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Title: Needed but Unwanted. Thomas Hobbes's Warnings on the Dangers of Multitude, Populism and Democracy

Year: 2016

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Jakonen, M. (2016). Needed but Unwanted. Thomas Hobbes's Warnings on the Dangers of Multitude, Populism and Democracy. *Las Torres de Lucca : Revista Internacional de Filosofía Política*, 5(9), 89-118.
<http://www.latorresdelucca.org/index.php/ojs/article/view/110>

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Needed but Unwanted. Thomas Hobbes's Warnings on the Dangers of Multitude, Populism and Democracy

Necesario, pero no deseado. Las advertencias de Thomas Hobbes sobre los peligros de la multitud, el populismo y la democracia

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this article is to analyse Hobbes's understanding of democracy. The first part of the article analyses the role of democracy in the social contract. It aims to show how there exists a democratic element at the beginning of the process of social contract, in which the multitude is transformed into a people. However, after the *first* social contract is made, Hobbes aims to reduce the power of the people by leading the process of social contract on to another level, on which the power of the people is assigned to a representative of the sovereign power, for example a monarch. The second part of the article aims to explain the practical reasons, provided by Hobbes in different parts of his political theory, for his aversion to a democratic form of government. Main reason for this, it is argued, is that democratic government is closest to the unwanted multitude. Thus, in his political theory Hobbes uses democracy to build sovereign power, but does not trust it as a form of government.

KEY WORDS Thomas Hobbes; democracy; social contract; populism; multitude.

RESUMEN *El propósito de este artículo es analizar la comprensión de Hobbes de la democracia. La primera parte del artículo analiza el papel de la democracia en el contrato social. Su objetivo es mostrar cómo existe un elemento democrático al comienzo del proceso de contrato social, en el que la multitud se transforma en pueblo. Sin embargo, después de que se realiza el primer contrato social, Hobbes pretende reducir el poder del pueblo dirigiendo el proceso del contrato social a otro nivel, en el cual*

el poder del pueblo se asigna a un representante del poder soberano, por ejemplo un monarca. La segunda parte del artículo pretende explicar las razones prácticas, proporcionadas por Hobbes en diferentes partes de su teoría política, para su aversión a una forma democrática de gobierno. La principal razón de esto, se argumenta, es que el gobierno democrático es el más cercano a la indeseada multitud. Así, en su teoría política, Hobbes utiliza la democracia para construir el poder soberano, pero no confía en él como forma de gobierno.

PALABRAS CLAVE *Thomas Hobbes; democracia; contrato social; populismo; multitud.*

RECIBIDO RECEIVED 01-09-2016

APROBADO APPROVED 20-10-2016

PUBLICADO PUBLISHED 20-12-2016

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NOTA DEL AUTOR

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I would like to give my kind regards to the editors of the journal and for the two anonymous referees for their good and helpful comments. I would also like to thank the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy at the University of Jyväskylä for support.

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Thomas Hobbes's scepticism towards democracy is widely known. In *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic* he wrote that "a democracy, in effect, is nothing more than an aristocracy of orators, interrupted sometimes with the temporary monarchy of one orator" (Hobbes, 1640/2005c, 21.5, p. 141). Despite his rather clear formulations against the popular and democratic form of government, Hobbes's theory and relation to democracy has been under a lot of debate in the past two or three decades (Apperley, 1997; Curran, 2007; Dyzenhaus, 2001; Hoekstra, 2007; Martinich, 2007; Matheron, 1997; Mastnak, 2009; Pettit, 2008). Generally, Hobbes is considered to be a monarchist who opposed democracy both theoretically and politically (Dyzenhaus, 2001, p. 428; Hoekstra, 2007; Martinich, 2007, p. 158-159). However, some scholars have recently claimed that Hobbes can and should be seen as a radical democrat or a republican writer (Martel, 2007; Pettit, 2008, p. 121-122; Rahe, 2008; Tuck, 2007).

However, while both these lines of interpretation are tempting and interesting in many ways, it is much more accurate to state that Hobbes had a rather paradoxical relationship to democracy. Despite his negative feelings against democracy as a mode of government, Hobbes in fact constructed one of the most prominent theories of democracy in the early modern period, which had a significant theoretical impact on the development of the democratic theory in modern times (Jaume, 1986; Lemos, 1978, p. 69; Matheron, 1997). It is also crucial to point out how Hobbes designed his theory of state to apply to three different regimes: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. Thus, even though he saw monarchy as the best form of government, he thought that aristocracy and democracy are legitimate forms of a government as well (Hobbes, 1642/2003, *Preface to the readers*).

This article follows Creppell's idea that Hobbes's notion of the social contract, as well as his theory of sovereignty, were connected to and commented on the new rising form of politics, that is, democracy:

His writings are a response to a new social condition – a democratizing world and the demands from mobilized populations. *Behemoth* is an extended description of and reaction to that dynamism, both positive and negative, of new conditions (circumstances) of democracy. (Creppell, 2009, p. 241).

The article takes as a starting point the argument that Hobbes's theory of social contract includes several elements which are typical for democracy. In the process of social contract, the anarchic and chaotic multitude is transformed into a political subject, the people. The people represents the first form of political unity and is the basis of sovereignty. However, not all the elements of the social contract are democratic in their nature. In further development of the social contract, Hobbes's ultimate aim was to get rid of the people as representative of sovereign power and instead offer monarchy as the best form of government, that is, as the best available political representation of abstract sovereign power. Thus, it simply argues that even though Hobbes needed democracy as part of his political theory, he did not ever want to see democratic governance in action.

The second purpose of this article is to show why and how Hobbes disregarded democracy as a mode of government. The main argument is that the reasons for his strong dislike towards democratic government are connected to two intertwined questions: The problems of the multitude and populism. Hobbes saw that the democratic mode of government strengthens populist leaders who rhetorically mislead both common and educated people to the point where demagoguery turns into chaos and the logic of the multitude gets to reign. When the anarchic and chaotic forces of multitude have been unleashed, it is difficult, even if not impossible, to regain any control over the commonwealth. This leads to the destruction of sovereign power, the very thing that secures order in the society. In short, this article aims to show that Hobbes was sceptical towards democracy because he thought that democracy has too close a relationship with the reign of the multitude.

The article proceeds in the following way. In the first chapter, I introduce the problem and the question of the multitude in relation to the social contract. First, I analyse what kind of a problem the question of the multitude was for Hobbes and what kind of relationship it has to the question of power. Second, I explain how the multitude is transformed into a sovereign power in the process of social contract. Finally, I elaborate a little more on Hobbes's theory of representation and how it is constructed with the aim to avoid the possibility of the reign

of the multitude. Thus, the first section is a theoretical presentation of the way Hobbes constructs political power.

In the second chapter, I address the more practical problems Hobbes identifies with democratic government and governance. Thus, this section explains why Hobbes avoided and disregarded in every possible way the democratic governance, even though it is rather clear that in his theory the formation of the state is based on a democratic process. I first take a look on how Hobbes sees democracy as a *flat* way of governing the commonwealth, which is indeed too tightly posed over the reign of the multitude. Secondly, I show how Hobbes was wary of the rule of the populist leaders and their rhetoric inside the democratic concert. Following this, I then show how democratic government leads, according to Hobbes, to corruption and the rule of passions. The fourth and last part consists of an analysis of how the basic process of political governance, that is the process of deliberation, is almost impossible in the democracy described by Hobbes. I finish with some conclusions concerning Hobbes's relationship towards democracy and the dangers he saw in democratic government.

The Theory of the Multitude and Social Contract

The Problem of the Multitude and Power

The concept of the multitude has a long history in political thought before Hobbes. In the classical period, Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides, for instance, used concepts such as *plethos*, *oi polloi* and *ochlos*. All of these refer to a common people, mob or plebs. Later in the Roman political thought, *multitudo* was a concept with somewhat similar content: Plebs, common people and underclass were typical synonyms for *multitudo*. In the Renaissance, Machiavelli most prominently used the term: For him *moltitudine* was not just a group of common people. Instead he uses the concept to refer to violent mobs and confused crowds, both attributes that had already been used by Plato and Aristotle (See Jakonen, 2013, pp. 48-55).

Hobbes often criticized Aristotle, but he agreed with his analysis on the dangerous aspects of democracy, as it risks turning into mob rule. In the *Politics*, Aristotle defines democracy and distinguishes four

legitimate forms of democracy (trans. 1995, 1295b35-1296a10). The fifth form of democracy is *demos eschatos* (δημος εσχατος), which in fact refers to the people in its extreme form, the multitude (*plethos*). For Aristotle *demos eschatos* is the “most headstrong sort of democracy”, but the concept itself does not refer to democracy as a legitimate form of government.¹ In the rule of *plethos* or the *demos eschatos*, the rule of law collapses and the *polis* enters into a chaotic state where the multitude rules without any political structure, norm or tradition, that is, without authority. *Demos eschatos* means that the rule of the common people (*demos*) has gone too far: *Demos eschatos* is the rule of the multitude beyond law and constitution. Hobbes followed Aristotle in this question as he strongly condemns the rule of the multitude as an illegitimate or apolitical mode of power.

In medieval times, the Latin term *multitudo* also had the meaning of *population* (Billier, 2000). In Hobbes’s own time, the word *multitude* was widely used to refer to a poor, confused, rebellious and sometimes violent crowd consisting of common people. It was a commonplace word in the biblical, religious and political language, with a loosely defined meaning.² However, although Hobbes was familiar with both the classical meaning and the coeval usage of the word, he also elaborated and redefined the concept for the purposes of his own political theory—as he did with most of the political concepts he used. In what follows, I describe the way Hobbes saw the multitude, which differs drastically from the way classical and essentialist political thought understood it.

In Hobbes’s use, the multitude does not only refer to the common people and plebs as is the case with the classics, but instead to every person or group of people living without sovereign power or against its orders. Furthermore, it is also important to clarify that in Hobbes’s use, the multitude does not point to a certain group of people with certain history, quality, ethnicity or background. Instead,

1 Richard Tuck interprets Aristotle’s stand point differently, which leads him also to interpret Hobbes’s theory of the origins of the sovereign power differently. See Tuck (2007) and for a critique of Tuck’s interpretation Jakonen 2013, pp. 105-110.

2 An idea of the uses of the multitude in Hobbes’s time might be grasped from Christopher Hill’s book *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Hill, 1975). See also Evans (2000), who tells about the poor (multitude) in early modern Exeter, and Patrides (1965) who analyses the negative uses of the multitude in the Renaissance.

anyone, whether rich or poor, good or evil, young or old, may belong to the multitude, or to be even more precise, these categories do not play any role in the meaning of the multitude. For Hobbes, the multitude is a name for a disorganized, confused, headless, anarchical and powerless collection of human beings, one without any specific form, shape or essence. The multitude is human matter that is always in motion: The multitude changes and goes through constant metamorphoses. Yet, on the other hand, the multitude is an absolutely stagnant and powerless mass of human beings: It is more potentiality than actuality. It is difficult to understand the multitude's undertakings; there is no other common denominator for their actions than that they are the actions of the multitude, since the multitude does not represent anything. The multitude is a monster, half a man, half an animal. It is a mythical, Biblical violent beast, the Behemoth, which Hobbes describes in his *History of English Civil Wars*. The multitude is something that opposes the king of pride, Leviathan, the principle of political order (Jakonen, 2013, pp. 56-72).³

Thus, the multitude is, in fact, the *logic* that defines the motion and confusion of human crowds, instead of being an ostensive term. The logic of the multitude is an outcome of the necessity of egoism, which derives from the fact that people do not feel safe in the anarchic state of nature, where the rule of law does not exist. In Hobbes's philosophy, the multitude is matter in motion and as such a political problem that calls for a definitive, geometric answer. Still, the problem of the multitude is fundamentally *unsolvable*, since even after the social contract the logic of the multitude haunts the organized political community, as will be shown in this article. For Hobbes, the question of the multitude is something that political government and political theory must constantly think about and in his philosophy, he offers elementary tools for this (Jakonen, 2013, pp. 56-72).

Now, in addition to the above description, Hobbes's theory of the multitude is also a theory of individuation. Facing and sensing the chaotic and violent body of the multitude in the state of nature, people come to understand that they are first of all individuals.

3 Concerning the mythical etymology of the Behemoth and Leviathan, see Tralau (2007, pp. 61-81), and Schmitt (2002, pp. 73-80).

Participating in religious sects, political parties or rebellious groups means that the individuals put their own life in danger. Even loyalty to one's family might be dangerous. The most important thing for human beings is to safeguard their own lives: Self-preservation is the highest moral law. Thus, with his theory of multitude Hobbes calls for people to understand that the biggest threat to their safety and well-being is the unlimited action and motion (absolute liberty) of each and every one. Yet, disengaging from this threat is not possible by attacking others, since in the multitude people are equal. Instead, the answer is to lay down arms and subject oneself to the arbitrary power of others. Hobbes believes that all the people will find the same fear of violent death inside themselves. By self-examination, through recognizing the fundamental nature of the fear of violent death, people prepare themselves for making an individual decision about forming a sovereign power that transcends all the possible political, religious or militant groups, i.e., the logic of the multitude (Jakonen, 2013, pp. 56-72, 73-98).

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 Now, it seems that the distance of the multitude, be it an ensemble of different, heterogeneous groups or lonely individuals, from the sovereign power is vast. Hobbes however states that *originally*, that is prior to the fictive social contract there was/is nothing else than this moving matter of displaced and disorganized human beings. Therefore, it is worthwhile to ask how it is possible to create a sovereign power out of the multitude and to bridge this fundamental gap. And why cannot the multitude be a political subject?

The main reason why the multitude cannot ever be a political subject,⁴ a political entity or a commonwealth is that the multitude does not have one will, but instead a plurality of wills. Every individual has her own mind, her own will and own endeavour, since the logic of the multitude prevails in every individual. In the multitude, there is no common understanding about anything. The multitude cannot act as one person and it cannot make collective decisions. The multitude is a direct expression of the actions of the individuals, as Hobbes states in *De Cive*: "Whatever is done by the multitude must be understood

⁴ This was different with the classics, who saw that the multitude, which they see as common people or *the many*, can indeed become a political subject.

as being done by each of those who make up that crowd [*multitudo*]" (1642/2003, 6.1, p. 76 [218]).⁵

It is obvious that in the multitude, there is no representation of men, no mediation between the actions of men and the authorization of those actions. The multitude is a direct expression of individual desires and actions. Since the multitude cannot act in the name of the commonwealth, it is impossible to attach any legal action to it: The civil law does not concern the multitude. This is because the multitude is not a natural or an artificial person, but a plurality of natural persons that has yet to be institutionalised as an artificial person.

Finally, the fundamental meaning and the problem of the multitude for Hobbes's political theory becomes clearer if it is analysed from the viewpoint of political power. In the *Leviathan* Hobbes writes about the social contract in the following way:

This done, the multitude so united in one person is called a COMMONWEALTH; in Latin, CIVITAS. This is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that mortal god to which we owe, under the immortal God, our peace and defence. For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the Commonwealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him that, by terror thereof, he is enabled to form the wills of them all, to peace at home, and mutual aid against their enemies abroad. (1651/1999, 17.13, p. 114).

This unanimity, the artificial construction of one *mind* and one will in the social contract is necessary:

For being distracted in opinions concerning the best use and application of their strength, they do not help, but hinder one another; and reduce their strength by mutual opposition to nothing. (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 17.4, p. 112).

In other words, the question of the multitude in Hobbes's political theory is a question of the absence and formation of political power. The question between the multitude and the social contract is a case between absolute power (sovereignty) and the total absence of

⁵ Silverthorne and Tuck (2003) translate the word *multitudo* systematically as *crowd*. I suggested their translation by using *multitude* instead.

power (the multitude). Hobbes sees that without a contract under which people join together and form a sovereign power, there is no possibility to live politically and in an industrious way. Without a contract that binds human beings together, there is no common power and no state. Without common power, there is no possibility to do things that are beyond the strength of a single individual or the multitude, such as lift heavy stones or build large buildings—or generally, live a good life (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 17.9, p. 84).

Hence, Hobbes sees that the multitude is absolutely incapable of bringing peace and security to the state of nature. It does not have the power to calm down the violence between individual men or groups of men (sects, parties etc.), since in the multitude there is no (qualitative) majority, only an ensemble of minorities (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 17.3, p. 112). It is for this reason that the *bellum omnium contra omnes* is such a crucial formulation in Hobbes' theory. He simply tries to form a theory of power that can secure peace in a large area and population by explaining how the principal enemy of all political order, the logic of the multitude which escalates into the war of every man against every man, can be overcome.

Theory of Social Contract and Representation

The question of democracy in Hobbes's political thought is primarily a question of social contract, the constitution of the state. However, since the social contract is a series of motions and transformations, one has to be careful to recognize correctly all the different forms political power takes. With social contract, first of all, the multitude transforms into a people, many (*omnes*) turn to one (*singuli*), a lonely and independent individual turns into a citizen and a subject. On the second phase of the social contract, the people is divided in two: the monarch and the population, the latter of which Hobbes calls a multitude. This is, however, a different sort of multitude than the one living in the state of nature, and the monarch is a different sort of the people than the people in the first phase of the social contract.⁶ In what follows, I will analyse these different transformations.

⁶ This issue will be elaborated in more detail in the next chapter.

For Hobbes, the change from the reign of the multitude to the commonwealth is a question of the right kind of contract between every man with every man (1651/1999, 17.13, p. 114). The sovereign power is the outcome of a metamorphosis⁷ in which the plurality of wills are condensed into a single one. It is this body that is authorized by every man who participated in the constitution of sovereign power, that is, by those who belonged to the multitude and participated in the act of voting:

A commonwealth is said to be *instituted*, when a *multitude* of men do agree, and *covenant, everyone, with everyone*, that to whatsoever *man*, or *assembly of men*, shall be given the major part, the *right to present* the person of them all (that is to say, to be their *representative*) every one, as well he that *voted for it*, as he that *voted against it*, shall *authorize* all the actions and judgements, of that man, or assembly of men, in the same manner, as if they were his own, to the end, to live peaceably amongst themselves, and be protected against other men. (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 18.1, p. 115).

It seems that the basic idea of democracy as the rule of an elected majority is in at the heart of the Hobbesian idea of social contract and sovereignty. Thus, for Hobbes the sovereign power is originally a sort of democratic majority. In *The Elements of Law* Hobbes writes:

The first in order of time of these three sorts is democracy, and it must be so of necessity, because an aristocracy and a monarchy, require nomination of persons agreed upon; which agreement in a great multitude of men must consist in the consent of the major part; and where the votes of the major part involve the votes of the rest, there is actually a democracy. (1640/2005c, 2.1, pp. 138-139).

⁷ It is noteworthy that in Hobbes's early political writings (*Horae Subsecivae: A Discourse Upon the Beginning of Tacitus*), he did not have the idea of a social contract. Instead, the beginning of the commonwealth is seen as accidental and the term multitude is used to mean what is later called democracy: "The first form of government in any State is *accidental*: that is, according to the condition the Founder happens to be of. If one man of absolute power above rest, be the Founder of a City, he will likewise be the Ruler of the same; if a few, then a few will have the government; and if the *multitude*, then commonly will do the like" (1620/1995, pp. 31-32). This piece of text shows how Hobbes in 1620s still had a rather traditional conception of political regimes.

In *The Elements of Law*, democracy, as a rule established by the majority of votes, is chronologically the first instance of sovereign power. Yet, the crucial problem of democracy seems to be the lack of contract between the sovereign power and its subjects. This is because when “democracy is a making, there is no sovereign with whom to contract” (Hobbes, 1640/2005c, 2.2, p. 139). In *De Cive*, Hobbes states that “democracy is not constituted by agreements which individuals make with the People, but by mutual agreements of individuals with other individuals” (1642/2003, 7.7, p. 95 [240]). This is in a way the purest form of social contract and it means that the birth of sovereign power is at the same time the birth of the people: “Prior to the formation of a commonwealth a People [*populus*] does not exist, since it was not then a person but a multitude of individual persons” (1642/2003, 7.7, p. 95 [240]).

Now, it is important to note that on a theoretical level, sovereignty (sovereign power) is something fundamentally different from the sovereign, the representative of sovereign power. In *De Cive*, Hobbes, writing about the differences between the kinds of sovereign power, states very clearly that “the differences between commonwealths are derived from the difference in the persons to whom sovereign power is committed” (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 7.1, p. 91 [235]).⁸ A little later he clarifies the difference between the Aristotelian concepts of *potentia* and *actus* by applying them to politics:

For government [*imperium*] is a *capacity* [*potential*], administration of government is an *act* [*actus*]. *Power* is equal in every kind of commonwealth; what differs are the acts, i.e. the *motions* and *actions* of the commonwealth, depending on whether they originate from the deliberations of many or of a few, of the competent or of the incompetent. (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 10.16, p. 125 [276]).⁹

8 A little earlier Hobbes states that in democracy, “sovereign power lies with an *Assembly* in which any citizen has the right to vote; it is called DEMOCRACY” (1642/2003, 7.1, pp. 91-92 [236]). The difference between sovereign power and the ones that use that sovereign power is very clear.

9 Translators of *De Cive* here translate *imperium* as government. In my text, I use the term government to refer to the administration of sovereign power.

Hence, there are in fact two phases in the process of political representation. First of all, sovereign power represents the power of individuals, which amounts to nothing in the multitude as the individuals are hindered by each other. Thus, sovereign power is ultimately the power of the people, not of the multitude. Sovereignty is the actual omnipotence of the people over the multitude, or in other words, the omnipotence of the political subject over the apolitical mass of individuals. Secondly, a government, be it monarchy, aristocracy or democracy, represents this sovereign power as the sovereign. The sovereign is the one who uses the abstract and artificial sovereign power and orders the ways the commonwealth acts and moves. In other words, the administration of government in the commonwealth means controlling the motions of people. Sovereignty is, however, the *artificial soul* and the prime mover of the commonwealth (Hobbes, 1651/1999, intro., p. 7).¹⁰

Furthermore sovereignty (sovereign power) and the sovereign (the representative of sovereign power) should never be actually separated. Sovereign power always completely rests upon a natural person who bears sovereignty: "Whosoever beareth the person of the people, or is one of that assembly that bears it, beareth also his own natural person" (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 19.4, p. 124). Otherwise, sovereignty is divided (mixed government), which is not in Hobbes's interests.

The negative examples given by Hobbes concerning *elective kings* and other limited sovereigns tells that sovereign power and the bearer of sovereign power should always be completely united in one natural person. Although the person of the state is artificial, the best outcomes in government are reached if the person looks and acts like a natural person. This means that in a monarchy, the sovereign power of the people must be completely transferred to a monarch. The ability of sovereign people to limit the power of the monarch would render the monarch a minister of sovereign power, not the sovereign itself (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 19.10-14, pp. 127-129).

¹⁰ Yet, one must not forget that the real origin of the motion in the commonwealth is the appetite of each individual combined to a multitude in motion, which however is captured in the social contract as a property of the Leviathan (Jakonen, 2013, pp. 68-72).

Thus, as was stated above, there is in fact another contract in which an aristocracy or a monarchy is created through democracy. With this contract, the people transfers its rights and sovereignty. In the transfer of rights, the people as a *person* ceases to exist but it does not, however, return into a formless and anarchic multitude. All obligations towards the public person of the people cease as they become a population instead of a political subject and new obligations towards a new representative of the sovereign power (the political subject), for example a monarch, are created. But it is important to note that originally the sovereign monarch received the power from the sovereign people who voted for its transfer. In this way, it is impossible for the citizens to act legally against the will of the sovereign monarch, since the citizens have voluntarily transferred their rights to the monarch (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 7.10-12, p. 96 [241-242]).

Since the people is the first instance of government after the social contract, or in fact, the social contract is basically a democratic meeting¹¹, it is necessary to understand why exactly Hobbes wants to get rid of the democratic government and why he prefers monarchy as the best form of government. If democracy is needed to establish sovereign power, why is it so important to give away of it as soon as the state is properly formed? In what follows, I suggest the reason for this is that the people as a sovereign, that is, as the representative of sovereignty, is a form of government that is too close to the unwanted multitude.

The Problems of Democratic Government

Flat Government

The first and perhaps the most important thing to note regarding Hobbes's aversion to democratic government is that the representative of sovereign power and its subjects are superposed in a way that makes it difficult to actually separate them from each other. In this sense, the power relation between those who govern and those who are governed, compared to aristocracy and monarchy, is in democracy flat. In fact, the problem of the divided nature of the

¹¹ "When men have met to erect a commonwealth, they are, almost by the very fact that they have met, a *Democracy*" (Hobbes 1642/2003, 7.5, p. 94 [239]).

political subject is the most palpable in democracy. In Hobbes' own words, "the nature of commonwealth is that a multitude of citizens¹² both exercises power and is subject to power, but in different senses" (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 6.1, p. 76 [217]). Hence, Hobbes seems to suggest that a democratic government is not the best example of the possibilities of the geometry of power.

This makes things very complicated in a democracy: The same people are rulers and governed subjects. Every individual is divided in two since they must see themselves as both the authors of sovereign action and the subjects of government. Several problems follow from this dichotomy. In *The Elements of Law* Hobbes states:

How unjust soever the action be, that this sovereign *demus* shall do, is done by the will of every particular man subject to him, who are therefore guilty of same. If therefore they style it injury, they but accuse themselves. And it is against reason for the same man, both to do and complain; implying this contradiction, that whereas he first ratified the people's acts in general, he now disalloweth some of them in particular. (1640/2005c, 2.3, p. 140).

Hobbes sees that it is difficult, or even impossible to expect that people could be able to see themselves operating in two roles. Quite the contrary, they constantly mix up their two roles as political subjects and the objects of political governance. A lengthier citation from *De Cive* explains the way Hobbes sees the relationship between the political subject (people) and the governed object (the multitude):

Men do not make a clear enough distinction between a *people* and *multitude*. A *people* is a *single* entity, with a *single will*; you can attribute *an act* to it. None of this can be said of a *multitude*. In every commonwealth the *People* Reigns: for even in *Monarchies* the *People* exercises power [*imperat*]; for the *people* wills through the will of *one man*. But the citizens, i.e. the subjects, are a *multitude*. In a *Democracy* and in an *Aristocracy* the citizens are the *multitude*, but the *council* is the *people*; in a *Monarchy* the subjects are the *multitude*, and (paradoxically) the *King* is the

¹² The term *multitudo* is used here simply to refer to the large number of citizens, not to the political concept of *multitudo*.

people. Ordinary people and others who do not notice this point, always speak of a *large number* of men as the *people*, i.e. as the *commonwealth*; they speak of the *commonwealth* having rebelled against the *king* (which is impossible) and of the *people* wanting, or not wanting, what malcontent and murmuring subjects want or do not want; under this label of the *people*, they are setting the *citizens* against the *commonwealth*, i.e. the *Multitude* against the *people*. (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 12.8, p. 137 [291-292], see also 1640/2005c, 2.11, pp. 145-146).

Thus, according to Hobbes, the multitude does not in fact vanish in the social contract. Instead, when the political subject is born, the multitude becomes an object of governance, or, in a modern parlance, a population. Accordingly, if the people as the sovereign acts upon a subject, in this case an individual ultimately at war with the sovereign,¹³ the subject has the right to reciprocate, since every member of a democratic state is also a part of sovereign government. Every subject in democracy is directly responsible for every action of the sovereign, the people (Hobbes, 1640/2005c, 2.3, p. 140).

In democracy, the democratic government and the multitude (the political subject and the object of governance) are superposed, since the same people are the material of both. This means that the power of the people is not actually gathered into one *Archimedean point*, but is instead dispersed to cover every particular man. Thus, democracy is a rather abstract form of government, since the artificiality of the public person is so obvious. The system of authorisation and representation does not work properly in democracy: One is not able to distinguish between the source of sovereign power (people) and the user of sovereign power (people). Even more importantly, one is not able to distinguish between the ones governing (people) and the ones governed (the multitude, *population*).

¹³ According to Hobbes, a citizen is always in the relation of state of nature to sovereign power. Sovereign power has a power to kill its subject, if needed (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 21.7, pp. 141-142; 21.11-12, p. 144).

Populist Leaders

Hobbes sees the democratic meeting as a sort of an open gathering in which people are allowed to participate rather freely. A depiction of this can be found in *The Elements of Law*. Here the most important part of Hobbes's argument seems to be that a state tied to a democratic process of constant deliberation and rhetoric, which are most typical for democratic meetings, cannot operate properly. In a democratic meeting, all negative elements related to demagoguery and eloquence, and thus to the multitude, are actualized:

In all democracies, though the right of sovereignty be in the assembly, which is virtually the whole body; yet the use thereof is always in one, or a few particular men. For in such great assemblies as those must be, where into every man may enter at his pleasure, there is no means any ways to deliberate and give counsel what to do, but by long and set orations; whereby to every man there is more or less hope given, to incline and sway the assembly to their own ends. In a multitude of speakers therefore, where always, either one is eminent alone, or a few being equal amongst themselves, are eminent above the rest, that one or few must of necessity sway the whole; insomuch, that a democracy, in effect, is no more than an aristocracy of orators, interrupted sometimes with the temporary monarchy of one orator. (Hobbes, 1640/2005c, 21.5, p. 141).

Practically, democracy is always a rule of one or few capable men who can persuade the whole democratic assembly of their own opinions and ambitions. In a democratic meeting, the orators and demagogues can easily gain power and actually rule over the whole democratic body politic like aristocrats and monarchs do. The difference is that unlike monarchs, demagogues do not have legal authority for their rule, since in democracy the authority is officially held by the democratic meeting.¹⁴ Hobbes does not rely on the process of democratic deliberation by a long set of orations, but he seems to endorse the fact that every time

¹⁴ In *De Cive* Hobbes states that "but in a *Democracy* the large numbers of *Demagogues*, i.e. orators who have influence with the people (and there are a lot of them and new ones come along every day) [...]" (1642/2003, 10.6, p. 119 [269]). It seems that in a democracy, the problem of demagoguery is permanent, since there are always new candidates seeking political power.

there is a possibility to persuade people by speech, the majority of them will follow those who possess good eloquence and “ornamentary style of speaking”.

It is also possible that the tyrannical demagogues or populists make the arbitrariness and cruelty of the *leaders* of democratic meetings much stronger than it is in monarchies. In *De Cive* Hobbes writes: “In a *Monarchy* therefore anyone who is prepared to live quietly is free of danger, whatever the character of the ruler” (1642/2003, 10.7, p. 120 [270]). In democracies, the demagogues become *Neros* who will cruelly use people according to their own interests and join with other orators to oppress people. For this reason, in a democracy no one is safe from the cruelty of demagogues and orators. Two classical examples given by Hobbes clarify this question.

The first example is the case of Pericles in the *Peloponnesian Wars*, highlighting the relationship between the democratic *demos* and the democratic leader. Even though Pericles was a strong leader, he was still constantly oscillating between the people’s favour and despise. On the one hand, it seems that the advice Pericles gives to the people easily leads them to war. But in time of trouble, people start to hate their leader and give him a fine for leading Athens to war. Yet, soon after this, the people of Athens still elect Pericles as the leader of the Athenian troops. This shows how confused the Athenian people were, “as is the way with the multitude” as Thucydides states (Hobbes, 1629/2005a, 20, p. 35).

The relationship between the Athenians and Pericles demonstrates those elements which Hobbes saw as dangerous in Athenian democracy. Even though Pericles was a good leader, a man of the State and a patriot, nothing like the demagogues such as Alcibiades, his rule was still very fragile. The picture Thucydides paints of Pericles is admirable, but he manages simultaneously to reveal that people did not in the end act as Pericles wanted. Right after the death of Pericles, people became confused and forgot everything they had learned from him. From this basis, Hobbes also sees that Thucydides was very critical towards democracy. In his Introduction to Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian Wars*, Hobbes notes that “For his [i.e. Thucydides] opinion touching the government of the state, it is manifest that he least of all liked

the democracy” (Hobbes, 1629/2005b, p. 16). This leads Hobbes to conclude that everything good in imperial Athens under the reign of Pericles was not derived from democracy, but monarchy:

He [Thucydides] praiseth the government of Athens, when it was mixed of the few and the many: but more he commendeth it, both when Peisistratus reigned, (saving that it was an usurped power), and when in the beginning of this it was democratical in name, but in effect monarchical under Pericles. (1629/2005b, p. 17).

Another example is the case of Caesar, which further illustrates the problems of democracy and how in the Roman Empire it faced the constant danger of falling into the hands of charismatic populists. The case of Caesar shows how people can easily be drawn away from the obedience of the law and under the spell of a charismatic leader (Hobbes refers to demagoguery as witchcraft) (Hobbes 1651/1999, 29.20, p. 220). Demagogues like Caesar flatter the people. They offer grain and wine, appoint popular civil servants and build temples that please people. Plutarch (tran. 2010) describes how Caesar gained popularity in Rome by spending the money gained in the Gallic wars to build up popular temples etc. Suetonius (tran. 1961, pp. 7-8, 27) also describes vividly how Caesar gained power right from the beginning of his career by building temples, organizing gladiator shows etc. for the common people of Rome.

Also, the reputation of the leader might impact the people's mind to not follow the laws and lawful leaders, but instead to join the rebellious action of the multitude. What is interesting in the example of Caesar is that Hobbes explicitly expresses how the danger of this kind of action happening in popular governments (that is, in democracy) is much bigger than it is in monarchy, because “an army is of so great force, and multitude, as it may easily be made believe, they are the people” (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 29.20, p. 220). Although Hobbes does not defend the republican model of power, he nevertheless notes that the reason for the ruin of the Senate in the rebellion that finally led Caesar to power was the unleashed power of the multitude. With the help of the raging multitude, Caesar subverted the power of the Senate. After this he became the master of both the Senate and the people/

multitude with the help of his army (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 29.20, p. 220). This example shows clearly how the line between the people and the multitude is continually oscillating. From this follows, that the fundamental problem for Hobbes is that the people, as a political subject, is in constant danger of becoming a multitude, that is, of turning into an apolitical monster.

Thus, according to Hobbes, the democratic meeting too much resembles the gathering of the multitude, where demagogues lead the ignorant but passionate people whose worst characters are publicly manifested. It is highly possible that Hobbes might have combined the ancient examples of democracy with the *English experience* of the Short and the Long parliaments. Hence, we should not take this picture of democracy as an accurate description of the British parliament in the seventeenth century, but it shows instead the negativity and suspicion that Hobbes had of democratic government in general.

The Dangers of Passions and Corruption in Democracy

In *The Elements of Law*, Hobbes explains how passions¹⁵ form a great problem in assemblies such as democracy and aristocracy:¹⁶ "If the passions of many men be more violent when they are assembled together, then the inconvenience arising from passion will be greater in an aristocracy, than a monarchy" (1640/2005c, 5.4, p. 166).

When political questions are debated in large assemblies, everyone tries to push their own interests and ideas forward. This leads men to exaggerate their opinions and passions. The outcome is a sort of extremism where bad is made to seem even worse and good to appear even better. The most efficient way to do this is to give a speech to a large crowd of people and influence their passions with extreme examples and figures of speech. This instead leads to a situation where the extremism of some private men angers even the moderate people: "As a great many coals, though but warm asunder, being put together inflame one another", states Hobbes (1640/2005c, 5.4, p. 167).

15 In this article I concentrate only to few examples concerning passions and democracy. For a short summary on this crucial theme in Hobbes's political theory, please see Jakonen (2013, pp. 74-80).

16 In the *Elements of Law* Hobbes goes as far as to state that democracy and aristocracy are actually the same, since "democracy is but the government of a few orators" (1640/2005c, 5.3, p. 165).

According to Hobbes, monarchy is not as prone to passions as democracy and aristocracy are, since affections and passions have the strongest power in large social gatherings. This follows from the fact that "the mind of one man is not so variable in that point, as are the decrees of an assembly" (Hobbes, 1640/2005c, 5.4, p. 168). Orators are the "favourites of sovereign assemblies". They can easily hurt the commonwealth with their eloquence, but they cannot heal what their words have brought about (Hobbes 1651/1999, 19.8, p. 126). The most dangerous thing according to Hobbes is the combination of passionate stupidity of the multitude and eloquence of the demagogues as Hobbes states when he compares demagogues to the story of Medea:

Thus, *stupidity* and *eloquence* unite to subvert the commonwealth; in the manner in which once upon a time (as the story goes) the daughters of *Pelias*, king of Thessaly conspired with *Medea* against their father. Wishing to restore a decrepit old man to his youth, they cut him in pieces by the advice of *Medea* and placed him in the fire to cook, in the vain hope that he would be rejuvenated. In the same manner the mob (*vulgus*) in their stupidity, like the daughters of *Pelias*, desiring to renew their old commonwealth and led by the *eloquence* of ambitious men as by the sorcery of *Medea*, more often split it into *factions* and waste it with the fire than reform it. (Hobbes 1642/2003, 12.13, pp. 140-141).

Thus, the irrationality and easily provoked passions of the multitude puts the body politic in the tangible danger of falling apart. Democracy is always very close to multitude, and multitude is always subject to betrayal, and the more people there are together, the easier it is to hoax them all.¹⁷ This follows from the fact that in a multitude the variety of opinions, (in the end, everyone has their own), turns out paradoxically to be simple Manichean opinions when they are expressed by the multitude. This derives from the fact that the multitude acts according to its passions: It moves towards something that pleases it

¹⁷ In *Behemoth* Hobbes says: "I have heard often that they ought to pay what was imposed by consent of Parliaments to the use of the King, but to their own use never before. I see by this, it is easier to gull the multitude, than any one man amongst them. For what one man, that has not his natural judgment depraved by accident, could be so easily cozened in a matter that concerns his purse. had he not been passionately carried away by the rest to change of government, or rather to a liberty of every one to govern himself?" (1681/1990, p. 38 [211]).

and moves away from everything that scares it. In multitude only brutal appetites and aversions have importance. It is of no use to ask anything special from the multitude, since the only answer it will give is simple *pro* or *contra*, if it can answer at all.¹⁸ Hence, if one (a demagogue for example) wants to lead a multitude, it must happen through easily understandable orders and by appealing to passions, not by rational discourse. For this reason, democracy seems to be in practice a very hazardous mode of government.

In *The Elements of Law*, Hobbes also gives an interesting insight into his understanding of the meaning of corruption. The alleged inconvenience of monarchy, or any kind of sovereign power as Hobbes specifies in *De Cive* (1642/2003, 10.5, p. 119 [268-269]), is that the monarch may legally take property from his subjects to fulfil the needs of the state. But sometimes he may also use the funds of the state to enrich his children, relatives, friends and others. This kind of corruption is, however, even more dangerous in an aristocracy and democracy, Hobbes claims. The more there are people taking part in the governance of the state, the more there are relatives, children and others, who also may demand their share of wealth and power. Aristocrats can also ally together as "twenty monarchs" and "set forward another's designs mutually". In democracy, there are always new people coming to seek the benefits of power and this easily leads to high costs of bribery and corruption that cannot be done without exploiting the citizens. In monarchy, corruption takes place within reasonable limits, argues Hobbes (1640/2005c, 5.5, p. 167, 1642/2003, 10.6, pp. 119 [268-269]).

Thus, Hobbes sees that the public interest of the state is best watched over when the leader of the state is a monarch, who takes care of his own interests while considering the best for the state. In the *Leviathan*, Hobbes makes a very interesting argument, stating that:

18 In *Leviathan* Hobbes describes how the *government of a multitude* is incapable of action, as he compares it to the *mute* representative where the number of representatives is equal and thus, it is not possible to decide anything. "Or if the number be odd, as three, or more, men or assemblies; whereof every one has by a negative voice, authority to take away the effect of all the affirmative voices of the rest, this number is no representative; because by the diversity of opinions, and interests of men, it becomes oftentimes, and in cases of the greatest consequence, a mute person, and unapt, as for many things else, so for the government of a multitude, especially in time of war" (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 16.17, pp. 109-110).

where the public and private interest are most closely united, there is the public most advanced. Now in monarchy, the private interest is the same with the public. The riches, power, and honour of monarch arise only from the riches, strength and reputation of his subjects. For no king can be rich, nor glorious, nor secure; whose subjects are either poor, or contemptible, or too weak through want, or dissension, to maintain a war against their enemies; whereas in a democracy, or aristocracy, the public prosperity confers not so much to the private fortune of one that is corrupt, or ambitious, as doth many times a perfidious advice, a treacherous action, or a civil war. (1651/1999, 19.4, pp. 124-125).

Here Hobbes seems to be saying that democracy and aristocracy are prone to all sorts of confusion between private and public interests. Monarchy better suits the needs of a commonwealth that wants to live a secure and happy life. In other words, it is in the interests of the monarch to make his people happy and prosperous. The case is not so clear in aristocracy and democracy.

Deliberation in Democracy

In *De Cive*, Hobbes states several times that democracy is a convention where decisions are made by the majority. Thus, as explained above, the act of voting is something that Hobbes relates strongly to the democratic practice of power (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 7.5 y 16, pp. 91-92, 98-100 [235-236, 239, 244-247]). However, to practice voting there needs to be some kind of an institution where the voting takes place. Hobbes defines democracy by stating that:

From the fact that they have gathered voluntarily, they are understood to be bound by the decisions made by agreement of the majority. And that is a *Democracy*, as long as the convention lasts, or is set to reconvene at certain times and places. For a convention whose will is the will of all the citizens has *sovereign power*. (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 7.5, p. 94 [239]).

To maintain the convention of democracy, that is the practice of voting and the expression of every particular citizen's mind, there has to be a strict decision regarding the time and place where this

public deliberation and voting can take place. Without this, democracy will revert to the state of the multitude, claims Hobbes.¹⁹ Without a clearly set time and place for the next democratic meeting, there is no longer a *demos*, but instead a disorganized multitude, “to which no *action* or *right* may be attributed”. We see that *demos*, the people as the political subject, is in fact a practical democratic meeting that has an uninterrupted schedule (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 7.5, p. 94 [239]).

Along with this basic requirement, there has to be something else used to secure the preservation of sovereign power (people) between these meetings. It is impossible, says Hobbes, that a democratic meeting could sit uninterrupted. For this reason, the people as the sovereign have to relinquish the authority (*potestas*) of the people to one man or assembly of men for the interval between meetings. Again, democracy is in danger of turning into a corrupted aristocracy or monarchy, since it seems practically impossible to have a permanent and stable democratic meeting, which is capable of making decisions all the time (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 7.6, pp. 94–95 [239–240]).²⁰

Hence, the last thing in the long list of disadvantages of the democratic government is the role of deliberation in the governance of the state. Deliberation is, of course, the most important thing in a democracy, since political decisions and the will of the state regarding every particular question is formed in the process of deliberation. In *De Cive*, Hobbes gives four reasons that prove why deliberation does not work properly in a democracy.

The first reason is that in democracy, deliberation is reduced under the public display of prudence and eloquence: “Each member [of a democratic meeting] has to make a long, continuous speech to express his opinion; and deploy his eloquence to make it as ornate

19 Aristocracy resembles democracy in this sense. Hobbes writes: “Without a fixed schedule of the times and places at which the *council of optimates* may meet, there is no longer a *council* or a single person, but a disorganized multitude without sovereign power” (1642/2003, 7.10, p. 96 [241–242]).

20 “But if a People is to retain sovereign power, it is not enough to have settled times and places for meeting. Either the intervals between the meetings must not be so long that something could happen in the meanwhile which (for lack of sovereign power) would endanger the commonwealth, or the people must devolve at least the exercise of sovereign power on some one man or one assembly for the intervening period. If this has not been done, no adequate provision has been made for the defence and peace of individuals” (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 7.6, p. 95 [239–240]).

and attractive as possible to the audience, in order to win reputation” (Hobbes 1642/2003, 10.11, p. 123 [273-274]). Hence, deliberation, which should be the work of reason, becomes an interplay between rhetoric and passions where eloquence can persuade people to adopt whatever opinion.

In the *Leviathan*, Hobbes goes as far as to compare democracy to the infant king, who must take counsel and advice from several people. These *custodes libertatis*, as Hobbes ironically calls them, easily become nothing more than dictators and temporary monarchs. Hence, in democracy the counsel given by several people might lead to a situation where the actual power and sovereignty lies in the hands of counsellors, not in the hands of the people (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 19.9, p. 127).

The second reason why deliberation does not work in democracy is that decisions would mostly be made by dilettantes and novices. In military matters, for example, common people do not have enough knowledge about external powers and their resources (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 10.11, p. 123 [273-274]). This means that, again, those who possess the skills of rhetoric are able to guide the ignorant multitude to accept whatever opinions and decisions on very serious matters.

The third reason is that democratic, public deliberation, where eloquence is used, leads too easily to the formation of different kinds of factions. Factions, Hobbes claims, “are the source of sedition and civil war” (1642/2003, 10.12, p. 123 [275]). The birth of factions follows from the fact that every orator tries to make other orators look bad, and for this reason they gather around them a group that is able to destroy their competitors. Hence, democracy is all about the competition of different factions, or parties in contemporary terminology.

This is also evident in meetings where different factions join together to receive the power through the majority of the votes. This leads to a politics where the sole aim is power and the wellbeing of the commonwealth is easily forgotten. When power is not reached through eloquence, people take up arms and the outcome is a civil war. Another possible outcome, albeit not quite as disastrous as a civil war but nevertheless a bad outcome of factions, is that the laws of the state are diminished under the arbitrary decisions of the leading factions. Hobbes simply means that the laws of the state become uncertain and

subject to constant change, comparing them to the waves of the sea. Constant, unpredictable change and uncontrolled motion is not good for the commonwealth (1642/2003, 10.12-13, pp. 123-124 [274-275], 1651/1999, 19.6, p. 125).²¹

The fourth and last reason why deliberation in democracy does not work is that secrets of the state are easily revealed to large audiences and, as a consequence, to the enemies as well. In this way the security and wellbeing of the state is endangered (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 10.12-13, pp. 123-124 [274-275]). In other words, public talk about the matters of the state is not suitable, since it tends to reveal the most important secrets of the state to the masses and via masses to enemies.

Conclusions

Even though the birth of the people is the birth of sovereign power and in this way democracy is the basis of any kind of absolute sovereign government, for Hobbes democracy is the worst kind of government for a commonwealth. In fact, democracy is incapable of taking care of the basic task that the sovereign needs to conduct. For Hobbes, the basic task of the sovereign is the security and wellbeing of the people (*salus populi suprema lex*) and the best government is that which can take care of the security in the best possible way, as Hobbes states in the *Leviathan*:

The difference between these three kinds of commonwealth, consisteth not in the difference of power; but in the difference of convenience, or aptitude to produce the peace, and security of the people; for which end they were instituted. (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 19.4, p. 124).

In democracy, the power-relations between the sovereign and the subjects are as direct as possible, since every member of the commonwealth is also part of the sovereign assembly. For Hobbes,

²¹ This view can be identified even from Hobbes's earliest texts, *Horae subsecivae*. In his *A Discourse Upon the Beginning of Tacitus* Hobbes states: "After the people had delivered themselves from the authority of Kings, and came themselves to undergo the cares of government, they grew perplexed at every inconvenience, and shifted from one form of government to another, and so to another, and then to first again; like a man in a fever, that often turns to and fro in his bed, but finds himself without ease, and sick in every posture" (1620/1995, p. 34).

this *flatness* of power-relations is a real problem and a genuine threat to security: It is difficult to separate those who govern (people) from those who are governed (the multitude/population). People as citizens carry the artificial body politic of the people with their natural persons. For this reason, the democratic sovereign has much less power than the aristocratic or monarchic sovereign, since the power has been dispersed all over the body politic. Democracy as a mode of government does not fulfil the hopes Hobbes had put for the effectiveness of the governance in his geometric analysis of power.

For Hobbes, monarchy is a sort of an Archimedean point where the use of power over the multitude, or population in contemporary language, is the easiest. While in democracy, it is difficult to distinguish between those who govern and those who are governed, in a monarchy this difference is very clear. A monarch governs with the authority that the artificial body of the people has transferred wholly to the monarch. The same people are governed as the multitude, that is as the object of governance, by their own will. In contemporary language, the difference between the people and the population is of utmost importance for Hobbes. This usage of the concept of the multitude is significantly different compared with the classics: The multitude can never be a political subject for Hobbes and it must always be an object of governance. Political power must be able to take over and control the motion of the multitude.

As can be seen from the several pragmatic negative examples of democracy – concerning the problems of flat government, demagoguery and populism, passions, corruption and difficulty of deliberation – given above, for Hobbes democracy is an un-pragmatic and problematic form of government, too closely linked to the multitude. It is in danger of dissolving into anarchy, to the state of nature, which is not a form of any commonwealth, but the lack of it. As Hobbes states: “anarchy (which signifies want of government” (Hobbes, 1651/1999, 19.2, p. 123). Instead of an un-pragmatic and *archaic* democracy, Hobbes prefers the *modern* monarchy. A simple reason for monarchy is that it is a more practical form of power than democracy, because in a monarchy the capability of using power never ceases for a moment: “In the case of monarchy deliberation and decision occur at any time and in any

place” (Hobbes, 1642/2003, 7.13, p. 97 [242]). In this way, monarchy in practice is a more omnipotent form of power than democracy, since in monarchy power is permanent and undivided, unlike in democracy.

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