

HOBBS'S "JUST MAN"

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The names of just and unjust, when they are attributed to men, signify one thing; and when they are attributed to actions, another. When they are attributed to men, they signify conformity, or inconformity of manners to reason. But when they are attributed to actions, they signify the conformity, or inconformity to reason, not of manners, or manner of life, but of particular actions. A just man therefore, is he that taketh all the care he can, that his actions may all be just: and an unjust man, is he that neglecteth it. . . . Therefore a righteous man, does not lose that title, by one, or a few unjust actions, that proceed from sudden passion, or mistake of things, or persons: nor does an unrighteous man, lose his character, for such actions, as he does, or forbears to do, for fear: because his will is not framed by the justice, but by the apparent benefit of what he is to do.¹

IT IS PERHAPS NATURAL enough that an author who has been discussing the nature of just conduct should say at least a few words about the character of persons who, with fair consistency (no one is perfect!), do or do not manifest it. After all, many of his readers would be accustomed to treatments of this topic in which the order of discussion would be reversed and in which such an order would be held to reflect the true order of knowledge: first explain what a just man is, and then you can define a just act as the sort he would be likely to perform. This is not Hobbes's own order of priorities, but he can be expected to anticipate the disappointment of his readership if he says nothing at all about what a just man is, or if the little he does say seems to violate either educated common sense or the constraints of his own system. In what follows, I hope to show that what he says does a good job of satisfying each of these requirements, once we penetrate the puzzles generated by his characteristic brevity. I think it will become apparent that understanding what Hobbes can and does mean by a "just man" is worthwhile for understanding his system as a whole.

Hobbes's discussion of what a just man is occurs in the eleventh of sixteen chapters in Part One, titled "Of Man." Earlier in this part Hobbes has pursued and developed the thesis that a human being is a self-maintaining machine, a machine that maintains itself principally by moving toward and acquiring things it likes (which evidently must, for the most part, help it to survive and flourish) and by moving away from and avoiding things that it does not like (which equally evidently must, on the whole, be contributory to its destruction). It differs from the simplest beings of this sort in the extent of its *prudence*, or foresight, an acquired knowledge of the causes and effects of those states of affairs that include the objects of its desires and aversions.

The practical side of prudence is a transitivity of desire, so that the organism desires what it sees to be the causes of what it already wants and develops aversion to conditions that tend to bring about whatever it is already averse to. (Under the heading of "deliberation," Hobbes discusses what happens when the organism discovers a state of affairs that includes both an object of desire and one of aversion, perhaps connected causally. His solution to the difficulties of such an organism requires that some desires and aversions are stronger than others and that likes combine by addition, unlikes by subtraction.)

Human organisms transcend those of all other species in their application of this power of prudence principally because of their possession of language, which makes it possible to keep track of very long and involved chains of cause and effect. This power makes it possible for some human beings to engage in science, that is, the discovery of true universal conditional statements about causal connections, with which to anticipate experience all the more efficiently. The general practical aim of prudence is to achieve desired satisfaction (and the avoidance of aversive states) now and in the future, to the greatest possible extent—a condition known as felicity.

Another name for the transitivity of desire (Hobbes's name for it) is the *love of power*, the desire for any "present means to a future apparent good." Other human beings are my *equals* in that their objects of desire and aversion are similar to and commensurate with my own, as are their *natural powers* (the ones they do not have to acquire). Since among these equal powers is the potential for prudence, other people tend to want all the same sorts of power that I want. (Hobbes does not discuss the question whether

human beings have a sort of herd instinct that makes them naturally wish to be in one another's company, although he manages to mention sex, rather quickly, in connection with the family. He does not really discuss what might be the instinctual, or rock-bottom, desires and aversions of *human* beings. He evidently does not think it is important, for his theoretical purposes, what they are. What does matter is that these desires and aversions are for basically similar objects and that the world is not perfectly generous in providing these objects whenever they are wanted.

We human beings are in profound and nearly irremediable trouble with one another and would remain so even if we turned out to possess far more sympathy and fellow feeling than Hobbes bothers to attribute to us. The trouble is that, even if nature happened to provide everyone in a certain vicinity with all of the basic goods they happened to need for the moment, they would still want power, and the more each understood, the more power each would want. We are in trouble with one another because we understand our similarity in needs and powers and the stepmotherliness of the world. Because we understand our similarity in prudence to one another, we anticipate one another's pursuit of power, and it is clear to all of us that we want power over each other. The very knowledge of the similarity of another's lot with my own, which might make it possible for me to feel sorry for him if he were to get something to which he is strongly averse, will also make me want to anticipate and dominate him so that he could not arrange for me to get it instead!

In this miserable condition we fear one another and we attempt various strategies such as preemptive strikes and permanent intimidation. But killing others does not solve anything (since more are constantly being produced through the family relation that Hobbes mentions all too briefly). And, of course, the very commensurateness of our prudence and other powers makes permanent intimidation a hopeless illusion.

But here our power of language can come to our rescue. When we see how hopeless we are, the more each of us tries to anticipate and eliminate competitors, we realize that we need to arrive at a consensus, which language will enable us to formulate and negotiate. This will be an agreement concerning the permissible limits of competitive behavior. There are various sorts of competitive, or competition-anticipating, behavior that would be advantageous for each man to forgo in exchange for assurance that each of the others

would also forgo them: killing, for example. Each man *ought* to enter into and remain in such an agreement if he can. (He ought to, evidently, in that if he were perfectly prudent all the time he *would naturally* do so and never do anything incompatible or inharmonious with doing so; one owes it to oneself to be as prudent as one can.) The use of language to make such an agreement, and to promise to keep it, is called *covenanting* or *contracting*, and the resulting agreement is a *covenant* or *contract*. *Justice* of actions is the keeping of covenants once they have been made—a ticklish business until there is an arbitrator to settle disputes about who has, and who has not, acted justly and a policeman-jailer-executioner to apprehend and inflict planned nastiness on those who have not.

Thus, for Hobbes, a just man is a rationally prudent man. He has reflected on the most ubiquitous causes of his felicity or misery when in the company of others. Part of what it means to say that he is rationally prudent is that he has for a fixed aim this very felicity, or the ongoing satisfaction of as many of his most importunate desires as possible; additionally, “rationally prudent” means that when reason shows him that something is a necessary condition for this felicity, he wants that necessary condition to obtain. A third component of the meaning of “rational” in such contexts is that reason does a fairly good job. The rationally prudent man is not hopelessly stupid. When in the company of others, therefore, he desires peace with them and desires, as well, that the necessary conditions for peaceful living obtain. One of these conditions is that men must keep the covenants that they make with one another to escape from the condition of war. Therefore, the rationally prudent man wants to behave justly when other men do and wishes that he were in a position to behave so even when he is not. He will take all the care he can in this matter.

This description is consistent with the quoted passage with which I began. There is one puzzle, however. At the end of this passage Hobbes explains that an unjust man who occasionally keeps his word from, say, fear of the magistrate, is not a just man “because his will is not framed by the justice, but by the apparent benefit of what he is to do.” Notice, it is not simply because of the inconsistency of his covenant-conforming behavior that he is an unjust man. We can imagine that such behavior on his part is exceptionless. Suppose he suffers from a systematic fear that the police are watching him all the time. He would often break his word, ex-

cept that he fears instant arrest followed by certain punishment. He is not a just man, even so, for his motive is wrong: his will is not framed by justice, but by simple fear of those in authority.

Now this evidently accords well enough with common conceptions of a just person. Someone is not a just person because he would cheat others if he dared, except that he is Caspar Milquetoast. But what about the requirements of Hobbes's system? Are not rationally prudent men driven by nothing but fear and hope? Indeed, are not fear and hope often indistinguishable, as the wording of the quoted passage suggests: fear of losing the advantage that I hope for, or hope of avoiding the calamity that I fear? And what other motives are there for Hobbes? Is not the man whose will is framed by justice fearful of losing a great advantage in his relation to others, an advantage he may expect to lose, or suffer a serious chance of losing, if he violates his covenant? Of course, perhaps all Hobbes means here is that the just man and the systematically deluded unjust man fear somewhat different things. But we would like to know more about the difference.

THE MOTIVE OF JUST ACTS

That which gives to human actions the relish of justice, is a certain nobleness or gallantness of courage, rarely found, by which a man scorns to be beholden for the contentment of his life, to fraud, or breach of promise. This justice of manners is that which is meant, where justice is called a virtue; and injustice a vice. [Pt. I, chap. 15, p. 123.]

Here we receive a definite indication of a motive of just conduct other than fear: the opposite in fact, for do not courageous men either have no fear or act against the fear they have? The gallant man of virtue clearly differs from the timid deludate. But does he not equally differ from the man of rational prudence? One is calculative of gains and losses large and small, the other is *scornful*. He scorns to be beholden *for the contentments of living*, to fraud. (Does this include even the contentment of continuing to live?)

Hobbes tells us that such men are rarely found; is this his excuse for not having introduced us to them earlier? I will try to show that he has prepared us for this introduction in his earlier discussion of manners (in chapter 11), and we must shortly turn to that discussion in order to elucidate a certain repeated and evidently crucial phrase, "the manner of justice." But first let us try to get clearer

about this motive of *scornfulness*: What is it that the brave and gallant man scorns in the injustice of others and would scorn in himself if he were to break his word?

THE CONSEQUENCE OF BREAKING COVENANTS

... injury or injustice in the controversies of the world is somewhat like to that which in the disputations of scholars is called absurdity. For as it is there called an absurdity to contradict what one maintained in the beginning, so in the world it is called injustice and injury voluntarily to undo that which from the beginning he had voluntarily done. [Pt. 1, chap. 14, p. 109]

We know, as Hobbes does, that the scholar is contemptuous of absurd speech in others and embarrassed by it in his own case. Generally, it is an indication of a lack of power. Everyone wants power, and particularly the power to understand whatever one has a reason for understanding. And, moreover, one wants the power to express what one understands and to cause others to share one's understanding. To contradict oneself or to utter something that turns out to be irrelevant, or uninterpretable, in the context of what one earlier said is therefore shameful. One is unable to fit the later words to the earlier ones appropriately. One loses honor in that one loses the willingness of others to attend to or believe what one says. On Hobbes's account, one's mortification here is an expression of anxiety about further consequences, but the object of the anxiety can be very vague. One may not know exactly what people will do if they stop taking one's words seriously, but it is a bad sign. Besides, it is directly unpleasant to discover the lack of a power in oneself that one thought one had. To be sure, one would not discover *this* if one had deliberately digressed or obfuscated, but the reaction of scholarly (or other) peers to such behavior will likely be even worse: the response to perverted taste will be even harsher than the preceding response: behold, he even lacks the power to *desire* what is fitting or needful!

Thus, for Hobbesian reasons, or just because we have our own conviction that speaking clearly, consistently, and relevantly *is* one of the fitting and needful things, we *might* resist digressing or obfuscating just to get something we want (a grant, perhaps), or to avoid something unpleasant (such as the enmity of one who disagrees). (And we are not necessarily violating the spirit of Hobbes-

ian thinking in deciding that some things *just are* fitting or needful, for felicity must have constituents or components, not just propaedeutics.)

Now, just as consequential speech consists in fitting later utterances to earlier ones that anticipated or constrained them, so keeping a covenant consists in fitting a subsequent act to an earlier speech that anticipated and constrained it. In making a covenant I said *that*, or *implied that*, one of my actions by and by would be of a certain sort. But then I go on to act in a manner that is dispersive or inconsequential. Presumably, when I said I would do this I meant to and wanted to, but then I failed to understand something—something about my nature or about how much authority or power I had. Or perhaps I did not mean what I said; but then I failed to desire what is fitting or needful. The others will stop taking me seriously either way, and that will probably have bad consequences, even if I do not find it directly and simply unpleasant itself.

This, or something like it, must be rock-bottom in *contempt for*, rather than resentment or mistrust of, those who break their word: they are considered weak or disordered. And it goes without saying that one does not want to be weak or disordered. Still, it is a big rough world out there, replete with distractions and consolations.

The force of words being, as I have formerly noted, too weak to hold men to the performance of their covenants, there are in man's nature but two imaginable helps to strengthen it. And those are either a fear of the consequence of breaking their word, or a glory or pride in appearing not to need to break it. This latter is a generosity too rarely found to be presumed on, especially in the pursuers of wealth, command, and sensual pleasure—which are the greatest part of mankind. The passion to be reckoned upon is fear. [Pt. 1, chap. 14, p. 117]

The glory of not having to appear to break one's word (and why not, all the more, the glory of really not having to break it?) is a motive too rarely strong to be presumed on in the fashioning of civil society. Hence, the features of the Hobbesian system with which all students of *Leviathan* are familiar. The just man may perhaps be welcome in the just society, but he is not its foundation, unless his generosity or love of glory is the same thing as rational prudence!

THE MAN OF SCORN

Let us review the motives from which a man in civil society might keep his word. They are apparently three:

1. He fears that he will be punished by the sovereign for breaking his word.

2. He fears being plunged into the state of war or being partially plunged into it by the reactions that his injustice induces in his neighbors.

3. He scorns those who do this and would not wish to be himself an object of his own scorn.

Hobbes himself distinguishes from just men those whose sole motive is (1), and we have seconded the distinction. We have seen the difficulty of considering someone a just man if his motivation does not include (3), and those in whom (3) is a strong enough motive to resist temptation (including, most especially, the temptation not to be taken advantage of) have been characterized as very rare and not the building blocks of a just social order. If we ask who are the foundations of a just social order, the answer seems to be a blend of people whose motives are (1) or (2) or people with a blend of the motives (1) and (2). People whose ruling motive is (3) are perhaps only ornaments of such a society. But could they be unwelcome there?

Let us suppose that a very brave man, accustomed to the state of nature, comes to town. He is scornful of those who break their word and has demonstrated a capacity to endure danger, hardship, and serious loss to avoid breaking his own. Still, his habits from the frontier are such that he does not give his word very often and stoutly resists the doctrine that things like silence or geographical location imply covenants he has not uttered. He is drinking rotgut in the Harmony Saloon when the sheriff ambles through the swinging doors. One can imagine several conversations, not all of them harmonious! Here is a man whom Hobbes might not be prepared to regard as very rational or very prudent. Will he call such a man *just*? Can one be virtuous without the virtue of rational prudence? This man may consider himself peaceable enough; after all, he doesn't go around picking fights. He may be puzzled by the edginess or downright hostility of his new-found neighbors. But they will not accord him the title of "peacekeeper" until he promises to keep all the laws and recognize all the authorities that *their* covenant has made, and Hobbes is their philosopher.

So then, a just man must agree with his neighbors about what his covenants are or about how the question will be settled in particular cases. Suppose our man says, "I promise to keep all your laws and recognize all your authorities until I leave town." Then they buy him a drink. But leaving town means returning to the state of nature, an irrational act! Perhaps some of the more erudite citizens press the arguments of *Leviathan* on him, insisting that these arguments prove he should stay. At length, appearing somewhat browbeaten he says, "Okay, I promise to stay." Applause and another round of drinks! Now all doubts as to the soundness of his citizenship are allayed, but he may only have been tired of arguing, not rationally convinced. He may not be prudent now or ever, although he *will* keep his word to act from now on "the way prudent people do." We must suppose he will do this to the best of his ability, which is all we can ask of anyone.

Lastly, let us suppose that he *is* rationally prudent. He does desire his own felicity, and whatever is necessary to it, and he does see what is necessary to it. He is as rational as Hobbes could wish, evidently, *except* that, because of the strength of his courage and scorn, he never needs to "draw upon" either fear of the police *or* rehearsals of the evils of the war of each against all others, in order to always be sufficiently motivated to behave justly. Can Hobbes be at peace with such a picture? I think he can. Later I will argue that he should.

MIXED MOTIVES

It is possible to get the impression from a certain reading of Hobbes that the motivation of rational people (while they are being rational) is monolithic: they act only for the sake of their own best interest. Other motives are for inferior states of consciousness, in which anger, fatigue, or strong passion snap the chain of argument from the identification of one's own felicity to submission to the sovereign. One can imagine Hobbes's finest citizens in their best moments, conning the proof and responding to nothing else! One can, perhaps, but one need not:

By manners I mean not here decency of behavior—as how one should salute another, or how a man should wash his mouth or pick his teeth before company, and such other points of the *small morals*—but those qualities of mankind that concern their living together in peace and unity. [Pt. 1, chap. 11, p. 79]

There is more than one quality of men that has to do with their living together in peace and unity. Some examples are "love of ease," "love of arts," and "love of praise." These are *positive* examples; that is, they are traits that dispose those who have them to behave peaceably and to hope or wish that others will, also. Their tendency need not be perfectly in this direction; perhaps any of them as a monomania or obsession might cause trouble, and it isn't clear that any combination of those he lists would be jointly sufficient to accomplish good citizenship. There are also some strongly negative ones, such as the usual sort of glory seeking, and perhaps there are many ambiguous ones, as well ("pusillanimity" seems to me a mixed bag).

What are "manners"? They are all sorts of dispositions to behave that are being considered with a view to the question whether they cooperate or do not cooperate with the behavior patterns required by rational prudence. The point for our purposes is simply that even the most cooperative ones are *distinct* from rational prudence. From another slightly different perspective, they may all be part of the *composition* of felicity. There are, or there is no reason why there cannot be, as many of these motives in the Hobbesian as in any other scheme of psychology. People can be as complicated as we need to think of them as being. No reason appears why the man we have imagined above could not always keep the third law of nature, acting always from his manner of justice, and do so even while appreciating the prudent rationality of doing so.

VIRTUOUS MANNERS

The truly just man is rare. He acts from a motive distinct from rational prudence but conformable to its dictates. But, I have argued, it seems unlikely that he *would* act in consistent conformity with some of its less-obvious dictates for Hobbes to call him "just," unless he were somehow aware of those dictates. Thus, it might be thought he must partake of rational prudence in some measure. If we examine the argument of the preceding two sections, it will be evident that the just man need not independently *deduce* the need for his own obedience to civil law or the sovereign, as long as he can be got to swear that he *will* obey them. That is, in terms of the specification of "rational prudence" in the first section, the just man could be to a certain degree "*stupid*," so long as he is avowedly *loyal* to the civil authority. So long as we make

Hobbes's convenient assumption that the civil laws that the just man promises to obey "contain" (or adequately reflect) the laws of nature (pt. 2, chap. 26, p. 227), and so long as he is aware of what those civil laws specify for his conduct and that of others, he *knows enough* to be just.

But suppose that he is more fully rational than this and has deduced everything that Hobbes claims a fully rational man would deduce? Is his pride and scorn now in some sense superfluous or redundant motivation? I think not. In a well-constructed and well-governed civil society, the just conduct of the just man is *over-determined*. But even so, there is no reason to dispute or question the authenticity or efficacy of the rare component in its motivation. And in less-optimal circumstances it can be crucial. If some of the civil laws are silly, or if the current sovereign is not everything a sovereign should be, those with the manner of justice may play a key role in fending off the return of the state of nature. And *in* the state of nature, those who have the manner of justice may be the nuclei around which a civil society begins to crystalize. Those with the manner of justice are dependable at the margin where others are not. In critical situations they are the ones who are chosen to be the peacemakers, the negotiators, those who are accepted in place of hostages, and so on. Hobbes underestimates their significance for his system. They make escaping from the state of nature a far more plausible outcome than it appears to be without them.

More generally, Hobbes's moral and political theory would be more subtle and complete, and appear less grotesque, if he introduced other virtuous manners (let them be as rare as he likes), which he easily could do. Consider, for example, the manner of "gratitude" or the manner of "complacency," virtues that correlate, respectively, with the fourth and fifth laws of nature. These are civilizing and harmonizing tendencies whose importance for rational prudence he argues, but whose distinctness he fails to discuss, although nothing would be more likely to be thrown in his face by someone who finds him a repulsive thinker who makes people uglier than the best of them are!

When one considers the importance of Hobbes's theory of virtue for the rest of his theory, it is a great pity that he does not expand his hints and tangential remarks into a full chapter entitled, perhaps, "Of Moral Philosophy," in which he could more clearly expound his own definition of that science as "the science of virtue and vice," (pt. 1, chap. 15, p. 132) and his explicit identification (in

the same place) of the moral virtues with the laws of nature. This would have saved him much grotesque, if pitifully serious, lampooning of his real views.

APPENDIX

Following a suggestion by Henry Sidgwick,² we may divide ethical theories into theories of obligation, which tell us what we must or should do, and theories of virtue, which tell us what a good person is. Given this division, philosophers generally discuss Hobbes as if his were wholly a theory of obligation and not one of virtue. The point of this paper has been that, in the course of his discussion of justice, Hobbes discloses a theory of virtue, a theory that he might and should have developed and systematically connected to his theory of obligation. Not only would doing this have given his theory a greater completeness and system, but it would have spared him from the impression that (like Machiavelli) he is either an immoralist or not really talking about morality. In my paper I have attempted the beginnings of such a development and connection, but, because of the characteristic terseness of Hobbes's own remarks, I can only offer a sketch, together with a reiterated regret that he did not offer more on this subject; for the little he does say is interesting and illuminating and contributes to ruling out certain standard clichés about his philosophy, clichés customarily grouped under the heading of *psychological egoism*.

Cliché number one: Hobbes holds that all a man ever wants is what is (in) his (own greatest) interest. This position is adequately exploded by Butler, who points out that to desire one's interest is to desire that some more particular desire or desires should be satisfied. But Butler must, I think, incorrectly attribute such a view to Hobbes.³ Look at Hobbes's definition of felicity: "Continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say continual prospering, is that men call felicity" (pt. 1, chap. 6, p. 50). Men, possessing (through the power of speech, evidently) the conceptual power to think of something as fancy as "felicity" or "prosperity" naturally *want* it because of all the *other* things they see that they want, *and will want*, from time to time.

Cliché number two: Hobbes is a *psychological* (egoistic) *hedonist*; that is, he holds that all a man ever wants is his own greatest pleasure or happiness. The same sorts of considerations ought to dispose of this one that disposed of the first cliché: to

desire one's happiness is to desire that one's desires be satisfied, a desire that makes no sense unless one has at least one other desire. Moreover, Hobbes nowhere says that pleasure or happiness (each, his own) is what all men always and only want. Many remarks throughout *Leviathan* make it abundantly clear that on his view they want all sorts of things.

Cliché number three: Hobbes holds that all a man ever wants is the continued optimal expression of his own powers, or, in materialistic terms, the maximal continued opportunity for all possible motions of his limbs. But this will not do either. Evidently Hobbes thinks, as anyone does, that *most* of the time I move my limbs to *get* things—things like strawberry jam, for example. But then, why not things like the safety of my children from a tyrant or the advancement of learning?

It is important here to distinguish Hobbes the philosopher from Hobbes the polemical reformer of political passions. He tended to combine labors by exaggerating certain features of his thought to his contemporaries. Now that he belongs safely to the ages, and fashions in passions have changed, it is necessary for us to distinguish unavoidable characterizations of his system of thought as a whole from falsifiable exaggerations of it, by him, to gain the attention of his contemporaries or to counteract certain sources of their obsessions. What Hobbes the philosopher propounds is an expanding structure of desires and aversions in each person, correlative with the expansion of that person's knowledge of causal connections. But the continued expansion of this structure in its middle portions does not require—indeed, cannot sustain—the extirpation of its foundational and peripheral points. It is like the web of a spider that will collapse if all of its connections to various twigs and leaves are cut.

Now it is plain that people, taken as they are, want all sorts of things not plausibly characterized as states of themselves, or as motions, or powers of moving, their limbs. For example, they often want their children to be safe and happy after they themselves are dead, and some of them want promising scholars unknown to them to attend universities. Hobbes the philosopher is not committed to denying any of this, even if Hobbes the polemicist, and counterpolemicist, is attempting to convince his contemporaries that, in Mary Midgley's marvelous phrase, they are *showing off*^a and grabbing for power and illusory security when, as they have for the three centuries preceding, they invade, torture, and slaughter each other and subvert, or scheme to subvert, their governments, for the

sake of all that is pure and wonderful and holy. But when he is not striving to strip those around him of homicidal (and suicidal) ideologies, which operate by not assigning enough value to one's own skin, Hobbes admits such commonplaces as that men can be made miserable by things that are done to others than themselves. Thus, for example, he refers to "those by whose condemnation a man falls into misery, as of a father, wife, or benefactor" (pt. 1, chap. 14, p. 116).

Let us now consider a more interesting and challenging thesis, namely, that Hobbes holds that what always has *top priority* with any man is the continuation of his own vital and voluntary motions. This is much more difficult to refute as an interpretation of Hobbes's philosophical psychology, and it is far more illuminating to reflect on than those just considered above. After all, it would make sense if the spider that tends the web mentioned above were programmed to sever the connection to any *one* twig or leaf, if occasionally this will save the whole web. But this thesis is open to a standard objection: Hobbes is an *ethical* egoist. He holds that *if* men were fully rational they *would* always prefer the continuation of their own vital and voluntary motions to things that are likely to result in their severe restriction or termination. And the claim that this is the top *rational* priority provides all of the force of the claim that men *ought* to keep this end in view and act accordingly. But this ethical claim is otiose and puzzling if men always do *in fact* put this first. Why tell a man that he ought, say, to sacrifice his father for his sovereign if he is all set to do it anyway? Why write *Leviathan* if there is no variance between the *actual* priorities? And if one has noticed such a variance, or thinks one has, hasn't one noticed a distinction?

Fine, some will say, it is just because Hobbes is both a psychological and an ethical egoist that he is inconsistent! But, in the first place, there are degrees of ingression of inconsistency: do not tell me that a philosophical writer *is* inconsistent in some of his words or speeches; show me that, for reasons that are central to his philosophical system, he *has to be*. I think I am showing, without extravagance, that Hobbes does not have to be. Besides that, in the second place, *you* need to show *me* in which of his words or speeches it is *clear* that Hobbes is committing himself to psychological *instead of* ethical egoism. Slipperiness about *expressing* this distinction is notorious in theories of human nature, not just with Hobbes. (It is as if we thought that when the spider is a human spider it helps to

remind it, from time to time, of its fixed programming.)

One final point. Because it has been customary to offer and defend alternative versions of Hobbes's theory of obligation, some of my readers might expect me to do much more in this regard than I have done. But it is not possible to do everything in an article, and that is not what this article is about. Aside from the remarks I have already made in expounding his theory of virtue, I shall remain silent from a reason of principle as well as from caution: what I am offering is a new way of *testing* rival interpretations. Any view of these matters must square with what Hobbes says about virtue rather than ignore it, as has previously been done. An attempt on my part to expound a view, other than what has been *extracted* from me for my own limited expository purposes, would conflict with my overall intention. For it would tempt a reader with his own favorite interpretation of Hobbesian obligation to attack mine instead of applying to his own what Hobbes says about virtue.

To sum up, the test is this: A virtue is a personally variable trait that makes it easier than it otherwise might be for the person who has that trait to do what it is rational for him to do. It is supplementary to, and therefore not identical with, prudence or rational foresight, which is the only personal quality whose presence is *analytically* tied to its being easier than otherwise to do what is rational (or, what one ought). Virtues might be connected to the exercise of rationality in at least two ways: they might be independent intellectual traits that support prudence and make it more effective, or they might be emotional traits that substitute for, offset, or attenuate others that are more troublesome. The virtue of justice is evidently one of these latter. Because virtues are manners—that is, traits whose strength varies from one individual to another—we may single out for differential admiration those who have them, and, if we are not among those people, we may envy them, for it is easier for them, than it is for us, to live well.

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1. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Everyman Editors, 1950). All page references in the text are to this edition.

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