *Renaissance and revolt: essays in the intellectual and social history of early modern France* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 27–53.

¹⁰⁹ Cicero, *De finibus*, 3.9.64, 3.20.67; cf. *De re publica* 1.7.23.

England punctuated by invective against Buchanan once more.¹¹⁰ The extreme nature of the polemic sprang not only from its author's sense of outrage and despair, but also from his somewhat embarrassing need to circumvent the obstacles which he himself had placed in the way of any would-be challenger to the authority of a reigning monarch. Elizabeth's, he declared, was a tyrannical regime; but had he not himself argued insistently that tyrants were not to be resisted, that God alone might be their judge? The answer lay in alleging the English queen to be 'not only a bastard' as the English parliament itself had pronounced, 'but also born of triple incest'¹¹¹ – to wit, her father's carnal relations first with her grandmother and then with her mother, the latter being his own daughter. So Elizabeth was unworthy and incapable of reigning at all; she lay beyond the bounds of divine and natural law, and had breached these afresh through her crime against the queen of Scots, a legitimate ruler and indeed rightful claimant to the English throne.¹¹² No doubt all this sufficed to license Blackwood's radically revising a key feature of his earlier doctrine. He now summons in aid 'the ordinances of the ancient emperors and the civil law founded upon this maxim of nature [which] permits force to be resisted with counter-force'; while 'the common law permits a private man to resist with force an injury on the part of a judge'.¹¹³

Perhaps consistency of political opinion is not to be sought in a philosopher plunged into despondency. Blackwood's despondent frame of mind is evident from a letter of his to King James VI, written in French exactly two years after the execution of the queen of Scots.¹¹⁴ Having received, he writes, no acknowledgement of the copy of his '*apologie contre Buchanan*' which he has previously sent to His Majesty, he now sends a copy of the 'second edition, more handsomely printed', and will follow it up with a new work, already in press, the *Martyre de la Roynne d'Escosse*. That lady, 'my most gracious and worthy mistress', never had another servant as loyal as he; yet, since her death, her council 'has shown me very little respect' and for his loyalty he receives no 'recompense'. Even some indication of the king's 'intention' towards him would be most welcome. Whether James, liberated by Buchanan's death in 1582 from that scholar's daunting presence, was disposed to cultivate any such intention towards his former tutor's opponent remains unknown. Blackwood's object seems likely to have been as much to resume some role in the affairs of the house of Stuart as to qualify afresh for emoluments which doubtless had ended with Queen Mary's death. What did not end, during the century's

¹¹⁰ Blackwood, *Martyre*, pp. 257–61. In addition to the misdeeds already denounced, Buchanan had published an *exposé* of Mary's alleged involvement in the murder of Darnley (the *De Maria Sclotorum regina ... historia* ([1571]) which was translated into French (as *Histoire de Marie roynne d'Escosse*) by Philippe Camuz, 'a sometime advocate at Poitiers, and now a sword-dangler pretending to be a gentleman' (*Martyre*, p. 261).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 457, 434, 38.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 454; cf. above, p. 921.

¹¹⁴ British Library (BL) Cotton Caligula E VII, 312; letter dated 18 Feb. 1589 (NS), and badly damaged by fire. It would seem on the evidence of this letter that James did have 'access to the views of Blackwood': cf. Mason, *Kingship and the commonweal*, p. 222, also 226.

closing years and the unfolding of the next, was elaboration of the case for the inviolability of royal *imperium* at the hands of the people. It was a case which yet another Scot was soon to carry still farther, on the back of renewed attacks upon Buchanan and the 'monarchomachs'.¹¹⁵

Adjudged by William Barclay to rank among 'the most learned and distinguished of men',¹¹⁶ Blackwood seems indeed to be classifiable with him as an 'absolutist' thinker, to judge on the basis of definitions of the term which are currently in vogue. By and large, he held the monarchical ruler to be appointed by God, to be accountable only to God, to wield an indivisible *imperium*, to be the sole source of positive law within his realm, to be himself *legibus solutus*, and to be not resistible by the people subjected to him.¹¹⁷ As time passed and circumstances changed, Blackwood shifted from some of these positions, now allowing magistrates a greater and now a lesser role in the exercise of *imperium*, or radically modifying his stance on the vexed question of resistance to a tyrannical ruler.¹¹⁸ These and other such shifts were no minor adjustments. They illustrate the hazards of interpreting opinions expressed at some particular juncture in a writer's career as wholly representative of his convictions, and these in turn as typical of some specific body of thought. Yet the insufficiency with which Blackwood's thought has been interpreted hitherto is not confined to such particular points as these. It is quite misleading to pronounce him a 'legist' with a 'remarkably secular' approach and a disinclination to assess the principal object of his thought 'in moral terms'.¹¹⁹ As his works disclose, Blackwood was above all else a moral philosopher, convinced not only of the indispensability of religion as a cohesive force in human affairs, but also of the monarch's as first and foremost an ethical function. Thus, by his account the position of the prince in relation to law is not to be construed simply in the sense, so often ascribed to 'absolutist' thinkers, of standing 'above' human laws on the one hand whilst being 'bound' by divine and natural law on the other. Rather, his function, a function proper to the unifying influence of the monarch sole, is to serve as the conduit whereby positive laws are imbued by the 'highest reason' which emanates from the divine source. The position is that of a thinker drawn towards a mystical view of the human condition within the divine schema, and framing his political analysis accordingly. It is a view that distinguishes Blackwood's intellectual orientation from that of the essentially rationalist Buchanan, and so contributes further to explain the fundamental differences between them.

The differences extend to their respective perceptions of the optimum form of political organization for mankind in general. Whereas Buchanan's *De jure regni* is oriented towards the Scots and in its concluding passages arrives at an endorsement of how various modes of government flourish among the several

¹¹⁵ Barclay, *De regno et regali potestate*: above, n. 2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, fos. 1v–2r.

¹¹⁷ For definitions of 'absolutism' in such terms as these, see J. P. Sommerville, 'Absolutism and royalism', in Burns and Goldie, eds., *Cambridge history of political thought*, pp. 348–9; Burgess, *Absolute monarchy*, pp. 28–32, 97–8.

¹¹⁸ Above, pp. 921–923, 926, 932.

¹¹⁹ Above, p. 916.

peoples of Europe, Blackwood's ultimate appeal in each of his main treatises is to universalism. Thereby, in an era of emerging nation-states, he perpetuates an ancient tradition of thought traceable from the classical world and through that of medieval Christendom. It was a tradition that survived the decline and fall of the *pax Romana*,¹²⁰ to be reaffirmed most plainly by Dante in the fourteenth century with his famous pronouncement that 'mankind can be ruled by one supreme prince', if only in matters 'which apply to all (*quae omnibus competunt*)'.¹²¹ Humanist scholars, notably from the Netherlands, took up the theme, at least in terms of asserting that men and women everywhere had common needs and natural affinities.¹²² But none professed it as determinedly as the 'agitated' Norman Guillaume Postel. Deriving inspiration from the thirteenth-century Spanish mystic Ramon Lull, the prolific Postel propagated a vision of unity in the shape, politically, of 'universal empire' to be led, moreover, by the king of France, and to enable the creation of 'universal peace'. And for almost twenty years from 1562 until his death Postel lived in or near Paris, sometimes teaching, sometimes confined on account of his eccentricities, and gaining always in celebrity amongst the philosophically minded students and teachers, such as Blackwood, who thronged the city.¹²³

But, in so far as Blackwood's universalism was of a piece with that of Postel, a dreadful irony sprang from his devotion to the cause of Mary, queen of Scots. French Catholic opinion shared all too readily his revulsion at her execution. In Paris her cousin, Catherine-Marie of Guise-Lorraine, duchess of Montpensier, did not hesitate to stir up feeling against Elizabeth of England, while preachers fulminated from the pulpits on the topic of her misdeeds. Yet Elizabeth was not their only target. Had not her Huguenot allies within France itself defied the authority of a king who, far from bringing about the peace of the world, had palpably failed to control seditious heresy within his own dominions? Into this highly charged atmosphere Blackwood hurled the invective of his *Martyre de la Roynne d'Escosse*. It would doubtless be foolish to ascribe to that tract much responsibility for the mounting support with which, in Paris and elsewhere, the activities of the Catholic League were greeted in the year of its publication. Yet those activities were to culminate at Blois within two years in the assassination of an anointed king, Henry III, at the hands of a religious devotee, Jacques Clément. And that event, acclaimed though it was

¹²⁰ P. D. King, 'The Barbarian kingdoms', in J. H. Burns, ed., *The Cambridge history of medieval political thought, c.350-c.1450* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 145–6.

¹²¹ Dante, *Monarchia*, 1.14: 'humanum genus potest regi per unum supremum principem'.

¹²² Thus Erasmus in the *Querela pacis* (1517) – though not in his *Utilissima consultatio de bello Turcis inferendo* (1530); more searchingly, Justus Lipsius, in his *De constantia* (1584). For some comment on these and other contemporary contributors to the theme, see D. Heater, *World citizenship and government: cosmopolitan ideas in the history of Western political thought* (London, 1996), especially pp. 49–51, 60.

¹²³ On Postel, W. J. Bouwsma, *Concordia mundi: the career and thought of Guillaume Postel (1510–1581)* (Cambridge, MA, 1957), especially pp. 1–2, 25–6, 78–97, 216–17. On irenic tendencies of another order among French thinkers in the late sixteenth century, see C. Vivanti, *Lotta politica e pace religiosa in Francia fra cinque e seicento* (Turin, 1963), pp. 132–86.

in the capital and elsewhere as a meritorious act of tyrannicide, set at naught so many of the principles of which Blackwood, with all the considerable rhetorical skill at his command, had endeavoured in his earlier works to persuade his readers.