THE FORM OF POWER

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"A virtuous society is a royal society. It is ruled by kings, so to speak, at every level of scale: kings all the way down—or, in what amounts to the same thing, fathers all the way up."

Many Catholics discussing the proper use of political power in relation to the common good overlook fundamental problems concerning political power itself: what power is, how it works, the forms power can take under which circumstances, how the reality of power relates to the reality of the social order in which it operates, and so on. These fundamental questions about power are at the heart of classical political theory. Plato and Aristotle address the problem of power by focusing on the intrinsic relationship between the moral composition of the people and type of regime; and subsequently, that relationship was to be a central feature of pre-modern, classical political thought. It is this relationship that I would like to focus on in the present essay.

Within the classical reading, any given positive regime comes to be and is sustained only within a social regime, a way that the people are.[1] As Plato asserted, "there must be as many

1. Aristotle, *Politics*, III.17.1288a.5–7; IV.3.1290a.30–33; IV.8.1294a.

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types of individual as of society. Societies aren't made of sticks and stones, but of men whose individual characters, by turning the scale one way or another, determine the direction of the whole."[2] This is not, however, because culture is upstream of politics, as the saying goes, nor because politics is actually upstream of culture. It is because human beings are at the same time social and ethical. Our societies are essentially moral and our morals are essentially social.[3] "Political science" is the field of knowledge that aims to understand as a whole the relationships between who a people are and what a people do, or can do, or ought to do.[4] This understanding is pre-requisite for political science to perform its primary task, which is to understand how power can be used to effectively bring about human flourishing. Political theory, therefore, must not first ask how power should be used. Rather, it must first address questions about the nature of power itself. A first step in this direction is the recognition that different forms of power are integral to different social circumstances, which means different moral circumstances. This was precisely the view of pre-modern theorists like Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas.

If when we say "power," we mean efficacy—if we mean the ability of one man to affect change in the behavior of another man—then power is always a middle term between at least two persons, and the conditions of relations between any two persons are always embedded in a wider social setting. In other words, power takes certain forms in certain circumstances that it does not in other circumstances. And so, a mode of acting that is power*less* in one setting can be power*ful* in another. Positive or *de jure* constitutions are, therefore, a sort of image or reflection of the form of *de facto* power.[5] And they are not even an image of the whole *de facto* power structure: it is in fact always the case that

2. *Republic*, IX.1, 544d.

3. One need not understand this in a moralizing manner. Rather, it is minimally the assertion that human action always flows from intention, that human action always takes on a normative form, and that such thinking and acting produces habits of both thought and action.

4. For Aristotle, the study of politics "completes the philosophy of human affairs." *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1181b15.

5. Aristotle, *Politics*, IV.3.1290a.5–10.

parts of the regime of power remain hidden behind the positive constitution. In places this is obvious, as in the case of nepotism structures. In other places, the hidden bits are opaque to everyone acting within the regime, forming a sort of deep background of an unacknowledged power structure, as is the case in the way language sets bounds of possibility for thought and therefore for action. Different constitutional forms subsist within different total power structures, different "power regimes" we might call them, made up of both positive and "hidden" power relations. And the relationship between the positive constitutions and their respective power regimes is not itself stable as we transition from one regime form to another. It is not the case that we can anthropologically determine how these two aspects of regime forms correspond in a generic manner that can then be applied to any given specific regime. Rather, the mode of their co-dependence is itself integral to the specific regime forms. In some regimes, for example, formal, extrinsic structures may map directly onto actual mechanisms of power—what we see might be close to what we get—whereas in other regimes such formal structures may be entirely symbolic or ritualistic and serve only to obscure the real organs of power. In all cases, the complex interactions between different modes of power form the total regime; and all total regimes must be seen to include the moral composition of the population, because their existence as extant forms simply is a manner of human action, which is always both social and ethical. The relative happiness or fulfillment of the inhabitants of a specific regime are integral to the power of that regime.

My point is that the power of a tyrant is not the same sort of thing as the power of a king. The two forms of power share the concept of efficacy, but this is a shallow and bare sort of univocity, because the efficacy of the one does not work in the same sort of way as that of the other. They are not experienced in the same sort of way, they are not aimed at the same sort of ends, they do not operate in the same social "fields." Kingdoms are total power regimes in which royal power is efficacious and tyrannical power is not; tyrannies are power regimes in which tyrannical power is efficacious and royal power is not. Political philosophy, classically understood, is the attempt to understand these actual various power regimes, as they can and do in fact exist, not a bare univocal notion of power.

Hence, the classical political thinker is concerned with both regime forms and moral habituation. Notice that not only do the ends change as we transition from one regime to another, but the means change, as well. This is not to say that different means are used as others are set aside. It is rather that the full battery of available means shifts as ends shift and as moral habituation proceeds. It was only by understanding this full picture of power in action that a classical political philosopher could achieve his goal to be a "teacher of legislators,"[6] because only by understanding power regimes could a man effectively legislate those regimes. Classical political science is a practical science aimed at efficacious political action, at maximizing real power in the service of human flourishing. It is, therefore, in the end, nothing more than the science of power itself.

Political theorists of the seventeenth century largely abandoned the classical task of understanding the (differing) powers that types of actual regimes wield, and so, their theories amount to variations of the "reason of state" politics launched by Machiavelli and perfected by Thomas Hobbes. These modern so-called "sciences of power" cannot be counted as variations or innovations of classical political science, because the regime question was abandoned from the outset.[7] The essence of the classical conception of political power was altogether ignored. Politics becomes for the modern political theorist merely the mechanics of the only power regime that they assumed was possible: the tyrannical regime. All regimes are various forms of tyranny, that is, regimes composed of atomized and self-interested subjects that are extrinsically bound together through impersonal power. This one regime allows for all sorts of disagreements on details and strategy. What is the most effective constitution? What constitutional arrangement contributes to the most happiness? What contributes to the most wealth? What contributes to the strongest military? What maximizes power and what leads

6. Leo Strauss, "On Classical Political Philosophy," in *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 84.

7. As Leo Strauss described the transition: "The most striking difference between classical political philosophy and present-day political science is that the latter is no longer concerned at all with what was the guiding question for the former: the question of the best political order." "On Classical Political Philosophy," 79.

to its decline? Indeed, what constitution does God want us to have? The proliferation of such arguments resembled political philosophy, but such theorists were partisans within a more fundamentally unquestioned regime. This is why power itself became simple and uncomplicated. It was always more or less the same.[8] It was always some version of sovereignty.

But let us consider what has been lost in this move. Classically, of course, regimes were divided into two broad categories: just regimes and unjust regimes.[9] Accordingly, St. Thomas, following St. Augustine, Aristotle, and Plato, divided human dominion over other humans into two general types: one was rule for the common good and the other was rule for the good of the one who ruled.[10] Aquinas follows Augustine explicitly in his assertion that the first type was natural to man, whereas the second was the product of sin. Augustine, and subsequently Aquinas, had explained that the archetype of the first is that of the father over his son, whereas the archetype of the second is that of a master over his slave. For Plato and Aristotle, as well as for Augustine and Aquinas, these archetypes are the foundational structures for kingship and tyranny respectively. Kings are like fathers; tyrants are like masters. Just societies are paternal and royal, even if they

8. Catholic thinkers fell into this trap along with everyone else. And Early Modern Catholic political thought became largely the discussion of the proper arrangements between positive offices within formal juridical structures. There developed an obsession with legitimacy that nevertheless forgot the question of legitimacy itself. They found themselves discussing whether the pope had this power or that power, perhaps the power to depose a monarch, as if identifying some sort of formal prerogative within a theoretical bureaucratic structure. The classical question, of course, would have been more along the lines of, "What are the total social conditions, including the moral and spiritual conditions of the people, in which the pope *actually* wields the power to depose a monarch?" The classical approach would have faced history, ecclesiology, and anthropology always along with and within political theory. It would have asked, "Why did Pope Gregory VII *have this power* while Pope Pius V *clearly did not*?" Facing the problem in this way is, of course, what made political science the architectonic science.

9. In what follows, I offer an interpretation of pre-modern political thought that seeks not to explicate the precise arguments of any one thinker, but rather to offer a re-articulation of the themes of the tradition and perhaps sometimes novel assertions concerning the implications and consequences of these themes.

10. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1278b.30–1279b.10; Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 96 a. 4.

lack a king, whereas unjust societies are servile and tyrannical, even if they lack a tyrant. As the stranger in Plato's *Statesman* articulates, the primary distinction between the two is: "And it is no doubt the case that we are to address as a tyrannical art the care of those who submit to force, and as the political art the voluntary herd-grooming of voluntary two-footed animals, and declare that he who has this as an art and care is in his being king and statesman."[11] Similarly Aristotle wrote: "For kings rule according to law over voluntary subjects, but tyrants over involuntary; and the one are guarded by their fellow-citizens, the others are guarded against them."[12] Tyrannical power is founded on submission through fear or bribery, broadly understood, whereas royal power is founded on free obedience.

My contention in what follows is that paternal rule and servile rule are not two parallel options competing over a human nature that is receptive to either. Rather, all power is grounded ultimately on paternal rule. Tyrannical structures are built out of royal blocks. In order to construct a science of power, then, we must begin with the father and his son and the royal dominion that it exemplifies.

ROYAL POWER

Why would one not motivated through fear of punishment or promise of reward obey his king? The answer is that the subjects' end is realized only through the realization of the king's end, and vice versa—which is to say that their fulfillment are different participations in a common good,[13] and that the subject trusts in the king's superior judgment in the pursuit of that common good, which we might understand in broad terms as happiness.[14] But we cannot understand this mutual co-dependence

11. Plato, *The Statesman*, 276E.

12. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1285a.

13. As Aristotle puts it: "Since the end of individuals and of states is the same, the end of the best man and of the best constitution must also be the same." *Politics*, VII.15.1334a.

14. Aquinas, *ST* II-II, q. 47 a. 11 ad 2: "Boethius, in defining happiness, considered happiness in general: for considered thus it is the perfect

as something that descends from power. We cannot suppose that the king uses his power somehow extrinsically to instill in the subject a desire for the common good and a trust in his leadership. This would be to go back to the beginning of the problem of power before we made any progress at all because, of course, the king's ability to affect his subject (his power) is founded exactly on this desire and this trust.

Rather, to understand obedience and so royal power, we must, following Aristotle, start not with the kingdom, but with the smallest of societies—the friendship. Mankind is social in his nature and his end is happiness.[15] This means that happiness is had together or it is not had at all.[16] What makes a man happy is participation in the happy life of another person—to have friends.[17] Of course, man also has material needs—food and shelter and so on. The combination of friendship with the satisfaction of material needs is what constitutes the family. The family, then, emerges naturally out of man's shared desire for happiness—and the family is, as itself, an achievement of this common good. But the happiness of a lonely family is an imperfect happiness, not because it is flawed, but because it is the very nature of happiness to seek its own deepening. Happiness includes essentially a desire for a more perfect happiness. Happy families seek to deepen their happiness by integrating into each other to form what we might call higher-level orders. The common good, the shared happiness of friendship is deepened in its elevation into greater order. This is very practical: friends need shared projects in which they

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common good; and he signified this by saying that happiness is *a state made perfect by the aggregate of all good things*, thus implying that the state of a happy man consists in possessing the perfect good." Also *SCG* III.117: "For there should be union of affection between those who have one common end. Now, men have one common last end, namely happiness, to which they are directed by God. Therefore men should be united together by mutual love. Moreover, since man by nature is a social animal, he needs assistance from other men in order to obtain his own end. Now this is most suitably done if men love one another mutually. Hence the law of God, which directs men to their last end, commands us to love one another."

15. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b5–15.

16. Augustine, *City of God*, 15.5. Aquinas remarks that happiness is "the perfect common good." ST I-II, q. 3 a. 2 ad 2.

17. "For no one would choose to live without friends even if he had all the other goods." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155a.5.

can serve each other; friends need shared loves through which they can appreciate each other's accomplishments and contributions. At the very least, friends need something to talk about—the more the better.

Aristotle, and St. Thomas following him, explain that out of friends' discourses—out of their conversations concerning true and false, just and unjust, useful and useless—there emerge first households, and then cities.[18] St. Thomas further explains that men's desire to know the truth of things is itself a social endeavor, with each person sharing in conversation the truth he knows and receiving the truth that his friend knows.[19] In such social reasoning, each person comes to know within a socialized world that has already been reasoned and discussed into existence. He does not start from scratch, but starts in a dynamic stream of discursive truth, and participates in that stream. Within the stream he understands more and so he can discuss more and can participate more efficaciously in the movement of this shared world deeper into the common good.[20] The friends' shared space of communication becomes richer and more beautiful as *more* is integrated into it: more knowledge, more experience, more persons, more truth.

Part of the experience of happiness is to strive, in hope, after more perfect happiness.[21] A higher level of order, a more perfect living of the common good, is a more perfect object of man's natural desire for happiness and so is, so to speak,

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18. *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, 17.

19. *On Kingship* I.1. Also, *ST* II-II, q. 109 a. 3 ad 1: "Since man is a social animal, one man naturally owes another whatever is necessary for the preservation of human society. Now it would be impossible for men to live together, unless they believed one another, as declaring the truth one to another. Hence the virtue of truth does, in a manner, regard something as being due." Or again: *ST* II-II, q. 114 a. 2 ad 1.

20. *SCG* III.147: "[A]lso to him is given the use of speech, so that by making use of it, one who has conceived the truth in his mind, may be able to impart it to another: so that men may thus assist one another in the knowledge of truth, even as in other necessaries of life, since man is *by nature a social animal*."

21. *SCG* I.102: "For the nearer a thing is to happiness, the more perfectly is it happy. Hence, although a person be called happy on account of his hope of obtaining happiness, his happiness can nowise be compared to the happiness of one who has already actually obtained it."

more diffusive of its good exactly because it is desired *more*.[22] As Thomas put it, referencing Dionysius's *Divine Names*: "Wherefore it is said by some, not without reason, that *good, as such, is self-diffusive*,[23] because the better a thing is, the further does the outpouring of its goodness extend."[24] This pursuit of the higher order common good can never be construed as somehow subordinating or leaving behind the lower levels of society. It is the exact opposite: the higher good is more diffusive precisely because the lower levels desire it as themselves. Friends desire more perfect friendship because the happiness of friendship is desired for its own sake. As Aquinas writes: "Every thing desires the perfection of that which it wills and loves for its own sake: because whatever we love for its own sake, we wish to be best, and ever to be bettered and multiplied as much as possible."[25]

The friend that one loves for his own sake, then, includes the social project, the social movement, in which that particular friendship subsists. A man loves his wife when it is just the two of them, enjoying the joys of youth—and that love drives them to push beyond themselves by starting a family. And, of course, the man comes to love her more perfectly when she is not only his wife, but the mother of his children. She now *is* her integration into the family and so the friendship with her husband now *is* a familial friendship, not extrinsically, not in some sort of stacking of associations, but intrinsically. As a friendship is integrated into higher levels of order, its shared space is deepened; the common

22. Understanding the common good in this way allows us to understand how it was that Adam and Eve were not created in some deficient state, a conclusion we would have to draw if we understood "the city" to be some sort of perfect society that added content to human perfection that did not somehow grow out of the smaller societies that constituted it. The understanding I expound here allows us to see that Adam and Eve were created happy in their friendship and yet the intensity of this happiness itself led them to "be fruitful and multiply" and to subdue and have dominion, perfecting it beyond itself. Higher levels of order perfect lower levels; this is that in which their own perfection consistsv. If this were not the proper manner to understand the social nature of man, God would have needed to create not a first couple, but a first city in order for him to create human beings, properly speaking.

23. Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* iv.

24. *SCG* III.24. See also *De veritate*, q. 21 a. 1 ad 4; *In librum B. Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*, c. 4, lect. 1.

25. *SCG* I.75.

good is richer as it becomes more widely shared, and so integral to a more complex "space." This shared space is intrinsic to the reality of the simple friendship, to what it is, to its mode of happiness. In the same sort of way that the friendship between two brothers is exactly as brothers and so includes intrinsically the shared familial space, so the friendship between two citizens in a just city is exactly between *citizens*. The city is fully there, intrinsically, in their friendship. Their love for each other includes intrinsically their love for the city because they *are* citizens as integral persons; the city is the space in which their common good is situated, and so integral to what it is. This is why they will risk their lives for the whole. Nothing can be more wrong than the notion that they are sacrificing their private good for the common good.[26] That is, I think, a wicked, essentially fascist

26. For St. Thomas, a "private good" only emerges as relative to the "common good." A just man refers *all* his actions to the common good. In so doing, all the proximate goods that are thereby ordered to the common good become "private" because they are relative to his particular situation within the community. It is a good for a father to provide for his children and yet it is not a good for a monk to do so. So the father's livelihood is "private" relative to the life of the monk. The two of them may then share a good related to the level of order that unites them, say, perhaps the spiritual health of the city in which they live. This becomes a "public" good to them, even as it emerges as a "private" good relative to the neighboring city. The point is that every just actor has a "trajectory" of proximate goods ordered by his reason and directed toward common goods. These proximate goods vary from position to position and so are relative to each other and in this relativity discussion of private and public goods makes sense. A just man may sometimes feel a sense of loss in ordering his "private" goods to the common good—such as tithing out of his wealth that could be spent on his children—but there is never a situation in which a "private good" is rightly to be pursued in its own right—as if a final end: the man's sentiment of loss is mistaken. As his prudence properly concludes, his family's good is achieved through paying the tithe.

Therefore, as soon as a truly just man's right prudence inclines to a "private good" against the "common good," in fact, what has occurred is that the once private good has become the new common good and a new sorting of proximate goods has become necessary. Which is to say, that it is never right for the family or the village to act against the good of the city *until* it happens that the city is no longer working toward the common good, in which case the good of the family or of the village becomes the common good exactly because the city no longer exists as a proper community. What I mean to say is that the common good "settles" at the highest order of achieved justice; all *parts* of this whole, wherever they fall, are "private" only because they are relative to different persons within it. What is good for one family may not be good for another family because they are in different positions within the whole, but both sets of private goods fall within the common good as proximate goods

notion. Rather, in the just society, all human goods are participations in the common good and to fight for the whole is to fight for the parts at a deeper and more profound level.[27] This is why soldiers who assert that in combat they are fighting for nothing other than the man to their right and the man to their left, for

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ordered to it from different directions. Properly understood, therefore, it is impossible to sacrifice a private good for the common good.

This is directly parallel to Thomas's treatment of private persons. A private person never has the authority to coerce exactly because as soon as one does have that authority, one is no longer operating as a private person—for example, when a citizen must stop a crime in progress or defend his family. Such instances are not exceptions to the rule; they are demonstrations of the rule. Private persons are such when they are operating in a real, *de facto* situation in which their relative authority is arrayed under another, real, *de facto* greater authority. In such a situation "private" becomes ethically meaningful, an explication of proper behavior within a just, actual hierarchy.

All this is to say that "private" is a relative adjective and not the designation of a stable, official status. In other words, you do not answer the question "who justly coerces" by locating the "public person." Rather, you locate the public person by answering the question "who justly coerces," a procedure that, of course, directly implicates the deep, structural, lived law, the legal justice, of a real community. Likewise, it is mistaken to see the private good as the good that governs up to a certain point and then must be "set aside" or "stepped beyond" for the common good to be pursued. This is a bizarre notion that would require a quasi-divine vantage point in order to identify the supposedly "objective," and yet entirely invisible, lines of demarcation, in order to identify from without who "holds" which realms (Hobbes, of course, assigns this position to the mortal god, his sovereign). Likewise, it is mistaken to see private goods as assembled extrinsically to form the common good. The common good is not some aggregate of private goods nor some balancing of private goods. Such would be a utilitarian conception, which must concede possible competition (and also requires a mortal god, a sovereign, to make the most advantageous arrangements). Rather, in a Thomistic understanding all proper private goods are always integral to the pursuit of the proper common good relative to different vocations. In other words, the pursuit of a proper private good is exactly the private good as elevated into the common good, as a mode of participation in that common good, as elevated into a greater order. What is good for my city is *never* bad for my family and vice versa—to fight in a just war, for example, is personally meritorious. And conversely, my city, as just, would never sacrifice the authentic good of my family—by demanding we fight in an unjust war, for example—for some "greater" good. The just man orders all his virtues to the common good, not here or there, now and then, but everywhere and always. I love my neighbor for the love of God. E.g.: *ST* I-II, q. 19 a. 10; *ST* I-II, q. 83 a. 1 ad 5; *ST* I-II, q. 90 a. 3 ad 3; *ST* I-II, q. 92 a. 1 ad 2; *ST* I-II, q. 96 a. 3 ad 3; *ST* I-II, q. 97 a. 4 ad 1; *ST* I-II, q. 109 a. 3; *ST* II-II, q. 26 a. 3; *ST* II-II, q. 26 a. 4 ad 3; *ST* II-II, q. 31 a. 3 ad 2; *ST* II-II, q. 32 a. 6; *ST* II-II, q. 47 a. 10 ad 2.

27. *ST* II-II, q. 47 a. 10 ad 2.

their friends, are not committing some sort of moral fault—as if they *should* be fighting for the common good and *not* for such a clearly private good.[28] Rather, their friends are the whole in the only way that the whole ever really *is*. If in combat, the unit is reduced to only two men, they, together, remain the whole to each other because that is who they are. They are nothing else and the whole is nothing else than its instantiation in real relations.

It is important to see that the construction of a society's depth is the deepening of the smallest thing, friendship, because happiness can only finally be real in actual human relationships. As Aristotle explains:

> It is clear then that a state is not a mere society, having a common place, established for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange. These are conditions without which a state cannot exist; but all of them together do not constitute a state, which is a community of families and aggregations of families in well-being, for the sake of a perfect and self-sufficing life. . . . Hence arise in cities family connections, brotherhoods, common sacrifices, amusements which draw men together. But these are created by friendship, *for friendship is the motive of social life*. The end of the state is the good life, and *these* are the means towards it.[29]

The common good is always, in the concrete, the good of real, immediate relationships.[30]

The point, though, is that it is the very nature of the common good that the desire for it results in the integration of smaller participations in that common good into higher or more noble participations; it is pursued through the pursuit of ever-further unity of order, which is a movement not from the deficient to the

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28. See, for example: *ST* II-II, q. 31 a. 3 ad 2.

29. *Politics*, III.9.1280b.30–42.

30. I have no idea what else it would be. Parades? Sporting events? The glory of victory in war? (Even these goods would have to be enjoyed outside of friendship—perhaps by watching TV by one's self?) How exactly could one construe such supposedly "common goods" as being higher and worthy of more love than lower "private goods" such as the prosperity of one's children? I think a man who loves his "country" more than his children in some sort of competitive sense has a deep moral problem—one shared, perhaps, with the members of the SS.

sufficient, but from the imperfect to the perfect, like a boy becoming a man.[31] Discussion of the relationship between parts and wholes can sometimes confuse us here. There are parts of wholes that are such that, as Thomas explains, "there is no operation of the part that does not belong to the whole."[32] For example, a hand is a part of the body in such a way that any "action of the hand" would better be described as an "action of the *body*." The hand is instrumental for the body, hence the willingness to sacrifice the hand in order to protect the body. A slave is, for Aristotle, such a part to his master's whole, merely a living instrument, "a living but separated part of his bodily frame."[33]

This is not the kind of parts/whole dynamic that characterizes a political society, however. As Thomas explains: "It must be known moreover that the whole which the political group or the family constitutes has only a unity of order, for it is not something absolutely one."[34] A unity of order is characterized by a shared end, and in the pursuit of that end ordered relationships between parts are necessary and emerge.[35] In the unique case of

31. *ST* I-II, q. 90 a. 2 s.c.

32. *On Ethics*, I.1.5.

33. *Politics*, I.4, 1254a, I.6.1255b.

34. *On Ethics*, I.1.1.

35. Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 22 a. 1 c.–ad 2: "I answer that, it is necessary to attribute providence to God. For all the good that is in created things has been created by God, as was shown above (q. 6, a. 4). In created things good is found not only as regards their substance, but also as regards their order towards an end and especially their last end, which, as was said above, is the divine goodness (q. 21, a. 4). This good of order existing in things created, is itself created by God. Since, however, God is the cause of things by His intellect, and thus it behooves that the type of every effect should pre-exist in Him, as is clear from what has gone before (a. 19, a. 4), it is necessary that the type of the order of things towards their end should pre-exist in the divine mind: and the type of things ordered towards an end is, properly speaking, providence. For it is the chief part of prudence, to which two other parts are directed—namely, remembrance of the past, and understanding of the present; inasmuch as from the remembrance of what is past and the understanding of what is present, we gather how to provide for the future. Now it belongs to prudence, according to the Philosopher (*Ethic.* vi. 12), to direct other things towards an end whether in regard to oneself—as for instance, a man is said to be prudent, who orders well his acts towards the end of life—or in regard to others subject to him, in a family, city, or kingdom; in which sense it is said (Mt 24:45), a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath appointed over his family. In

men as rational creatures, the shared end, in fact, is harmony, is social happiness. In a sort of doubling back upon itself, the *order* that emerges out of the shared pursuit of the common end is, in fact, that common end—order in friendship is the end and the means. The unity of end for man as a social animal is the construction of unity between parts, is the construction of and living in peace, but these parts at peace are never merely parts of a whole, like a hand to a body. Rather, the individual, the family, and the city are wholes in their own right, even as those wholes are in integral relationship to each other as ordered to a common end. Their relationality is an aspect of their integrity; their status as parts is an aspect of who they are as wholes. As Plato expressed in the *Republic*, in each society, the man is a micro-polis, as is the family, as is the neighborhood: each, though, in a different mode, each in an analogical imaging of the whole.

St. Thomas compares this social order repeatedly to the order of the universe.[36] The micropolities are, of course, more profoundly microcosms. The universe is composed of beings that *have being* in their participation in the goodness of the Creator and who, therefore, seek perfection in a return to the superabundant Source. They are ordered first and most importantly through the shared end. But, as Thomas explains, goodness is self-diffusive. Goodness is the imparting of goodness to others. The universe, therefore, participates in the good more perfectly through each thing's diffusing of goodness to others as the manner in which the goodness of the whole is ordered toward the common end.

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this way prudence or providence may suitably be attributed to God. For in God Himself there can be nothing ordered towards an end, since He is the last end. This type of the order in things towards an end is therefore in God called providence. Whence Boëthius says (*De Consol.* iv. 6) that Providence is the divine type itself, seated in the Supreme Ruler; which disposeth all things: which disposition may refer either to the type of the order of things towards an end, or to the type of the order of parts in the whole." See also: *SCG* III.117.

36. There are too many examples to document completely. The following are representative: *ST* I-II, q. 21 a. 4.; "For the definition of distributive justice consists in this, that something is given to each according to his condition. And just as the whole political order is preserved by the order of distributive justice, constituted by the ruler of the city, so the whole order of the universe is preserved by God by this order of justice; for if this [order] were removed, all things would be left confused." See also Aquinas, *An Exposition of the Divine Names, The Book of Blessed Dionysius*, I.1.22 (15).

God's perfect rule of the universe, then, is a rule that occurs not against or extrinsic to the natures of creation, but rather *is* those natures. The parts of the universe are most perfectly wholes exactly as parts. As St. Thomas writes of this cosmic order:

> We have an example of this in civil affairs. For there is a certain order among all the members of a household according as they are subject to the head of the house: again the head of the house together with all the other heads of houses in the same city have a certain order among themselves, and in relation to the governor of the city; and he again together with all the other governors in the kingdom is subordinate to the king.[37]

The king rules within the polity. He perfects the polity through guiding each and all of the parts, as smaller orders, as wholes in and of themselves, into deeper participation into the greater order.[38] His office is to combine ever more perfectly the smaller participations in the common good into deeper participations through the unity of order.[39]

This rule is efficacious precisely because these parts desire deeper unity. The king's utterances of truth are made to a

37. *SCG* III.98.

38. *SCG* I.78: "Moreover. According to the Philosopher (11 *Metaph.*) there is a twofold good of order in the universe: one consisting in the whole universe being directed to that which is outside the universe, just as the army is directed to the commander-in-chief: while the other consists in the parts of the universe being directed to each other, as the parts of an army: and the second order is for the sake of the first. Now God, through willing Himself as end, wills other things that are directed to Him as their end, as we have proved. Therefore He wills the good of the order of the whole universe in relation to Himself, and the order of the universe as regards the mutual relation of its parts. Now the good of order arises from each single good. Therefore He wills also singular goods."

39. *SCG* III.71: "In every government the best thing is that provision be made for the things governed, according to their mode: for in this consists the justice of the régime. Consequently even as it would be contrary to the right notion of human rule, if the governor of a state were to forbid men to act according to their various duties—except perhaps for the time being, on account of some particular urgency—so would it be contrary to the notion of God's government, if He did not allow creatures to act in accordance with their respective natures."

society that wants to hear them.[40] This does not mean that he tells them things that they already know. Rather, it is the nature of smaller instances of social order to desire to go beyond themselves into the unknown, into that which they do not already possess or even comprehend. Royal power, then, rules through the trust that is born of hope. The ruler truly rules, truly guides the ruled, through their obedience, deeper into the common good in surprising ways.[41] The movement to a higher level of unity requires this initiative from above.[42] The king's power is

40. *ST* I, q. 103 a. 3: "I answer that, we must of necessity say that the world is governed by one. For since the end of the government of the world is that which is essentially good, which is the greatest good; the government of the world must be the best kind of government. Now the best government is the government by one. The reason of this is that government is nothing but the directing of the things governed to the end; which consists in some good. But unity belongs to the idea of goodness, as Boëthius proves (*De Consol.* iii. 11) from this, that, as all things desire good, so do they desire unity; without which they would cease to exist. For a thing so far exists as it is one. Whence we observe that things resist division, as far as they can; and the dissolution of a thing arises from defect therein. Therefore the intention of a ruler over a multitude is unity, or peace. Now the proper cause of unity is one. For it is clear that several cannot be the cause of unity or concord, except so far as they are united. Furthermore, what is one in itself is a more apt and a better cause of unity than several things united. Therefore a multitude is better governed by one than by several. From this it follows that the government of the world, being the best form of government, must be by one. This is expressed by the Philosopher (*Metaph.* xii., *Did.* xi. 10): Things refuse to be ill governed; and multiplicity of authorities is a bad thing, therefore there should be one ruler."

41. *On Kingship*, I.1.

42. Aquinas, *ST* I q. 96 a. 4: "Now a social life cannot exist among a number of people unless under the presidency of one to look after the common good." Also, *SCG* I.42: "Moreover, the mutual order of all diverse things that are directed to each other is on account of their order towards some one thing: even as the mutual order of the parts of an army is on account of the order of the whole army to the commander-in-chief. For that certain diverse things be united together in some relationship, cannot result from their own natures as distinct from one another, because from this there would rather result distinction among them. Nor can it result from different causes of order: because these could not possibly of themselves as differing from one another have one order in view. Accordingly either the mutual order of many is accidental, or it must be reduced to one first cause of that order, who sets all in order towards the end which he intends. Now, all the parts of this world are observed to be ordered to one another, in so far as certain things are aided by certain others: thus the lower bodies are moved by the higher, and the latter by incorporeal substances, as shown above. Nor is this accidental, since it happens always or for the most part. Wherefore this world has but one director and governor. But

authority, efficacious through obedience, a dynamic that exists only within a shared experience of truth and goodness, a friendship. This is what it means to rule through law.

THE POWER OF LAW

Law, in St. Thomas's most succinct definition, is an external principle of *human action* for the good that instructs.[43] Human action is, of course, rational and voluntary.[44] Law then is an external principal of rational and free action. What I want to suggest here is that within the classical understanding of monarchy, such law emerges as a means by which communities of the common good are elevated into each other and so to a higher level of order. Take, for example, two just and happy and yet relatively lonely villages. The just specification of the natural law is different in the two villages, and so there is a gap between them. Their conversations about right and wrong, true and false, are isolated from each other and yet in their very natures are reaching out, looking for more to discuss. The king's law, then, as a more general dictate of reason comes to both villages externally and is freely received by them into their reason as if it were native to their own discourse.[45] Proper law, then, is the middle term, we might say between authority and obedience and in so being is able to unite two subjects through a third. This royal law externally bridges the gap between the villages, elevating their discourses on justice and truth into a now shared discourse. Just law, of course, does not trump or destroy the particular discourses of the villages. If it did, it would not be freely received, received as

there is no other world besides this. Therefore there is but one governor of the universe, and Him we call God."

43. *ST* I-II q. 90, Prologue.

44. *ST* I-II q. 1, a. 1.

45. Proper law, even for Aristotle, is always accommodated to the regime and is not the source of the regime. "The same political insight will enable a man to know which laws are the best, and which are suited to different constitutions; for the laws are, and ought to be, relative to the constitution, and not the constitution to the laws." *Politics*, IV.1.1289a.13–15.

if native. Rather, it leads them beyond themselves as themselves into this new association of friends.[46]

Another way of understanding this, I think, is to understand language itself as quasi-juridical. The conversation between friends is an exchange of "laws" in the sense that it is an exchange of utterances of reason for the common good that are spoken from authority to obedience. It is an authority and obedience that shifts back and forth through the conversation, but, nevertheless, the exchange is an exchange of laws that constructs the shared space of the speakers. The king enters into these discourses from above, but he does so as another conversationalist, constructing through the conversations a shared space, a space that now brings together two smaller spaces into a deeper internal unity exactly by making them spaces that now include intrinsically their relation to the larger space, as in two brothers in a family.

The law's end is to bring the villages together into a deeper unity of that order in which they are friends. Their now shared discourse on the law is the conversation that enables the construction of this new level of order wherein the law is no longer extrinsic but intrinsic, which is to say, the law has been transformed through the formation of habit into a second nature that includes the two villages essentially. The king does not merely bridge the gaps; he closes the gaps through elevating the separated parties into a moral-social space that includes each other intrinsically. This is the function of true law. The ruler teaches through law, and the objective of instruct*ing* is for the pupil to be instruct*ed*; the objective is for the instruction to cease being instruction and to become, rather, understanding and desire—to become virtue. A law, then, is in its nature temporary, provisional, imperfect. Law is fulfilled not in some habitual obedience to a proposition that remains foreign and therefore perpetually written, but rather in becoming an aspect of the just and the unjust, the true and the false that makes up an honest conversation between friends and which builds households and cities.[47] The

46. *ST* II-II q. 50 a. 1 s.c. The prudence involved in legislating is, therefore, as both Aristotle and Thomas take pains to point out, quite profound.

47. Aquinas, *ST* I q. 103, a. 6: "But since things which are governed should be brought to perfection by government, this government will be so much the better in the degree the things governed are brought to perfection. Now it is a greater perfection for a thing to be good in itself and also the cause of goodness in others, than only to be good in itself. Therefore God so governs things

king rules willing subjects through law. This is the form of his power; it is simply what power *is* in a virtuous society.

It is not merely that virtue is the end of law, as if we have law so that we might have virtue. It is as much the case that we are the sort of creatures that require virtue for the perfection of our powers so that we might have law—so that we might live in shared worlds built through truly creative rationality, built through unpredictable discourses on the true and the good. Law and virtue are essential aspects of human nature because we are rational, social creatures, because we reason together, linguistically, and toward ends that are always bound up in the social world. Law and virtue are relational parts of a whole—directly related to the intellect and the will, reason and the appetites within an individual. This, I think, is one way of understanding what it means for man to be essentially social. Our perfection as man is a social perfection in both means and ends. We might say that the nature that is perfected in virtue is not only *perfected* socially, but it is *generated* socially exactly as it is perfected through law. The thing being perfected is formed as itself in its perfecting. Law and virtue are always, then, two ways of talking about a single reality: justice. A just regime is a power-regime structured by a particular law-virtue complex—a particular justice. As Aristotle asserts, "[T]he virtue of the good man is necessarily the same as the virtue of the citizen of the perfect state."[48] And again: "A people who are by nature capable of producing a race superior in the virtue needed for political rule are fitted for kingly government."[49]

The movement deeper into virtue is, of course, the movement into the common good as I have described it here.[50] From within their position in society, virtuous people

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that He makes some of them to be causes of others in government; as a master, who not only imparts knowledge to his pupils, but gives also the faculty of teaching others."

48. Aristotle, *Politics*, III.18.1288a.38–39. Aristotle continues: "Clearly then in the same manner, and by the same means through which a man becomes truly good, he will frame a state that is to be ruled by an aristocracy or by a king, and the same education and same habits will be found to make a good man and a man fit to be a statesman or king." Also: *Politics*, VII.13.1332a.

49. Aristotle, *Politics*, III.17.1288a.8–9.

50. As Aristotle remarks: "For no one would maintain that he is happy who has not in him a particle of courage or temperance or justice or prudence,

seek virtuous leaders at the same time that they seek to be virtuous leaders.[51] As D.C. Schindler states: "The pursuit of the good will always be in some sense both a giving to what is other and a receiving from what is other."[52] The virtuous look up with obedience as they look down with authority, we might say. This is what it means to be just, to render each his due.[53] Understanding this helps us understand the significance of prudence in a just society. Prudence renders the ruler capable of legislating because it perfects his ability to determine the truth within justice, to speak what is true within what has already been spoken and accepted and yet to go beyond this discourse into a not yet encountered situation. Now both Aristotle and Thomas make a distinction between such legislative prudence and the sort of prudence held by a subject *as subject* or a slave *as slave*. Of course, the subject *as subject* has prudence only in the execution of the task assigned to him.[54] But the "*as subject*" is crucial to this understanding. A royal

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who is afraid of every insect which flutters past him, and will commit any crime, however great, in order to gratify his lust or meat or drink, who will sacrifice his dearest friend for the sake of half-a-farthing, and is as feeble and false in mind as a child or a madman" (*Politics*, VII.1.1323a.27–34). Again: "Let us acknowledge then that each one has just so much of happiness as he has of virtue and wisdom, and of virtuous and wise action. . . . In like manner, and by a similar train of argument, the happy state may be shown to be that which is best and which acts rightly; and rightly it cannot act without doing right actions, and neither individual nor state can do right actions without virtue and wisdom. Thus the courage, justice, and wisdom of a state have the same form and nature as the qualities which give the individual who possesses them the name of just, wise, or temperate" (*Politics*, VII.1.1323b.30–36).

51. Aquinas, *On Kingship*, I.9: "Thus, greater virtue is required to rule a household than to rule one's self, and much greater to rule a city and a kingdom. To discharge well the office of a king is therefore a work of extraordinary virtue. To it, therefore, is due and extraordinary reward of happiness." See also Plato, *Republic*, I.1, 347b–d.

52. D.C. Schindler, *Retrieving Freedom: The Christian Appropriation of Classical Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022), 245.

53. Aristotle, *Politics*, III.13.1283b–1284a: "Now what is just or right is to be interpreted in the sense of 'what is equal'; and that which is right in the sense of being equal is to be considered with reference to the advantage of the state, and the common good of the citizens. And a citizen is one who shares in governing and being governed. He differs under different forms of government, but in the best state he is one who is able and willing to be governed and to govern with a view to the life of virtue."

54. *ST* II-II q. 47 a. 12 s.c.–c.

society is a free society, a society of free men, a society of rational men capable of virtue—men who both rule and are ruled. What this means is that every man exercises both types of prudence. But I am not talking about different virtues here. I am talking about different objects for the same prudence, or maybe better, about a distinction that can only be made within a single movement of prudence. And what I want to assert is that a free man's prudence is always foundationally legislative prudence: the man's status "as subject" is a determination of *his* legislative prudence "as ruler." The prudent man comes to an understanding of the necessity of his obedience for his relative position within the legal order. He obeys as an act of micro self-legislation, a further specification to his particular situation of his city's specification of the natural and divine laws.[55] He is not legislating as does the ruler of the city, but as one who occupies his particular place within the power-regime of law-virtue. He is legislating in the manner appropriate to a just father, say, or a just foreman; and his legislation is, therefore, efficacious, met with obedience. As the virtue that puts all his virtues into action, this legislative prudence dictates his behavior both toward those under his rule and equally toward those by whom he is ruled.[56] In the direction of the city's rulers, he legislates for himself true obedience, that is to say, humility, patience, a willingness to be taught, a hesitation to act.[57] This is an obedience that is not blind, and for that very reason is substantive. To be ruled as a free man is exactly to be ruled as a ruler, to choose as a matter of self-legislation to obey another legislator, to execute his will "as subject."[58] The free man obeys

55. *ST* II-II, q. 104 a. 1.

56. *ST* II-II, q. 47 a. 14 s.c.–c.

57. *ST* II-II, q. 49 a. 3: "I answer that, as stated above (A. 2, *ad* 1: Q. XLVII., A 3) prudence is concerned with particular matters of action, and since such matters are of infinite variety, no one man can consider them all sufficiently; nor can this be done quickly, for it requires length of time. Hence in matters of prudence man stands in very great need of being taught by others, especially by old folk who have acquired a sane understanding of the ends in practical matters."

58. *ST* II-II, q. 104, a. 5: "[A] subject is not bound to obey his superior, if the latter command him to do something wherein he is not subject to him. . . . But in matters concerning the disposal of actions and human affairs, a subject is bound to obey his superior within the sphere of his authority." Again, *ST* II-II, q. 104, a. 6 ad 3: "Man is bound to obey secular princes in so far as

the law because his prudence determines that the law is a dictate of reason for the common good made by one with authority—with each of these terms understood in the thick manner I have been trying to articulate—and his justice responds accordingly.[59] A free man is not sometimes a ruler and sometimes a slave. Rather, he always acts as a king, even when he takes the form of a slave; indeed, voluntarily taking the form of a slave is a supremely royal action.[60] Real legislative power, then, emerges from within a regime of legislative prudence, a just regime of law-virtue. Kings rule voluntary subjects through law. But really, what I am saying is that kings and subjects are differentiated not essentially through their virtues but through their relative position within their friendships. The king gives himself to the subject as the subject gives himself to the king; we call the king's act authority and we call the subject's act obedience, but these are names for two movements by two persons, each of whom is manifesting the same socially structured "second nature," the same justice.

A virtuous society, then, seeks the most capable and most virtuous of its members at every level of scale to lead society deeper into the common good at the same time as the most

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this is required by the order of justice. Wherefore if the prince's authority is not just but usurped, or if he commands what is unjust, his subjects are not bound to obey him, except perhaps accidentally, in order to avoid scandal or danger.".

59. Obedience is a moral virtue, governed by prudence, and not a rote action because "it is a part of justice, and it observes the mean between excess and deficiency. Excess thereof is measured in respect, not of quantity, but of other circumstances, in so far as a man obeys either whom he ought not, or in matters wherein he ought not to obey . . . so too obedience observes the mean between excess on the part of him who fails to pay due obedience to his superior, since he exceeds in fulfilling his own will, and deficiency on the part of the superior, who does not receive obedience. Wherefore in this way obedience will be a mean between two forms of wickedness . . ." *ST* II-II, q. 104, a. 2 ad 2.

60. A free man, then, bears the responsibility, governed always by his prudence within the concrete, legal regime of virtue, of determining the limits of obedience, of determining when disobedience is justified self-defense and when it is sedition, a distinction, Thomas tells us, which turns entirely on which actions serve the common good. One commits the sin of sedition because he works against the common good, and of course determining what serves the common good is the essential legislative prerogative. *ST* II-II q. 42, a. 2.

capable and most virtuous members voluntarily assume those positions.[61] The ruler is legitimate, is legal, from both directions: in his assertion of authority, and in his acclamation by the people, through their obedience. His superior virtue is real superior power exactly in the deep legal regime in which that power is experienced as authority. He becomes legally ruler on account of his virtue in this regime of law-virtue. It is not that the virtuous society comes first, and then, later, a monarch emerges. Rather, a virtuous society is a royal society. It is ruled by kings, so to speak, at every level of scale: kings all the way down—or, in what amounts to the same thing, fathers all the way up.[62] As St. Thomas states: "the providence by which God rules things is similar to the providence by which the father of a family rules his household or a king rules a city or kingdom. The common element in these rules is the primacy of the common good over the good of the individual."[63]

What I am claiming is that, in a royal order, virtuous leadership emerges out of *each level of order* in the hierarchical ordering to the common good exactly as virtuous obedience likewise emerges, and both movements are structured by law. This means a perfect monarchy is a perfect aristocracy, even as it is a perfect polity. This is why, I think, St. Thomas can at times claim that a monarchy is the best form and yet, more forcefully, assert that a mixed regime is the best. For example, he asserts:

> [T]he best manner of constituting the ruling offices occurs in a city or region in which there is a single person who is placed in authority on the basis of virtue and presides over everyone, and in which under him there are certain others who govern in accord with virtue, and yet in which this political arrangement involves everyone, both because

61. As Aristotle says, "all should joyfully obey such a ruler, according to what seems to be the order of nature." *Politics*, III.13.1284a–b, 30–35.

62. Aristotle, *Politics*, III.14.1285b.31–34: "For as household management is the kingly rule of a house, so kingly rule is the household management of a city, or of a nation, or of many nations."

63. *De Veritate* q. 5, a. 3. See also: Aristotle, *Politics*, I.12.1259a–b.

> the rulers can be chosen from among everyone and also because they are chosen by everyone.[64]

A further implication is that in the perfect state, the positive regime and the social regime tend always toward identity in the regime of law-virtue. The people tend toward being the administration.[65] The life of the people in their world *is* the final specification of the law from the most general to the most specific.[66] The king's rule, like the rule of the mayor, and like the rule of the father, is a rule from within social virtue and not from outside it.[67] This is what it means for the monarch to rule according to law—that is to say, for him to be legitimate. The king is, then, the embodiment of society's unity and as such his power is absolute.[68] When he justly calls on the people to act, they act in their totality, holding nothing back, because they act as themselves on behalf of their world.

There is another side to royal rule that we must mention: its coercive aspect. Political leadership, as I have attempted to explain it, is about closing the gaps in society, about integrating communities of the common good—of solidarity—into more perfect order. These gaps are in a sense the king's field of action. They are also regions of peril. Outside of the achieved common good—outside of friendships—is a realm of danger, a wilderness that is not yet subdued and over which one's order does not yet have dominion. It is where crime happens. Sometimes, it is a realm of open warfare. The virtuous citizens, then, who follow the king's law beyond their communities of friends do so

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64. *ST* I-II, q. 105, a. 1. Also: "There is also a mixed form of government—the best form—and, accordingly, this regime gives rise to a type of law which, as Isidore puts it, has been sanctioned by the greater people along with the common people." *ST* I-II, q. 95, a. 4. See also, Aristotle, *Politics*, IV.8.1294a.

65. Aristotle, *Politics*, VII.1226b.15–18. This means, of course, that all people are citizens in the strict Aristotelian sense: "He who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state is said by us to be a citizen of that state." *Politics*, III,1275b.19–21.

66. Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 22.24

67. Aristotle, *Politics*, III.14.1285b.30–35: "For as household management is the kingly rule of a house, so kingly rule is the household management of a city, or a nation, or of many nations." Also: Aquinas, *On Kingship*, I.1.

68. Aquinas, *On Kingship*, I.2.

with valor, not only because they venture into the unknown, but because they must do so armed against the vicious men that are lurking in the darkness. They must be willing to use coercion in order to clear the space. The polity coerces criminals with its law, this is true; but *it is not law properly speaking to the criminal*. Law is a middle term between two, between authority and obedience, and here it is one-sided. For the criminal, law is not an external principle of human action. It is an obstruction; it is a problem for him, but it is not itself brought into his reasoning about the true and the false, the just and unjust.[69] The law-giver coerces according to the law of the polity, but no citizen *as citizen* experiences coercive law. This may seem a pedantic matter of definition, but it matters. Without it we can become confused into thinking that the king's power resides in his coercion, but this is mistaken. His power, even his police and military power, is grounded in his calling the courageous out onto the field, and this is a product of his legal authority, freely obeyed. There is, nevertheless, in the gaps, in the wildernesses that persist wherever friendship has not constructed a shared world, a necessity for what we might call administration. Extrinsic rights and duties, the impersonal sorting of people into administrative units, become necessary exactly because in the gaps people do not know each other as friends, as persons. Administrative methods are used even in just societies as an aspect of the means of closing the gaps, of stitching together imperfectly, through an order of parts to a whole, communities of the common good and so in this sense are an aspect of attaining the greater common good achieved through unity of order.

We can see this phenomenon in a negative manner in the family. When family members start asserting their rights against each other ("It's your turn to take the garbage out!"), we all know that the family has been degraded, that gaps have opened up within what ought to be the most intimate of friendship groupings. In the gaps, not only is it the case that the ruled are

69. Cicero, for example, writes: "If, however, it is punishment or the fear of retribution, and not wickedness itself, that deters people from a life of crime and villainy, then no one is unjust; instead, the worthless should be called careless. By the same token, those of us who are persuaded to be good not by probity itself but by some advantage or benefit, are not good but crafty. How will a man behave in the dark if his only fear is a witness and a judge? What if he comes across someone in a deserted place . . . ?" *Laws*, I.40–41.

now managed impersonally, but also that the exercise of power itself must sometimes take on an administrative form. Indeed, to the extent that the gaps are not yet being bridged through valor, through hopeful virtue, they must be left either open, and so be the realm of possible violence, or they must be "closed" by mechanisms of rule that are themselves impersonal and "rational" in the ironic Weberian sense of non-human. But these methods are either provisional or remedial. Their end, their purpose, includes their elimination because their purpose is to provide the substrate on which the discourses of true and false, of the just and unjust, which build properly legal communities of the common good can be conducted. They are legal, then, only in a certain respect. Their legality rests on the fact that the foundation of their power always, ultimately, is found in the royal regime of law-virtue from which they emerge and to the expansion of which they are ordered.

Such administration is a legal mechanism of coercion only in so far as those who are engaged in the coercion do so through free obedience to legitimate rule. In addition, those citizens who obey the bureaucratic machinery freely and not through the threat of coercion do so in the hope that it is to be trusted. They tolerate being treated impersonally because they understand their participation in the category "subjects" in the impersonal mechanism to be as integral to its legality as the participation of the bureaucrats themselves in the category "rulers." It is as if the legality of the administration detours around the administration itself and approaches it simultaneously from the top and the bottom, but nevertheless from the outside. One thing is clear, however: the formal rules of the administrative machine bear virtually no resemblance to proper law, classically understood. They are more like warfare, wherein men are instruments, resources, obstacles, mere means. Positive administration is martial, which may shed light on why classical authors regularly use the image of a soldier's relation to his general as an example of how one can be justly ordered as a part to a whole. The administration that is built in the gaps is a finite cosmos, filled with finite, man-made "natures," with offices and procedures and objectives and key performance indicators and what-have-you—all of which are alien to both the men who operate them and the men who are subject to them. This is a cosmos that is built, not

according to a unity of order, but rather according to the parts-to-whole dynamic characterized by a hand to its body.

We need to extend this understanding through the entire regime. What I mean is that if the royal regime is a regime of kings all the way down, it is at the same time a regime of gaps all the way down. There is unitive work to be done down and through the whole, all the way to the inner disposition of the single soul. Law, then, which as we have seen is in its essence freely obeyed, nevertheless must always bear coercive power. To understand this, we must be able to conceptualize far-reaching impersonal mechanisms of administration that are at the same time always secondary, always built on the realized common good, on the royal regime of law-virtue, making contact with this regime at every point. Of course, the common good is never fully realized. Not only are there gaps, but any instance of the common good can always grow both in depth and in density. Administrative and coercive work always, therefore, accompanies royal governance even as it is always secondary; and because of its secondary nature, it does not—it cannot—form a seamless whole that somehow accounts for or sustains the regime itself. It can never take the form of a Code, but rather takes the form of decretals, rulings, decrees, or commissions, which all find their legitimacy not in self-referential legality, but in their emergence from authority and acceptance by obedience. As such, this administration is essential work for the regime, but it is not to be mistaken for the regime. Coercive administration is always aimed at closing gaps, which means it is always aimed at rendering itself superfluous in whatever domain it is operating, even if such success would mean that it shifts to yet deeper or yet smaller gaps. Such shifting, such movement, such deployment and redeployment of coercion, such construction and destruction of administrative structures, is an integral component of the prudence that rules the whole regime of law-virtue, from top to bottom. Monarchs do it. City councils do it. Foremen do it. Fathers do it. Each of us does it in the internal struggle for holiness in our own soul.

Coercive apparatus, therefore, operates always in the gaps that persist within any given regime. These gaps might be thought of as "occupied territories" that are in the process of being assimilated into the regime. Coercion, therefore, is essential

to all political regimes only because all political regimes essentially seek their extension into the gaps and because there are always more gaps, further up and further in. Nevertheless, no idea more misunderstands the nature of political power than the notion that such power essentially is coercion. In fact, the opposite is the case. Coercion is experienced exactly where political power does not exist.

TYRANNICAL POWER

If a royal regime seeks to close gaps, a tyrannical regime seeks to open them up, seeks always greater separation. As with royal power, then: to understand the efficacy of tyrannical power we must attend to the problem of the gaps. As we have seen, in a just society the gaps are areas of imperfect ordering toward the common good, places where extrinsic forms must temporally stitch together smaller wholes as parts to a greater whole—like a hand to a body. The gaps are regions where the citizens of a just regime venture out with a bit of fear, a bit of anxiety, but with courage and with trust in the ruler who calls them to greater order through law. The law does not emerge from their experience of the common good, but it is rather spoken into that experience, spoken in its idiom and yet articulating a mandate that exceeds the discourse of true and false, just and unjust, that constitutes that idiom. The citizens respond, then, with obedience, which is a combination of faith and courage. This is how the gaps are closed, as citizens from different experiences of the common good are brought together through their obedience into a higher-level discourse. The gaps are closed, then, as the polity expands, as the common good is deepened through the formation of the friendships that enjoy it.

A tyrannical order, on the other hand, seeks to set up shop in these gaps and slowly expand them. One way in which classical authors expressed this was in the assertion that tyrannies always relied upon mercenaries. Mercenaries were foreign. But this did not mean that they necessarily came from a different city. What it means is that they were not *true* citizens of the polity because their end was not the common good. Plato explains that men who become mercenaries in a tyrannical society are

nothing other than the criminals that operate in the gaps of a just society, where they had already divided their private interests from the public good.[70] All tyrannical regimes rely upon such professionalized criminals to staff their impersonal apparatus of rule in the gaps.[71]

In an oligarchic regime, the gaps between neighborhoods and families are held open by structures of greed and fear. The first thing that must be done is the elimination of all would-be kings, the elimination of all supremely virtuous men who through their leadership would offer an alternative to the mercenary force by calling free men *as* free men into the gaps. The oligarchs must eliminate this competition. This is not too difficult once the social regime has already began the drift into tyranny, because kings rule over voluntary subjects and so, as Aristotle remarks, "their overthrow is readily effected; for there is an end to the king when his subjects do not want to have him."[72] Once the king's rule has been overthrown, the oligarchs can structure the gaps in a permanent, closed parts-to-whole, martial order, with formal designations of different types of people, who hold different rights and bring different liabilities. Property qualifications are introduced, taxes are levied, offices are assigned, a permanent administration is built. Unlike the administration of royal rule, this administration is not aimed at the common good, nor does it seek its own undermining through internalization, but rather at the good of the oligarchs and so at its extension at the expense of smaller communities of the common good. But, nevertheless, the oligarchy depends ironically on this smaller communities of the common good for its power, a power that must as it is exercised undermine its own source. How so?

As we have seen, a just father wants the good of his family and this includes wanting to deepen that good through integration into increased levels of order. But before he ventures *outside* into the gaps in trust and risk, he must secure what is under his own authority *inside*. When what is *outside* is a threat to what is *inside*, he will always choose what is *inside*; this is merely an

70. *Republic*, IX.9.575a–b.

71. *Republic*, IX.8, 567d.

72. *Politics*, V.10.1313a.14–15.

aspect of his justice, of his royal rule as a father. When through his prudence he perceives that what is larger—what is outside—is not conducive to the good of what is smaller—what is inside—a just man *will not order what is inside to the good of that larger level of order.* Rather, he will either fight it or make deals with it. The trick for the tyrannical regime, then, is to crush all those who fight while simultaneously convincing the rest that it is better to haggle with the regime out in the gaps—that through such negotiation, one can cut one's losses and even bring home from the outside certain goods for his family and friends inside.[73] But this working on the outside, in what we can begin to call the public sphere, is always ordered down and into the newly created private sphere. A man becomes willing to play a part in public, willing to take on impersonal offices and roles, willing to assert "rights" and fulfill tasks that he does not in any way own or owe as a person, but merely as a cog in the mechanism. He is willing to flatter the power, to become bad, to become just another mercenary. The efficacy of such a regime relies upon alienation. Aristotle remarks: "Hence tyrants are always fond of bad men, because they love to be flattered, but no man who has the spirit of a free man in him will lower himself by flattery."[74] This is the alienation that underwrites power in tyrannical regimes. It is the origin of the formal public/private distinction. A man in a tyrannical regime becomes turned against himself, inverting the royal order by seeking a private good *outside* in order to build and maintain a common good *inside.* He goes out to exploit, that he might come back in to serve; to protect the small, he serves as a tool in the corruption of the larger. In the pursuit of the good of his family, he quite literally serves in the mechanism that frustrates his achievement of a more perfect good for his family. But worse than that, he works in the very mechanism that aims to destroy smaller communities of the common good, smaller groupings of friends and families, by extending the regime of the

73. Xenophon, for example, counsels the tyrant Hiero that he ought to extend the protection offered by his mercenaries to the goods and interests of the prominent men of the city, that he ought to incorporate them into the benefits of the gang, and so bind them to his rule.

74. *Politics*, V.11.1314a.41–50.

gaps. The whole affair inevitably becomes a rear-guard strategy of cutting one's losses.

This is the construction of social vice.[75] The tyranny of the gaps subsists as a society of little tyrants who, as Plato has Socrates explain, "pass their lives without a friend in the world; they are always either master or slave, and never taste true friendship or freedom."[76] Tyranny can be neither ruled by free men nor rule over free men. Indeed, Aristotle goes so far as to assert that no free man will endure a tyranny.[77] This ought to be read as a definition of what it means to be free, which is in the end synonymous with being virtuous. In a tyranny, however, a man attempts to order his relative justice to injustice. He attempts to use his power, his virtue, in service to an end other than the common good. This makes his actions bad, and so their repetition consumes his relative virtue and creates ever-expanding vice. The tyrannical subject's soul becomes as disordered as the city in which he participates. As it does—as he becomes more self-interested, more aligned with the regime of the gaps—the power in the gaps becomes stronger and so ambitious to expand; a strength that is augmented only as, at the same rate, the power of the communities of the common good become weaker and so unwilling to resist. The tyrannical subject's vice becomes the very vehicle for the expansion of the tyranny into his "private" life of friends and family, inside the scope of his rule, the very realm the good of which motivated his participation in the tyranny of the gaps at the outset. His initial weakness, his initial unwillingness to fight as a free man would, begins a cascading collapse of virtue and so of justice.

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75. Aristotle explains, "one class cannot obey, and can only rule despotically; the other knows not how to command and must be ruled like slaves. Thus arises a city, not of freemen, but of masters and slaves, the one despising, the other envying; and nothing can be more fatal to friendship and good fellowship in states than this: for good fellowship springs from friendship." *Politics*, IV.11.1295b.19–23.

76. *Republic*, IX.9, 576a. Or Aristotle: "But it has now become a habit among the citizens of states, not even to care about equality; all men are seeking for dominion, or, if conquered, are willing to submit." *Politics*, IV.11, 1296a–b.

77. *Politics*, IV.9.1295a.23.

The paradox of tyrannical power, then, is that because it cannot provide the good that motivates action, it inevitably "uses up" that good. The power of the tyranny in the gaps is fueled by the justice of the smaller communities over which it tyrannizes. As the virtue that constitutes those communities is undermined and ultimately destroyed, the tyranny must move deeper. The extension of the power in the gaps is the burning up of the communities of the common good the reality of which constitute the gaps as gaps. The oligarchic form, then, cannot be sustained.

The move into democracy is the extension of the gaps into the realm of family and intimate friendships. Plato explains it as a form of patricide, where the individualist turns on the family, the very community of the common good that gave him life.[78] The impersonal, formal regime of the gaps is extended to every individual in all of his interactions. Each person becomes a person only to himself, a friend only to himself, viewing all others as either dangerous or potentially useful, as enemies or as instruments. Politics as the pursuit of the common good ceases to exist. Everything outside the individual is in the gaps, where people are ordered not to a shared end, but merely as parts to a whole. As Aristotle states, "virtue must be the care of a state which is truly so called, and not merely enjoys the name: for without this end the community becomes a mere alliance which differs only in place from alliances of which the members live apart; and law is only a convention, . . . and has not real power to make the citizens good and just."[79] Plato, in the end, is not willing to call a tyranny a regime at all—it is more of an anti-regime, a non-regime.

As in the royal society, in the tyranny the positive regime and the social regime tend toward identity in a single power-regime, but the dynamic comes from the reverse direction. In the royal society, bureaucracy and administration are always the temporary and provisional mechanisms that enable true law to penetrate into the gaps, and so stitch together communities of the common good into higher levels of order within the single regime of law-virtue. Administration is a sort of war against disorder, a fight that subsides as the peace of just order is

78. *Republic*, IX.8, 569b.

79. *Politics*, III.9.1280b.5–11.

built, as the external is internalized and so fulfilled in the experience of real friendships. In the tyrannical society, the war does not aim at peace, but at extension. Law is not internalized into virtue through self-giving. Rather, people conform themselves to the parody of law that is administration and bureaucracy in the pursuit of self-interest. *As they descend into vice, people adopt the extrinsic mechanism as if it were reality.* They begin to become the rights-bearing individuals engaged in the contest of scarcity, cheating each other and suing each other, and serving in the mechanisms through which the more powerful tyrants cheat each other and sue each other. Friendship, where it survives, becomes a weird exception to the social whole, a concept that falls out of relevance in favor of economic theory, sociology, and so-called "political science."

This is a situation of ultimate moral disorder where each individual views the rest only within his pursuit of whatever passion happens to dominate in his disordered soul. Inevitably, an alliance will form under the leadership of a demagogue who is nothing more than the best flatterer. This alliance will be aimed at using all those who are not members of it. What this means is that it is always an alliance of the one and the many against the few—a complete repudiation of the hierarchical ordering of a just society.[80] The demagogue, who soon becomes an outright tyrant, sets about eliminating all remnants of friendship, all lingering centers of strength and virtue, that he might extend his structure of "rational" administration down and through the whole.[81] The prudent tyrant, Aristotle explains,

> must put to death men of spirit; he must not allow common meals, clubs, education, and the like; he must be upon his guard against anything which is likely to inspire either courage or confidence among his subjects; he must prohibit literary assemblies or other meetings for discussion, and he must take every means to prevent people from knowing one another (for acquaintance begets mutual

80. Aristotle, *Politics*, IV.4.1292a.4–38.

81. Aristotle, *Politics*, V.11.1314a.5–10: "It is characteristic of a tyrant to dislike everyone who has dignity or independence. . . . [H]e wants to be alone in his glory, but any one who claims a like dignity or asserts his independence encroaches upon his prerogative, and is hated by him as an enemy to his power."

> confidence) . . . [he] sows quarrels among the citizens; friends should be embroiled with friends, the people with the notables, and the rich with one another.[82]

Indeed, the tyranny can maintain and extend its power only through the destruction of any royal power that might still exist or come to be formed down and through the whole. "For," in Aristotle's words:

> a tyrant is not overthrown until men begin to have confidence in one another; and this is the reason why tyrants are at war with the good; they are under the idea that their power is endangered by them, not only because they will not be ruled despotically, but also because they are loyal to one another, and to other men, and do not inform against one another or against other men.[83]

In the democratic turned demagogic tyranny, we experience the ultimate level of alienation wherein all that is left of a free-man, all that is left of the common good to be threatened or rewarded, is a kernel of individual consciousness. Each person is in his soul alone before the masses, before the *demos* and its *nomos*, organized as a structure of instrumental parts making up a single whole, of which he is, in all his outside movements, merely a part, a mercenary ruled by mercenaries. In the inevitable movement from democracy to outright tyranny, Plato explains, "the people find, as the saying is, that they've jumped out of the frying-pan of subjection to free men into the fire of subjection to slaves, and exchanged their excessive and untimely freedom for the harshest and bitterest of servitudes, where the slave is master."[84]

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82. *Politics*, V.11.1313b.17–19. Socrates remarks: "So he must keep a sharp eye out for men of courage or vision or intelligence or wealth; for, whether he likes it or not, it is his happy fate to be their constant enemy and to intrigue until he has purged them from the state." *Republic*, IX.8.567b–c. See also: Aquinas, *On Kingship*, I.3.

83. *Politics*, V.11.1314a.15–25. In addition, any administrative, instrumental power that remains diffused through the state is centralized. E.g., *Republic*, IX.8.567e. The tyrant, Plato explains, robs "the citizens of their slaves, freeing them, and enrolling them in his bodyguard."

84. *Republic*, IX.8.569a. The people, Aquinas explains, "brought up in fear, become small-spirited and discouraged in the face of any strenuous and manly task." *On Kingship*, I.4.

In the end, even the tyrant succumbs to the strength of the mechanism of universal slavery, and fears it as much as does everyone else.[85] The whole functions only on the reality of vice and despair, only on the atomization of the population and so the maximization of their anxiety.[86] Terrified and alone, as Hannah Arendt described in her explanation of the rise of twentieth-century totalitarianism, the individual will believe anything and will do anything for some degree of safety and belonging—miserable, and yet driven by human nature to seek happiness through social belonging, this sad soul will seek it in total submission in which he works to build the very structure of alienation and fear that holds him in bondage.

We can see, I think, how monarchy and tyranny are the regimes furthest away from each other, not just in some sort of moral worth, but in actual structural characteristics. A royal regime is a mixed form where the rule of the people and the rule of the king merge together into a single regime of friendship and trust, of authority and obedience. Kingship can only exist where friendship exists. Tyranny, on the other hand, cannot exist where there is friendship. Its foundations are in the gaps, and it moves to eliminate internalized unity and to replace it with administration. It seeks to separate, to replace the unity of virtue with the division of vice.[87] Tyranny combines separated people

85. *Republic*, IX.9.579a–e.

86. "Both state and individual, again, must be haunted by fear." *Republic*, IX.9.578a. Xenophon has the tyrant Hiero explain: "I will tell you of another harsh affliction, Simonides, which the tyrants have. For although they recognize the decent, the wise, and the just, no less than private men [the tyrants] fear rather than admire them. They fear the brave because they might dare something for the sake of freedom; the wise, because they might contrive something; and the just, because the multitude might desire to be ruled by them. When, because of their fear, they do away secretly with such men, who is left for them to use save the unjust, the incontinent, and the slavish? The unjust are trusted because they are afraid, just as the tyrants are, that some day the cities, becoming free, will become their masters. The incontinent are trusted because they are at liberty for the present, and the slavish because not even they deem themselves worthy to be free." *On Tyranny*, 11.

87. Origen, *On Ezekiel*, Homily 9.1:

> Where there are sins, there is a multitude, there are schisms, there are heresies, there are disagreements; but where there is virtue, there is singleness, there is unity—and thus all the believers had "one heart

through impersonal mechanisms, through an order of parts to a whole wherein the movement of any part is the movement of the whole, like a body and its hand. The king rules voluntary subjects through law; the tyrant rules involuntary subjects through a parody of law, which we might call an administrative state or a bureaucracy, a military-style organization personified in the mercenaries.[88] The royal regime rests on the authority met with obedience found only in a virtuous people; the tyrannical regime rests on the raw power met with submission found only in a vicious people.

Friendship always and everywhere works against tyranny because friends are willing to sacrifice for each other's good—and are completely *un*willing to sacrifice each other's good for the ends proposed by an unjust regime. A father is simply wicked if he sends his son off to fight for a regime that is not integral to the achieved good of the family and so to that good's expansion. To sacrifice one's friend for an unjust regime or for a foreign regime is unjust. A just man, a free man, will rather send his son to fight alongside the sons of his friends against the unjust regime. A just man and his friends will defend the highest level of society

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> and one soul." And, to speak more clearly, the principle of all evils is plurality, while the principle of good things is the narrowing and reduction of crowds to a state of singleness—as, for example, all of us, if we are to be brought safe to unity, so that we will be made "perfect in the same mind and the same opinion," and will be "one body and one spirit." If, however, we are of such a sort that unity does not encompass us, and instead it can be said about us, "I am Paul's; I am of Apollos; I am of Cephas," and if we are still split and divided by wickedness, then we are not going to be where those are who are brought together into unity. For as the Father and Son are one, even so those who have one Spirit are compressed together into unity; indeed, the Savior says, "I and the Father are one"; and "Holy Father, just as you and I are one, [I pray] that these may be one in us"; and in the Apostle we read, "Until we all come . . . to a perfect man and the measure of fullness of age in the unity of Christ"; and again, "Until we all arrive at the unity of the body and spirit of Christ." The meaning of this is that virtue produces unity out of plurality, and that it is necessary for us to become one by means of it, and to flee from the many.

88. As the stranger explains: "Well, still, we won't ever find those at least who we see are hired for wages and, in serving for pay, serve everyone most readily, laying a claim to the royal art." Plato, *The Statesman*, 290A.

ordered to the common good, whether that be the family, the neighborhood, the city, or the nation—which is to say that he will fight always for the perfection of the good of the level of order over which he has authority: the level of his friends.[89] The tyranny, then, can only exist exactly where friendship does not exist. It must push friendship out and replace it with an order in which each man, in seeking his own end, views the other parts of the mechanism in which he serves as mere parts, expendable and replaceable, as mere slaves, worthy of being sacrificed for the power and efficiency of the whole. And yet the tyranny relies exactly on linger friendship, on the lingering good, lingering freedom, in order to motivate men to sell themselves as mercenaries. The tyranny, therefore, is incoherent and can only decline, can only fight the very source of its power. The final tyrannical move is when the man turns the part of him that is merely an instrument against the part of him that is still, deep down, a person, when within a man, the slave sacrifices the free-man to the whole. This is, of course, a form of suicide that takes the form of fanaticism, of total commitment to one's own instrumentality. The termination of the dynamics of tyranny is a society of tyrants all the way down, which, in the end, is identical to a society of slaves all the way down. At the bottom, in the end, a tyranny saps all the value, all the strength, all the virtue, out of a society. Alienation becomes complete, men become hopeless and purposeless as the last vestiges of free, royal rule are eliminated, and the regime falls.

MODERN POWER

I would like to end by bringing things back to the seventeenth century. Everyone begins with Machiavelli, and not without reason. The most important move made by him for my

89. Happiness is the final good because it is sufficient "not for one man alone but for all whose care is incumbent upon him." A man's pursuit of happiness is always the pursuit of happiness as the common good of that which is below him because all that is below him is included in him. His happiness in this circle of friends and family is true happiness in which he can rest content and so "sufficient." Nevertheless, given the opportunity he will deepen this happiness as far as possible. Aquinas, *On Ethics*, I.IX (113–17).

purposes here was the move toward a univocal understanding of power. The only power Machiavelli is interested in is the sort of power that exists in tyrannies, the power of promises and threats. Because of this, his focus becomes strategies for how one builds, sustains, and maximizes power (understood in this way). He is close enough to the classical tradition, however, to have a sense of what he is doing. He is close enough, I think, to know that the royal power of free men is possible.[90] For example, his obsession with appearances, with tricking the people into thinking that the prince has virtue, betrays his lingering classical approach. As Aristotle and Xenophon had suggested, exactly because of the truth of royal power, the smartest tyrant acts in such a way as to be mistaken, at least superficially, for a king.

The so-called "reason of state" tradition that developed out of Machiavelli's thought steadily minimized the credibility of true royal power. Giovanni Botero is sometimes invoked by statist Catholics such as Adrian Vermuele and Gladden Pappin as a thinker who initiated a strand of this tradition compatible with Christianity.[91] But this, I think, is mistaken. Rather, what Botero does is move Christianity into Machiavelli's "reason of state" logic. As he explains:

> But of all the laws none is more favorable to princes than the Christian because it submits to them not only the bodies and faculties of subjects where this is appropriate but the souls and consciences as well, and it binds not only the hands but even the affections and thoughts, and

90. For example, he writes: "whoever becomes master of a city that has been accustomed to liberty, and does not destroy it, must himself expect to be ruined by it. For they will always resort to rebellion in the name of liberty and their ancient institutions, which will never be effaced from their memory, either by the lapse of time, or by benefits bestowed by the new master. No matter what he may do, or what precautions he may take, if he does not separate and disperse the inhabitants, they will on the first occasion invoke the name of liberty and the memory of their ancient institutions." *The Prince*, V. Such free men are the deepest threat to the power of Machiavelli's prince even though he spends little time concerned with them because he assumes such regimes to be rare precisely because he believes the social virtue that underwrites them to be nearly always a false virtue, a pretended virtue that is discarded as soon as self-interest gets in the way. *The Prince*, XVII–XVIII; *The Prince*, V.

91. Adrian Vermeule, *Common Good Constitutionalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2022), 31; Gladden Pappin, "New Model Statecraft," *The Lamp*, no. 9, 33–38.

> it prescribes that obedience be given to wicked princes as well as ordinary ones and that everything be endured in order not to disturb the peace . . .[92]

A prince, then, should promote Christianity, "because the more the subjects' will be accustomed to and fervent in the way of God so much the more manageable and obedient will they be to their prince."[93] We need not attribute to Botero Machiavelli's cynicism. Rather, I think, his sincerity is the development worth noting. For Botero, Christianity is true and so it works the best in the construction of a centralized, essentially Machiavellian state. Machiavelli was mistaken, for Botero, because he did not understand just how useful Christianity was to power, and this usefulness is ultimately indistinguishable from its veracity. This is why Botero can follow Machiavelli in advocating one mode of tyrannical power after the next, advancing a systematic program for eliminating all rival nodes of power in a society.[94] Botero goes beyond the classical understanding of tyranny by introducing Christianity as what amounts to the ideological component of maximizing power. Christian men will serve the tyranny longer and with less trouble because they will confuse their own good with its good. The tyrant will convincingly appear to be a king precisely because, for Botero, Christianity does away with the formal distinction between the two. All the tactics of the tyrant are, therefore, available to the Christian ruler.[95] Tyrannical power works just fine in Botero's regime, because "the end of the resources of a prince is the preservation and expansion

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92. *The Reason of State* (Cambridge, 2017), 65.

93. Ibid., 67.

94. Botero argues that promoting abundance, peace, and justice are means of winning the people's loyalty, but that the best means is war, for nothing both unifies a people and diverts them from their concerns than an enemy. *The Reason of State*, 71. This works even better if the war is a just war, so the prince should see to it that his soldiers believe it to be so. *The Reason of State*, 166.

95. For example, in his discussion of what to do with dissidents, Botero asserts, "subjects will lack neither courage nor power if they are allowed to unite. . . . You destroy their intent [to unite] by fomenting suspicions and differences among them, so that no one risks to reveal himself and trust in another. . . . There are various sways to prevent them from uniting, first by preventing family relationships among peoples and between one house with clients and another." *The Reason of State*, 105.

of the state."[96] In order for him to do this most effectively, the prince must be a Christian. It is not enough to fake it; he must himself believe it. Only in this way will he gain in reputation and reputation is, for Botero, the most important characteristic of the prince. Indeed, reputation is the solution to Machiavelli's dilemma of whether it is better to be loved or feared—for as Botero explains:

> Reputation is composed of love and fear, which is better than the one or the other because it contains that which is good and useful in both, that is, it takes from love the union of the subjects with the prince and from fear the submission. . . . But someone will ask me which has the greater part in reputation, love or fear. Fear without a doubt, because just as respect and reverence so also reputation is for the eminence of virtue from which proceed species of fear rather than love. This can be easily understood by this: love is a passion that conciliates spirits, fear draws them back; the former unites, the latter draws them apart; the former makes equal, the latter makes unequal. Now it is clear that in reputation there appear many more features and effects of fear than of love because it has greater strength to pull back, to separate, and to render unequal.[97]

Botero is a missing link between Machiavelli's explicit tyranny and the complete forgetting of royal power that characterizes the political theories of the seventeenth century. In Botero, ethics returns to politics—only it is now a version that operates entirely within the tyrannical form. Those conversations between friends concerning the just and the unjust, the true and the false, that the classical tradition understood to be how just polities—how shared social worlds were built in the pursuit of the common good—are now replaced with ideology, with a truth that is no longer a discursive process of building a shared world, but is rather a propositional decree, a social world that is compelled from above, that is to be believed and lived in if one wants to avoid punishment and receive rewards. Botero's is a more perfect tyranny, because he attempts to redefine virtue as nothing other than habitual submission to the tyrannical regime.

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96. *The Reason of State*, 208.

97. Ibid., 221.

In other words, there is no formal distinction between virtue and vice. Botero's tyranny therefore seeks to move beyond fear of punishment and promise of reward, which always premised something to be threatened or rewarded. Rather men would serve as mercenaries because it was good, the will of God. The attempt, then, is to overcome the paradox of tyranny.

The theories of the seventeenth century become arguments for certain mechanisms of uniting from above the steadily more atomized masses into functional power machines. But these mechanisms now include, intrinsically, a declaration of right and wrong, just and unjust. They have to, because such declarations are demonstrably powerful. King James I and other royal absolutists such as Robert Filmer had to assert not only that absolutism is the most effective way to unite the population, but that it was the divinely mandated way. If the royalist faction was going to win the scramble for tyrannical power, this must be "true," and it must be believed. John Locke, on the other hand, would rather Parliament be in charge; he would rather his class rule. And so, he advanced a mechanism of uniting the fundamentally atomized people that is at the same time the declaration of the injustice of all other mechanisms. The legitimacy of ubiquitous private property and individual rights is in Locke's theory fideistically advanced in a manner no different than Filmer's advancement of royal legitimacy, because the belief in their absolute justice is essential to the functioning of Locke's mechanism for his faction's centralized power. In the seventeenth century, an obsession with abstract legitimacy replaced the classical conviction that justice is legitimacy. Legitimacy was now a dogmatic assertion rather than an experience of peace and order. Legitimacy replaced law.[98]

98. It is Hobbes, of course, who completes this move away from the common good, who finally gets rid of the distinction between royal and tyrannical power and who finally rolls truth seamlessly into the mechanism of uniting isolated individuals through raw, tyrannical power. In Hobbes the old notion of royal power, just mastery, isn't even missed, isn't even gestured to. The discourse concerning truth is not even possible until power has been established, until truth and falsity, just and unjust, mine and thine, have already been compelled. The problem of regime forms is here divisively and finally solved. There is no real politics because there is no real unity of real wholes. There are only particulars, only individuals that are united from without and ordered as parts to a whole. What we take to be universal truths, indeed consciousness itself, flow out of this whole, are parts of this whole, they emerge always below

The imperative of our current moment is to regain a classical view of politics, to regain a belief in the possibility of an actual political form to a just society. This is a tradition that never actually died. It just became marginalized and mocked by the "serious people," by the "realists," by the "politicals" as they were known in the seventeenth century. We need to regain control of this tradition.[99] □

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it and within it and have no ability to transcend it. The Spiritual Power is here definitively positioned below the Temporal Power.

99. I will end with an example. In the early seventeenth century an English Jesuit named Thomas Fitzherbert wrote a treatise against these reasons-of-state thinkers. It begins:

> Heretics undermine and shake the foundations of Christianity, but politicals do utterly overthrow it; for although they grant, and acknowledge the necessity of religion [for] . . . the conservation of the commonwealth, yet they so little consider the nature, dignity, and true effects thereof that they prefer in all things reason of state before reason of religion, as though religion were ordained only for the commonwealth; Yea and which is more to be lamented, they use it no otherwise than as nurses use fables and bogeymen to terrify little children, to make them the more obedient; as though religion . . . consisted in phantasy and imagination and devised to keep men in awe and fear of eternal punishment, to make them more obedient to temporal laws. (*A Treatise Concerning Policy and Religion*, 1615)