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# Not Always at the Helm: *The Federalist* and the Modern Dismissal of Statesmanship

PATRICK OVEREEM

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## ABSTRACT

Except for occasional glimpses (like the one, surprisingly, in Rawls's *The Law of Peoples*), the concept and ideal of statesmanship have disappeared from modern political thought. This article examines how this has happened and what reversing this would require. It concentrates on *The Federalist* as a text situated at the very transition from the classical appraisal of statesmanship to its modern dismissal. I show how its authors not only relegated statesmanship to a secondary role after constitutionalism but also emptied it as a moral ideal and blurred its distinctions with other types of rulership, namely, that of officials, demagogues, and ultimately tyrants. *The Federalist* has thus opened the way to the ensuing democratic and technocratic undermining of statesmanship (through what Storing has called "populism" and "scientific management"), processes impossible to redress without a thorough questioning of some core modern assumptions.

## INTRODUCTION

John Rawls's *The Law of Peoples* (1999) contains a remarkable, little-noticed section (sec. 14.2) of hardly more than a page titled "Ideal of the statesman." It is worth quoting at some length: "There is no office of statesman, as there is of president, or chancellor, or prime minister. Rather, the statesman is an ideal, like that of the truthful or virtuous individual. Statesmen are presidents or prime ministers or other high officials who, through their exemplary performance and leadership in their office, manifest strength, wisdom, and courage. They guide their people in turbulent and dangerous times. The ideal of the statesman is suggested by the saying: the politician looks to the next election,

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the statesman to the next generation” (Rawls 1999, 97). Rawls further emphasizes the statesman’s extraordinary qualities: “The statesman sees deeper and further than most others and grasps what needs to be done. The statesman must get it right, or nearly so, and then hold fast from this vantage. . . . Statesmen may have their own interests when they hold office, yet they must be selfless in their judgments and assessments of their society’s fundamental interests and must not be swayed, especially in war, by passions of vindictiveness” (97). Hence, strength, wisdom, courage, foresight, steadfastness, selflessness, and magnanimity are the seven virtues of Rawls’s ideal statesman. He also gives examples: “Washington and Lincoln were statesmen, but Bismarck was not” (97). And at the section’s end, he writes, “Napoleon and Hitler incalculably altered history and human life; but statesmen they decidedly were not” (98).

This brief section is remarkable in two ways. First of all, in the context of Rawls’s wider thought: although he refers, somewhat later, to “the duties of the statesman in political liberalism” (1999, 97), the concept is entirely absent in the rest of his work and quite unrelated to his more general theorizing.<sup>1</sup> Second, and more importantly, Rawls’s depiction of the “ideal of the statesman” is an anomaly in the context of modern political theory, in which it plays no role of importance.<sup>2</sup> The concept harks back to a much older tradition—call it classical political philosophy—originating with Plato and Aristotle and further developed by Roman and Christian thinkers (Jones 2019). Thinking in that tradition arguably revolved around two poles: *politeía* and *politikós*, regime and statesman. (It is no coincidence that two of Plato’s key political dialogues bear these terms as titles.) Classical political philosophy was primarily occupied with questions about the good regime and the good ruler, assuming that they hang closely together: good rulership and the good regime both require and promote each other.

For modern political scientists and theorists, by contrast, both questions have lost pertinence. The question about the good regime has come to be regarded as basically settled. Continuing disagreements about particulars notwithstanding, a broad consensus has grown in favor of liberal democracy. Alternatives endorsed in the classical tradition (especially monarchy, aristocracy, and the mixed regime) are no longer considered as serious options. Instead, insofar as constitutional issues are addressed, most effort is put into ever further

1. Except, perhaps, where Rawls states that “the statesman must look to the political world, and must, in extreme cases, be able to distinguish between the interests of the well-ordered regime he or she serves and the dictates of the religious, philosophical, or moral doctrine that he or she personally lives by” (1999, 105).

2. One other exception is the use of the concept of (liberal) statesmanship by Ackerman (1980, 236–37).

realizing the promises of liberal democracy and defending it against illiberal, undemocratic rivals. The modern treatment of the other question, the one about good rulership, is even more radical: here the question itself is neglected. Political science discusses structures, mechanisms, and abstract “actors” but pays remarkably little attention to the persons who actually conduct politics. Likewise, modern political theory concentrates on ideals or principles and on institutions, but no longer on virtues (Waldron 2016, 1–3).

All this shows the demise of the ideal of statesmanship in modern thought. Not only has the term nearly disappeared from political vocabulary, but the concept and the ideal also barely play a role in modern political research and theorizing (Faulkner 2007, 198–242). Reflecting their preference for liberal democracy, modern political scientists and theorists do pay a considerable amount of attention to citizenship, but hardly any to statesmanship: the *polítēs* (citizen) has replaced the *politikós*. Apart from occasional glimpses, such as Rawls’s, the ideal of the statesman has all but vanished from modern political thought. For exhuming it, Rawls has drawn, presumably, on his knowledge of classical rather than modern political philosophy—and on common parlance, in which the concept has remained in use and retained its moral overtones.

This article aims to clarify how the ideal of statesmanship has been eclipsed and how it might be recovered. It does so by first expounding the basic meaning of (classical and modern) statesmanship. Then, I turn to one key text, namely, *The Federalist*—not primarily because its authors are justifiably deemed statesmen themselves, but because the text is situated at the very transition from the classical appraisal of statesmanship to its modern dismissal. The aim, then, is not to provide a novel interpretation of *The Federalist*, but rather to inquire how in the thought of its authors statesmanship has lost its distinctive meaning. Next, I explain (drawing on an argument from Herbert J. Storing) how statesmanship has been transforming into three other forms of rulership, namely, those of the official, the demagogue, and ultimately the tyrant. The concluding section considers what it would require to redress this degeneration and to regain the ideal of statesmanship for our time.

While much has been written before, obviously, on moral and political leadership and on *The Federalist*, this article contributes to the existing literature in at least two ways. The first is by its specific focus: it considers the meaning and relevance of the much-neglected concept of statesmanship and its role in Publius’s constitutional argument. Notwithstanding others’ valuable contributions on aspects of this issue (many of which are used below), no systematic and comprehensive analysis of it has been done before, despite its clear links (and tensions) with core elements in *The Federalist*’s framework. The second main contribution of this article has to do with disciplinary approach. Compared to most literature that addresses (the scope for) statesmanship primarily from

the viewpoint of (American) political history, my aim here is rather to contribute to (American and ultimately international) political thought. Hence, the subject is placed in a much wider philosophical context than historians usually do, namely, in the long-term transition from classical to modern political thought, and it is treated in a frankly normative manner, as when I show how statesmanship has “decayed” and been substituted by other, decidedly inferior forms of leadership. My ultimate assessment of the need for statesmanship in our times, as well as the difficulty of regaining it (both conceptually and practically), follows from this approach.

### STATESMANSHIP, CLASSICAL AND MODERN

To present-day ears, the term “statesmanship” sounds hopelessly quaint, elitist, and gender biased. Many people, including those with an expert knowledge of politics, have only a faint idea of what the concept originally meant. They use the word, if at all, as a term of praise for seasoned, successful politicians. But in that superficial meaning even long-ruling dictators like Belarus’s Lukashenko or Syria’s Assad could count as statesmen. The concept clearly has a richer and more normative meaning.

Most briefly, statesmanship can be described as (morally) excellent leadership on the highest political level. This working definition contains several important elements. To begin, statesmanship is a form of leadership; not all leaders are statesmen, but statesmen are always leaders. Hence, it is misplaced to say that, for instance, all civil servants could become statesmen. According to a very helpful conceptualization by Coats (1995, 21), statesmanship can be distinguished from other forms of leadership by three characteristics. First, it can be distinguished by its aim: the goal of statesmanship is the general interest or rather the common good (*bonum commune*). A true statesman is not concerned with a partial interest (whether that of a minority or of the majority), let alone with his own, but stands “above the parties,” serving the well-being of the whole. And importantly, in the pursuit of this aim, there should be considerable and lasting success: a politician who strives to promote the common good but fails because of opposition, bad luck, or some other external factor can be admired but does not qualify as a statesman. The second distinctive trait of statesmanship is its scope: it always concerns the entire political community and not just a part of it. It is aimed at “the highest political level,” so in modern states that of the entire people, of the nation, or even of multiple nations in an empire (if there is one), and in international politics perhaps even that of all humanity. (Statesmanship is thus definitely not restricted to the nation-state only.) Third, statesmen can be distinguished by the means they employ: these are the political means of rhetoric, persuasion, negotiation, and decision-making,

and not those of force, deceit, or intimidation. These three characteristics make a statesman. When only one of them is missing, a leader can be very powerful but not count as a statesman. Dictators, for instance, are not statesmen since they work to realize only their own interest and that of their entourage (aim). Neither are mayors, since they govern only their own city and not the wider polity (scope). Nor are warlords, finally, since they use not political means but military force (means).

*Classical* statesmanship further distinguishes itself by a fourth characteristic, namely, virtue: leadership should be not just excellent but morally excellent. At this point the modern conception of statesmanship parts ways with the classical one. For a thinker like Machiavelli—one of the first, of course, to use the concept of state (*stato*) in relation to political leadership—the ruler need not be morally excellent but should be effective and hence at most have an appearance of virtue. According to classical (by which I mean ancient and medieval) thought, by contrast, the statesman has to possess and exercise important virtues such as prudence, justice, and others. The most typical virtue of the statesman in this conception, however, is Aristotle’s virtue of magnanimity (*megalopsychía*), which spurs the statesman to accomplish great things (Faulkner 2007, 16–57; Overeem 2017). In later literature, this “crown of the virtues” is indeed often presented as an essential part of the classical ideal of statesmanship (Arnhart 1983; Holloway 2008; Fetter 2012; Vasalou 2019). As we have seen, these same virtues are also at the core of Rawls’s depiction of the ideal of the statesman. Indeed, his conception is surprisingly classical: the extensive set of deeply moral virtues; the urge to look ahead of the short-term wishes and interests of the electorate toward a higher, long-term good; and the pedagogical role toward the people—these are elements in Rawls’s description that belong to the classical rather than the modern conception of statesmanship.

It may be worth stressing that this conceptualization of statesmanship is ideal-typical: real-world examples of statesmen (even the most esteemed among them, such as Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Churchill) will not meet this conceptualization perfectly. They may, for instance, not always have served the common good unequivocally or they may have used deceitful and forceful means to reach their goals. In the moralized classical perception as well, actual statesmen were often highly ambiguous characters. The value of this ideal type is, as always, not to give a precise description of concrete cases but to provide a theoretical yardstick for analyzing and assessing them. The given conceptualization thus serves to gauge the extent to which specific leaders (one could think of Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Reagan, but also Gandhi, Lee Kuan Yew, Mandela, Thatcher, Merkel, and many others) do or do not qualify for being considered statesmen. The ideal-typical conceptualization of statesmanship thus allows

easily for the common occurrence of moral imperfection and ambiguity in actual leaders.

In both its classical and modern conceptions, statesmanship is particularly shown at two occasions, namely, at the founding of a state and in times of crisis and danger.<sup>3</sup> Hence, there are also two types of statesmanship: that of “founders,” who erect a state and provide it with a constitution (think of Solon and Lycurgus, or in later times Atatürk, Ben Gurion, and indeed the American founders), and that of “savers,” who lead their state through a crisis and reestablish it (Pericles perhaps, or more recently Churchill and De Gaulle).<sup>4</sup> In both cases, and contrary to what the term suggests, statesmanship manifests itself especially when the state cannot be taken for granted. Paradoxically, statesmen emerge either when the state is still lacking or when it is endangered. This means, conversely, that they do not appear when the state is safe and functioning properly. Statesmanship is extraordinary by definition and does not fit naturally with everyday politics in a relatively stable and functioning regime. “Stateness” is at odds with statesmanship (Overeem and Bakker 2019).

The most fraught question for moderns is, of course, what is the common good or public interest that statesmen are supposed to achieve? Is there not simply too much disagreement about that to leave statesmanship with any meaningful relevance? Here again, we need to distinguish between classical and modern conceptions. For the ancients, the common good was above all, in one word, virtue: the statesman had to facilitate and promote the virtuousness of the people and to educate them in virtue, not least by his own example. The specific virtues to be promoted could include only the earthly (cardinal) virtues, as for the ancient pagans, or additionally the theological virtues, as for medieval Christians, but in either case the common good was understood in deeply moral terms. Moderns have generally rejected this “perfectionist” view of the common good and instead adopted a more “proceduralist” and “facilitative” understanding of, in their terms, the public interest. In this view, the goal is, succinctly put, the maintenance of the political order and thereby the protection of the basic goods that a well-functioning political order ensures, starting with physical security and property and extending to late modern ones like housing, health, and education. Statesmanship is, then, as Coats (1995, 21) puts it, “the activity directed toward securing the conditions for politics to occur.” Whereas good politicians often achieve much for their constituency, their party, or their

3. Particularly clear, in this regard, is Cicero’s conceptualization of the *politikós* (Zarecki 2009; see Jansen 2022).

4. For discussions of (inevitably controversial) cases, see, e.g., Coats (1995; on Washington and Hamilton, Lincoln, Wilson, Churchill, De Gaulle, and Nixon and Kissinger), Ionescu (1999; on Adenauer, De Gaulle, Thatcher, Reagan, and Gorbachev), Mahoney (2000; on De Gaulle), and Mahoney (2022; on Burke, Tocqueville, Lincoln, Churchill, De Gaulle, and Havel).

country, statesmen make sure that politics as such remains possible. In other words, modern statesmanship is not just playing the political game well; it is making that very game possible.

Again, it must be stressed that this is an analytical distinction; actual statesmen (such as, prominently, the American founders) have often mixed perfectionist with proceduralist aims and thus reflected both the classical and modern conceptions. This need not confuse us. As said before, the founders can be located at the very transition between the two, showing traces of both. Still, the extent to which both types of aims are present in either the classical or the modern ideals of statesmanship and, more importantly, the justification for those aims differ markedly. So, while undoubtedly a Madison, or a Churchill, or some other statesman in modern times has also served substantive moral aims next to formal ones, modern political theory will have much greater difficulty justifying (indeed even recognizing) those than its classical counterpart.

Finally, closely related to the idea that statesmen must have a clear idea of their aim is one other aspect of statesmanship, namely what Eidelberg (1974, 3) has called “the coordination between political theory and political practice.” Although statesmen do not develop original political philosophy themselves, they tend to relate to politics in a philosophical manner, either by internalizing the political philosophical insights of others and translating them to political practice or by reflecting philosophically on the practical questions they are confronted with. It is especially the latter type of practical reflection of which America has much to offer (Rossum and McDowell 1981; Frisch and Stevens 1983; Newell 2012; Lim 2014)—and of which *The Federalist* is, of course, one of the earliest and most important examples.

### THE FEDERALIST ON STATESMANSHIP

Having to some extent explored what statesmanship means, I now want to turn to *The Federalist* and see how it exemplifies the modern transformation and dismissal of the ideal of statesmanship. To begin, consider the text itself.<sup>5</sup> The term “statesman” and its variants appear only six times in *The Federalist*, namely, in nos. 10 (twice, in subsequent sentences), 12, 36, 58, and 70. The three uses in nos. 10 and 58 are by Madison; the other three are by Hamilton. In four of these six instances, the text speaks about “enlightened statesmen” (including “inquisitive and enlightened statesmen”; *Federalist* no. 36, 215) and once about “politicians and statesmen who have been the most celebrated for the soundness of their principles and for the justice of their views” (*Federalist*

5. The edition I cite is Hamilton et al. (2003). To limit confusion about pagination, I give paper numbers too.



no. 70, 422). Apparently, statesmen are associated with wisdom and political insight, praised not so much for their actions as for their understanding. Which insights do “enlightened statesmen” possess?

Three issues are explicitly mentioned, invariably (and importantly) by Hamilton. First, statesmen understand the great importance of trade: “The prosperity of commerce is now perceived and acknowledged by all enlightened statesmen to be the most useful as well as the most productive source of national wealth, and has accordingly become a primary object of their political cares” (*Federalist* no. 12, 86). This view, that the promotion of trade is considered one of the most important issues for statesmen to care about, is remarkable when viewed from the classical conception of statesmanship, especially since Hamilton continues to say right after this that trade multiplies the “means of gratification” and promotes the circulation of precious metals, “those darling objects of human avarice and enterprise.” Clearly, in classical thought this was never an aim on which statesmen were supposed to concentrate. Hamilton here shows an appreciation of economic life and an acceptance of its concomitant vices that is typically modern (as he himself seems to realize, given his use of the word “now”).

The second kind of knowledge and expertise of statesmen is their ability to design good tax laws, a task that cannot simply be left to the people’s representatives: “Nations in general, even under governments of the more popular kind, usually commit the administration of their finances to single men or to boards composed of a few individuals, who digest and prepare, in the first instance, the plans of taxation, which are afterward passed into laws by the authority of the sovereign or legislature. Inquisitive and enlightened statesmen are deemed everywhere best qualified to make a judicious selection of the objects proper for revenue” (*Federalist* no. 36, 215). Again, we see that Hamilton endows statesmen with a task—tax legislation—that was certainly not prominent in the classical tradition. Both issues, trade and taxation, considerably expand the portfolio of statesmen and ensure that they act not only at the state’s founding or during crises but also in quieter times, when the state functions properly. Statesmanship in this sense becomes more normal and closer to politics in general—again a typically modern tendency.

The third and final kind of insight that Hamilton ascribes to enlightened statesmen has a more constitutional character. It is the awareness of the necessity of a strong, monocratic executive, besides and against the more populous legislative: “Those politicians and statesmen who have been the most celebrated for the soundness of their principles and for the justice of their views, have declared in favor of a single Executive and a numerous legislature. They have, with great propriety, considered energy as the most necessary qualification of the former, and have regarded this as most applicable to power in a

single hand, while they have, with equal propriety, considered the latter as best adapted to deliberation and wisdom, and best calculated to conciliate the confidence of the people and to secure their privileges and interests” (*Federalist* no. 70, 422). It is somewhat unclear whom Hamilton means here with “politicians and statesmen,” but more than to actual political leaders he seems to allude to famous political thinkers such as Locke and Montesquieu. They were, after all, the ones who have most clearly articulated this important distinction between the executive and legislative powers and the difference in composition and role between them.

We see, then, that in Hamilton’s three references to statesmen they are depicted in a very positive but also in a typically modern and rather technocratic manner. Madison’s usage is quite different. To begin, in *Federalist* no. 58 Madison warns against the risk of a great popular representation by pointing out that in ancient times “a single orator, or an artful statesman” sometimes succeeded in enticing the entire meeting, “as if a scepter had been placed in his single hand” (*Federalist* no. 58, 358). Here it turns out that for Madison the term “statesman” not only had a positive meaning but also could be attached to more negative qualifications such as “artful.” The line between statesman and demagogue is remarkably thin here.

The most important explicit passage on statesmanship in *The Federalist*, however, is in no. 10, which is, as everyone knows, about the danger of faction. We have seen already that statesmanship distinguishes itself from other forms of political leadership by serving not the partial interest of a subgroup but the common good of the entire political community. In that regard, statesmanship is the exact opposite of partisanship (Mansfield 1965). Does this mean that statesmanship can be a counterweight to or even a remedy against divisiveness and faction? Madison doubts it. He emphasizes that the causes of faction are given with human nature: people are too limited, too different, and above all too self-interested to come to a full harmony of opinions. Not just differences in personal capacities but also those in economic interests lead to constant animosity, not least about taxes. Even statesmen, Madison claims in a crucial passage, cannot be expected to resolve this: “It is in vain to say that enlightened statesmen will be able to adjust these clashing interests, and render them all subservient to the public good. Enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm. Nor, in many cases, can such an adjustment be made at all without taking into view indirect and remote considerations, which will rarely prevail over the immediate interest which one party may find in disregarding the rights of another or the good of the whole” (*Federalist* no. 10, 75). In other words, statesmanship is no remedy for partisanship. Enlightened statesmen will not always be in power, and even when they are, they will often not be able to withhold parties from pursuing their immediate self-interest at the cost of the

further-removed general interest. Gain in the short run will usually win out over welfare in the long run.

This is a sobering conclusion: for curbing the biggest threat that republics face, the value of statesmanship is in the end very limited. To really counter the danger (not the existence) of faction, we should, according to Madison, rely not on political leaders but on institutional measures: we should install majority rule against minority faction and representation (rather than direct democracy) against majority faction. Above all, the large size of the American republic should ensure that its population is so heterogeneous that organizing effective partisanship at the Union level becomes very difficult. Here and elsewhere *The Federalist* provides institutional solutions for what are ultimately moral problems. As Lawler (1983, 339–40) has put it, “The founders realized that to rely on statesmen is to rely on luck, because no one can predict whether a statesman is present when one is needed. They attempted, therefore, to construct a regime with institutions so strong that statesmanship would not be required for the regime’s preservation.” In this regard, too, their approach can be called typically modern.

### SCOPE FOR MODERN STATESMANSHIP

This is, however, not the last word about the role of statesmanship in *The Federalist*. The question remains how much space is still left for a meaningful contribution of statesmanship within the institutional framework it defends. The fact that “enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm” and the fact that they cannot resolve the deeply human problem of partisanship need not mean that statesmanship counts for nothing. On closer inspection, *The Federalist* has indeed more to say about statesmanship than is suggested by the six passages in which the term is explicitly used. This leads us to the scope that the authors of *The Federalist* more implicitly leave open for statesmanship in their conceptual and constitutional system. Do they deny the very possibility of statesmanship or do they suppose that it can play a modest role after all? Do they perhaps even implicitly promote it? Can statesmanship perhaps still be required in cases of (constitutional) crisis?

These questions touch on a long-standing debate about two interpretations of *The Federalist*: the pluralist interpretation and the elite republican interpretation (Gibson 1991, 2012). This debate concentrates particularly on no. 10 and thus on Madison’s views but applies to other papers as well. According to the pluralist interpretation, the authors of *The Federalist* (especially Madison) expected the constitutional structure of the extended federal republic to create a power equilibrium in which various group interests would balance each other out. In this view, there is little need for reliance on the impartiality

and other qualities of rulers. Indeed, rulers (the discussion is especially about congressmen) are expected to act as advocates of a partial or group interest. The elite republican interpretation, by contrast, says that the Federalists (Hamilton obviously, but also “the Hamiltonian Madison,” as he is called in Banning 1984<sup>6</sup>) did expect the rulers of the new republic to be “disinterested” and “impartial” gentlemen, oriented at the general interest, with their ambition guided and checked by the constitutional structure. Now, which of these interpretations best suits the intent and meaning of *The Federalist* is not something to be decided here (it seems to me that Alan Gibson himself offers a very convincing middle position, giving each interpretation its due), but the debate does have implications for our issue: the scope for statesmanship, which is obviously greater in the elite republican interpretation than in the pluralist one. What indications does *The Federalist* give us that such a scope indeed exists?

There is no doubt that both Hamilton and Madison believed it necessary to take recourse to constitutionalism rather than to statesmanship as a reliable source of political order. In *Federalist* no. 6, Hamilton expresses his concerns about “the agency of personal considerations,” which can lead esteemed politicians (including “the celebrated Pericles,” the classical model of statesmanship<sup>7</sup>) into initiating self-destructive wars. He concludes that it is time “to adopt as a practical maxim for the direction of our political conduct that we, as well as the other inhabitants of the globe, are yet remote from the happy empire of perfect wisdom and perfect virtue” (*Federalist* no. 6, 53). Hence, he emphasized structures with checks and balances over political action by officials. As Tulis (2010, 121) has put it, “The system of institutionally constructed personas put in conflict and dialogue is a substitute for statesmanship in the day-to-day-business of government.” Constitutionalism expressly establishes the “rule of law, not of men” and is therefore intended to make statesmanship secondary, at least as long as the constitutional order remains intact.

6. There is much debate about the supposed development of Madison’s thought and its relation to Hamilton’s. This is beyond our scope here, but for a start, see Rosen (1999) and Gibson (2002).

7. Hamilton criticizes Pericles with remarkable severity, saying he acted “in compliance with the resentment of a prostitute, at the expense of much of the blood and treasure of his countrymen,” was “stimulated by private pique,” was threatened with prosecution “as an accomplice in a supposed theft,” was accused of “dissipating the funds of the state in the purchase of popularity,” and finally was “the primitive author of that famous and fatal war . . . which . . . terminated in the ruin of the Athenian commonwealth” (*Federalist* no. 6, 49). In other words, Hamilton depicts Pericles as the very opposite of the statesman he was reputed to be. This does not necessarily imply a deviation from ancient political thought, since Plato and to a lesser extent Aristotle did the same (see Caesar 2007, 295n5), but it obviously downplays the role of statesmanship. See Roberts (2011) for more about American appreciations of Pericles.

But secondary is not superfluous. The question remains whether constitutionalism cannot allow for statesmanship too. Madison provides the beginning of an answer when he writes, “The aim of every political constitution is, or ought to be, first to obtain for rulers men who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue, the common good of society, and in the next place, to take the most effectual precautions for keeping them virtuous whilst they continue to hold their public trust” (*Federalist* no. 57, 348). This is a remarkable passage: the goal of a constitution is to get rulers who can serve the common good with wisdom and virtue—an entirely classical view. How can this be achieved? In no. 10, Madison had already argued that the size of the republic contributes to the selection of the best officials, “representatives whose enlightened views and virtuous sentiments render them superior to local prejudices and schemes of injustice” (78). Large distances make nepotism difficult and compel voters to look for general qualifications. In this way, Madison expects, the best candidates for political office will emerge.

The two types of statesmanship discerned earlier, that of “founders” and that of “savers,” are both discussed in *The Federalist* (Diamond 1983). In the past, Madison notes in no. 38, states have mostly been founded by “some individual citizen of pre-eminent wisdom and approved integrity” (*Federalist* no. 38, 228), that is, by men like Solon and Lycurgus. It is noteworthy, in that light, that the Constitution of the United States is designed not by one such preeminent individual but rather by a convention. And particularly when they are more numerous, founders of states should be free from “the pestilential influence of party animosities” (*Federalist* no. 37, 227). They must take advantage of the insights of the new science of politics, Hamilton says in no. 9, according to which “the efficacy of various principles is now well understood, which were either not known at all, or imperfectly known to the ancients” (*Federalist* no. 9, 67), namely, of the principles regarding the separation of powers, the independent judiciary, representation, and federalism.

*The Federalist* also leaves room for statesmanship after the state’s founding. Surely, “enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm,” but this does not mean that they will never be. While it would be exaggerated to say, with Grasso (1987, 18), that Hamilton and Madison expected them to be often or even regularly available, they did see the occasional possibility of the statesmanship of “savers.” They recognized that after the adoption of the Constitution emergency situations could arise that make this type of statesmanship necessary (see Rossiter 2002). Hamilton writes in no. 72, “There is no nation which has not, at one period or another, experienced an absolute necessity of the services of particular men in particular situations; perhaps it would not be too strong to say, to the preservation of its political existence” (*Federalist* no. 72, 437). And in the preceding essay, Hamilton discusses the possibility

that the state has to be rescued from itself by statesmen standing up against the momentous, self-destructive wishes of the people:

When occasions present themselves, in which the interests of the people are at variance with their inclinations, it is the duty of the persons whom they have appointed, to be the guardians of those interests; to withstand the temporary delusion, in order to give them time and opportunity for more cool and sedate reflection. Instances might be cited, in which a conduct of this kind has saved the people from very fatal consequences of their own mistakes, and has procured lasting monuments of their gratitude to the men who had courage and magnanimity enough to serve them at the peril of their displeasure. (*Federalist* no. 71, 431)

Where should one look for statesmen with such “courage and magnanimity”? The most likely place for statesmanship in the American republic seems to be the executive, that is, the presidency. More than any other official, the president should be expected to serve all Americans. And that responsibility requires statesmanship, as Eidelberg (1974, 306) argues: “A President, who is in fact, and not only in name, the leader of the nation, requires a degree of intellectual and moral excellence surpassing that of a President who is merely the leader of a party.” John Jay, *The Federalist’s* third author, shows confidence that the indirect election of both the president and the Senate would ensure the election of the noblest candidates: “As the select assemblies for choosing the President, as well as the State legislatures who appoint the senators, will in general be composed of the most enlightened and respectable citizens, there is reason to presume that their attention and their votes will be directed to those men only who have become the most distinguished by their abilities and virtue, and in whom the people perceive just grounds for confidence” (*Federalist* no. 64, 389). Particularly Hamilton tries to create space for presidential statesmanship in his defenses of strong executive power (see Frisch 1981, 48). Of course, he recognizes that presidents will never be perfectly virtuous; they will often be prone to avarice and self-aggrandizement (*Federalist* no. 75, 450). Like Jay, however, he has surprisingly high expectations of the moral level of future American presidents:

The process of election affords a moral certainty, that the office of President will never fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications. Talents for low intrigue, and the little arts of popularity, may alone suffice to elevate a man to the first honors in a single State; but it will require other talents, and a different kind of merit, to establish him in the esteem and confidence of the whole

Union, or of so considerable a portion of it as would be necessary to make him a successful candidate for the distinguished office of President of the United States. It will not be too strong to say, that there will be a constant probability of seeing the station filled by characters pre-eminent for ability and virtue. (*Federalist* no. 68, 412)

Irrespective of whether this assessment has proven to be too optimistic or not, we can conclude that *The Federalist* does indeed leave space for morally excellent leadership at the highest political level—that is, for classical statesmanship—in the constitutional regime it defends. Its occurrence is not at all guaranteed, but it is not ruled out either. While it is exaggerated to claim, with Grasso (1987, 20), that “enlightened statesmanship” makes for one half of Publius’s solution, next to representational and institutional pluralism, there is room for it as a kind of exceptional remedy. This is not to deny that, although statesmanship is discussed in *The Federalist*, it plays a secondary role in its argument. The fact that essays written in defense of a constitution primarily address institutional issues is of course natural. More importantly, the constitutional principles and the specific regime they defend are deliberately meant to limit the very need for statesmanship. In this regard, *The Federalist* is a truly modern text: the *politikós* as personification of political virtue is no longer expected to play the key role he had in the classical tradition.

But this does not mean that there is no place for statesmanship at all. The Constitution does not require statesmanship to function, but it does not preclude it either. In *The Federalist* it is acknowledged that morally excellent political leadership in service of the public interest and the entire American nation remains both desirable and possible. It can be exercised by the president, but also by senators, representatives, high-ranking judges, and perhaps other officials as well. No doubt, statesmanship will show considerable variation when exercised by functionaries of the different branches: they may tend different aspects of the common good and exhibit different statesmanlike virtues (deliberative prudence in the Senate, energetic fortitude in the executive, and even-handed justice in the Supreme Court). The fact that such variations are conceivable underlines the point that *The Federalist* left scope for statesmanship at the highest echelons of America’s complex constitutional arrangement. While it is exaggerated to say, with Franck (1989, 517), that “Publius argues that the Constitution will maximize the potential and opportunities for . . . statesmen to arise in the national government,” he did allow for the possibility.

According to this reading, which closely follows Gibson’s, both the elite republican and pluralist interpretations are only partially tenable. The pluralist interpretation rightly argues that the authors of *The Federalist* did not believe that sustaining the constitutional order depends on statesmanship; they relied

on institutional mechanisms instead. It underrates, however, the explicit passages in which they (not only Hamilton but also Madison and Jay) stress the value of virtuous rulership. The elite republican interpretation, in turn, is correct in emphasizing such passages, but then again it underrates the primary importance of constitutionalism.

## OPPOSITES OF STATESMANSHIP

Recent political thinkers disagree on the possibility of statesmanship in the present American order. Some have argued that American presidents can still be statesmen, particularly when they use their extensive competences to create a “new consensus,” as Lincoln did during the Civil War or Franklin D. Roosevelt with his New Deal (Engeman 1982, 281). Others are more skeptical. According to Ackerman, the founders have created a system suited for the “politician/statesman,” an ambiguous figure who works for his conception of the general interest, but only insofar as this does not jeopardize his chances of being (re)elected.<sup>8</sup> This is exactly the type of “normal politics,” as Ackerman calls it (1991, 230–65), for which the founders designed the Constitution. They were not so cynical as to think that politicians only pursue their self-interest, but neither were they so naive as to think that all politicians are also statesmen—most of them will be a mixture of both. Tulis also believes that the American president can no longer be a real statesman establishing or saving the constitutional order; he can only work in service of the existing regime. Hence, Tulis proposes to abandon the lofty term “statesman” and henceforth speak of the president as a “constitutional officer” (2010, 112).<sup>9</sup> Thus the “official” has replaced the statesman.

Officialdom is a typically modern degradation of statesmanship. In classical political thought, statesmanship used to have two very different opposites, both much more exciting and more obviously dangerous than officialdom, namely, demagoguery and tyranny (Patapan 2019, 3). While opposed, statesmanship has, however, one important similarity to both, since, like them (and contrary

8. “On the one hand, our politician/statesmen are not perfect privatists willing to sell their legislative influence to the highest bidder (after taking due account of the risk of criminal prosecution). On the other hand, they are unwilling to devote themselves single-mindedly to the public good, as they might define it if they were public citizens who were not interested in winning and holding electoral office. Instead, as a *politician/statesman*, each representative is interested in getting reelected. Subject to this constraint, they will try to use their influence on behalf of the ‘public good’ as they conscientiously define it. But they will be reluctant to play the role of *politician/statesman* when it seriously endangers their reelection chances” (Ackerman 1991, 244).

9. This is what in German is called an *Amtsinhaber*, who is neither a statesman nor a demagogue, nor a tyrant for that matter, but literally an officeholder, serving the people as a public servant, even if elected (see Kirsch and Mackscheidt 1985).



to rule by officials), it relies on sources of power and authority that lie outside the constitutional order. The difference, of course, is that the statesman seeks to (re)establish that very order, whereas the demagogue and the tyrant try to abuse and ultimately undo it.

Of the two classical opposites, tyranny is most squarely opposed to statesmanship. We have seen already that Madison, in no. 10, warns against the tyranny of both minorities and majorities, two typically modern forms of “electoral” tyranny. But his conception of tyranny is much broader than that: “The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny” (*Federalist* no. 47, 298). This definition deviates from the classical understanding, according to which tyranny is not simply the concentration of power, but rather the use of concentrated power in the ruler’s own interest, detrimental to the common good. Madison’s apparent unwillingness to distinguish between good and bad forms of concentrated rule (between monarchy and tyranny, so to speak) has to do, of course, with the context of the American Revolution, but it is also typically modern. The same, paradoxically, goes for the view that tyranny can be prevented by proper constitutional design: “Tyranny has perhaps oftener grown out of the assumptions of power, called for, on pressing exigencies, by a defective constitution, than out of the full exercise of the largest constitutional authorities” (*Federalist* no. 20, 132).

In no. 83, Hamilton notes one specific kind of tyranny, namely, “the tyranny of popular magistrates in a popular government” (*Federalist* no. 83, 498). To see how the people’s representatives in a republic can be tyrannical, we must turn to the second classical opposite of statesmanship: demagoguery. What is a demagogue? James Fenimore Cooper, in a brief essay published in 1838, famously described a demagogue as “a leader of the rabble”: “The peculiar office of a demagogue is to advance his own interests, by affecting a deep devotion to the interests of the people” (1838, 98–99; see Roberts-Miller 2017). Whereas tyrants use oppression and intimidation, demagogues use deceit and flattery. The distinction between demagogues and tyrants is, however, a gradual one. James W. Ceasar (2007, 268–70) has helpfully distinguished between Type I demagogues, who pretend to speak up for the people but mislead it through their rhetoric in order to gain popularity, and Type II demagogues, who go further and use demagoguery to secure their own power in order to overthrow the republic and become tyrants themselves. The ancient Greek ruler Cleon is the classic example of the former, the Roman leader Julius Caesar the classic example of the latter.

This transition from demagoguery to tyranny is exactly the danger Publius feared as well. As has been noted by others as well (e.g., Signer 2009, 31),

*The Federalist* both begins and ends with an explicit warning against demagoguery. In no. 1 Hamilton writes, “History will teach us, that . . . of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career, by paying an obsequious court to the people . . . commencing demagogues, and ending tyrants” (*Federalist* no. 1, 29). And at the closing of no. 85, he calls on “all the sincere lovers of the Union” to prevent, among other evils, “the military despotism of a victorious demagogue” (*Federalist* no. 85, 526). The fact that Hamilton felt the need to warn against this danger at the very beginning and the very end of the essays underlines the extent to which he feared it. And in both cases, the warning was not against “mere” demagoguery (Type I) but against demagoguery that leads to tyranny (Type II).

The danger of demagoguery is also noted elsewhere in *The Federalist*. In no. 63, Madison writes that the people can be “stimulated by some irregular passion, or some illicit advantage, or misled by the artful misrepresentations of interested men” (*Federalist* no. 63, 382). And in no. 71 Hamilton adds that citizens are easily beset “by the wiles of parasites and sycophants, by the snares of the ambitious, the avaricious, the desperate, by the artifices of men who possess their confidence more than they deserve it, and of those who seek to possess rather than to deserve it” (*Federalist* no. 71, 431).

These warnings and the way in which they are formulated, indeed the very contrast between demagogues and statesmen, stem directly from the classical tradition (Lane 2012). Although demagogues pretend to stand up for everybody, in the end they only serve a partial interest, namely, that of the poor masses and ultimately that of themselves. As Cooper has put it, “The demagogue always puts the people before the constitution and the laws” (1838, 99). On the other hand, the statesman is not a flatterer or “adulator” of the people (*Federalist* no. 71, 431) but is willing to contradict it, if necessary: “It is all important to distinguish between those who labor in behalf of the people on the general account, and those who labor in behalf of the people on their own account” (Cooper 1838, 99).<sup>10</sup>

The remedy proposed in *The Federalist* for both tyranny and demagoguery is again mainly institutional: expanding the size of the polity, building representative institutions, installing checks and balances—in one word: constitutionalism

10. Sometimes the distinction between statesmanship and demagoguery is blurred by the argument that the latter can serve as a tool to the former: “The statesman would always wish to avoid demagoguery, but sometimes a statesman needs to use demagoguery to avert greater harm to the city or nation” (Ceasar 2007, 268). But this seems to confuse demagoguery with rhetoric. Of course, statesmen will use rhetoric (albeit prudently), but that is not the same as becoming demagogues or “using” demagoguery. See also Lawler (1983, 330–48) and Tulis (1987).

(Grasso 1987, 17; Patapan 2019, 2, 5, and 10). This approach, however effective, makes the emergence of statesmanship difficult. While aiming to prevent demagoguery and tyranny, Publius does little to promote statesmanship, or even to distinguish it from its opposites. This, again, is typically modern: his efforts aim at preventing the greatest evil (*summum malum*) rather than at achieving the common good (*bonum commune*). While it is untenable to say, as Patapan (2019, 5) does, that Publius “sought to do away altogether with the problem of the demagogue by denying any distinction between statesman and demagogue,” it is true that in *The Federalist* the distinction is neither sharp nor very consequential. This blurring of concepts is surely an important factor in what (as we will now see) Herbert Storing called the modern “decay” of statesmanship.

THE “DECAY” OF STATESMANSHIP

So far, we have encountered four types of political leaders, namely, the statesman, the official, the demagogue, and the tyrant. Schematically, they can be distinguished by means of Coats’s dimensions of the end and means of rulership and thus presented in one typology (see table 1). As this table shows, the statesman is the opposite of the tyrant, on both dimensions, but has similarities to and differences from the demagogue and the official. While both the statesman and the official (however imperfectly) aspire to serve the general interest (or, in classical terms, the common good), the demagogue and the tyrant rather serve a partial interest, namely, that of the common people and that of themselves and their clique, respectively. And while both the statesman and the demagogue use political means (including rhetoric), the official and the tyrant rather use nonpolitical (administrative, legal, or military) means that are ultimately based on the state’s power.

In the classical conception, the four types of leadership can furthermore be contrasted in terms of virtue: while the statesman is the personification of virtue and the tyrant is the personification of vice, the demagogue and the official are mixed figures—neither fully virtuous nor fully vicious, excelling more in

Table 1. Four Types of Political Rulership

|                     | End: General Interest | End: Partial Interest |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Means: political    | Statesman             | Demagogue             |
| Means: nonpolitical | Official              | Tyrant                |

skills than in morality (political skills in the case of the demagogue and non-political ones in the case of the official).<sup>11</sup>

This typology is also instructive for understanding how, as noted in the beginning, the concept and ideal of statesmanship have gradually disappeared from modern political theory. To see how that has happened, we can turn to an essay by Herbert J. Storing, titled “American Statesmanship: Old and New” (published unfinished and posthumously in, among other places, Storing 1995; see Carrese 2015, 282–85). In this essay, Storing describes how the ideal of statesmanship in America has been undermined by two processes, one democratic and the other technocratic. The first is what he calls “populism”: the endorsement of the idea that popular government (i.e., democracy) is an unqualified good and thus, conversely, the loss of the idea that democracy, however desirable, is also problematic because it can result in majoritarian foolishness and tyranny (see Ruderman 1997). According to Storing, this development has occurred in two steps. The first step was taken when the founders downplayed the dangers of popular government and rejected the classical solution to them—the mixed regime—by foreclosing the possibility of an aristocracy in America. Instead, they relied on a class of gentlemen like themselves who were democratically minded but also decent enough to rule with prudence and moderation. The second step happened with the breakthrough of populism under President Jackson, when further democratization did away with this informal barrier of the “gentlemen class” as well.

Partly as a response to Jacksonian populism, the second process started: what Storing calls the rise of “scientific management.” This started off when, around the dawn of the twentieth century, the Civil Service Reform Movement aimed to do away with the spoils system and to professionalize government: besides being democratic, American government was to be made meritocratic as well, leading to the so-called “administrative state” (Waldo 1984; Pestritto 2007). Gradually, the role of political economy, administration, and management was increased and correspondingly that of moral and political statesmanship was diminished.

Hence, by these twin processes the ideal of statesmanship (understood minimally as giving moral and political guidance to the polity) has been hollowed out and replaced by ideals of democratic and technocratic leadership, or rather combinations of both. The fact that Storing calls the latter “new statesmanship”

11. Recently, Charles Zug (2021; see also Zug 2022) has pointed out that demagoguery can be unduly ascribed to political actors by their opponents. This obviously happens often, but that does not diminish the danger of actual demagoguery. Rather, this practice confirms the pejorative status of the term and should make us cautious to adopt the qualification in politically contested cases.

should not delude us: what he describes is not even statesmanship in the modern meaning described above. Indeed, it is hardly political leadership, but rather a kind of administrative leadership over the modern mass society, something hardly more than “herd management.” So I think it was a misnomer by Storing to call this “new statesmanship,” as he himself occasionally seemed to realize: “*Authentic* American statesmanship,” he scribbled in the notes outlining the conclusion of his unfinished essay, “has decayed, but it decayed (as it were) from within” (1995, 428; emphasis added).

Now, these two processes described by Storing can be connected to the four types of leadership depicted in table 1: “populism” is the horizontal shift from the statesman to the demagogue, while “scientific management” is the vertical shift from the statesman to the official. Because ends are generally more important than means, the former is more important than the latter. An official can, after all, still serve the common good, however unpolitical his approach, whereas a demagogue need only take recourse to nonpolitical means to turn into a tyrant. This point is only of relative importance, however, because usually, as Storing points out, the two processes will go together and merge into what Lawler has called “scientific populism” (1988, 50–53). Combined, they can easily and quickly lead to the worst form of political leadership: tyranny.

Historically, the story line developed by Storing has been nuanced and at points corrected by later scholars, for the development of the American regime since the 1780s is obviously much more complicated than his two trends of “populism” and “scientific management” suggest. Wood, for one, has provided a rich account of both the radical origins and the ensuing transformation of the American regime (particularly in Wood 1992).<sup>12</sup> And the expanding sub-field of American political development (APD) has thoroughly researched the evolution of the republic and the role of leadership in it (for overviews see Orren and Skowronek 2004; Valelly et al. 2016). Regarding the presidency in particular, much research has been done on its character, development, and power (for an overview see Tatalovich and Schier 2015). In an illuminating chapter, Milkis points out that scholars focusing on the presidency have raised three key questions, namely, “whether there is a pre-modern-modern divide in the development of the executive office, the extent to which the president is the formative actor in major developments of American politics and government, and how the shifting foundations of principles, institutional arrangements, and policies since the Founding have altered the relationship between the presidency and the constitutional order” (2016, 288). These three questions are directly

12. Wood also criticized the transhistorical, “canonical” interpretation of the founding by those he called the Straussian “fundamentalists” (1988), although he respected Storing’s historiographic scholarship on the Anti-Federalists.

pertinent to our theoretical analysis.<sup>13</sup> Examining the debates about them is beyond the scope of this article, but obviously detailed historical inquiry on each of them adds much-needed detail and nuance to Storing's rather sketchy narrative.

### REGAINING (CLASSICAL) STATESMANSHIP?

Is it possible to counter the modern dismissal of statesmanship and regain the ideal that Rawls so clearly and surprisingly articulated in *The Law of Peoples*? Undeniably, the scope for statesmanship has become severely limited. The main reason for this, paradoxically, is that modern states tend to be rather well established. And "stateness," as was noted before, creates a bad habitat for statesmen. The modernization of the American state (together with a decline of political mores) has seriously affected the conditions for statesmanship to emerge and prove itself. The American regime has become a mixture of oligarchy and democracy in which the two no longer mitigate each other (as Aristotle hoped), but instead reinforce each other, so that not the best but rather the worst traits of each are being promoted (Winters and Page 2009). In such a situation statesmanship becomes more necessary but also less imaginable than ever.

It seems not unjust to blame the authors of *The Federalist*, at least partly, for this. Of course, the demise of ideas and ideals can never solely be ascribed to specific pamphlets and treatises, however renowned. In the history of political thought, we have learned not to overestimate the impact of specific contributions to specific political debates at specific moments in time. Still, *The Federalist* exemplifies (and has arguably contributed to) the long-term degradation of statesmanship in the modern era, a trend spanning centuries both before and after 1787–88. It has done so in at least three ways discussed in the preceding sections: by relegating statesmanship to a secondary role far behind constitutionalism, by turning the lofty ideal into something much more mundane and not even necessarily positive, and by blurring the conceptual distinction between statesmanship and other forms of rulership. These three developments cannot, as said, be ascribed exclusively to *The Federalist*, but they are definitely epitomized and further strengthened by it. Or, to put the argument reversely: to

13. Milkis's first question concerns the relation between the supposedly original "constitutional" conception of the presidency (here confusingly called "pre-modern") and its later ("modern") "rhetorical" and "administrative" conceptions. Hence, this is basically the question whether and how Storing's two processes have occurred. The second is the question about the remaining scope for statesmanship, albeit now not from an interpretative-theoretical viewpoint (how much room is left for statesmanship in Publius's thought?) but from an empirical-historical viewpoint (how much room for agency is left for specific American presidents?). The third, finally, concerns the type of leadership that presidents still enact. For instance, and most simply, are they supporting the constitutional order, acting as statesmen or officials, or undermining it as demagogues or tyrants?

see clearly how the (classical) ideal of statesmanship has been transformed in modern times, it is highly instructive to study *The Federalist's* treatment of it. That is primarily what this article has aimed to show.

Whatever the remaining scope for statesmanship (which is fortunately still there), the unintended consequence of the three developments mentioned is that statesmanship has become less conceivable and less likely to emerge when needed. Particularly in times of both technocracy and demagoguery, the constitutional order that *The Federalist* so successfully defended is being seriously tested. And the less that order can be taken for granted, the greater the need for statesmanship, but also the more uncertain its emergence (Ray 2020, 113–15). It is to Rawls's credit that he articulated the ideal so clearly, although unfortunately he never elaborated on it. So far, section 14.2 of *The Law of Peoples* remains a voice crying in the wilderness. Among most contemporary political thinkers, recovering the (classical) ideal of statesmanship is not seen as required, and hence it is not attempted.

So what would be needed to regain it? In any case, the two processes noted by Storing will have to be redressed. To curb populism, an awareness must be raised of “the need a democracy has of regulation and guidance in the face of some of its own tendencies toward foolishness and injustice” (Storing 1995, 418; see Besette 2000). At bottom, this means that democracy must be limited (see Talisse 2019, who forcefully argues the same). This should happen in two ways, according to Storing: first, through strong institutions (he points particularly to the judiciary and bureaucracy), and second, through strong statesmen, who do not flatter the people but dare to “reason” with them. Now Storing realizes that this is, of course, deeply circular: we need strong statesmen to redress populism in order to regain statesmanship. He also acknowledges that in a time of “loose relativism” both solutions are particularly vulnerable to legitimacy questions: when government is believed to be wholly grounded on consent rather than on the need to protect given and unalienable natural rights (Storing's modern conception of the public interest), people will not easily accept correction by strong institutions and strong statesmen (Storing 1995, 418–21).

The second process that must be redressed is “scientific management.” To achieve this, again two things are needed, Storing argues (1995, 421–28). First, we need to raise awareness of the limitations of human practical reason: in contrast to what experts tend to believe, there is not one best method to solve societal problems. They must be tackled not with scientific and managerial means but with expressly political means. Politics needs to be restored as legitimate, over and above “technology” (see Crick 1993, 92–110). Second, we need to reacknowledge the moral element in political decision-making, and particularly the importance of the “moral stature” of leaders (Storing 1995, 427; see Uhr 2015), to redress the technocratic tendencies of modern government.

While I do not doubt that Storing was right in pointing in these directions, it seems highly uncertain that we (as an ill-defined political collective) will follow his counsel. Doing so would require not only, circularly, that some things are already in place that he hopes to achieve (recognition of the importance of moral stature and indeed strong statesmanship itself) but also that we are converted from some deeply held modern convictions, such as relativism and contractualism on the one hand and technocratic myopia on the other. Although *The Federalist* cannot be blamed for promoting those convictions, it also seems clear that the sources for abandoning them and thus for renewing statesmanship cannot be found in the ideas it expressed, nor in the regime it defended.

We therefore cannot be too optimistic that the ideal and practice of statesmanship will be reinvigorated soon. The obstacles, both ideational and institutional, seem too big and too deeply rooted to be quickly overcome. If statesmanship is to reemerge, it will probably not be thanks to a reevaluation of forgotten ideas and lost ideals, but rather due to political urgency. This is a possibility that, fortunately, conceptual blindness can never preclude. If the current democratic and technocratic regime can no longer be taken for granted and either needs to be saved or needs to be replaced by some other regime, statesmen may unexpectedly manifest themselves and “rise to the occasion.” Continuing the study of statesmanship will, hopefully, enable us to recognize them when they do so.

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