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Hobbes on Magnanimity and Statesmanship: Replacing Virtue with Science

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At first glance we might think that Hobbes had no use for either magnanimity or statesmanship. How could either fit into his commonwealth, that great Leviathan, king over the children of pride? The word “statesman” or “statesmanship” appears, as far as I can tell, in only two passages of Behemoth, neither very significant. Magnanimity, for its part, is defined in Leviathan as merely “contempt of little helps and hindrances.” A fellow Oxfordian would later describe Aristotle’s magnanimous man in terms Hobbes might have approved as “a prig with the conceit and bad manners of a prig.” It would be easy to conclude that he considered neither magnanimity nor statesmanship to be worthy subjects of study. We might even go so far as to suggest that they are not worthy of emulation, leading as they might to vainglory and the presumptions that lead to civil war.

It is certainly true that Hobbes had scientific pretensions for his political theory, and this topic has been ably covered by scholars. But it is also the case that he introduced his masterwork, Leviathan, with a letter extolling the virtues of his deceased friend, Sidney Godolphin. Hobbes was not insensitive to virtue and virtuous men. But neither was he unrealistic about such men. Sidney died early in the civil war, thus rendering his virtues inaccessible to the royalist cause, and Francis, his brother and the man to whom Leviathan is dedicated, turned the Scilly Islands over to the Commonwealth in 1646. Whatever virtues these brothers possessed and however highly Hobbes might have thought of them, their virtues did little good because they were so unusual and short-lived. The reason such virtues are unavailing is to be found in his account of the only two things that can induce men to keep their covenants: “And those are either a Feare of the consequence of breaking their word; or a Glory, or Pride in appearing not to need to break it. This later is a
Generosity too rarely found to be presumed on, especially in the pursuers of Wealth, Command, or sensuall Pleasure; which are the greatest part of Mankind." The Godolphin brothers—or at least Sidney—might have kept their word from a generosity of spirit, but such a rare quality is not solid enough ground for erecting civil society.

The advantage of paying attention to magnanimity and statesmanship in the thought of Thomas Hobbes is that it allows us to see the extent to which his arguments in Leviathan and elsewhere develop what is, for him, a suboptimal answer to the questions he sought to address in his work. I shall argue that Hobbes could treat these topics lightly only after regretfully acknowledging that his preferred solution, which would involve both, is unworkable. And it is the impracticality of relying on magnanimity and statesmanship that led Hobbes to develop the arguments that he did, the arguments that do not rely on either.

MAGNANIMITY AND STATESMANSHIP

Before we explore the various ways that magnanimity and statesmanship play out in Hobbes’s political theory, we ought first to consider how he understood each of these terms. Again, the biggest obstacle to this is his infrequent use of these terms and short attention to these concepts. Nevertheless there is certainly enough for us to go on at this point.

Taking magnanimity first, we can be grateful for the fact that Hobbes did indeed define the term for us. The first mention of magnanimity in Leviathan, however, is not its definition. Rather, Hobbes offered it as an example of the ways in which names can not be the true grounds of any ratiocination. According to Hobbes, one man will call prodigality what another will call magnanimity, as one will call gravity what another would call stupidity. When we come to the definition of magnanimity we find, as noted above, that it is contempt of little helps and hindrances. This arises as part of a description of the various passions which, in the work of other authors, would be called virtues. In Hobbes’s account, not only are they passions, but magnanimity merely falls in his list between pusillanimity and kindness. He further refined the definition by offering us two different sorts of magnanimity. The first, which is to be found in the face of physical danger, he defined as valor or fortitude. The second type of magnanimity arises in the use of riches and is called liberality.

These first occurrences of magnanimity in Leviathan do not seem very promising. The warnings regarding the use of names may be useful, but there is nothing to suggest that his choice of terms had special significance. Quentin
Skinner, however, has taken the trouble to compare Hobbes’s warnings about the use of names to his earlier list in *The Elements of Law*. Almost all the terms changed in *Leviathan*. The only pair that even resembles the earlier list is prodigality:magnanimity, which earlier appeared as liberality:prodigality.\(^8\)

What is especially curious is that “prodigality” nowhere else appears in *Leviathan* and is not listed among the passions in chapter 6. Indeed, there seems to be no description of excessive spending, even though Hobbes offers three different words for its opposite. And yet this word is the one that he uses in both lists. It is curious that Hobbes consistently warned that magnanimity or one of its variants could be perniciously misused in a rhetorical struggle, even as he used it repeatedly.

The definition of magnanimity and its two variants is also disappointing, for “greatness of soul” is reduced to a contempt for something bad rather than an attraction to or pursuit of something good. In keeping with its status as a passion it is little more than an aversion.\(^9\) Moreover, the definitions of valor and liberality ring a little hollow. How does a contempt for “little helps, and hindrances” translate into valorous actions in the face of death? Compare this to Aristotle’s account: “Still, nobility shines through even in such circumstances, when a man bears many great misfortunes with good grace not because he is insensitive to pain but because he is noble and high-minded [*megalopsuchos*].”\(^10\) There is an incommensurability between, on the one hand, a passion that disdains pettiness and, on the other, those actions that we might associate with valor. Liberality is not much better explained by this contempt for little helps and hindrances.\(^11\) Far more than define these terms what Hobbes seems to do here was define them away. What would otherwise be understood as the virtues of magnanimity, valor or fortitude, and liberality are presented in *Leviathan* not only as passions, rather than virtues, but as minor passions. Reducing courage to the hope of avoiding hurt by resistance as he also did is certainly commensurate with this general diminution of the virtues.\(^12\)

A further and significant refinement arises two chapters later, in chapter 8, where magnanimity is now defined as “contempt of unjust or dishonest helps.”\(^13\) The curious shift here is from little to unjust or dishonest. What would account for the sudden moral content of magnanimity? This refined definition of magnanimity arises in the context of Hobbes’s definition and account of the intellectual virtues, specifically prudence. He explained that the prudence that uses unjust and dishonest means is “that Crooked Wisdom, which is called CRAFT; which is a sign of Pusillanimity.” Thus, however prudent it may be to turn to injustice and dishonesty, the magnanimous man will not do so. But why not? If dishonesty were to be a great rather than a little help, why would the magnanimous man continue to contempt it? Only a few
chapters later Hobbes will tell us that “Force, and Fraud, are in warre the two Cardinal vertues.” The refinement raises more problems than it answers.

Thereafter, in the four other mentions of magnanimity to be found in *Leviathan*, it is understood in relation to the display or acquisition of power. For instance, on one and the same page magnanimity is said to be both consciousness of power and a sign of power. In other words, while on the one hand it arises from self-knowledge and self-reflection, it is also a signal to others. Following upon the second, we find in chapter 14 that actions can be undertaken for the purpose of gaining a reputation for magnanimity. One would apparently so want such a reputation that Hobbes even said rights would be transferred without reciprocation. And we find, in the final mention of magnanimity, that if not magnanimity itself at least its effects are honorable by nature.

So where does Hobbes stand on the topic of magnanimity? Is it good or bad? On the one hand it would seem to be good, for the magnanimous man disdains injustice and that would be good for the commonwealth. On the other hand, of course, both the awareness of power that leads to magnanimous actions and the desire for power that does the same involves a subject in the very type of contest that destabilizes the commonwealth and can lead to civil war. As much as having power leads to magnanimity, a reputation for magnanimity through repeated magnanimous actions can produce power where none or little existed before. For, as Hobbes tells us, a reputation for power is power. And, as any student of Hobbes can explain, for anyone other than the sovereign to have that reputation or to seek it is dangerous. Therefore, there seem to be two types of magnanimity. There is what we could call the true magnanimity, the type that leads the man to distain both little helps and injustice. But there is also another type, perhaps a false magnanimity that might even inspire injustice. The distinction between the true and the false is not fair because Hobbes never made such a distinction himself. He treated both as magnanimity, perhaps for good reason. How could one judge between an action produced by a magnanimous contempt of little helps and an action merely intended to look as if it were produced by the same? In many cases they would be the same act. Hobbes did not want the state to look into men’s hearts, nor did he intend to produce a political science which relied on accomplishing that impossible task.

At best we could say that Hobbes was ambivalent about magnanimity. But this is not strong enough. According to Leo Strauss, Hobbes uniquely makes the claim in *Leviathan* that magnanimity is the origin of all virtue. Strauss attributes this position that Hobbes took only temporarily to the influence of Descartes. Rather, “[f]or Hobbes, except when confused by his own real intentions by Descartes, sees the origin of virtue not in magnanimity, but in fear,
in fear of violent death. He considers not magnanimity but fear of violent death as the only adequate self-consciousness.”

While he might have preferred a world or a commonwealth which could rely upon magnanimous men, relying upon such virtues where they can so easily be feigned was the underlying fault of previous attempts to provide political peace. Hobbes would not allow himself to indulge these fantasies. “Precisely because magnanimity is a form of pride, even though it be the most ‘honorable’ form, it cannot be accepted by Hobbes as the origin of justice.” He dedicated *Leviathan* to Francis Godolphin, but he could not expect an entire commonwealth to be populated by men such as he.

According to Hobbes, the laws of nature are contrary to our natural passions and the terror of some power is needed to compel us to abide by them. In the context of our concerns here, certainly the one law of nature that is contrary to the passions associated with magnanimity is the ninth, against pride. It is here where Hobbes takes a shot at Aristotle for assuming that a natural inequality permitted some to rule others. Hobbes would have none of this. Accordingly he argued, “If Nature therefore have made men equall; that equalitie is to be acknowledged: or if Nature have made men unequall; yet because men that think themselves equall, will not enter into conditions of Peace, but upon Equall termes, such equalitie must be admitted.” Whether or not men are equal by nature, by the laws of nature they must pretend that all are equal, for without such pretense no one will enter the contracts that produce peace. This is not quite the irony that Aristotle so approved of in the magnanimous man, but neither is it quite statesmanship.

The power of the sovereign is designed to compel us to obey the laws we authorized him to make. Therefore, one might think that Hobbes’s philosophy had an important place for statesmanship. The overwhelming role of the sovereign within the commonwealth would normally suggest this. However, as I have already pointed out, the term does not appear anywhere it might be expected. In general terms, how would statesmanship as we normally understand it fit into Hobbes’s political philosophy?

Because Hobbes did not define statesmanship nor even discuss it in *Leviathan* or his other treatises, there are two possible places for us to look for it. We can look to his analysis of prudence or to his descriptions of civil science. Prudence seems to be a logical place to find something like Hobbesian statesmanship, but it is disappointing. According to Hobbes, “To govern well a family, and a kingdome, are not different degrees of Prudence; but different sorts of business.” Prudence is not specific to affairs of state; rather, it is a general ability to predict future events based on the experience of similar events in the past. It is not absolute, and it is certainly not scientific, but it can serve individuals well enough. In fact, it seems to serve individuals better
than groups. “A plain husband-man is more Prudent in affaires of his own house,” wrote Hobbes, “then a Privy Counsellor in the affairs of another man.” Prudence may be of some use in politics, but Hobbes sought something more certain.

Hobbes’s civil science, a science he characteristically thought first appeared with his publication of *De Civitatis* in 1642, was to be the place where such certainty could be found. Prudence, again, relies on comparing past events to current ones and extrapolating from that the likelihood of the same results occurring again. Hobbes’s civil science relies on much surer methods. The Introduction to *Leviathan* ends thus:

> He that is to govern a whole Nation, must read in himself, not this, or that particular man; but Man-kind: which though it be hard to do, harder than to learn any Language, or Science; yet, when I shall have set down my own reading orderly, and perspicuously, the pains left another, will be onely to consider, if he also find not the same in himself. For this kind of Doctrine, admitteth no other Demonstration.

We shall see below just how difficult it will be for Hobbes to restrict this civil science to the sovereign, and in what ways the subject must also understand some part of it. But for the moment it is important to see that what we might call statesmanship is neither a passion, like magnanimity, nor an intellectual virtue, like prudence. It is something different, it is something new; it is a science.

Nevertheless, Hobbes cannot do without the statesman to the same degree that he thinks he can do without the magnanimous man. The virtues of the magnanimous man are rare and, he tells us, can not be relied upon for our safety precisely because of their rarity. The argument in *Leviathan* and other places, by contrast, seems to suggest that the qualities needed for a statesman can be taught, produced, or somehow developed through civil science. In a curious passage at the end of the second part of *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes “I am at the point of believing this my labour, as uselessse, as the Commonwealthe of *Plato*.” He regains his hope however when he considers how little is required of the sovereign and his principal ministers, for he does not even ask them to master the mathematical sciences as Plato did. Instead, Hobbes ends this section by imagining a sovereign who would “by the exercise of entire Sovereignity, in protecting the Publique teaching of it, convert this Truth of Speculation, into the Utility of Practice.” Here it seems they need only teach it, or allow it to be taught; perhaps they do not even need to understand it fully. Whatever may be the case, Hobbes tried to move away from relying upon the virtues, whether moral or intellectual, and place more stress on science.
One thing that is starting to become apparent is that Hobbes treated magnanimity as a passion and downgraded its status as a moral virtue whereas he treated statesmanship, insofar as he did treat it at all, as the product of his civil science and resembling a civil science. We shall see the significance of this distinction as magnanimity and statesmanship play out among the different roles of sovereign and subject. One fact remains constant, however. Hobbes did not want to rely upon magnanimity in any level of society for the peace and tranquility of the state. This pushed him in the awkward direction of relying upon his new science in such a way that it would have to be somewhat widespread throughout the people in the commonwealth. These general considerations on magnanimity and statesmanship lead us to our more specific considerations of what role they play in the duties of both sovereign and subject.

THE SOVEREIGN

When it comes to the question of magnanimity and statesmanship the sovereign is certainly the most important figure. Both of these virtues would seem to apply to the sovereign far more than any subjects. But here it is important to remember what exactly the sovereign is and what role sovereignty plays in Hobbes’s political philosophy. Power defines the position of the sovereign, for the sovereign is authorized to use the collective power of all the members of the Commonwealth. The sovereign is not a philosopher king, as Hobbes made clear in Leviathan. The sovereign’s right to rule does not rest on his inherent qualities, but rather on the position he holds among the institutions of power. That is to say, the office is more important to Hobbes than is the officeholder. And we can see in several places that when Hobbes argued for the superior merits of monarchy he did not suggest that monarchs are morally superior people. It is suspected that this argument, among others, accounts for the cool reception of Leviathan in the court of Charles II.

If magnanimity is the consciousness of power, all sovereigns ought to be magnanimous as a matter of course. But what type of magnanimity? We can hope that they would disdain injustice—if the sovereign can commit an injustice—but we know that magnanimity does not always work in that direction. It can easily slip into vainglory. And even when it does not this may still prove to be dangerous to the commonwealth. When we think of magnanimity as a contempt of little hurts, might we not conclude that overlooking many small offenses against sovereignty can lead to much larger ones?

We know that diminishing the power of the sovereign is not good for the state. Rather, the virtue of the sovereign is to be found in retaining the concentration of power, not in adhering to some other concept of justice. For
Hobbes’s whole point is that there can be no justice outside of the state, and there is no state without the centralization of power. So, however much the more positive aspects of magnanimity may appeal to us, Hobbes cannot be more than ambivalent about it. It is not consistently positive, it does not always lead to actions that promote peace. Hobbes cannot, therefore, endorse it as a virtue—or a passion—for sovereigns.

Hobbes is well known for arguing that there is no real distinction between a tyrant and a sovereign, and that the very term tyrant merely means a “monarchy disliked.” A statesman, therefore, may very well be no more than a sovereign who is liked. Thus tyranny and statesmanship can be dismissed by Hobbes as mere commentary rather than description. But as Kinch Hoekstra has explained, tyranny plays a complex role in Hobbes’s work. For instance, in De Cive Hobbes tells us that a king rules well and a tyrant does not. This is a very strong comment coming from Hobbes and it is not repeated elsewhere in his work. Nevertheless, we can find something akin to this same statement in Leviathan. Consider the argument in chapter 30. Although entitled “Of the Office of the Sovereign Representative” it could as easily have been entitled “Of Statesmanship,” for it is a fascinating instruction to sovereigns. Much of this chapter explains how and why the sovereign must justify his rights to his people and why he must execute those rights as he does. Hobbes explains, “and consequently, it is his Duty, to cause them so to be instructed; and not onely his Duty, but his Benefit also, and Security, against the danger that may arise to himselfe in his naturall Person, from Rebellion.” In this sense, then, a tyrant does rule poorly for he has not sufficiently explained himself to his people. Thus, a poorly instructed people will consider the legitimate actions of a sovereign to be acts of hostility, “which when they think they have strength enough, they will endeavour by acts of Hostility, to avoyd.”

Hobbes opens the chapter by explaining that the safety of the people to which the sovereign is bound by the very purpose of his institution means that he must do much more than simply keep them alive. “But by Safety here,” he explains, “is not meant a bare Preservation, but also all other Contentments of life, which every man by lawful Industry, without danger, or hurt to the Common-wealth, shall acquire to himselfe.” This rather expansive understanding of safety leads Hobbes to list among the duties of a sovereign not only the equal application of justice or equality of all subjects before the law, but even such policies as a flat tax or sales tax, and the replacement of private charity with state welfare. This is also the chapter in which he famously recommended a reform of the universities for, “the Instruction of the people, dependeth wholly, on the right teaching of Youth in the Universities.” The idea running throughout this chapter is that a sovereign who does not rule well or
rather, who is not believed to rule well, will be accused of tyranny. But it seems that, however much Hobbes objected to the political and partisan uses to which the term tyrant could be put, he could find some justification for applying it to those sovereigns who provoked their people into rebellion or who never explained the legitimacy of their actions. He wrote: “I conclude therefore, that in the instruction of the people in the Essential Rights (which are the Naturall, and Fundamental Lawes) of Soveraignty, there is no difficulty, (whilst a Soveraign has his Power entire.) but what proceeds from his own fault, or the fault of those whom he trusteth in the administration of the Common-wealth.” So long as the sovereign does his duty and retains his full rights, he can easily teach the people to respect those rights and, thus, he can continue to retain them.

There is one other argument that runs through chapter 30 of *Leviathan*, and it is that the interest of the sovereign is the same as that of his people. Hobbes writes, “For the good of the Soveraign and People, cannot be separated. It is a weak Soveraign, that has weak Subjects; and a weak People, whose soveraign wanteth Power to rule them at his will.” Hobbes uses this same argument elsewhere to argue for the superiority of monarchy over both aristocracy and democracy, so it cannot be dismissed as an idle point. But in the context of this chapter it should also be understood as an instruction to sovereigns who might otherwise overlook it. This second argument in the chapter, therefore, might be understood as complementary to the first. Whereas the first argument instructs the sovereign in the importance of how he is perceived by the people, this second argument instructs him in how he should perceive them. In other words, neither party should see the other as an enemy but as a partner in the common enterprise of procuring safety for all involved, safety in its most broad understanding. Conveniently, of course, it is the duty and in the interest of everyone that this be accomplished.

The sovereign was not expected to act upon the virtue of prudence, but upon the wisdom of Hobbes’s science. Prudence extrapolates from past events to predict future ones, so that “The best Prophet naturally is the best guesser; and the best guesser, he that is most versed and studied in the matters he guesses at: for he hath most Signes to guess by.” But Hobbes was not in the business of guessing; that was not good enough for him. And certainly the sovereign had to do better than simply guess at policy, so the virtue of prudence had to be replaced with the science of politics. Magnanimity, being treated as the opposite, that is as a passion, plays much less of a role in the duty of a sovereign. But all of this accords very well with the suboptimal account that Hobbes presents in *Leviathan* and his other books. He was writing about the duties attendant to sovereignty, not its perfection. Surely Hobbes would have been very pleased with a sovereign who was magnanimous in
only the best sense and a true statesman. But could he expect such a figure to rise but rarely? He was not going to entrust public safety to fortune, any more than to guesswork.

THE SUBJECT

Hobbes wrote in *De Homine* that “whatsoever the laws are, not to violate them is always and everywhere held to be a virtue in citizens, and to neglect them is held to be a vice.”\(^{48}\) That says about all that needs to be said on the topic of magnanimity and statesmanship on the part of a subject. At least it would say everything, if it were not for the unfortunate fact that subjects often do not obey the laws and that a good deal of Hobbes’s work was an attempt to explain why they should. So we must take a bit more time with this topic.

One of the most intriguing and often difficult parts of Hobbes’s argument in the *Leviathan* is that the subjects form the commonwealth through an agreement with one another that includes the sovereign only tangentially.\(^{49}\) This at least is the argument regarding a commonwealth by institution. And even though the commonwealth by acquisition is, of course, different, Hobbes tried to take the commonwealth by institution as the paradigmatic case. He may not be entirely successful in this attempt, and it may be true that acquisition better fits both the historical record and his own explanation.\(^{50}\) Nevertheless, it is important to focus upon the commonwealth by institution when considering the duties of the subject because it is the formation of this commonwealth that best explains those duties as more than submission. As Hobbes well knew, if there is something approaching a moral reason for forming a commonwealth, and concomitant moral duties, they are to be found in this account of civil society.

The first duty of the subject when forming a commonwealth is to confer his power onto another.\(^{51}\) In fact, Hobbes can say that the act of creation and the thing itself are one and the same. For authorizing another to take actions on one’s behalf both creates the commonwealth and defines it and, at least in *Leviathan*, the soon-to-be-sovereign plays no role in this process. Through this act of creation the individual becomes a subject by alienating his own power (with certain exceptions)\(^{52}\) to the sovereign, as do all the others. Relinquishing power defines the subject, so any act that recovers some of it will be an act of usurpation. Here we see that magnanimity, in all but its most benign sense, is incompatible with the duties of the subject. As either a display of power or a means of acquiring it, magnanimity threatens the monopoly of power that, Hobbes argued, is the key to securing peace.
Thus the passion of magnanimity is not good for the commonwealth. For even in those cases where it arises from salutary motives or a true moral virtue, it tends to be admired as a sign of power: “Reputation of power, is Power; because it draweth with it the adhaerence of those that need protection.” And whereas having subjects who disdain to commit injustice might be a good thing for the commonwealth, magnanimity is too ambiguous a virtue to trust. Subjects who wield power on their own threaten the peace because the laws cease to bind them effectively. He wrote that “laws are as cobwebs to potent men.” Anything that loosens the bonds of the law moves in the direction of returning men to the state of nature. Nevertheless, Hobbes did claim that a sovereign who is popular and beloved of his people has nothing to fear from the popularity of any of his subjects. For such a sovereign relies not only on the good opinion in which he is held but also on the very office of sovereignty which a usurper does not have. There is no contradiction here. Hobbes was thinking of the best possible case where a sovereign understands his role, explains it to his people, and all submit to his rule. In the suboptimal condition which he takes to be the normal one, however, powerful subjects are a cause for concern.

At first glance it would seem that statesmanship is by definition an encroachment on the rights of sovereignty. Wisdom or insight into the affairs of state are not the proper concern of subjects. There are many passages in Hobbes’s work that bear this out. He tells us that subjects should not compare their laws with the laws of other states and that they should not seek reform. In Leviathan, he unfavorably compared human society to that of bees on many points. One stands out in this context:

Thirdly, that these creatures, having not (as man) the use of reason, do not see, nor think they see any fault, in the administration of their common business: whereas amongst men, there are very many, that think themselves wiser, and abler to govern the Publique, better than the rest; and these strive to reforme and innovate, one this way, another that way; and thereby bring it into Distraction and Civill warre.

In De Cive he made the point with force: “every king, whether good or bad, is exposed to being condemned by the judgment, and having his throat cut by the hand, of a lone assassin.” As Harvey Mansfield has put it, “For Hobbes, then, consent is not a kind of participation in politics; it is, to the contrary, as far as possible an abstention from politics.” Excluding the subjects from politics is not that simple, however. Subjects will not spontaneously obey the laws, and they will certainly not know why they ought to obey the laws unless someone tells them. Some amount of understanding, some access to his civil science, is required of subjects for the state to be successful.
This leads to a tension in Hobbes’s political philosophy. He wanted his book to be taught in the schools and then those lessons to be transferred to the people through other means. In a most colorful passage, he wrote:

For seeing the Universities are the Fountains of Civill, and Morall Doctrine, from whence the Preachers, and the Gentry, drawing such water as they find, use to sprinkle the same (both from the Pulpit, and in their Conversation) upon the People, there ought certainly to be great care taken, to have it pure, both from the Venime of Heathen Politicians, and from the Incantation of Deceiving Spirits.59

Thus, on the one hand, his argument required that all the subjects of the commonwealth learn their duties and the justifications for the rights of the sovereign. He even placed subjects in the awkward position of rejecting powers that they might be granted when they understand that, instead, they ought to be retained by the sovereign.60 This places a burden on the subject to understand the science of politics. Yet, on the other hand, these same subjects must not look too deeply into political questions or compare their own laws with the laws of others. For example, Hobbes is frank in admitting that “there is scarce a Common-wealth in the world, whose beginnings can in conscience be justified.”61 Opening-up political questions would both encroach on the rights of the sovereign and stir up discontent. How do you teach people to learn only so much?62

Hobbes divided the population of each commonwealth into two groups: the first has little time or interest in discussing or discovering the principles of natural justice; the second forms the opinions of the first group based upon the little bit they studied in the universities. The first group he described as they “whom necessity, or covetousenesse keepeth attent on their trades, and labour; and they, on the other side, whom superfluity, or sloth carrieth after their sensuall pleasures, (which two sorts of men take up the greatest part of Mankind).”63 This first group was not distinguished as an economic class, for it included both rich and poor (as did the second group). Rather, it was a class of people too poor, greedy, or hedonistic to devote any time to studying. And this is the vast majority of humanity. Yet these were the same people Hobbes thought had to have just enough of his civil science to know what to do. Perhaps their general distraction or indifference to such studies makes irrelevant any concern about them going too far. But it does not solve the problem of getting them up to the minimum standard, even if they are more easy to instruct than are the rich and potent subjects.64

Magnanimity, a passion, is not demanded of the subject and its vices are certainly discouraged. It is more difficult to understand the place of statesmanship, however. Some civil science is required, but only a certain amount.
Too much or too little understanding of politics on the part of the subject imperils the state. It is a difficult balance to achieve, and Hobbes did not provide a great deal of advice on how to strike it. Presumably that is the job of the sovereign as statesman.

CONCLUSION

Hobbes described the commonwealth as an artificial person, and in the Introduction to the *Leviathan* he set out in detail a comparison of all the parts of the human body and all the parts of the state. Ought we, then, to ask if this artificial man might not have the virtues of magnanimity and statesmanship? There is no place in his description of the *Leviathan* for the passion of magnanimity. Hobbes tells us that voluntary motion and the passions arise from imagination, to which nothing corresponds in his analogy. This should come as no surprise, for institutions have no passions; that, it would seem, is their great advantage. By contrast, if the intellectual virtue of statesmanship as either prudence or civil science might be assigned to the faculty of reason in the individual, it has its corresponding feature in the state under the heading of “equity.” Even if equity does not exhaust the classical understanding of statesmanship, it certainly captures a great deal of what Hobbes would have understood by it.

Hobbes could largely do without magnanimity because he thought he need not rely on this passion. Statesmanship, however, was much harder for him to abandon. The problem Hobbes faced is that a sovereign could make mistakes that would endanger the commonwealth. Institutions alone could not solve this problem, which is why Hobbes offered very little by way of institutional solutions. Neither could he rely on the virtues of mere men, like the brothers Godolphin, to achieve any more than they had in the past. His promise of the true civil science had to take him beyond that. And yet, however much Hobbes tried to insulate the state from the vagaries and inconsistencies of the human element, they always returned on him.

As a second best solution to fundamental political problems, Hobbes’s plans have much to recommend them. Many subsequent authors have recreated some of his solutions. But as his law of equality makes especially clear, much of his solution is based upon a fiction or a pretense. To the extent that magnanimity can be dismissed as a passion and statesmanship subsumed by his civil science, it might just work. But we know that magnanimity may be based on a reasonable assessment of one’s abilities, and Hobbes admitted that intellectual virtues were required to implement his science. He might be able to distract us from magnanimity and statesmanship, but he cannot eliminate them from politics. In this Hobbes was right in describing sovereignty in the artificial person as an artificial
soul: without the virtues of magnanimity and statesmanship to accompany it, such sovereignty is no more than a very thin body.\textsuperscript{69}

\section*{NOTES}


5. Hobbes, \textit{Leviathan}, 99 (ch. 14). Consider also the following: "That which gives to humane Actions the relish of Justice, is a certain Noblenesse or Gallantnesse of courage, (rarely found,) by which a man scorns to be beholding for the contentment of his life, to fraud, or breach of promise." \textit{Leviathan}, 104 (ch. 15).


14. Hobbes, \textit{Leviathan}, 90 (ch. 13). The force of this question might be mitigated if we were to consider the turn to injustice because Hobbes claims that there is no injustice in the state of nature. The question of turning to injustice, therefore, becomes a question of breaking the law. But dishonesty can exist in civil society and the state of nature, and there is no indication that Hobbes was speaking only of one condition when referring to magnanimity. Thus, however much I do think attention to injustice
may complicate the argument I am presenting, sticking fast to dishonesty reveals that Hobbes has got himself into a predicament.

18. Consider here what he calls the “Lawes of Honour,” in *Leviathan*, 126 (ch. 18).
19. Aristotle did distinguish between magnanimity and its excess, vanity, and its defect, pusillanimity. See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1107b22–24, 1123b; and Hanley, “Greatness of Soul,” 3 and 12 n. 45.
45. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 240 (ch. 30). See also Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 244 (ch. 30) and 491 ("Review and Conclusion").
52. See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 151 (ch. 21) and 208 (ch. 27).
61. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 486 ("Review and Conclusion"). The argument that sovereignty by institution is the paradigmatic case is undermined by this line, at least the claim that institution is the historically more accurate route to the commonwealth is undermined. See also Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 143 (ch. 20).