

Peace and Public Truth: Voegelin and Hobbes

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It is true that American courtiers do not say "Sire," or "Your Majesty," a distinction without a difference. They are forever talking of the natural intelligence of the people whom they serve; they do not debate the question which of the virtues of their master is pre-eminently worthy of admiration, for they assure him that he possesses all the virtues without having acquired them, or without caring to acquire them; they do not give him their daughters and their wives to be raised at his pleasure to the rank of his concubines; but by sacrificing their opinions they prostitute themselves.

➤ De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Book I, Chapter XV

Like most expansive peoples—the Greeks and Romans, for instance—Anglo-Americans did not view themselves as aggressors. In part, they believed it only right and natural that they should seek independence and fortune for themselves and their families in the New World. Once having pursued this destiny and established a foothold in the untamed lands of North America, continued expansion seemed to many a matter of survival, a defensive reaction to threats that lay just beyond the ever-expanding perimeter of their English civilization.

➤ Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation*, pp. 19-20.

I. VOEGELIN

Hobbes and Gnosticism

In Eric Voegelin's thesis about gnosticism in *The New Science of Politics*, Thomas Hobbes plays a major role. Hobbes is a gnostic, Voegelin proclaims, because he wants to abolish the tensions of history, because his "attempt at freezing history into an everlasting constitution is an instance of the general class of Gnostic attempts at freezing history into an everlasting final realm on this earth" (*New Science*, 160-161).¹ What are the "tensions of history" that Hobbes along with his fellow Gnostics try to

¹ Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). It will be referred to as "*New Science*" in the parenthetical references.

freeze? Voegelin writes: “What comes into being will have an end, and the mystery of this stream of being is impenetrable. These are the two great principles governing existence. The Gnostic speculation on the *eidos* of history, however, not only ignores these principles but perverts them into their opposite.” (New Science, 167). It does so by assuming that a society can be created that will have no end, and that speculative knowledge can accomplish this goal. The basis on which Voegelin applies this definition to Hobbes is a passage in which Hobbes opines that education by the Sovereign Power could inculcate good principles in the people of a state which would “make their constitution, excepting by external violence, everlasting.” The proviso clause is, however, a big exception. “Excepting by external violence”—unless the state gets defeated by its enemies. Hobbes is only providing the remedy for internal disorder, not success on the battlefield. Internal order is necessary but not sufficient for this success; it will buttress a state acting in the international order, but cannot guarantee anything. What is needed for such success are “strengths of mind” like courage, prudence, and temperance.

Hobbes writes:

[T]he other three virtues ... called cardinal—courage, prudence, and temperance—are not virtues of citizens as citizens, but as men, for these virtues are useful not so much to the state as they are to those individual men who have them. For just as the state is not preserved save by the courage, prudence, and temperance of good citizens, so is it not destroyed save by the courage, prudence, and temperance of its enemies. ... For just as every citizen hath his own private good, so hath the state its own public good. Nor, in truth, should one demand that the courage and prudence of the private man, if useful only to himself, be praised or held as a virtue by states or by any other men whatsoever to whom these same are not useful. (De Homine XIII, 69-70).²

² The works of Hobbes will be referred to throughout with chapter numbers and the page numbers from the following: *Behemoth, or The Long Parliament*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); *De Cive*, in *Man and Citizen*, ed. Bernard Gert (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991); *De Homine*, in *Man and Citizen*; *The Elements of Law*, ed. J.C.A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson, (New York: Penguin, 1985).

Virtues “as men” only means that there is no common standard, no moral science, by which we could truly say that your virtue is a virtue for everyone. And this, after all, is the definition of virtue. Being a talented violinist is not a virtue, because not everyone is or can be one. It is good for Sarah Chang, and more power to her, but it is not for me. The virtues, however, are for everyone, and their presence in individuals leads to the good effects of peace and good order in the surrounding society, rather than dissensions and violent outbreaks. The common standard for moral science cannot oppose what is useful to the social order. And what is useful for the social order is to have good citizens. If the enemies of the state have courage, prudence, and temperance, Hobbes is saying, this is not good at all for the state! Those virtues are relative, and so are not to be considered moral virtues for everyone, certainly not in enemies of the state who are using them to wreak havoc. This is why Hobbes does not critique the passions which tend “to the destruction of particular men” (Leviathan XV, 214) in Leviathan, and says that they are not “pertinent” enough to be mentioned. Hobbes writes that the state is preserved by “the courage, prudence, and temperance of good citizens.” One might argue that he means in the passage to emphasize the good; however as written, courage, prudence, and temperance could also be emphasized. The state needs citizens to have these virtues—Hobbes refers to them as, technically, “strengths of mind” rather than virtues—to defeat its enemies. It requires them if it is to succeed.

A similar situation arises with the creation of the Sovereign. In the covenant which brings it forth, there is a risk for the first performer. As Michael Oakeshott notes, Hobbes shows that it is far more reasonable to take part in this covenant than even in ordinary contracts. Oakeshott writes,

And since, as I understand it, what Hobbes is seeking is a demonstration of reasonableness and not merely the probability of superior reasonableness, I must

suspect that this account is either faulty or incomplete. To what extent the supposition of a man (such as Hobbes understood Sidney Godolphin to have been) careless of the consequences of being bilked as the first performer in this covenant, a man of “pride” and not of “reason,” supplies what is lacking, the reader must decide for himself.³

Here we have the suggestion that the way is open in Hobbes to the recognition of unteachable human excellences or worthiness—precisely that which he cannot build his system on, since they require more than fear or training—which are nevertheless needed to make the system work. Hobbes’s theory would open up beyond itself, not pretending to capture within it all that is necessary for the good society, but rather pointing towards the requisite virtues or strengths of mind which can only be provided by individual efforts. Oakeshott sees this as a fault in Hobbes’s thought only because he misreads Hobbes’s opinion of science. Hobbes writes: “And for the knowledge of Consequence, which I have said before is called Science, it is not Absolute, but Conditionall. No man can know by Discourse, that this, or that, is, has been, or will be; which is to know absolutely: but onely, that if This be, That is; if This has been, That has been; if This shall be, That shall be: which is to know conditionally” (Leviathan VII, 131). That is to say, if we want a peaceful and well-ordered commonwealth, then we can achieve it by means of the “prospective glasses” of “Morall and Civill Science” (Leviathan XVIII, 239). If we don’t want it, but rather want to indulge our “lusts, and other irregular passions” (Leviathan XVIII, 238), then we will face disastrous anarchy instead. We can choose, and science can help us if we choose peace (just as economics today can help us if we choose prosperity).⁴ It is no flaw in Hobbes, therefore, that he cannot demonstrate what is necessarily up to human choice.

³ Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991), 350.

⁴ Cf. Alan Ryan, “Hobbes’s Political Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 213.

All this is hardly the stuff of Gnosticism. Gnostics do not go around qualifying their statements by saying that a state needs strong citizens or else it won't survive in an anarchical state system, or admitting that their Gnostic system cannot ensure such strength of mind. This subjection to the vicissitudes of history is ruled out by the Gnostic program, as Voegelin rightly points out. Hobbes does not think he is creating an everlasting state. Voegelin leans heavily on the one programmatic statement of Hobbes, which, being programmatic, is disconnected from and a reflection on the text and should be taken with a grain of salt (one thinks for example of Husserl in this connection). But even taking the statement at face value, Hobbes inserts within it a proviso concerning foreign relations, which gives a Sovereign absolutely no certainty of success, given that Hobbes sees the international realm as one of anarchy and power-seeking states. Leviathan is precisely defined by Hobbes as a "Mortall God" (Leviathan XVII, 227), which can perish, not to be confused with the Immortal God. Hobbes in all three of his political works (De Corpore Politico, De Cive, Leviathan) devotes an entire chapter on, as he calls it in Leviathan, "those things that Weaken, or tend to the Dissolution of a Commonwealth." That chapter in Leviathan begins: "Though nothing can be immortall, which mortals make; yet, if men had the use of reason they pretend to, their Common-wealths might be secured, at least, from perishing by internall diseases" (Leviathan XXIX, 363).

The Gnostic closure of history and the theory of Hobbes are two different things entirely. What Hobbes is saying in the quote Voegelin relies upon (and one senses Voegelin's relief in finding such a quote in the hundred of pages of Hobbes's oeuvre) is in fact an admission that his system is partial. Hobbes deals only with the internal order of a polity; this means his theory is incomplete. Hobbes's attraction to geometry was such that one could achieve certain results, though they be counter-intuitive, by teasing out the conclusions of true premises through proofs, and on this method Hobbes structured his system; however, nowhere does Hobbes claim that he has captured every

single premise concerning man in his system. He is responding to the disorder of his time, as he says in the conclusion to *Leviathan* (*Leviathan Conclusion*, 728), and Voegelin praises him for doing (*New Science*, 178-79). Only being concerned with internal order, which he sees visibly disturbed by a multitude of hostile opinions about government, he wants to base a theory on those opinions that all can accept, no matter how opposed they are to each other—the “known naturall Inclinations of Mankind” (*Leviathan Conclusion*, 725), which might be directed to very different objects but all have a similar formal structure (*Leviathan Introduction*, 82-83). This way Hobbes can accomplish his purpose, which is “to set before mens eyes the mutuall Relation between Protection and Obedience” (*Leviathan Conclusion*, 729). It is clearly not Hobbes’s purpose to create a Gnostic koran, and if there are similarities they can only be superficial, since Hobbes’s theories are shot through with the utmost suspicion and hostility to gnostic revolutionaries. Voegelin again admits this. Hobbes is fighting the Gnostics (*New Science*, 179). If Voegelin is nevertheless going to count Hobbes as an intellectual adversary, it must be because Hobbes is fighting the Gnostics in a manner different from Voegelin’s preferred approach, not because he is one.

It is characteristic of a gnostic koran, according to Voegelin, that it breaks “with the intellectual tradition of mankind,” because the author has “the faith that a new truth and a new world begin with him” (*New Science*, 139). Opposed to this is consciousness of tradition and history. Superficially one might apply this to Hobbes, yet it seems that Hobbes has already thought the matter through. His conclusion: ignorance of history can be bliss, since so much conflict can be avoided thereby.

For instance, Hobbes mentions that it is a common mistake of kings to

justifie the War, by which their Power was at first gotten, and whereon (as they think) their Right dependeth, and not on the Possession. ... [W]hilest they needlessly think to justifie themselves, they justifie all the succesfull Rebellions that Ambition shall at any time raise against them, and their

Successors. Therefore I put down for one of the most effectuall seeds of the Death of any State, that the Conquerours require not onely a Submission of mens actions to them for the future, but also an Approbation of all their actions past; when there is scarce a Common-wealth in the world, whose beginnings can in conscience be justified. (Leviathan Conclusion, 721-22).

Of course Hobbes is not against doing history; he himself wrote a history of the English Civil War. But in public discourse, where arguments have consequences for the question, “Who should hold power?,” the answers to which shape opinions, which in turn shape actions and determine events impacting the state of order in the commonwealth—disputes over history should be kept at a minimum where the power of the Sovereign is concerned. Historical questions and the various answers given to them can be extremely subtle. Are such matters as the peace of a whole social order, containing the fates of so many souls, going to hinge on the conclusions of a constitutional lawyer tucked away with his dusty books? Political reality has to trump such intellectual hubris. Constitutions should be for the sake of the common people, those who cannot follow the fine nuances of the hyper-educated. Say what you will about Hobbes, but he was not under any illusions about, nor insensitive towards, the plight of the vulgar; nor did he have any illusions about the dangers of, nor any sympathies for, intellectual pride. Voegelin, again, has praised Hobbes for the latter quality, calling him “one of the greatest psychologist of all times” (New Science, 179).

Hobbes and Civil Theology

Hobbes holds a central place in the argument of *The New Science of Politics*, and in particular for Voegelin’s conclusion. His last chapter, “The End of Modernity,” begins thus:

Hobbes had discerned the lack of a *theologia civilis* as the source of the difficulties that plagued the state of England in the Puritan crisis. The various groups

engaged in the civil war were so heaven-bent on having the public order represent the right variety of transcendent truth that the existential order of society was in danger of floundering in the melee. It certainly was an occasion to rediscover the discovery of Plato that a society must exist as an ordered cosmion, as a representative of cosmic order, before it can indulge in the luxury of also representing a truth of the soul. (New Science, 162).

Voegelin places Hobbes at the other end of the spectrum as Sts. Ambrose and Augustine. The latter had the truth of Christianity and the falsity of the pagan gods at the forefront of their minds, which erased any consideration as to the problematic nature of installing Christianity as a civil theology. This deed, Voegelin points out, destroyed a culture when seen from the viewpoint of the compactness of Roman experience. We need to be sensitive to this destruction in order to see the problem of making Christianity a civil religion.

“Uncertainty,” writes Voegelin, “is the very essence of Christianity” (New Science, 122). One might have thought that, if Christianity must have an “essence,” God’s everlasting love for man would certainly be a more fitting one; nevertheless, this “uncertainty” for Voegelin results from a “de-divinization” of the world. One might be surprised at this characterization of a faith which holds that God became man, but Voegelin is referring to the loss of the compact “world full of gods.” In this world there was a “feeling of security”; it was lost when the world is “de-divinized.” The precise type of “security” experienced by the peoples mentioned by Varro who sacrificed children or adults to Saturn, or who practiced the obscene rites of Liber, is not explained by Voegelin.⁵ Voegelin continues, “[C]ommunication with the world-transcendent God is reduced to the tenuous bond of faith,” and further, “The bond is tenuous, indeed, and it may snap easily” (New Science, 122). Now things become less strange, for it is clear that Voegelin is speaking here of a Christianity already reduced to a Gnostic

⁵ St. Augustine, *City of God*, trans. John O’Meara (New York: Penguin, 1984), 277-79.

dependence on a text without any interpretive authority. An individual left upon his own resources with a non-self-interpreting text must experience faith in precisely the way Voegelin describes. That it veers towards Gnosticism is intimated by Voegelin in his discussion of Calvin (New Science, 138-39), and proved decisively by Hobbes in chapter 33 of Leviathan. Hobbes shows that it is always a gnostic will-to-power that is behind a private reading of Scripture as dictating public truth, since rather than a true submission of the intellect, it rather involves an effacing of the history of the fixing of a biblical canon, as Voegelin puts it, “the traditions and rules of interpretation that had been developed” by centuries of Christianity (New Science, 138). That from the outset—that is, from the question of its very structure—the bible cannot do without some authoritative interpretation was seen more keenly by Hobbes than Voegelin, though it is the latter who accuses the former of lacking a historical sense.

To continue with Voegelin:

The life of the soul in openness toward God, the waiting, the periods of aridity and dullness, guilt and despondency, contrition and repentance, forsakenness and hope against hope, the silent stirrings of love and grace, trembling on the verge of a certainty which if gained is loss—the very lightness of this fabric may prove too heavy a burden for men who lust for massively possessive experience. The danger of a breakdown of faith to a socially relevant degree, now, will increase in the measure in which Christianity is a worldly success, that is, it will grow when Christianity penetrates a civilizational area thoroughly, supported by institutional pressure, and when at the same time, it undergoes an internal process of spiritualization, of a more complete realization of its essence. The more people are drawn or pressured into the Christian orbit, the greater will be the number among them who do not have the spiritual stamina for the heroic adventure of the soul that is Christianity: and the likeliness of a fall from faith will increase when civilizational progress of education, literacy, and intellectual debate will bring the full seriousness of Christianity to the understanding of ever more individuals.

Christianity seems on this reading to achieve its essence the more it removes itself from “institutional pressure” and the more inaccessible it becomes to the vulgar, who experience a crisis of faith when they are actually able to understand its “full seriousness.” With this view of Christianity, it becomes clear why Voegelin believes that there has to be “civil theology.” Christianity leaves a vacuum in that the vulgar are unwilling to follow its “heroic adventure,” want a “massively possessive experience,” and a firmer grip on transcendence. Christianity needs a supplement (New Science, 163). Precisely, says Hobbes: an authoritative interpreter. Voegelin, however, sees Hobbes “great and permanent achievement” in his clarification of the necessity of a civil theology for public order (New Science, 159). He just takes issue with the content Hobbes uses to fill the vacuum.

Less fortunate was [Hobbes’s] hand when he tried to fill the vacuum by establishing Christianity as the English civil theology. He could entertain this idea because he assumed Christianity, if properly interpreted, to be identical with the truth of society which he had developed in the first two parts of the *Leviathan*. He denied the existence of a tension between the truth of the soul and the truth of society; the content of Scripture, in his opinion, coincided in substance with the truth of Hobbes. (New Science, 159-60).

Any reader of Hobbes can see that Voegelin has the arrow of causality backwards here. Hobbes did not “assume” properly-interpreted Christianity to be identical with “his truth.” Rather, Hobbes worked very hard to interpret Scripture to conform to his system—in precisely the manner Voegelin describes as a method willing to “use Scripture when passages torn out of context ... support the cause, and for the rest [to] blandly ignore Scripture.” (New Science, 138). And more accurately, it is not the system or “truth of Hobbes” that Hobbes is trying to make Scripture conform to, but rather the dictates of the Sovereign, public truth. Voegelin truncates Hobbes’s insight—Hobbes did not prove the necessity of a civil theology for public order, so much as he proved

that the content of civil theology would be the will of the Sovereign, and it is perhaps more conducive to seeing Hobbes's point here if he is read descriptively rather than prescriptively.

Proving this point was an endeavor that, far from denying the tension between the truth of the soul and the truth of society, is thoroughly permeated with it and is working hard for the victory of the truth of society against the gnostic deformation of the truth of the soul. Hobbes's theory is partial, dealing with an aspect only of this tension; however, that is different from denying the tension altogether. If the tension was denied by Hobbes, there would be no reason for his theory to exist in the first place, and no reason for the Sovereign, as we shall see, to be in a state of continual war against its enemies. Hobbes is not trying to take away the constant effort required to defeat gnosticism, and he realizes clearly that this tension will never be finally resolved.

Hobbes was not a philosopher of civil theology, but a philosopher of sovereignty. His "truth" is centered around the needs of sovereignty, not a watered-down Christianity autonomous from the Sovereign Power. "Hobbes saw that public order was impossible without a civil theology beyond debate" (New Science, 159), Voegelin says—but precisely not, it is rather that the laws of the Sovereign should be beyond debate.

There are reasons to believe Hobbes was right, that the content of civil theology is always the will of the Sovereign. And what is the will of the Sovereign, but that all change will occur within the status quo? Augustine's discussion of Varro on civil theology reeks of incredulity on Augustine's part concerning Varro's lack of intellectual curiosity. What about this contradiction, that contradiction, this absurdity, that inconsistency—Augustine can hardly believe a smart person like Varro could believe such claptrap, as Voegelin notes (New Science, 87). But what is more inconsistent than a society's status quo? Who could entirely defend it in any society without massive contradictions? Who could wholly accept it without a passive incuriosity? Who could actively promote it

without a dullness to all tua res agitur? Who could follow it unquestioningly out of anything but self-interest? Voegelin is right that Augustine's explanations do not reach the core of the problem, however. Augustine explains the gods by saying that they were men who received such adulation that their personalities and exploits were deified by their followers and embellished by their epigones. A better explanation, one not anti-Augustinian in the slightest, is provided by René Girard in *Violence and the Sacred*: civil theology achieves the differentiated unity of society through a surrogate victim. This is a better way to read Hobbes; he should perhaps be thought of as a philosopher, not even of sovereignty, but of the status quo. This is what "Leviathan" really is—the power of society's vested interests. That it can be inconvenient, Hobbes does not deny. But, he writes, "The condition of man in this life shall never be without Inconveniences; but there happeneth in no Common-wealth any great Inconvenience, but what proceeds from the Subjects disobedience, and breach of those Covenants, from which the Common-wealth had its being" (*Leviathan* XX, 260). Hobbes's point is that if we justify a revolution because some private individuals think some social problem is unconscionable, then there will be no order whatsoever but rather a permanent revolution. There will always be some do-gooder complaining about this or that social problem, yet it is the civil war caused by seditious opinions, probably based in the social critic's libido dominandi, that is the real social problem to watch out for.

It is civil theology that the philosopher will come into conflict with, however. Voegelin writes about the philosophical discovery of a truth in opposition to society:

The discovery of the new truth is not an advancement of psychological knowledge in the immanentist sense; one would rather have to say that the psyche itself is found as a new center in man at which he experiences himself as open toward transcendental reality. ... These experiences become the source of a new authority. Through the opening of the soul the philosopher finds himself in a new relation with God; he not only discovers his own psyche as the instrument for experiencing transcendence but at the same time discovers the divinity in its

radically nonhuman transcendence.... The meaning of the anthropological principle must, therefore, be qualified by the understanding that not an arbitrary idea of man as a world-immanent being becomes the instrument of social critique but the idea of a man who has found his true nature through finding his true relation to God. (New Science, 67-68).

This is where Voegelin at bottom takes issue with Hobbes. He “could not interpret the nature of man from the vantage point of the maximum of differentiation through the experiences of transcendence” (New Science, 180). So this is Voegelin’s solution; a non-solution of viewing man through the most developed theory, the theory with a history which includes the maximum differentiating experiences. To revolt against this is doxa, opinion (New Science, 79-80). Hobbes, however, cannot accept this opinion because of the purpose of his theory, viz. fighting the gnostics. Hobbes would reply to Voegelin that he does not take gnosticism seriously enough, and also, that he, Hobbes, is not personally opposed to theory incarnated as a maximum differentiation. Such a theory will not stir up a gnostic revolution, inflicting great harm on a state, Hobbes would say, and Voegelin would be forced to agree.

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This, Hobbes would respond, is the whole point of my theory. Voegelin has misidentified it as trying to get rid of the truth of the soul in favor of the truth of society. But Hobbes wants to keep the truth of the soul—as a private matter. This is consistently misinterpreted by Voegelin. Consider how these characterizations of Hobbes by Voegelin should be modified:

Hobbes tried to meet the danger by devising a civil theology which made the order of a society in existence the truth which it represented—and by the side of this truth no other should be held [add: in public]. (New Science, 179).

The practical value of the idea, however, rested on the assumption that the transcendent truth which men tried to represent in their societies, after mankind had gone through the experiences of philosophy and Christianity, could be [add: publically] neglected in its turn. (New Science, 179).

[T]hings, to be sure, would be so much simpler without philosophy and Christianity. But how can one dispose of them without abolishing the experiences of transcendence which belong to the nature of man? Hobbes was quite able to solve this problem, too; he improved on the man of God's creation by creating a man without such experiences [add: as far as the public realm is concerned]. (New Science, 160).

Hobbes solved the conflict [between public order and private opinions] by deciding that there was no public truth except the law of peace and concord in a society; any opinion or doctrine conducive to discord was thereby proved untrue [add: to hold in public]. (New Science, 153).

In the last quote Voegelin comes close to recognizing the truth about Hobbes in the first clause. He cites chapter 18 in *Leviathan* in the footnote. Here is the passage from the book:

Sixtly, it is annexed to the Sovereignty, to be Judge of what Opinions and Doctrines are averse, and what conducing to Peace; and consequently, on what occasions, how farre, and what, men are to be trusted withall, in speaking to Multitudes of people; and who shall examine the Doctrines of all bookes before they be published. For the Actions of men proceed from their Opinions; and in the wel governing of Opinions, consisteth the well governing of mens Actions, in order to their Peace, and Concord. And though in matter of Doctrine, nothing ought to be regarded but the Truth; yet this is not repugnant to regulating of the same by Peace. For Doctrine Repugnant to Peace, can no more be True, than Peace and Concord can be against the Law of Nature. It is true, that in a Common-wealth, where by the negligence, or unskilfullnesse of Governours, and Teachers, false Doctrines are by time generally received; the contrary Truths may be generally offensive; Yet the most sudden, and rough busling in of a new Truth, that can be, does never breake the Peace, but onely sometimes awake the Warre. For those men that are so remissely governed, that they dare take up Armes, to defend, or introduce an Opinion, are still in Warre; and their condition

not Peace, but only a Cessation of Armes for feare of one another; and they live as it were, in the procincts of battaile continually. It belongeth therefore to him that hath the Sovereign Power, to be Judge, or constitute all Judges of Opinions and Doctrines, as a thing necessary to Peace, thereby to prevent Discord and Civill Warre. (*Leviathan* XVIII, 233).

Hobbes does not say that the Sovereign should define all truth as that which is conducive to peace and then enforce it through coercion—this is a lazy reading of Hobbes. Hobbes did not think the Sovereign could regulate the opinions in men's minds.⁶ He is not saying the Sovereign decides what is true and enforces it; rather, the Sovereign must be on the watch for vicious opinions. This might be controversial in quiescent times; Hobbes's whole point is we cannot judge the nature of sovereignty based on our experience of such times, and he is undoubtedly right. Who is there alive today who does not wish that Adolph Hitler had been given a life sentence, as was the law under Article 81 of the German Penal Code, or had at least served the full five years he was sentenced to, rather than being released from prison after less than nine months?

It is not private opinions Hobbes is concerned with, but the professional agitator's. That is why he says the Sovereign must determine "how farre, and what, men are to be trusted withall, in speaking to Multitudes of people; and who shall examine the Doctrines of all bookes before they be published." Opinions that are not put forward for others to follow in order to disrupt society are not any worry. Hobbes is against the multiplication of laws; he wants to stick with what is necessary (*Leviathan* XXX, 388). Actions clearly do flow from opinions—an agitator cannot simply begin leading a movement that takes action against the public order without tilling the ground first with seditious opinions. It would be foolish for the Sovereign not to take note of this, or to lay down the weapons at its disposal out of a false idea of tolerance. Besides, Hobbes says, the gnostic "truths" are not really truths. Stirring up strife to slake one's "pravity

⁶ For Hobbes, not even God can command religious belief, much less a Sovereign (*Leviathan* XXVI, 332; XLII, 526), and God should be the only power over men's consciences (*Leviathan* XLVII, 711).

of will” (Leviathan XXX, 383) cannot really be based on truth. Sincere seekers of truth will not start gnostic revolutions. Only sometimes will sincere seekers of truth do so—when the truth has become so offensive that, as Voegelin puts it, “the doxic state has become self-perpetuating.”⁷ In this case, putting forward the truth to a corrupt society might lead to actual fighting, but it doesn’t in reality start a state of war, Hobbes tells us, because the society was so degenerated that they were already in a state of war, just without fighting. Hobbes then has a place for speaking the truth to a hostile, gnostic environment, and Voegelin is completely wrong to say that Hobbes denies the tension between the truth of society and the truth of the soul.

Clarifying the opinions of Hobbes, however, casts doubt on the main assumptions made by Voegelin in differentiating between Gnostic certainty, leading to revolutionary agitation, and the philosopher’s rightful opposition to society as the source of a new truth about God. According to Hobbes, this distinction is perhaps all well and good, but cannot be politically operative when fighting gnostic revolutionaries is the order of the day. How to distinguish between the two then? Voegelin’s distinction, according to Hobbes, cannot be effectively maintained as public policy and will give the Gnostics an opening. The difference between “partners in a theoretical debate,” and those that masquerade as them but are really Gnostic revolutionaries, might be able to be glimpsed by a thinker of the caliber of Hooker, but it is extremely unlikely to be clear to all, or even most, people. The distinguishing mark of Gnostic rule offered by Voegelin, viz. the closure of debate and the “taboo on critique” (New Science, 140; Cf. also 187) is hard to distinguish from a necessary part of existential representation: as Voegelin writes, “In so far as the order of society does not exist automatically but must be founded, preserved, and defended, those who are on the side

⁷ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Volume III: Plato and Aristotle*, ed. Dante Germino (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 135.

of order represent the truth, while their enemies represent disorder and falsehood” (New Science, 55).

With this point we have reached the core of Voegelin’s New Science of Politics, which is an attempt to explicate the difference between the philosopher and the Gnostic and their respective relationships to politics. At the beginning of the second chapter, Voegelin asks the pertinent question: what is theory? “Is it possible that a theorist be a person outside social reality, or is he not rather a part of it? And if he be himself a part of reality, in what sense can this reality be his object? And what does he actually do when he clarifies the symbols which occur in reality?” (New Science, 52). The answer he gives correctly refers to the function of theory in measuring “the truth represented by society” and developing a truth “in critical opposition to society” (New Science, 53). If one is merely cataloguing beliefs, like Varro, one is not a theorist. Yet we have reached an impasse, for Voegelin agrees with Hobbes on the need to crack down on Gnostic movements (New Science, 144), yet accuses him of excising the fullness of transcendental truth. Yet on what basis could Hobbes fight the Gnostics of his day, if he adamantly excluded transcendent sources of order? Perhaps he did not exclude them, as Voegelin claims; perhaps he only excluded the public claim to such sources. The two are very different; with the latter, a private man can still have access to transcendent truth. Hobbes believed himself to be a man of science concerned with peace, and he put forth doctrines that riled up the powers of his day such that he had to flee his home country, living in exile for eleven years. Yet the system he developed on his own private time he thought to be instrumental for good order in society.

This is the new model provided by Hobbes: transcendence is not opposed, but kept in its proper (private) place. Civil theology is seen for what it is, the whim of the Sovereign. The clash between the two is likewise is recognized in its true light, as jeopardizing the social order. So much depends on the social order, which is the context for all flourishing, that it is madness to publically countenance its destruction.

Though this may be an inexact guide to distinguish between true philosophy and Gnosticism, it is the best that we have to offer as a public standard. But much depends on private virtue, private strength of mind, private access to transcendent sources of order. If good citizens identify and combat the Gnostics where they are, the state will have much less trouble with them. And if those citizens wish to change society for the better, there is a large swath of freedom available to them to act on their convictions, without enlisting their fellow citizens in the destruction of the whole social order.

If all this is the case, it seems that David Walsh's assessment of the negative critique of liberalism proffered by Voegelin is fundamentally correct: that it is tinged with utopianism.⁸ Hobbes speaks to a situation where philosophers cannot exercise direct authority.⁹ What is at stake here is not the coherence of symbolism, but the actual functioning of good order, as Walsh points out.¹⁰ The apparent shallowness and incoherence of the liberalism critiqued by Voegelin is revealed in Hobbes to be the result of a method precisely of separating public from private so as to combat Gnostic pretenders while still keeping open the transcendent sources of order. If this is unsatisfactory for Voegelin, it could be because underneath it all he desires the direct rule of the philosopher. Might we prefer Voegelin when it comes to explicating the nature of the philosophic act, but Hobbes when it comes to political theory? I turn now to Hobbes in order to answer this query.

II. HOBBS

Politics, an Excluded Good

In Hobbes there is no concept of the good life. There is "felicity" but no *summum bonum*—this follows strictly from his anthropological premise that humans want more

⁸ David Walsh, *The Growth of the Liberal Soul* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 99.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

and more power. The struggle for power over others, which is what felicity consists in, has no inherent limits. External and internal limits are the same, both being a lack of sufficient power to attain my desire. Would these limits block me from felicity? No—actually gaining power over others is not happiness, rather, if you are at the top of the heap you have not achieved felicity. “Felicity, therefore ... consisteth not in having prospered, but in prospering,” Hobbes writes. “[W]e are not to marvel, when we see, that as men attain to more riches, honours, or other power; so their appetite continually growth more and more; and when they are come to the utmost degree of one kind of power, they pursue some other, as long as in any kind they think themselves behind any other.” (Elements of Law VII, 45). It is not repose, but continual action that we seek, the “utmost degree” of power is not enjoying it but working to maintain and expand it. If we reach the end of this search, we are dissatisfied, and have to look for something else to achieve. Life is like a race with no goal or finish line to cross; to finish the race is death (Cf. Elements of Law IX, 59-60). Oakeshott is confused therefore when he writes that the institution of the Sovereign allays our fear at the cost of felicity; felicity was never a good attainable in the first place.¹¹

As Hannah Arendt has noted, it follows from Hobbes’s theory that the Sovereign will endeavor to extend indefinitely the power and territory of the commonwealth.¹² Is this not a program of continual war with other states? It is well known that Hobbes thought that amongst themselves Sovereigns were in a state of nature, that is, of war. But, he writes, “because they uphold thereby, the Industry of their Subjects; there does not follow from it, that misery, which accompanies the Liberty of particular men.” (Leviathan XIII, 188). This can help us fill in Hobbes’s view of peace, a concept left unanalyzed in the passage where he vividly describes the state of war of all against all: “All other time [that is not war] is Peace,” he says simply (Leviathan XIII, 186). But

¹¹ Oakeshott, 307.

¹² Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1958), 146.

clearly it is a time of industry, of men fulfilling their projects, rather than death. “The Passions that encline men to Peace, are Feare of Death; Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a Hope by their Industry to obtain them.” (Leviathan XIII, 188). This ability to live in an industrious peace is based on our foreswearing one project only—that of being the Sovereign. In the state of war, private opinion rules; Hobbes describes it as “every particular man” being “at liberty ... to frame a new commonwealth or not” (Elements of Law XX, 115). We give up the liberty to make the law, and in return get the ability to pursue all our other projects (minus that one). It is an eminently rational choice. My “natural right” to all things—to do whatever I want unconditionally and not be blameworthy—is in manifest contradiction with the desires of other people, and it can only lead to continual strife, in which I cannot effectively pursue any of my projects. So I give it up this totalitarian, spoiled-child “right” and receive a well-ordered and peaceable existence which allows me and my fellows to be industrious and to mutually benefit each other. But all this masks that which Hobbes is really asking: for me to give up on politics, that is, to give up the right to say what the Sovereign should do. “But if everyone says what the Sovereign should do, then the state will be easily conquered, or will face internal war” (Cf. Leviathan XVII, 224-25). Internal strife perhaps, but surely it is an exaggeration to say that war is the result. But perhaps not, since the one “right” we give up, which I am calling the right to be political, is not a matter of mere opinion. This requires explanation.

Hobbes seemingly has an exalted view of opinions. He treats them very seriously¹³ and insists that the Sovereign promote good ones,¹⁴ yet at the same time he holds that they cannot be regulated because they are interior. It seems we have two

¹³ “For it is evident to the meanest capacity, that mens actions are derived from the opinions they have of the Good, or Evill, which from those actions redound unto themselves; and consequently, men that are once possessed of an opinion, that their obedience to the Sovereign Power, will bee more hurtfull to them, than their disobedience, will disobey the Laws, and thereby overthrow the Common-wealth, and introduce confusion, and Civill war; for the avoiding whereof, all Civill Government was ordained.” (*Leviathan* XLII, 567).

¹⁴ “It belongeth therefore to him that hath the Sovereign Power, to be Judge, or constitute all Judges of Opinions and Doctrines, as a thing necessary to Peace, thereby to prevent Discord and Civill Warre.” (*Leviathan* XVIII, 233).

different species of opinion. The one could be called mere opinion, an opinion which understands itself to be subjective preference, a spouting-off. The other could be called serious opinion—understanding itself as knowledge, it is ready to act with others in concert. This latter type of opinion is the dangerous kind. The former is the kind that cannot be regulated; more precisely, there is no pressing reason to regulate it.¹⁵ The opinion that leads to action, however, can be extremely serious; it is desirable to regulate it, and Hobbes thinks that this can be done long-term through education.

There are two corresponding views of citizenship: one takes political opinions to be mere opinions, leading to strife but not war, while the other views political action in weightier terms, not ruling out possible armed opposition to the Sovereign if it comes to that. It is clear that Hobbes views the institution of the Sovereign as involving a disavowing of the latter. We must give up a political life defined in weighty terms. We can have opinions, as long as they are in the end unserious, as long as we don't ever think that they might be worth opposing the Sovereign law and becoming a law to ourselves. As long as we are obedient to the laws we can say whatever we want, as long as it is understood that we don't mean it, that we would never stake our life on it. The benefit is that we get to pursue all our other projects without fear of civil war.

But what if we want to be the Sovereign ourselves? After all, Hobbes says that men naturally love dominion over others (*Leviathan* XVII, 223). This is what Oakeshott means when he points to the incongruity of Hobbes asking us to give up felicity. Do we expect the creatures Hobbes describes as being willing to just give up on a serious political life, only in order to allay their worst fears? Not a very manly act, as Harvey Mansfield has noted.¹⁶ Are men going to stop being men? On Hobbes's view, your desire to be the Sovereign yourself is based on your own vain-glory—how on earth could you think that you would do a better job than the Sovereign is doing? You're just

¹⁵ Religious belief for Hobbes is put in this category. Unbelief means you still follow the laws of nature, but no longer assent to the propositions of faith, which are unconnected with action (*Leviathan* XXVI, 332).

¹⁶ Harvey C. Mansfield, *Manliness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 166-74.

a private person; it's sheer hubris. Any reasons you think you could do a better job are just your own opinions. These private opinions might become plausible to others, however, when times are tough and the Sovereign does not seem like he is doing a particularly good job. If the Sovereign is despoiling the people or committing iniquitous crimes, does this not call for politics in the weighty sense, involving possible opposition to the Sovereign?

The answer is "no." To say "yes" would destroy Hobbes's main point, that the Sovereign should not be resisted by his subjects. Hobbes certainly does not advocate that the Sovereign (ordinarily) use his power for anything except necessary governance (Leviathan XXX, 388). But there is no one to hold him to it, and nothing stopping him from despoiling his subjects. The Sovereign has a duty imposed by the law of nature, to procure the "safety of the people" (Leviathan XXX, 276), and to follow "the End of the Institution of Sovereignty" that there be "Peace of the Subjects within themselves, and their Defence against a common Enemy" (Leviathan XXI, 268). But that there is no one within the state who stands over the Sovereign who can do this is axiomatic for Hobbes, and his whole thought attempts to remove any notion that this could be possible. The Sovereign is in a state of nature vis-à-vis his subjects (Leviathan XXVIII, 354). Why would he not just despoil the citizens in the state, breaking the laws of nature?

Peace, the One Good

Is the law of nature is a law properly speaking for the Sovereign? Not on Hobbes's principles. The Sovereign remains in the state of nature, and the laws of nature hold not as proper laws imposing duties but rather as conclusions of reason. Yet it is somewhat misleading to say that the Sovereign is in the state of nature. The state of nature is a state of war, and is altered by everyone covenanting with everyone else not to resist the Sovereign. After this institution of a commonwealth, the Sovereign is not in a state of war with everyone else. He is not a party to the covenant; however, it is not as

if he remains in ignorance concerning the covenant. That is to say, while in the state of nature everyone has their own opinions, and there is no public opinion, after the sovereign is instituted, it is not just as if one private opinion is given arbitrary preeminence. Rule of a sovereign is not the rule of one arbitrary opinion, but is instituted in order to protect the subjects, an artificial man created with the intention of the “protection and defence” of natural man (*Leviathan* Introduction, 81). There is, then, a specific rationale behind giving the Sovereign all the right that we would have in the state of nature. The Sovereign is not ignorant of this rationale, or of the difference between everyone being their own judge (state of nature) and everyone submitting to a public judge, the difference between your opinions mattering only for yourself (and perhaps your household) and for a whole state, the difference between an apolitical and a political life. A private individual in a state of nature has only an internal, “easy” obligation to follow the natural laws. The natural laws “oblige onely to a desire, and endeavour.” (*Leviathan* XV, 215). Only when the natural laws get absorbed into the civil law does it cover our actions (*De Homine* XV, 85; *De Cive* XIV, 281). Again, natural laws are not really laws, but just conclusions of reason starting from the premise that my life is to be preserved (*Leviathan* XV, 217), or virtues disposing one to peace (*Leviathan* XXVI, 314). They are only properly called “laws” when considered under the aspect of being commands of God delivered in scripture (*Leviathan* XV, 217; *De Cive* III, 152).¹⁷

¹⁷ It seems that it might be important that the Sovereign believes in Christianity, when it comes to the question of him despoiling his subjects. Sovereigns are “immediately under God.” *Leviathan* XXXIII, 427. Hobbes tells us that “by God Almighty, under the pain of eternal death” they are required “to the utmost of their endeavour” to not breach the law of nature, and must “render an account thereof to God, the Author of that Law.” *Elements of Law* XXVIII, 172; *Leviathan* XXX, 376. When he has Christian subjects, the Sovereign is the head of the church, mediating between God and believers in the state. God reigns over men and “punisheth those that break his Lawes” (*Leviathan* XXXI, 397) which are the laws of nature, but atheists “acknowledge no Word for [God’s], nor have hope of his rewards, or fear of his threatnings.” *Leviathan* XXXI, 396. Actually it does not matter whether the Sovereign is a Christian, due to Hobbes’s theology. God is unknowable and has no ends. *Leviathan* XXXIV, 430; XXXI, 401. Hobbes is more concerned about using the power of religion to uphold the state than he is using the power of religion to restrain the Sovereign. It is true that in a religious climate where belief in eternal condemnation or heavenly rewards is reflexive (and this is the climate in which Hobbes lived) that the Sovereign will be influenced by it to avoid iniquity. But as far as Hobbes’s theory goes, the idea that religion can be counted on to restrain the Sovereign must be counted as part of what Oakeshott calls Hobbes appeal to the prejudices of his age, rather than his new logic. *Oakeshott*, 336-37. This new logic relies solely on the Sovereign fearing and fighting his enemies. It

Power is thus granted to the Sovereign through a covenanting for a definite purpose, yet this cannot be broken by the subjects, except in the individual case in which I am compelled to kill myself or someone else. Hobbes sums this up by saying: “When therefore our refusall to obey, frustrates the End for which the Sovereignty was ordained; then there is no Liberty to refuse: otherwise there is.” (Leviathan XXI, 69). The end of Sovereignty is to protect citizens from harm, which can come by way of civil war, or external invasion. This end is an objective end. Unlike so much in Hobbes it is not a matter of definitions, as are justice and injustice, which are relative to the decisions of the Sovereign. This end is not up for dispute. As Stephen Holmes writes in his Introduction to *Behemoth*, “Hobbes was not ultimately a value-subjectivist. When he said that ‘peace is good,’ for example, he did not mean to be expressing a mere personal preference.”¹⁸ This is, however, the only example. Hobbes was a value-subjectivist on everything save this. He tells us how all men have different opinions on good and evil, with this one exception:

Nay, the same man, in divers times, differs from himselfe; and one time praiseth, that is, calleth Good, what another time he dispraiseth, and calleth Evil: From whence arise Disputes, Controversies, and at last War. And therefore so long as man is in the condition of meer Nature, (which is a condition of War,) as private Appetite is the measure of Good, and Evill: and consequently all men agree on this, that Peace is Good (Leviathan XV, 216).

All men agree that peace is good. On this one certitude Hobbes builds his entire system. The good of peace generates the natural laws, which are reason properly speaking, which is the same for all men (Leviathan XXVI, 318). But why do all men

does not matter much whether the Sovereign is a Christian or not. It might be preferable that he be a believing Christian, just as it is preferable that the Sovereign be a monarch, but it is hardly vital and Hobbes theories hold in its absence. (Monarchy is better, since “where the publique and private interest are most closely united, there is the publique most advanced,” and “in Monarchy, the private interest is the same with the publique” since “the riches, power, and honour of a Monarch arise onely from the riches, strength and reputation of his Subjects.” *Leviathan* XIX, 241-42.)

¹⁸ Stephen Holmes, “Introduction to *Behemoth*,” in *Behemoth*, xix.

agree that peace is good and war is to be avoided? It is due to Hobbes's anthropology, which levels all desires down to a common denominator, our passions. All our desires are good (until the law intervenes), in themselves they are "no Sin" (Leviathan XIII, 187). All actions are voluntary, in the sense that there is no notion of freedom from our passions (Leviathan VI, 128). Of course freedom is defined by Hobbes with a rigorous lack of subtlety, as just getting what we want. The "higher" passions—desire for riches, knowledge, honor—are all leveled down to power (Leviathan VIII, 139). As Voegelin writes, "According to this conception, the generic nature of man must be studied in terms of human passions; the objects of the passions are no legitimate object of inquiry" (New Science, 180).

If war involves suspending our industry, that is to say, if we cannot complete our projects and fulfill our desires, then everyone has to agree that war is bad and peace good. No matter how different our different projects are (I might call yours evil and unjust, while you do the same for mine), we can both still agree individually that war is bad and peace good. Note that this agreement might not be able to be produced in discourse—I am so nauseated by my opponent, that the contemplation of agreeing with him on anything, much less the possibility (as one could very well conclude from this axiom) that my enemy's position could be the sovereign one, would make me choose war instead. But individually each of us would agree with Hobbes in the abstract, at least given his anthropology.

This is a nifty trick. No matter what views you hold on the foundation of authoritative power, you have to agree on the context within which you can work to make those views hold. You have to uphold the context, the rules of the game as enforced by the Sovereign, first, subordinating other views you might have about the good polity. The foundation of peace upon which Hobbes builds the Sovereign power contains all views of sovereignty within itself, and even those which contradict each other. There can be conflict within the state for Hobbes—lots of it. It just has to take

place in the zone wherein the Sovereign has not acted by promulgating a law, the zone of freedom. The zone of freedom is not fundamental, though; what's fundamental is the Sovereign institution. Freedom only exists due to the silent consent of the Sovereign.¹⁹ We all choose that under a veil of ignorance, in abstraction from any particular views or interests we might have. However, the abstraction from my views and interests is not total; still left over is me fearing for my life. For this, I do not need the rules of "Meum and Tuum" (Leviathan XVIII, 234), and I can disobey the Sovereign. There is one, and only one, objective good: my bodily integrity.

Iniquity, a Private Opinion

Returning to the question, however, of how it would fail to be the case that the Sovereign would not totally despoil the citizens, Hobbes does recognize at one point in Leviathan a category distinct from the binary options of just-unjust and natural right, viz. iniquity: "It is true that they that have Sovereigne power, may commit Iniquity; but not Injustice, or Injury in the proper signification" (Leviathan XVIII, 232). What might be included in this category? Hobbes writes this in Behemoth:

B. Must tyrants also be obeyed in everything actively? Or is there nothing wherein a lawful King's command may be disobeyed? What if he should command me with my own hands to execute my father, in case he should be condemned to die by the law?

A. This is a case that need not be put. We never have read nor heard of any King or tyrant so inhuman as to command it. If any did, we are to consider whether that command were one of his laws. For by disobeying Kings, we mean the disobeying of his laws, those his laws that were made before they were applied to any particular person; for the King, though as a father of children, and a master of domestic servants command many things which bind those children and servants yet he commands the people in general never but by a precedent

¹⁹ Silence equals consent, says Hobbes. *Elements of Law* XIV, 77.

law, and as a politic, not a natural person. And if such a command as you speak of were contrived into a general law (which never was, nor never will be), you were bound to obey it, unless you depart the kingdom after the publication of the law, and before the condemnation of your father. (Behemoth I, 51).

As M.L. Goldsmith puts it, “Hobbes does accept the implications of his own position.”²⁰ The Sovereign could command something iniquitous, and you would have to obey it. It would have to be in the form of a general law (I shall come back to this) and by the properly constituted authority.²¹ Hobbes assures us that it would never happen. But if it did happen we would have to obey it, and it would be just. It would however be iniquitous and against God, who has “prohibited all Iniquitie by the law of Nature” (Leviathan XXI, 265).

The example is dangerous for Hobbes because it evokes a different reaction than the one he is constantly trying to inculcate, viz. the fear of anarchical war. There very well might be a sovereign so iniquitous (perhaps the ancient Aztecs fit the bill) that everyone might be better off in the long run if it collapsed, though this risks a state of war. There might be an iniquity I cannot stand for, for which I am willing to give my life. This is a sacrifice not comprehended in Hobbes' system. Hobbes carefully excludes all sense of sacrifice with his leveled-down anthropology; this is the very point of the counter-intuitive reduction of all human desires to the same plane, as well as Hobbes' move to make all human action voluntary: to prohibit questions about the quality of desires. Whatever you do is good for you in that moment, and there is no struggle with one's passions, no sacrifice, no higher good. Everything is all lumped together in order to render senseless the inquiry as to whether a constituted polity might be better off being conquered, or even in civil war for a time, than continue in its iniquity.

²⁰ M.L. Goldsmith, “Hobbes on Law,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 285.

²¹ This is not true according to Leviathan, where the Sovereign stands above the law. He can act according to the law, but he can also act “by vertue of his power,” and in this latter case everything the Sovereign does is authorized by everyone. *Leviathan* XXI, 272-72.

Yet Hobbes acknowledges iniquity. But what is iniquity? In the example from Behemoth, I am asked to execute my father. Why is this so repellant, such that Hobbes exudes confidence that no Sovereign would be stupid enough to require it? The example has to do with a community concerning which Hobbes has very little to say: the family. Is the family a pre-political social group that would not operate on the basis of mutual competition and hostility? Does it not open up an entirely different realm from that of the natural state of war in the absence of the Sovereign—rather, an acephalous one, which as Alan Ryan puts it, seems to “persist for long periods” and “have no apparent tendency to self-destruction”?²² But apart from this, is not the family natural, and diametrically opposed to Hobbes’s sense of mere nature? Incest has never been found to be sanctioned in any human society to date, for instance. Hobbes’s discussions of the family are brief and centered around the narrow question of parental power. When he does mention incest, he does not say that it is against the law of nature, but for the Sovereign not to forbid it would be against the law of nature (Elements of Law XXVIII, 173).

If I start thinking that I can determine what is so iniquitous that the state would no longer deserve my support, I am travelling down the road that Hobbes finds so very dangerous. I must not think that my own reactions to good and evil could be substituted for what is publically mandated. This holds even in an extreme situation. Indeed, Hobbes is a philosopher of the extreme situation; but here there is an extreme situation that tacks against the driving intuition of his thought, the intuition that I cannot start substituting my private intuitions of good and evil for what is publically mandated, because that would lead down the road to distractions, contention, and civil war. I need to recognize my opinion for what it is, just my own opinion. I need to insert “It’s just my own opinion, but...” before everything I say. I need to stop thinking

²² Ryan, 218.

that what I think is good and evil can just be applied politically. There are complications—others do not believe the way I do, and for the sake of public peace there needs to be an accommodation between differing points of view. The only way this accommodation can work is if there is one Sovereign who can decide in the last instance. If there is a division in such authority, then in the resulting unclarity—more than anything else Hobbes is a philosophy of clarity²³—people will get confused, and civil war becomes a very real possibility whenever the two powers are out of sync on a matter of great salience.

This intuition is one-hundred percent correct for the type of society Hobbes is talking about. That society is not a brutish, acephalous one, nor a tribal group, nor a conquered people under an emperor who does not protect them. It is a large, functioning state. Large enough to have the following experience:

Let [the optimist about human nature] therefore consider with himselfe, when taking a journey, he armes himselfe, and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doores; when even in his house he locks his chests; and this when he knows there bee Lawes, and publike Officers, armed, to revenge all injuries shall bee done him; what opinion he has of his fellow subjects, when he rides armed; of his fellow Citizens, when he locks his doores; and of his children, and servants, when he locks his chests. Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions, as I do by my words? (Leviathan XIII, 186-87).

The size of the state must be large because it must secure us against “the Enemy we feare” (Leviathan XVII, 224) in a war (Leviathan XX, 257). If there is to be a polity incorporating persons who feel the need to protect themselves from others who would rob from them, in a state large enough to travel to an area wherein one believes oneself to be mortally endangered yet is still under the same formal laws, then this state needs one Sovereign to keep the whole thing together. For such a situation is inherently

²³ The true meaning of anything for Hobbes is that which is unequivocal. *Elements of Law* V, 37.

tenuous; if there is going to be a peaceful, cooperative relationship between the people within it, who are too different and too far apart to reflexively trust each other, it can only be in the terms Hobbes describes. His logic is iron-clad and admits no exceptions. If there is to be a state, there must be a unified Sovereign. A really divided Sovereignty cannot work (Elements of Law XX, 116, and XXVII, 166-67).

And the only way to keep the Sovereignty unified is to play within the rules; to support it no matter what, no matter how iniquitous. That means all opposition must be within the framework of the state's politics. There can and will be plenty of disagreement. But that disagreement must be, on the question of the Sovereign's authority, toothless. It must unquestioningly accept the Sovereign, prostrating before it whatever it decides and disagreeing with others only in the absence of an authoritative decision. This is assured in two different ways. The first has already been described—heterodox opinions must be private opinions of individuals. There will always be the isolated individuals spouting their strange doctrines against the Sovereign power. The state can treat them as children, fools, or madmen, who are taken care of by guardians (Leviathan XXVI, 317). They are considered to be lacking reason and authorship of their actions. That is to say, as long as those around them “take care of them” in the sense of marginalizing completely their views on sovereignty, as long as nobody listens to them or takes them seriously, then they are harmless isolated individuals who need not be taken account of by the Sovereign as an enemy worth dealing with.

It is a different story, however, if there is a breakdown on this lower level. That is to say, if someone opposes the Sovereign and starts influencing others. If there is an incipient community which questions the foundation of the Sovereign's authority, this must be dealt with differently. Those involved, and especially the leaders (Leviathan XXX, 390), must be treated as enemies. As Oakeshott says, “What, indeed, is excluded from Hobbes's civitas is not the freedom of the individual, but the independent rights of spurious ‘authorities’ and of collections of individuals such as churches, which he saw

as the source of the civil strife of his time.”²⁴ As Hobbes writes: “The Leagues of Subjects, (because Leagues are commonly made for mutuall defence,) are in a Commonwealth (which is no more than a League of all the Subjects together) for the most part unnecessary, and savour of unlawfull designe; and are for that cause Unlawfull, and go commonly by the name of factions, or Conspiracies.” (Leviathan XXII, 286). Only the Sovereign can defend citizens—if they start trying to defend themselves, together, then they are a direct threat to the Sovereign, the only advantage of which that would justify its awesome power is precisely this defense. But groups of citizens organizing together on their own is dangerous independently of them contemplating rising up against the state or defending themselves without the state—dangerous because it provides the context for exploding the foundation of Hobbes’s theory, viz. that “peace is good.”

The State Coterminous with War

As we have seen, this is the one objective good that Hobbes allows for; every other good is subjective and disputable. But everyone agrees that peace is good, and that is because it really is good, in the opinion of Hobbes. Is this not just his own opinion? Hobbes writes “all men agree on this, that Peace is Good.” He should write, “all men are of the opinion, that peace only insofar as it fulfills their designs, is good.” First of all, what do I care if there is war disrupting the lives of other people wholly unconnected with me? Secondly and more fundamentally, maybe peace is good for me, and maybe it isn’t. Maybe I could profit from war; maybe it would be better than a life led as a virtual outcast in society. Revolutions feed on those who have nothing to lose by an upheaval in the social order. Hobbes knows this. War might be the worst evil to those with something to lose, those interested in carrying out their projects for which peace is a prerequisite, but this is not everyone, and war there is, so it is demonstrably

²⁴ Oakeshott, 282.

true that any order is not always preferable to the status quo peace. Peace is just as subjective and disputable as any other “good.” Some people want peace, others don’t. Hobbes’s universal principle of good as that which people desire should admit of no exceptions, certainly without tolerating this glaring inconsistency. Hobbes draws—and only in this instance—a positive conclusion much stronger than is warranted by his premises. For one could plug any number of items of political malfeasance into his equation. Instead of “different opinions concerning the good,” we could have:

From [fill in the blank: injustice, inequality, exploitation, maladministration] arise Disputes, Controversies, and at last War. And therefore so long as man is in the condition of meer Nature, (which is a condition of War,) as private Appetite is the measure of Good, and Evill: and consequently all men agree on this, that [justice, equality, good government] is Good.

Hobbes would of course abjure this conclusion; these things are relative goods only. They can’t be objectively determined. What one man calls just and fair, another unjust and unfair, and so on. Only peace is accepted by all.

Or is it? For the covenant is not made by all men. There are some who do not perform. The covenant that creates the sovereign is made in the first instance by a “plurality of voices” (*Leviathan* XVII, 227) only, and not by “every one of that Multitude” (*Leviathan* XVI, 220). What happens to the former to create the later? Hobbes writes: “[B]ecause the major part hath by consenting voices declared a Sovereigne; he that dissented must now consent with the rest; that is, be contented to avow all the actions he shall do, or else justly be destroyed by the rest.”²⁵ (*Leviathan* XVIII, 231). In the condition of war, each is the enemy of every other. When someone

²⁵ The rest of the quote runs: “For if he voluntarily entered into the Congregation of them that were assembled, he sufficiently declared thereby his will (and therefore tacitely covenanted) to stand to what the major part should ordayne: and therefore if he refuse to stand thereto, or make Protestation against any of their Decrees, he does contrary to his Covenant, and therefore unjustly. And whether he be of the Congregation, or not; and whether his consent be asked, or not, he must either submit to their decrees, or be left in the condition of warre he was in before; wherein he might without injustice be destroyed by any man whatsoever.” (*Leviathan* XVIII, 231-32).

breaks the covenant, he becomes an enemy—you are either a member of the state or an enemy; they are mutually exclusive (Leviathan XXVIII, 359).

But in declared Hostility, all infliction of evill is lawfull. From whence it followeth, that if a subject shall by fact, or word, wittingly, and deliberately deny the authority of the Representative of the Common-wealth, (whatsoever penalty hath been formerly ordained for Treason,) he may lawfully be made to suffer whatsoever the Representative will: For in denying subjection, he denyes such Punishment as by the Law hath been ordained; and therefore suffers as an enemy of the Common-wealth; that is, according to the will of the Representative. For the Punishments set down in the Law, are to Subjects, not to Enemies; such as are they, that having been by their own act Subjects, deliberately revolting, deny the Sovereign Power. (Leviathan XXVIII, 356-57).

This is, then, what Hobbes means by the Sovereign being in the state of nature vis-à-vis his subjects, precisely as in the state where there is “warre of every one against his neighbor” (Leviathan XXVIII, 354). That is to say, the Sovereign wages war on his own citizens, and in particular those break the covenant so as to return to the state of nature. This is where the right of punishment, the idea of the state having a monopoly on the use of force, enters—the state terrorizes its own citizens: “the aym of Punishment is not a revenge, but terror” (Leviathan XXVIII, 355). Punishment serves as a warning of what will occur if the covenant is broken and the Sovereign power denied—all hell will be unleashed upon that pour soul’s head; every other citizen will be deputized to kill that person on sight. Those who argue for mercy and tolerance are simply mistaken.²⁶

The whole point of the state is war on the enemies of the state. “War makes the state, and the state makes war,” as Charles Tilly says. For Hobbes, the state is dissolved by losing a war with its enemies (Leviathan XXIX, 375). The enemies of the state are both

²⁶ “He therefore that breaketh his Covenant, and consequently declareth that he thinks he may with reason do so, cannot be received into any Society, that unite themselves for Peace and defence, but by the error of them that receive him; nor when he is received, be retayned in it, without seeing the danger of their error; which errors a man cannot reasonably reckon upon as the means of his security; and therefore if he be left, or cast out of Society, he perisheth.” (*Leviathan* XV, 205).

internal and external; the state is needed not only fight the enemies who break the covenant, but also other states. Ability to defend oneself in a war is what distinguishes a big family from a commonwealth (Leviathan XX, 227). Hobbes introduces the paragraph on the “Generation of the Commonwealth” as the need for a “Common Power” as that which can “defend them from the invasion of Forraigners, and the injuries of one another” (Leviathan XVII, 227). “And Law was brought into the world for nothing else,” writes Hobbes in another place, “but to limit the naturall liberty of particular men, in such manner, as they might not hurt, but assist one another, and joyn together against a common Enemy.” (Leviathan XXVI, 315). The problem of destroying the industry of a people is the “diminution of their strength against a Common Enemy” (Leviathan XVIII, 235). We must have protection from the designs of our enemies in other countries, and this is half of the reason why we covenant together.²⁷

The state makes war on other states. This is its natural condition. The “state of nature” is never really escaped—since according to Hobbes war is not actual fighting, but the time in which there is a known hostility, and as far as one-state-among-other-states is concerned, that time is always. The state is only a state so long as it is in perpetual war. Recall Hobbes’s definition of war:

Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man. For WARRE, consisteth not in Battell onely, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the Will to contend by Battell is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of Time, is to be considered in the nature of Warre; as it is in the nature of Weather. For as the nature of Foule weather, lyeth not in a showre or two of rain; but in an

²⁷ “And be there never so great a Multitude; yet if their actions be directed according to their particular judgements, and particular appetites, they can expect thereby no defence, nor protection, neither against a Common enemy, nor against the injuries of one another. For being distracted in opinions concerning the best use and application of their strength, they do not help, but hinder one another; and reduce their strength by mutuall opposition to nothing: whereby they are easily, not onely subdued by a very few that agree together; but also when there is no common enemy, they make warre upon each other, for their particular interests.” (*Leviathan* XVII, 224-25).

inclination thereto of many dayes together: So the nature of War, consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE. (Leviathan XIII, 185-86).

We might be living peaceably inside a state that is not actually fighting a civil war or a war with another state, but that does not mean there is not actually a state of war—according to Hobbes there is, since there is “known disposition” on behalf of other states who are enemies. The last expression is a pleonasm, since all other states are enemies. Hobbes even admits that the state of nature is an imaginary construction, but he proves its probability by referring to the hostility of foreign relations (Leviathan XIII, 187-88).

Industry and Empathy

Not until one state conquers the whole known world can there be peace. The state is always on a war footing. It is not, therefore, that “peace is good” and “war is bad” that is the grounding principle in Hobbes; rather, fundamental for Hobbes is industry: in essence, “being on the losing end of war is bad, since one’s industry is destroyed,” and “being on the winning end is good, since industry is not destroyed.” If the state of war was bad, then Hobbes would deploy his considerable theoretical talents upon the problem of peace between states that is generated by his system by discussing world government. Yet he considers this matter not at all, and is satisfied with many sovereigns co-existing in a state of war with industry. Industry is the mark of peace for Hobbes. It also forms the basis for the only critique of the passions that Hobbes indulges in.

God’s will is the cause of all the passions in men (Leviathan XXI, 263), yet they are the direct cause of war (Leviathan XVII, 223). For Hobbes, what is to be decried is the irregularity of the passions (Cf. Leviathan XV, 238; XXVII, 348); and it is irregularity, after all, which interferes with industry. The laws of nature are, Hobbes says, conclusions for people “concerning what conduceth to the conservation and defence of themselves”

(Leviathan XVI, 217), and go beyond the injunction not to use violence. Hobbes then does not deal with the ultimate evil of civil war by saying merely, “Lay down your weapons! Don’t fight!” With the laws of nature, Hobbes is striking at the root cause of war and is trying to make men peaceable. And peaceable means industrious, which means working with others for a common benefit. This can only happen when I am able to imaginatively take another person’s point of view, when I am capable of empathy.

The natural laws are conclusions that follow from our need to preserve ourselves—they are good dispositions we should have, like not insisting that we be a judge in our own case, submitting to arbitration, dealing with others equally, giving safe passage to mediators, not showing contempt for others, not falling into blind revenge, showing gratitude to our benefactors, accommodating ourselves to others, and the rest. Of all these dispositions, Hobbes says they are summed up in the Golden Rule, given mainly a negative formulation by Hobbes, “Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thy selfe” (Leviathan XV, 214). So even the biggest ignoramus can grasp the essence of all the natural laws, by just remembering this one precept.²⁸

Putting oneself in the place of another and asking “What if that were me?,” empathizing, is the basis for the natural law. We are to empathize with others, avoiding that which would be considered an act of war against them, and trying to get along. This is in our interest, first of all because we will be punished by the Sovereign if we do not,²⁹ and secondly because it allows us to be industrious, working with others in a

²⁸ “[I]t is true, that hope, fear, anger, ambition, covetousness, vain glory, and other perturbations of mind, do hinder a man, so as he cannot attain to the knowledge of these laws whilst those passions prevail in him: but there is no man who is not sometimes in a quiet mind. At that time therefore there is nothing easier for him to know, though he be never so rude and unlearned, that this only rule, that when he doubts whether what he is now doing to another may be done by the law of nature or not, he conceive himself to be in that other’s stead.” (*De Cive* III, 148).

²⁹ As Hobbes writes: “For as that stone which by the asperity, and irregularity of Figure, takes more room from others, than it selfe fills; and for the hardnesse, cannot be easily made plain, and thereby hindereth the building, is by the builders cast away as unprofitable, and troublesome: so also, a man that by asperity of Nature, will strive to

mutually beneficial relationship. The form of our industry, the passions we try to satisfy, is up to us. Hence our natural law duties are prohibitions in the negative form. Do we ever have to accomplish positive actions to help keep the peace? Are there peacemakers in Hobbes's view? Hobbes tells us what we should not do in order to not cause trouble with others. Everything we are obliged to do seems to be this way, even preserving our life and keeping the covenant: "Justice therefore, that is to say, Keeping of Covenant, is a Rule of Reason, by which we are forbidden to do any thing destructive to our life; and consequently a Law of Nature." (Leviathan XV, 205). There is no consideration of any positive duties we might have to uphold our own lives:

These are the Lawes of Nature, dictating Peace, for a means of the conservation of men in multitudes; and which onely concern the doctrine of Civill Society. There be other things tending to the destruction of particular men; as Drunkenness, and all other parts of Intemperance; which may therefore also be reckoned amongst those things which the Law of Nature hath forbidden; but are not necessary to be mentioned, nor are pertinent enough to this place. (Leviathan, XV, 214).

Of course these can be phrased as negative prohibitions also, such as "Avoid drunkenness." But even in the negative form they can involve at times hard personal struggles. Whereas in those things that "onely concern the doctrine of Civill Society" there is no struggle within my psyche—I merely have to not resist; there is an exterior power that takes care of the rest. Upholding the natural laws in the state of nature is "easy" (Leviathan XV, 215). The negative formulations of prohibitions without corresponding duties that Hobbes prefers follows from the assumption of equality between all the passions and denial of any interior alienation, which is necessary in order to rule out any higher source of authority other than individual agreement.

retain those things which to himselfe are superfluous, and to others necessary; and for the stubbornness of his Passions, cannot be corrected, is to be left, or cast out of Society, as cumbersome thereunto." (*Leviathan* XV, 209).

But it would seem that entering into society takes more than just forgoing certain things. In a late work, Hobbes writes that

good dispositions are those which are suitable for entering into civil society; and good manners (that is, moral virtues) are those whereby what was entered upon can be best preserved. For all the virtues can be contained in justice and charity. Whence it can also be understood that dispositions contrary to these are wicked; and that contrary manners and vices are all contained in injustice and in a mind insensible to another's evils, that is, in a lack of charity. (*De Homine* XIII, 70).

“Dispositions” in this passage refers to “men’s inclinations to certain things” (*De Homine* XIII, 63), and good dispositions consist, apparently, in those qualities in *Leviathan* which we are obliged to be in *foro interno* according to the laws of nature, viz. what was named above, like gratitude, modesty, sociability, and the rest. (*Leviathan* XV, 209-215). Also, it seems as though Hobbes also included under the heading of “dispositions” instruction in the “Essentiall Rights ... of Sovereignty” (*Leviathan* XXX, 379), so that insofar as dispositions are oriented towards justice and towards following the covenant which creates the Sovereign, they can be called “good.”³⁰ On the other hand “manners” are defined as dispositions which are “so strengthened by habit that they beget their actions with ease and with reason unresisting.” (*De Homine* XIII, 68). It is only with manners that there can be “moral virtues” in the proper sense, Hobbes writes. Dispositions are only good insofar as they are looked at from the point of view of the (perhaps incipient) Sovereign. There is no common measure to say whether dispositions are good or not, unless you consider them under the aspect of entering into a civil state. Manners can be good or bad; this is simple enough, as they are good when they incline one to follow the law, bad when they incline one to break them. Justice in Hobbes’s sense is the essence of how he defines virtue and vice. There is an exception,

³⁰ According to Hobbes, dispositions arise from six sources: “the constitution of the body, from experience, from habit, from the goods of fortune, from the opinion one hath of oneself, and from authorities.” *De Homine* XIII, 63.

however. There is a moral virtue that is defined “purely by the natural laws” (De Homine XIII, 69), and that is charity. Charity, a mind not “insensible to another’s evils” (De Homine XIII, 70), is empathy, the essence of good dispositions and the natural laws. By placing it under good manners, Hobbes is acknowledging that it can be a disposition “strengthened by habit [begetting] actions with ease and with reason unresisting,” which is responsible for more than inclining men towards civil society, but in buttressing the state as well. Justice and charity sum up the moral virtues, with charity, as we have seen (and in keeping with the normal sense of the words), seeming to be perhaps more than a negative prohibition. The fact that it is not is seen, however, by understanding it as the precondition for industry, which buttresses the state by making it rich and powerful. This buttressing goes beyond mere obedience to the Sovereign, yet is dependent on it as its ultimate condition, as will be shown.

Obedience to Prohibitions the Essence of Virtue

What about the other cardinal virtues besides justice? Courage and prudence, for example, require more than a negative formulation of duty. Hobbes responds that they are not virtues, since they are only useful to particular men. There is no common standard with which to compare them; they ostensibly aid each man to get what he thinks is good, which is different for each man. We cannot speak of them in an unequivocal way. Recall the passage cited in the first section, where it seemed like Hobbes was saying that these positive virtues are necessary for the continuation and survival of the state (De Homine XIII, 69-70). There is a problem, however, if it is a positive virtue that the state requires, provided by strong citizens who find resources for it beyond mere obedience, since then there would be the beginnings of a standard above the state, viz. the virtue which all states require for their flourishing, but are impotent to provide through their commands or even education. That is why in the very next sentence Hobbes makes it clear that these virtues are not positive (in the case

of temperance) and not virtues (in the case of courage and prudence) but rather “strengths of mind” akin to natural qualities, of which presumably every state has basically an equal share.

The virtue of following the law of nature is charity or empathy, which seems to be mired in the negative formulation of not being insensible to another’s evils, of not doing to others what one would not like done to oneself—though Hobbes does sometimes give it a positive formulation (*Leviathan* XVII, 223; also Cf. *Leviathan* XXX, 383). Hobbes’s roundabout avoiding of a discussion of any positive virtues is necessary in order to keep obedience to the Sovereign as the essence of all virtue. The Sovereign simply does not have the resources to inculcate the manly virtues of strength in adversity,³¹ and again, if there were such virtues of commission rather than omission, they would spring from a source other than the Sovereign and could even be used as a standard over and against him.

Also, negative prohibitions, since they are negative, do not interfere with industry. Hobbes assumes each man will be industrious in following his own interest in whichever way seems best to him, so moral virtue can promote industry to the fullest only by ensuring that the industry of others is not interfered with. Hobbes steers clear of all positive virtues which might interfere with each man furthering his own interests through industry; for instance, there is no distributive justice for him (*Leviathan* XV, 208). Peace is industry, and requires nothing supererogatory or sacrificial. The one thing that is sacrificed, as we have seen, is the ability to lead a political life. But this is precisely not a life of industry, but a life, ideally, of sacrificing in pursuit of the common good instead. It is better for industry if government takes a lower ratio of productive labor. So it is that the one thing that must be given up in the covenant to create the Sovereign is not something that is productive: its loss therefore should not be mourned.

³¹ Except perhaps through long-term education, although this is dangerous if it reduced the awe of *Leviathan*’s superior power, perhaps encouraging resistance among its internal enemies, as might happen with the insistence of kings to justify the rebellion that brought them to power. (*Leviathan* Conclusion, 721-22).

Empathy Possible Only in Civil Society

The essence of the laws of nature—don't do to others what you would not want done to you—is empathy, the realization that your own interests are not the only ones in the world, and that you should perhaps make room for others. In the state of nature, however, there is war between every man. Every man is an enemy to all the rest. Now when an enemy of mine has no power to hurt me, I can perhaps still empathize with him. But in the state of nature everyone has roughly equal power to hurt everyone else (Leviathan XIII, 183). When someone is my enemy and is coming at me, empathy is not very high on the list of emotions that will probably well to the surface.

In the context of civil society, it is difficult to empathize with people who are not like me. People who share our desires and interests are much easier to understand and empathize with. The less someone is like us, the harder it is to empathize with them, as it takes an effort of the imagination, which is simpler when there is more overlap with my own life. In the state of nature, however, empathy is most likely even tougher for those who are like me—since we are interested in and competing for the same goods, we are particularly dangerous for each other (Leviathan XIII, 184). This situation can only bring out especial hatred; the opposite of what could be the case in civil society. If we are not enemies, we can start to work together, be part of a common enterprise, merge our interests, and be much readier to empathize.

How is it to come about that this process of cooperating rather than fighting is to be inaugurated? Hobbes's description of the covenant is completely consistent: empathy plays no role. Rather, it is secondary to and only made possible under Hobbes's premises by the covenant to create the Sovereign. So we can say that while the laws of nature, summed up in essence as the Golden Rule, do go above and beyond what is necessary to create the Sovereign, they are reliant on that more fundamental covenant. Even in their negative formulation, the laws of nature prepare men for more

than just creating civil society, but also life in civil society, viz. mutually beneficial relationships with others, industry. But the laws of nature don't really become laws until they are backed up by the power of the Sovereign.

Creating the Sovereign has nothing to do with empathy. And it's a good thing too, with all of the people who have to be eliminated since they dissented from the "plurality of voices" which carried the day instituting the Sovereign power. You don't want to start empathizing with your enemies, especially enemies of the state. That cannot be a virtue. While virtue always involves obedience to the Sovereign and thus the good of everyone, industry furthers the good of individuals, but also, when produced by good citizens, the wealth and power of the state. The Sovereign has an interest in keeping up the mutually beneficial relationship with his subjects that takes place in industry.

War Suppresses Politics

Industry might always further private good, but what is its public purpose? It can only have one public purpose—war. War against the enemies of the state, viz. other states and those inside the state who do not accept the covenant. There is no other "good" that everyone can accept, except maintaining the covenant and not falling into a civil war or failed external war, both of which would disturb industry. There is no other way to measure the success of the state, since the contentments of life only affect private individuals, thus lacking a public measure. Think of a sports team—all the players submit to the decisions of the coach (the Sovereign) on playing time, allocation of scoring opportunities, etc. This is done for the sake the success of the team, which would be found wanting if there were too many chiefs and not enough Indians. The coach has to make the tough calls that become the (public) orthodoxy—how can you compare between two players with different strengths and weaknesses? It's difficult if not impossible, yet the coach does it and it has to be accepted by the team as the truth; I

was playing poor offense (but perhaps good defense), so I got benched. Grumbling against the coach, and certainly refusing to follow his commands, undercuts the team and are a recipe for defeat. Defeat—there is actually a measure of success that is even more objective than the will of the Sovereign-coach: winning. The same applies to Hobbes's state. Beating other states in war and expanding the Sovereign's power is the test the Sovereign must pass. I shall return to this.

A collective enterprise undertaken by the Sovereign can only have one two acceptable public reasons under Hobbes's principles: "safety" and the "Contentments of life, which every man by lawfull Industry, without danger, or hurt to the Commonwealth, shall acquire to himselfe." (Leviathan XXX, 376; Cf. De Cive XIII, 259). It is completely clear, however, which of these dual purposes of the Sovereign power is foundational—avoiding war. "[T]he estate of Man can never be without some incommmodity or other," writes Hobbes, "and that the greatest, that in any forme of Government can possibly happen to the people in generall, is scarce sensible, in respect of the miseries, and horrible calamities, that accompany a Civill Warre" (Leviathan XVIII, 238). We can never have all the contentments we want—and if we did we'd want more. So this is not as much the central goal of uniting with others as is avoiding a violent death by living under civil law. Also, if the Sovereign is going to ask any major sacrifices of his citizens, it cannot be for the purpose of acquiring the contentments of life, since by definition sacrifice would be a taking away of these very contentments. In fact, the only public reason the Sovereign can rely upon to convince anyone that a controversial policy is necessary is the maintenance of peace. And it is not really the maintenance of peace, as this runs into the same problem we just saw with the contentments of life, viz. that if there is already peace (as an absence of fighting), then it is no argument to say that peace will be gained by a certain controversial course of action, since if anything a controversial policy might create enemies of the state who would not otherwise be hostile, risking rather than solving the problem of civil war. So

it is not to gain peace per se which can be a given rationale, but rather to avoid war. The specter of war must always be conjured up with every new, big policy the Sovereign wishes to push through. Hobbes knows well the uniting power of a common enemy (Cf. *Leviathan* XVII, 224-25). It is the only thing that can unite an otherwise hostile people, who share no common sense of good between themselves, and are always on the verge of fighting with each other if they are not held in check by a power mightier than them.

The whole vocabulary of natural law and the public good that Hobbes employs makes us think that the Sovereign can view the political situation and see what is really in the public good, and that I can too, if I apply myself to political matters and am smart enough and of good will; that is to say, that we are all on the same page. But Hobbes uses the terminology of “public good” and “natural law” when in fact he means nothing of the sort.³² In fact the only thing that keeps the Sovereign from abusing the people is mutually-beneficial success. It benefits my interests to have the Sovereign in power, and the Sovereign benefits from my industry. This is really an extremely tenuous position. As C.B. Macpherson puts it, “any slackening or temporary absence of a sovereign power would tend to lead to internecine strife.”³³ As Arendt puts it, “The limitless process of capital accumulation needs the political structure of so ‘unlimited a Power’ that it can protect growing property by constantly growing more powerful.”³⁴

³² Cf. Oakeshott, 337.

³³ C.B. Macpherson, “Introduction to *Leviathan*,” in *Leviathan*, 55. He continues: “If the obligation of individuals to the state is based only on their calculation of their own self-interest, how can it be sufficient to hold a society together, since the same self-interest can be expected to dictate a breach of that obligation whenever changed circumstances would seem to make that profitable? The extreme case is that of the individual’s allegiance to the established sovereign in the event of civil war. Hobbes admits, as his logic requires him to do, that the subject’s obligation to the sovereign lasts only ‘as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them. For the firth men have by Nature to protect themselves, when none else can protect them, can by no Covenant be relinquished.’ Here, it may be argued, Hobbes’s whole system is reduced to absurdity. For the power of the sovereign, and hence his ability to protect the subjects, rests on their continuous rational acknowledgement of the obligation to support him. Yet in the crucial case when he needs their support to the utmost, they are admitted to be free to withdraw their support if in their judgement he is no longer clearly able to protect them.” Macpherson, 61-62.

³⁴ Arendt, 143.

Power for Hobbes does not mean objectively how much power can be employed, but is rather based on the opinions men have of power only, which also makes it extremely tenuous.³⁵ Our giving the Sovereign power is a free gift (Man and Citizen 25).³⁶ There is no duty to uphold the Sovereign; it is just a “Rule of Reason” (Leviathan XV, 205).³⁷ It might be a rule of reason, but man is ruled equally by reason and appetite, and as Oakeshott says, “On no plausible reading of Hobbes is the Law of Nature to be considered obligatory because it represents rational conduct.”³⁸ It is rational to preserve myself, but I can always break the covenant and oppose the Sovereign. Of course, the result is becoming an enemy of the state, but it is possible. When would I take such a precipitous risk? Perhaps only at the moment when the iniquity of the state is so large that I would rather die than participate in it. For Hobbes, the obverse of this is that I am willing the destruction of the state; this justifies me becoming the enemy. It should be noted that one does not have to hold Hobbes premises, and that non-participation can be a prophetic warning that desires repentance and not destruction. Hobbes is careful to eliminate precisely this sense of prophetism (Leviathan XXXII, 409-415).

The possibility of asking the question as to whether a whole state might be so iniquitous as to be better off being conquered is obscured by Hobbes’s denial of sacrifice in his anthropology. That is, that the future, though it be without me, might be better if an iniquitous evil is exterminated, that it might be that our lives ought to be a sacrifice for the future, is a senseless question to ask if “good” is only defined as what I desire. In other words, everyone should read behind my plea to sacrifice our present comfort and even lives for future generations a hidden will-to-power, in which I must really want to rule. Hobbes did not seriously think that this question could be completely eliminated altogether, however. People are going to ask themselves at certain points

³⁵ Stephen Holmes, “Introduction to Behemoth,” in *Behemoth*, xi, xlvii.

³⁶ As is, by the way, God’s giving us faith. *Leviathan* XXVI, 332.

³⁷ Cf. Oakeshott, 319-20

³⁸ Oakeshott, 314.

whether allegiance to the whole political system is worth it. What Hobbes wanted to eliminate is any sense that they would ask this question together, with a horizon of sacrifice. It must be asked only by individuals; and when it is, then the only standard can be my short-term interest, “short-term” meaning the horizon of my life. And this of necessity, since I cannot make sacrifices for others without their consent. This is the fundamental principle Hobbes builds into his system—the Leviathan can decide who it is going to sacrifice only because everyone has consented to all its actions. This consent, however, is only formal—it is not real. The notion of consenting in the covenant to create the Sovereign is a simple matter of logic for Hobbes. It never actually happened.³⁹ He admits this. The covenant, if we are to imagine it with Hobbes, occurred with everyone covenanting to everyone else with the Sovereign standing there speechless. When there is a decision to grant someone nearly absolute power, it is very doubtful that there would be no lobbying, speechmaking, canvassing, promising, or demagoguing by anyone. Hobbes’s theory of the covenant strips out every element of politics, which is only fitting for the creation of an anti-political state.

The covenant is not real, it is rather the most anti-political idea possible, viz. a deduction from principles. These principles are ostensibly ones that everyone would consent to, if given the choice between a state of war and a secure, ordered polity. But there is no moment where this happened. The political realm is certainly to be defined as the place where people must be forced to sacrifice their desires without their consent. This is what distinguishes politics, the field of power-relations, from other practices. But the idea of asking people for their consent is elided by Hobbes completely. Building consensus for policies in which people should sacrifice their interests voluntarily is the hallmark of a liberal state, yet it is ruthlessly excluded by Hobbes’s

³⁹ As Alan Ryan says, “Of all the routes to obligation, contract is at once the most and the least attractive. It is the most attractive because the most conclusive argument for claiming that someone has an obligation of some kind is to show them that they imposed it on themselves by some sort of contract-like procedure. ... It is unattractive for the same reason; few of us can recall having promised to obey our rulers for the very good reason that few of us have done so.” Ryan, 228-29.

political theory. His whole notion of Sovereignty is one in which the Sovereign never has to ask for anything (or ever say sorry); in short, the Sovereign exercises political power without ever having to engage in the political art of building consensus. He rather just gives commands.

The truly political art, on the other hand, involves self-delimitation, the restraining of the full use of raw power in order to accommodate others. Leviathan does know something similar. As we have seen above, the Sovereign governs by laws, which are only those which are necessary. And as we have seen as well, it retains a surplus of power; it is not bound by its own laws (Leviathan XXI, 272-72). In the passage quoted above from Behemoth (in which an example of iniquity was given in the Sovereign's command to execute one's own father), Hobbes writes that one must ask whether the command was a general law, since the Sovereign "commands the people in general never but by a precedent law, and as a politic, not a natural person." Stephen Holmes glosses this passage in terms of a passage in the dedication in Leviathan where Hobbes writes of his work, "I know not how the world will receive it, nor how it may reflect on those that shall seem to favour it. For in a way beset with those that contend on one side for too great Liberty, and on the other side for too much Authority, 'tis hard to passe between the points of both unwounded." (Leviathan, Dedication, 75). How could Hobbes possibly think that his Leviathan was a "middle way" between too much liberty and too much authority? Who is it that would desire more authority for the Sovereign than Hobbes? Holmes writes:

In other words, unlimited power can be self-weakening and even self-destructive. When the Scots army invaded the country, Charles found himself all alone, literally help-less. As a result of his absolutist ambitions, the nation went on a tax strike. The King would have been more powerful if, having submitted himself to Parliamentary limitations, he could have counted on Parliamentary cooperation. Hobbes admired the Romans for their capacity to win power through strategic concessions. They gained obedience from newly conquered

peoples by offering, not merely protection, but also citizenship, status, and the right to influence policy. By restricting their own arbitrary discretion, they gained useful cooperation and support. Limited power, they recognized, was more powerful than unlimited power.⁴⁰

For Hobbes the political art is the Sovereign proactively anticipating the interests of his subjects and manipulating them, rather than running roughshod over them. In the long run doing the latter makes things more difficult.

This is not, however, the political art. It is rather the art of public relations, of anticipating popular reactions and working to market your policy accordingly, manipulating appearances such that there is a surface harmony, with a detached, diffused, apathetic consensus. This is certainly not the informed consensus of popular representatives with relative proximity to their constituents; it is rather consensus as popularity, conceived as amassing individual preferences. It is precisely the art practiced in national politics in the United States today, with focus groups and polling results substituting for robust representation and federalism. For Hobbes federalism could never be anything but representatives of the Sovereign; certainly not lower-level representatives of the people.

Government on such principles will not further the “public good” defined as the good of everyone. It can only be the good, first of all, of the people who do not dissent from the government, since dissent is grounds for being labeled an enemy.⁴¹ So it is the “common good” only of all who tow the party line. It is also the good for those who prosper from the mutually-beneficial success offered by the Sovereign power. That is, if I am benefiting from the freedom offered me by the Sovereign, the good order the Sovereign has provided me is the condition for it. And I can only benefit if the Sovereign remains successful in imposing order on an inherently tenuous situation.

⁴⁰ Holmes, xlii.

⁴¹ Hobbes says that we authorize all the actions of the Sovereign, so we cannot dissent from this or that decision, but must accept all of them as authorized by us. Cf. *Leviathan* XVIII, 229

The situation is, to recall, one in which man—including the Sovereign who personifies the state—“cannot be content with a moderate power” and who will always strive to get more, “because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more” (Leviathan XI, 161). If this holds for the average individual, how much more so is it true of Leviathan, that moral god which Hobbes describes in Anselmian terms: “[I]t appeareth plainly ... that the Sovereign power ... is as great, as possibly men can be imagined to make it” (Leviathan XX, 260). Leviathan cannot be content with the current power dynamic, and is always striving for more power. There is always room for such striving—even if the internal dynamic is relatively “peaceful,” there will always be some state somewhere that is not yet subservient to Leviathan. If Leviathan stops and rests content, then there is stasis, stagnation, a coming-apart at the seams. We are not talking about a balance-of-power. What is needed is overweening superiority. One of the reasons Hobbes gives against a small polity is that, even if other states around it are also small, the balance-of-power is easily changed, since “small additions on the one side or the other, make the advantage of strength so great, as is sufficient to carry the Victory; and therefore gives encouragement to an Invasion.” (Leviathan XVII, 224). It is therefore unsafe, and what is needed is a large state.

In such a situation I am relying on the Sovereign moving from success to success, just as men seek after power without ceasing. Hobbes writes: “And from hence it is, that Kings, whose power is greatest, turn their endeavours to the assuring it at home by Lawes, or abroad by Wars: and when that is done, there succeedeth a new desire; in some, of Fame from new Conquest; in others, of ease and sensuall pleasure; in others, of admiration, or being flattered for excellence in some art, or other ability of the mind.” (Leviathan XI, 161). Although he excuses the “luxurious waste of private men” (Leviathan XXX, 387), Hobbes does list under the causes of the dissolution of the commonwealth, “the insatiable appetite, or Bulimia, of enlarging Dominion; ... also the

Lethargy of Ease, and Consumption of Riot and Vain Expence. (Leviathan XXIX, 374). Given Hobbes preference for industry and a government limited to necessities, it is fair to conclude that Hobbes would be in favor of Sovereigns assuring their power at home and abroad, rather than their own “ease and sensuall pleasure.” This is the only way that the Sovereign can become as great as can be imagined. If there are other states just as good or better, then this is exposed as not being true. Hobbes is in favor, then, of a belligerent jingoism. Belligerent, by necessity, because he believes free states always live in a condition of “perpetuall war” (Leviathan XXI, 266), and jingoistic because, as Hobbes writes, it is important for the people to be taught “that they ought not to be in love with any forme of Government they see in their neighbor Nations, more than with their own, nor ... to desire change” (Leviathan XXX, 380). Our state is better than all others; an attitude of hatred and contempt and fear that excludes all empathy. The Laws of Nature are only conclusions of reason, and are subsumed by the civil law (De Homine XIII, 69), because otherwise they might apply to the enemies of the state. They only become proper laws when there is civil society, with a common power to compel obedience (Leviathan XXVI, 314). But the Sovereign himself is above the law and this restraint of a higher power. He is therefore in a state of being obliged by laws that cannot compel him, this split consciousness of individuals in the state of nature. The law of nature only provides reasons for things, and determines nothing (Elements of Law XVI, 87).

In the state of nature this was resolved by creating the all-powerful Sovereign, which created the conditions for the empathy towards which we were directed by reason in the state of nature, eliminating the split-consciousness of being obliged to something we couldn't perform, and channeling man's passion and reason together through fear of the Sovereign. For the Sovereign, this alienation, this freedom coexisting with some kind of obscure obligation, remains. As with individuals in the state of nature, it is not empathy that overcomes this alienation. The Sovereign will not

try to empathize with the enemy as a way of resolving all differences; such sincerity would just be taken advantage of. Nor will he try and covenant with other sovereigns to create a regional or world government, since the war between states unlike the state of nature is compatible with industry, and there is no reason to dissolve the commonwealth by putting it under a new sovereign when you already have industry, the essence of peace. The only way for the Sovereign to carry out his duties as Sovereign consistently is to channel his reason and his passion together as happens for individuals in civil society—through fear of other states. The difference with private individuals, of course, is that their fear is of the Sovereign whom they cannot conquer, while the Sovereign fears those other states who are also candidates for conquest.

Just as private individuals pursuing their own interests do by their industry contribute to the might of the state as a whole under the Sovereign, so the Sovereign by fighting and winning ever more wars attains the victories that hold everyone within the state in ever-increasing awe, decreasing the likelihood of it being challenged within by domestic enemies stirring up malcontents—for who would succeed against such a terrible power? As we have seen, Hobbes knows that power is based on the opinions men have of power more than the actual facts concerning that power, so there is nothing like great victories to keep the opinions of the people spellbound, not to mention providing that crucial visible justification for the sacrifices they make for the state. For though Hobbes might plead that “the Impositions that are layd on the People by the Soveraign Power, are nothing else but the Wages, due to them that hold the publique Sword, to defend private men in the exercise of severall Trades, and Callings” (Leviathan XXX, 386), this is the kind of abstract argument that would take a lot of education for the vulgar to grasp, and though Hobbes is optimistic on this score (Leviathan XXX, 379), when he lists the greatest diseases of the commonwealth, it is not merely combating seditious doctrines (Hobbes gives a list of nine of them) which Hobbes thinks will forestall dissolution of the state, but also the error of the Sovereign

in remaining “content with lesse Power” than is required; and this is in fact placed first. Whenever there is an opportunity for the Sovereign to press his advantage in foreign affairs, he should not remain content with the status quo, but take his opportunity. In the absence of such an opportunity, it is the fear of other states which keeps the Sovereign focused on the “common good” of his people.

Perpetual war is good and necessary for the Sovereign and the citizens. If there really is peace, then the Sovereign loses his prerogative power (CF. Elements of Law XX, 114). If we are living in harmony without enemies, there is no longer any reason to justify the powers of the Sovereign in the eyes of the vulgar—yet to impair the Sovereign’s powers is to risk civil war. It is only due to the specter of war that we need the Sovereign in the first place. For a state which has free security, therefore, there might be a need to have enemies created artificially, or at least exaggerated, to keep the mutually-beneficial process going.

Yet it is not mutually beneficial for everyone. As we have seen, Hobbes’s claim that, among all the disputable goods in the world, only peace is accepted by all, is not true, since the covenant is not made by all men. There are enemies of the state within and outside it, and it is only when you first exclude these enemies is it true that all men desire peace. What Hobbes is doing at the outset is redefining “all men.” Humanity, in the sense of peace-loving people, does not include fools and madmen and children, who are not capable of the sufficient understanding required to value peace. Hobbes writes that

the Command of the Common-wealth, is Law onely to those, that have means to take notice of it. Over naturall fooles, children, or mad-men there is no Law, no more than over brute beasts; nor are they capable of the title of just, or unjust; because they had never power to make any covenant, or to understand the consequences thereof; and consequently never took upon them to authorize the actions of any Sovereign, as they must do that make to themselves a Common-wealth. (Leviathan XXVI, 317).

Humanity as peace-loving souls fails to include enemies of the state as well, who can be killed on sight. If the Sovereign makes the law for “Murder, Homicide, Felony, Assault, and the like” (Leviathan XXVI, 328), it will clearly not be considered murder to kill these enemies. They are counted as human only in some technical academic definition, but not in any sense that counts, except insofar as it is perhaps more urgent to kill them than harmful beasts since they are more dangerous. Citizens are under a regime of punishment, while enemies are under the regime of war without any protections, since “in declared Hostility, all infliction of evil is lawfull” (Leviathan XXVIII, 356).

The Sovereign can thus redefine humanity. Hannah Arendt was correct to speak of Hobbes as a precursor to the race doctrines of her time.⁴² The state can declare someone to be an enemy and then commit any iniquity against them, which is no longer to be considered unlawful, since that can happen only with citizens: “in declared Hostility, all infliction of evil is lawfull.” We cannot empathize with enemies; if we do we are mistaken. Hobbes, the philosopher of clarity, gives us these two options—empathy or hostility. They are binary options; one is either one or the other. It is based on a recognizable psychological experience—we do not treat others whom we are convinced are trying to destroy us in the same way as others who are not. How do we know which people are bent on our destruction, and which ones we can cooperate with? Only God can read hearts. We have to rely on the Sovereign, or else we will suspect everyone as possibly being our enemy—this is Hobbes’s argument. But the excluded middle is the possibility both of loving your enemies (Christianity) and of being an unwitting enemy, that is, harming the common good without intending to.

⁴² Hobbes affords the best possible theoretical foundation for those naturalistic ideologies which hold nations to be tribes, separated from each other by nature, without any connection whatever, unconscious of the solidarity of mankind and having in common only the instinct for self-preservation which man shares with the animal world. If the idea of humanity, of which the most conclusive symbol is the common origin of the human species, is no longer valid, then nothing is more plausible than a theory according to which brown, yellow, or black races are descended from some other species of apes than the white race, and that all together are predestined by nature to war against each other until they have disappeared from the face of the earth. Arendt, 157.

The latter is what politics is all about. Politics is more than just a power-struggle, but includes the argument over what the true common good is. For Hobbes such arguments only lead to dissention and civil war, which is the summum malum. Yet politics cannot be fully serious if it eschews dissention out of fear of civil war. Politics is a fine risk, and limits on it cannot be set in advance—just as Hobbes argues you cannot nail sovereignty down in advance (*Leviathan* XXIV, 298-99). Hobbes's arguments for sovereignty hold only if you prize industry over politics, power-seeking over searching for the common good. Hobbes draws the implications of this preference with more rigor and coherence than later liberals, Locke for example, who use the promotion of industry as the measure with which to limit sovereignty. Hobbes shows this to be an illusion. The state is built on war, and it is vital to fight this war outside the state rather than within it, for the sake of industry. Doing this requires waging internal wars on dissenters, external wars also for political purposes, and perhaps unacknowledged wars on the unproductive classes, which remain hidden in the absence of an inquiry into the common good. It is not pleasant to think of oneself as a cog in a war-making machine or as an intellectual slave to the Sovereign, but these are the consequences of putting industry above all other goods, and the virtue of Hobbes is to reveal this with ruthless honesty.

III. CONCLUSION: VOEGELIN AND HOBBS

We are now in a position to acknowledge the truth of Voegelin's reading of Hobbes. Voegelin identifies that "the Leviathan is the correlate of order to the disorder of Gnostic activists" (*New Science*, 186), but the problem lies with the fact that it is an unsuccessful correlate. It is with this argument that Hobbes is met on his own terms, rather than talking past him by setting forth philosophical truth against his theory of

political truth, without clarifying the status of philosophical truth in society. That is to say, what do you have if you do not have civil theology? Rule by philosophers?

Voegelin is critical even of Plato's attempt to have philosophers rule, and points out that in his last work the *Laws* Plato instead worked at the task of "devising institutions that embodied as much of the spirit as was compatible with the continued natural existence of society" (New Science, 158). That is to say, "the tension between a differentiated truth of the soul and the truth of society cannot be eliminated from historical reality by throwing out the one or the other" (New Science, 157). Philosophers cannot replace civil theology wholesale. This is not to say it is not be desirable to mitigate it as far as possible. Civil theology must be combated in every age.

Voegelin was right to say that the necessity of civil theology was a great insight of Hobbes; I would add that Hobbes also shows the nature of all civil theology as a buttress for the status quo. Hobbes wants all change to occur within the structure of the status quo. The impulse behind this attempt to eliminate all revolutions is conservative. Yet the result is permanent revolution, non-stop war. And it is this that is self-defeating. Voegelin writes: "Gnostic politics is self-defeating in the sense that measures which are intended to establish peace increase the disturbances that will lead to war" (New Science, 171). The point of war must be peace, the nature of which Hobbes refuses to analyze. But it is only by doing so that Hobbes's theory can overcome its partial nature, and insofar as Hobbes insists that his partial account is to be substituted for the whole, he falls into the gnosticism he is trying to avoid.

Hobbes has to assume that states will be just as power-hungry in the realm of international politics as are the men he analyzes in terms of a reduction to a power-drive, eliminating all rational discussion of the purpose of war. Voegelin: "If a war has a purpose at all, it is the restoration of a balance of forces and not the aggravation of disturbance; it is the reduction of the unbalancing excess of force, not the destruction of force to the point of creating a new unbalancing power vacuum" (New Science, 172). But

for Hobbes, war will be an unbalancing factor and a source of misery for all, yet must be passively accepted. It will also be perpetual. Voegelin again: “Gnostic politics, thus, is self-defeating in so far as its disregard for the structure of reality leads to continuous warfare” (New Science, 173). And this disregard for the structure of reality can only be combated when a “critical exploration of cause and effect in history” (New Science, 170) is allowed.

Such a critique is politics in the weighty sense. That is to say, like it or not, there is philosophical truth and it is relevant to politics. The “uncomfortable authority of the philosopher”⁴³ opposes itself to civil theology, and it is this conflict which Voegelin says “is the crucial issue.”⁴⁴ Philosophy allows us to separate ourselves from the authority of the political order of which we are a part when it is involved in an unjust war on its external or internal enemies. It is only such separation in a critical mass of citizens, relying on persuasion (New Science, 75), than can hope to attain a true peace, rather than continual war. This cannot be definitively achieved. As David Walsh says, “Each generation must assume the struggle and in the process exercise the freedom that is alone the way to realizing its humanity.”⁴⁵ The philosopher’s struggle with civil theology involves, in our era, attacking the illusion of progress.⁴⁶ Hobbes’s philosophy is not free of this illusion (Cf. *Leviathan* XXX, 378). It also involves tilting the tension between “pluralist self-interest and republican virtue,” which “has never been fully confronted with the liberal tradition itself,” towards the side of republican virtue.⁴⁷ For the sustenance of our liberal political orders is, as Walsh rightly points out, in its practice, which “can hardly survive the disappearance of all substantive opportunity for

⁴³ Eric Voegelin, “The Oxford Political Philosophers,” in *Published Essays: 1953-1965*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Columbia: University of Missouri Press), 40.

⁴⁴ Voegelin, “The Oxford Political Philosophers,” 37.

⁴⁵ David Walsh, “Introduction to *The Later Middle Ages*,” in Eric Voegelin, *The Later Middle Ages*, ed. David Walsh (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 17-18.

⁴⁶ Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 82.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

the exercise of common political action.”⁴⁸ That common political action might disturb the “exercise of entire Sovereignty” (Leviathan XXXI, 408), but it is the only way in which liberal states today can hope to offer “the opportunity for full actualization of human nature.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid., 92.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 45.