

**Polecats in the Lion's Den?: Rethinking Hobbes on democracy**

“This is to think, that men are so foolish, that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by pole-cats, or foxes; but are content, nay, think it safety, to be devoured by lions.” – John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chapter VII, section 93

Thomas Hobbes has often been accused of advocating for the rule of monstrous despots. He argues that the head of a State has no obligation to its citizens and also that it is best if States are governed by monarchs. Many, including John Locke, believe Hobbes' conclusions to be preposterous. Almost all scholars after Hobbes believe that some element of democracy is required for a State to be legitimate. In this paper I explore the many ways in which Hobbes too may have held that democracy was normatively desirable. I begin by providing a quick sketch of Hobbes' political philosophy before discussing several views of Hobbes' attitude towards democracy.

**I. Background**

Hobbes presents two different methods by which commonwealths can be generated. The first is commonwealth by institution where individuals in the state of nature join together and agree with each other to surrender their rights to a sovereign (*Leviathan*, chapter XVII, paragraph 13).<sup>1</sup> The second is commonwealth by acquisition and comes about “by force when men...for fear of death or bonds do authorize all the actions of that man or assembly that hath their lives and liberty in his power” (L, XX, 1). I will put aside commonwealth by acquisition and focus my attention on commonwealth by institution.<sup>2</sup>

Commonwealth by institution begins with the state of nature thought experiment. Imagine mankind “as if they had just emerged from the earth like mushrooms” – absent any obligation or

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 1994. Hereafter all references to this text will take the form: (L, XVII, 13).

<sup>2</sup> There are several reasons for focus on the former rather than the latter: First, commonwealth by acquisition is parasitic on the commonwealth by institution. Second, the former is premised solely on an extorted promise. Third, commonwealth by institution receives more attention from Hobbes and scholars. Lastly, democracy has no *prima facie* role in the exchange of a promise of obedience in exchange for safety.

government (*De Cive*, chapter VIII, paragraph 1).<sup>3</sup> Hobbes argues that people's desire for gain, glory, and safety would foster a war of all against all and life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (L, XIII, 9). In an attempt to escape such misery, individuals would join together and agree to the social contract – a mutual surrender of their heretofore unencumbered rights to a sovereign power, and thus create a commonwealth. Citizens would empower the sovereign with a multitude of rights, including some – the right to judge, punish, raise an army, appoint counselors, sign treaties, declare war, censor, create a curriculum, and establish property – that must remain undivided if the commonwealth is to succeed (L, XVIII, 16). The sovereign is not a party to the social contract and therefore receives all of these rights without incurring any obligation to its citizens (L, XVIII, 6). Here we can see Locke's worry about trading the dangers of living with polecats and foxes for being stalked by a lion: In order to escape a scenario where individuals are at war with each other they create a tremendously powerful sovereign who has no obligation to its creators.

The thought experiment, though interesting in itself, also carries normative implications. One example is Hobbes' conclusion of nearly complete political obligation: Because you, a real-life individual currently living in a functioning State, *would* agree to the social contract if you were in the state of nature you are obligated to obey the laws of your State so long as it provides you protection.

This general outline of Hobbes' political philosophy does not seem to leave much room for discussion of democracy. Hobbes does spend some time advocating monarchy (government of one) over either aristocracy (government of some) or democracy (government of all), but admits that he cannot prove the conclusion (DC, preface, 22), and argues that the three forms of sovereignty all obligate with equal strength (L, XVIII, 20). Therefore, Hobbes' view on democracy, it may be thought, could be summed up as "acceptable, but not ideal."

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ed. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Hereafter all references to this text will take the form: (DC, VIII, 1).

## II. Standard Interpretation

Despite the dearth of talk of democracy, even the standard interpretation of Hobbes acknowledges a role for democracy in Hobbes' political theory. The mutual surrender of rights that is the focal point of the social contract is not by itself sufficient for the institution of a commonwealth. The commonwealth must, in addition, be given a form or shape: Among other particulars, it must be decided whether the commonwealth will be a monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy. This seems to place Hobbes in a difficult position: The sovereign is the final decider. The contractors have to decide what shape the sovereign will take. Without a sovereign, a decision seems unreachable. Hobbes solution is to select democracy as the default form, "When men have met to erect a commonwealth, they are, almost by the very fact that they have met, a *Democracy*" (DC, VII, 5).<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the decisions that must be made about the form of the commonwealth – including whether the sovereign should be democratic, aristocratic, or monarchic – are made democratically.

Despite Hobbes' advocacy of democracy as the means by which the form of sovereignty is determined, this does not mean that sovereignty will or ought to take a democratic shape. In fact, the standard interpretation argues that the institution of a democratic sovereign would be a grievous error. Alan Ryan believes that "any system in which we try to set up a collective sovereign embracing many people will almost surely be a disaster" (Ryan, 235).<sup>5</sup> Jean Hampton notes the similarities between a democratic sovereign and the condition that the contractors are attempting to escape – i.e. the state of nature:

[W]ould not the investing of power in all the people in a democracy make violent conflicts stemming from power grabbing and jurisdictional disputes even more likely? It seems very improbable that Hobbesian people could hope to leave the state of nature by constructing a "commonwealth" that would allow each one of them to have a share in ruling. If their self-interested pursuits made peaceful anarchy impossible, it would certainly seem that these

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<sup>4</sup> Though less explicitly, this also seems to be Hobbes' position in *Leviathan*. For example, see L, XVII, 13 and L, XVIII, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Ryan, "Hobbes's Political Philosophy", *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

pursuits would also make collective rulership impossible. If they could not cooperate outside of government, how could we expect them to cooperate inside a government? (Hampton, 106).<sup>6</sup>

Russell Peters then states the obvious conclusion – the contractors ought to create a monarchy rather than an aristocracy or democracy. “[I]n spite of the logical priority of democracy, its inconveniences for promoting peace and security of the people are so manifest that monarchy is infinitely to be preferred” (Peters, 222).<sup>7</sup>

I have described the decision of the contractors to institute a monarch as a normative choice and I want to briefly mention what normative weight selecting monarchy might possess in this context: Individuals are joining together to institute a commonwealth in order to escape the inconveniences of the state of nature. However, they are not merely looking for a temporary resolution, but a permanent reprieve (L, XIX, 15). Despite Hobbes’ hedging that his conclusion is only probabilistic, his argument for monarchy is precisely that it is the one that is likely to last the longest (Hampton, 105-7). Therefore, if the contractors were to vote to institute anything other than a monarchy this would be contrary to their intentions. Acting contrary to one’s stated purpose appears to constitute an injurious or unjust act according to Hobbes:

So that *injury* or *injustice*, in the controversies or 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 (L, XIV, 7).<sup>8</sup>

From this we can see that it would not only be foolish for contractors to institute anything other than a monarchy, but it would also be unjust or injurious.

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<sup>6</sup> Jean Hampton, *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

<sup>7</sup> Russell Peters, *Hobbes*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967.

<sup>8</sup> I am not sure the act perfectly fits the definition and would be happy to discuss it. For the definition to fit, I believe we have to view institution as a two-step process. First, individuals come together and agree to institute a commonwealth for the purpose of perpetual peace. Second, they decide on the form of the commonwealth. Deciding on democracy or aristocracy makes all but ensures that the commonwealth will not be perpetual. Therefore, it voluntarily undoes what the contractors earlier did voluntarily. If it is not a perfect match, it is at least very close.

The standard interpretation relegates the place of democracy in Hobbes' thought to the realm of the theoretical. State of nature individuals come together to institute a commonwealth and democratically decide to transfer all of their rights to a single individual. Further, the decision to institute a monarch is morally obligatory. Selecting another form would be to ultimately doom the commonwealth to failure. Even worse, one might also think that the utilization of democracy in the process of instituting the commonwealth is arbitrary and normatively inert. After all, assuming that the contractors are rational (as Hobbes does), there would be *unanimous* support for monarchy and the reliance on democracy may be superfluous. However, I would like to suggest one possibility for the normative force of democracy in the institution of the commonwealth.

Hobbes suggests that the contracts, "*almost by the very fact that they have met*" (DC, VII, 5, my emphasis), have formed a democracy. Hobbes believes that there is something in the very coming together of individuals in the state of nature to create a commonwealth that entails a democracy. I suggest that this is because the decision to institute a commonwealth requires the recognition of everybody as equals even in the face of obvious mental and physical inequalities and this entails democracy.<sup>9</sup>

Hobbes admits that individuals are not perfectly equal. They exhibit differences in strength, reason, drive, and "street smarts" (DC, I, 1). However, in order to come together and institute a commonwealth each individual has to admit that everybody is *roughly* equal: They must concede that they are not so superior that they are capable of dominating all other individuals and creating a commonwealth by acquisition. So long as an individual believes that she has a (good) chance of defeating everybody by force and becoming sovereign by acquisition, it would be foolish for her to unite with the others and institute a commonwealth in which she may not be chosen to wield sovereign power. Therefore, until individuals acknowledge their rough equality they will not come together to institute a commonwealth. Further, this coming together for the purposes of peace is

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<sup>9</sup> For a similar argument see Kinch Hoekstra, "Hobbes on Equality" in *Hobbes Today*, ed. S.A. Lloyd, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2011.

dictated by Hobbes' first law of nature, Hobbes' catalog of moral rules derived from reason (L XIV, 3), which states that individuals must seek peace so long as others are willing (L, XIV, 4). Therefore, joining together to institute a commonwealth is morally obligatory, and in order to do so all individuals must recognize each other as equals. If recognizing everybody as an equal favors democratic decision making, and I think that it does, then the utilization of democracy in selecting the form of the commonwealth is normatively obligatory. Therefore, the standard interpretation provides moral reasons both to utilizing democracy to select the shape of the commonwealth when it is being instituted and claims that the commonwealth ought to take the form of a monarchy.

### III. Tuck's Interpretation

Richard Tuck agrees with the standard interpretation's claim that the form of the commonwealth is determined democratically (Tuck, 184)<sup>10</sup> and also acknowledges that Hobbes permitted the democratic gathering to unite under the reign of a single individual (Tuck, 185). However, he denies that creating a monarchy is *obligatory* and argues that contractors are morally permitted to create either a democracy or monarchy.

Tuck argues that the inferiority of democracy from Hobbes' perspective is a direct result of the deliberative process with which it is commonly associated and that "a democracy without a deliberative assembly was [for Hobbes] not at all inferior to monarchy..." (Tuck, 187). Tuck claims that those instituting a commonwealth do not error in creating a democracy just as long as that democracy immediately hands over its decision-making power to a single individual. This would create a democratic *sovereign*, but a monarchic *government*.<sup>11</sup> In order for the commonwealth to remain democratic sovereignty, "the only condition which had to be met...was that all the citizens could meet or otherwise declare their will on at least one occasion without being summoned by a monarch or aristocratic council" (Tuck, 189).

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Tuck, "Hobbes and democracy", *Rethinking the Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, ed. Annabel Brett and James Tully with Holly Hamilton-Bleakley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> I opt for Kinch Hoekstra's terminology in drawing this distinction. Tuck distinguishes between government and the administration of government.

Tuck's suggestion that Hobbes permitted a democratic commonwealth run by a monarch is highly counterintuitive. However, Hobbes' supports the idea of a total chasm between sovereign and government in the case of an infant monarch:

Of public ministers, some have charge committed to them of a general administration, either of the whole dominion or of a part thereof. Of the whole, as to a protector or regent may be committed by the predecessor of an infant king, during his minority, the whole administration of his kingdom. In which case, every subject is so far obliged to obedience, as the ordinances he shall make, and the commands he shall give, be in the king's name, and not inconsistent with his sovereign power (L, XXIII, 3).

In this situation, a monarch, perhaps on her deathbed, appoints a public minister to *govern* the commonwealth until the monarch's child, who becomes sovereign at the passing of the reigning monarch, reaches maturity. Tuck's proposal similarly creates a (near) total chasm between sovereignty and government: The sovereign is democratic, but government of the commonwealth is placed in the hands of a single individual. The only reason the split is not complete is, for the commonwealth to remain a democracy, the people have to retain the right to meet at least once without the permission of the monarch. According to Tuck, this system would avert *all* of the potential dangerousness of deliberative democracy. This would make this particular form of democratic sovereignty equally choice-worthy to monarchy since they are equally effective in maintaining peace.

Though innovative and extremely interesting, I ultimately disagree with Tuck's position. I will present two arguments against his interpretation of Hobbes' democratic sovereign. First, I argue that the system for which Tuck argues is implausible on Hobbes' picture. Second, even if possible, Kinch Hoekstra argues that Hobbes would not consider the resulting system a democracy.

First, I think a democratic sovereign who retains the right to meet *even once* without being summoned by the monarch is, in Hobbes' eyes, inferior to a monarchic sovereign. Though Hobbes does mention the possibility of a public minister who fully governs the entire kingdom, this is in the context of an infant king who will eventually mature and possess the capacity to rule. Democratic assemblies, on the other hand, will never reach a sufficient level of "maturity" to effectively wield

sovereign power: “[T]here is no great commonwealth the sovereignty whereof is in a great assembly which is not, as to consultations of peace, and war, and making of laws, in the same condition as if the government were in a child” (L, XIX, 9). Hobbes is saying that a democratic assembly will *always* be like a child. Even once to allow a child to make a decision that affects the commonwealth would be irresponsible and the same holds true for a democratic assembly. Therefore, it appears that even holding on to the right to assemble, the democratic sovereign is inferior to a monarchic sovereign.

Additionally, there is the problem of whether the democratic assembly actually *would* ever be able to re-constitute itself. Hobbes does suggest that democratic sovereigns ought to appoint an individual to serve as public minister, but he also warns that the sovereign may not be able to regain its original power (L, XIX, 9). Analogously, Hobbes warns that if a monarchic sovereign yields some of her power to the people, that she is naïve to think that she can simply reclaim that power whenever she wishes (L, XXIX, 3).

Kinch Hoekstra here interprets Hobbes as covertly siding with monarchy. Hoekstra stresses that Hobbes, following Thucydides, was concerned with how something is *in reality* rather than how it is *technically* and therefore to advocate a democratic sovereign who is unable to enact policy democratically is not to support democracy at all (Hoekstra, 200).<sup>12</sup> Tuck’s democracy, in the eyes of Hobbes, is no democracy at all.

We can now see that it is unlikely that Hobbes would advocate putting a democratic sovereign who transfers its power into the hands of a single public minister on par with a monarchic sovereign, but that, even if he did, he would not view it as a democratic State.

#### IV. Actual Democracy?

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<sup>12</sup> Kinch Hoekstra, “A lion in the house: Hobbes and democracy”, *Rethinking the Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, ed. Annabel Brett and James Tully with Holly Hamilton-Bleakley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.



Thus far we have seen attempts to show Hobbes advocated democracy both at the formal and substantive levels. The former argues that Hobbes' support of democratic voting in deciding the particulars of the State as part of the transition from the state of nature into the commonwealth demonstrated the moral worth of formal democracy. The substantive argument adds another layer of democracy to Hobbes' vision by claiming that monarchy and democracy can be equally efficacious so long as the democratic sovereign permits a public minister to govern the commonwealth. Though I believe the former claim is correct, the latter encountered serious difficulties. I now want to employ Hoekstra's distinction between the actual and the nominal to argue a new lens through which we can view Hobbes as a democrat.

The well-formed Hobbesian commonwealth – that which is constituted to best provide peace for its citizens – may technically be in the hands of a monarchic sovereign, but the government necessary for any State to function extends well beyond a single individual. Hobbes insists, and it is self-evident on minimal reflection, that the monarch will be forced to employ a number of individuals to aid the monarch in specific matters – e.g. governors, mayors, judges, educators, treasurers, police, military, ambassadors, etc (L, XXIII, *passim*). These individuals are given the authority to represent the commonwealth in the particular tasks to which they are assigned (L, XXIII, 1). Therefore, even in a monarchy, the monarch will not be the sole representative of the commonwealth, but power will be distributed to many others in order to ensure the efficacious governing of the State. Utilizing the distinction between how things are in actuality and how they are in name, we can see that even if something is called a monarchy, power will necessarily be dispersed and therefore the government will, to some degree, bear resemblance to an aristocracy.

It may seem that the requirement to appoint public ministers is merely a technical necessity of a functioning State and lacking in any normative force. Indeed, placing any normative demand on the actions of the sovereign may appear to be at odds with the fact that the sovereign is not

obligated to the citizenry since it is not a party to the social contract. However, the sovereign is still obligated by the laws of nature to act for the securing of the safety of the people (L, XXX, 1). Actions of the sovereign that are contrary to this aim violate the laws of nature and are therefore morally impermissible. In addition to being obligated to appoint public ministers, the sovereign is also required, at least in the case of judges, to appoint *competent* individuals (L, XXVI, 27-28). Therefore, not only does the well-formed commonwealth bear some resemblance to an aristocracy, but to a meritocratic aristocracy.

This may not appear to be a significant move away from pure monarchy. After all, even the most arbitrary and brutal dictators have employed vast bureaucracies to aid in the governing of their States. The fact that the power of public ministers is contingent on it being granted by the sovereign, it may be thought, goes to show that the power of the State is still ultimately concentrated in the hands of a single individual. I think the criticism has some force, but this does not negate the fact that no monarch, no matter how tyrannical, can rule alone and, more importantly, that a good monarch will employ capable individuals to aid in the governing of the commonwealth. This is a far cry from democracy, but it does not look like the rule of a single individual either.

Public ministers are not the only employees a monarch utilizes in governing a commonwealth. In addition, the sovereign will employ counselors whose job it is to provide advice to the sovereign. The need for counselors arises not from the physical limitations of a single individual attempting to govern a whole commonwealth as is the case with public ministers, but rather with the inevitable epistemic shortfalls of any individual who holds sovereign power. Governing a State requires not only “great knowledge of the disposition of mankind, of the rights of government, and of the nature of equity, law, justice, and honor”, but also more concrete matters such as knowledge “of the strength, commodities, and places of their country and neighbors”, as well as “the inclinations and designs of all nations that may any way annoy them” (L, XXV, 13). As

each task separately requires “the age and observation of a man in years, and of more than ordinary study,” it should be no surprise when Hobbes informs us that no one man has all the requisite knowledge for governing a commonwealth (*ibid*). Rather, the sovereign must employ individuals on whom she can rely on in those areas in which she is deficiently knowledgeable (L, XXX, 25).

Analogously to public ministers, the sovereign ought not to rely on just anybody to consult on important matters, but should consult those who will provide the best advice. Hobbes goes into some detail on how to ensure the receipt of good counsel: First, the sovereign cannot limit to whom she listens based on class, but should at least leave open the possibility of consulting individuals “of what rank or quality soever...” (L, XIX, 5). This confirms the normative demand for a meritocracy when it comes to selecting those who aid the governing of the commonwealth. However, this merely increases the pool of possible counselors and determining who is capable of providing the best advice is difficult. The very fact that the sovereign needs advice on an issue entails at least some degree of ignorance. If the counselor knew no more than the sovereign, the advice of the counselor would be useless. Therefore, the sovereign must attempt to determine who possesses the requisite knowledge that the sovereign herself lacks (L, XXX, 25). Even then, possession of the required knowledge is not sufficient to make an individual a good counselor. Additionally, the individual cannot have interests opposed to the interests of the State (L, XXV, 11). If she did have countervailing interests then she would have an incentive to use her knowledge to her own advantage, contra the good of the commonwealth, and there would be nobody capable of refuting her because she would be the most knowledgeable individual on the subject. Therefore, selecting good counselors requires the sovereign to evaluate individuals’ knowledge beyond the sovereign’s own limits and intentions that the sovereign cannot see. Hobbes suggests a procedure for attempting these difficult tasks: An individual is likely to have knowledge of a topic if she is often heard (confidently) discussing the issue and has “constant good effects” (L, XXX, 25). To guard against those with interests opposed to the State, the sovereign should avoid those who support

citizens with “unreasonable or irremediable grievances” or have to support lifestyles that exceed their current income (*ibid*). By utilizing these measures, Hobbes believes that the sovereign will be able to procure trustworthy and quality counsel.

We have now extended the circle of individuals on whom a sovereign, especially a monarchic sovereign, must and ought to rely. Not only will she have to employ public ministers for the execution of her decisions, but counselors must be consulted when making her decisions. Additionally, if the monarch is to comply with the laws of nature she will appoint those best suited for the task. Therefore, any monarchic commonwealth will bear more than slight resemblance to an aristocracy and all good monarchic commonwealths will appear as meritocratic aristocracies.

Thus far I have ventured to show that the monarchic sovereignty that Hobbes supports will require both public ministers and counselors for the governing of the commonwealth and therefore will look like an aristocracy. Furthermore, the laws of nature require the sovereign to employ qualified candidates in these roles and therefore a monarchic commonwealth ought to be meritocratic. However, I did not come all the way here to argue that Hobbes is a meritocratic aristocrat. Though perhaps more palatable than the received view of Hobbes as monarchist, it is still a far cry from a democratic Hobbes. I will now take the final step from Hobbes’ advocacy of monarchic sovereignty to the governing of the commonwealth being done in a (relatively) democratic manner.

In his discussion of how to ensure the receipt of good counsel, Hobbes makes what I take to be a radical proposal and one that is certainly at odds with how he is normally regarded. He suggests that when gathering advice about domestic issues the sovereign should appeal to the local citizens for advice on how to proceed:

The best counsel in those things that concern not other nations, but only the ease and benefit the subjects may enjoy by laws that look only inward, is to be taken from the general informations and complaints of the people of each province, who are best acquainted with their own wants, and ought therefore, when they demand nothing in derogation of the essential rights of sovereignty, to be diligently taken notice of (XXX, 27).

Hobbes is suggesting that the citizenry is the best counsel in some matters. First, it should be noted the wide-scope to which this advice may potentially be applied. Hobbes' reference to "laws that look only inward" suggests that the sovereign should listen to citizens when contemplating *all* domestic policy. Now, Hobbes later constricts the scope by eliminating any advice that is "in derogation of the essential rights of sovereignty", but this still leaves plenty of issues for which Hobbes believes appeal to citizens is the best form of gathering information. For example, Hobbes' claim seems to imply that if local citizens signed a petition to prevent the destruction of a historical building that the sovereign ought to take their advice under serious consideration. If a large group of protestors gathered in an attempt to shut down a factory that created significant pollution, the sovereign should listen. A commonwealth governed in this manner would, at least on domestic issues, have a palpable democratic element.

Second, unlike the need for public ministers or counselors in general, this is a purely normative claim about what is best for the commonwealth. It is surely possible for a monarch to seek out advice from particular individuals rather than listen to the requests of the community. Therefore, it is not necessary for all monarchic commonwealths appeal to local citizens and there may be plenty of despots who completely ignore the wishes of their people. The claim is that monarchs *ought* to listen to the citizens and therefore the monarchs that fail to do so are doing something wrong. It is in this way that Hobbes makes democracy *morally obligatory*.

It might be thought that the requirement that the sovereign employ counselors, and specifically the local citizenry as counselors on domestic issues, fails to make the well-formed commonwealth democratic because counselors, experts and the citizenry alike, are only in the business of providing advice to the sovereign and, unlike public ministers, do not have any power to create law. It is certainly true that the sovereign could opt to ignore the suggestions of all the counselors whom she employs. However, so long as she has followed Hobbes' procedure for selecting counselors then it seems that ignoring their advice would, though possible, be morally

impermissible. This would be to choose one's own opinion over the opinion of a person in an epistemically privileged position. To do so, absent a good reason, would be to needlessly threaten the safety of the commonwealth and violate the laws of nature. Therefore, though counselors are not capable of making law, the sovereign is *prima facie* morally obligated to heed their advice.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, though the sovereign can ignore the cries of the citizenry, she is not morally permitted to do so without a good reason.

Hobbes' position on the form that sovereignty should take has often been ignored or vilified. Occasionally the position has been more closely examined to reveal previously unnoticed nuances. Against the view that Hobbes is whole-heartedly anti-democratic, the standard interpretation carves out a role for democracy during the institution of the commonwealth. However, this interpretation also holds that the State ought to take the form of a monarchy and relegates Hobbes' democratic commitments to the theoretical realm. Against this, Richard Tuck has argued that it is permissible to institute either a monarchy or democracy, so long as the democracy immediately appoints an individual to exercise power. I showed that it is doubtful that Hobbes would really hold such a view and Kinch Hoekstra pointed out that, even if true, Hobbes would consider Tuck's commonwealth a monarchy because he was more concerned with how things actually were rather than what they were in name. I then employed Hoekstra's distinction and showed that a monarch would require the aid of a host of individuals in governing the commonwealth and the laws of nature required that she employ capable individuals. In this way, the commonwealth would resemble a meritocratic aristocracy more than a monarchy. In domestic matters, however, the best advice comes from the cries of local citizens themselves and it is in this way that I argued that the well-formed Hobbesian commonwealth will resemble a democracy.

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<sup>13</sup> The sovereign may have to decide between conflicting advice. This only shows that the sovereign is not obligated to adhere to every piece of advice of every counselor. It does not show that the sovereign is ever permitted in ignoring her counselors all together.