

Hobbes and unlimited government

[History](#)



Hobbes and Unlimited Government According to Hobbes, absolute monarchy is the best form of government since it is the only one that guarantees individuals absolute peace enabling them to coexist harmoniously to avoid the state of war. More so, Hobbes belief that neither limited government nor divided authority is a practical possibility arguing that there must be a supreme sovereign power in the society. Hobbes claims that any form of ordered government is preferable to civil war, therefore, he suggests that all societal members to submit to a single absolute, central authority in order to maintain peace and stability. Hobbes posits that the government is the only thing that can protect mankind from the fatal consequences of natural liberty (Cox 38). This paper provides an explanation of Hobbes's arguments in favor of unlimited government, criticisms advanced against these arguments, and Hobbes's possible reactions to these criticisms. According to Hobbes, humankind was originally created into the state of nature, where they were perfectly free. Life in the state of nature is characterized by solitude, brutality, poverty, nasty, and short-lived. The state of nature is undesirable and should be avoided because when man lives without a common authority, there will be war, man against man (Wolfenden1). Hobbes saw a strong government to be the necessary tool to avoid civil war and disorder basing his arguments on nature. Therefore, in order to eliminate this state of nature, sovereignty should be established as this will help in promoting peace. Hobbes's is main argument for a sovereign society was that any form of government is better than the state of nature and that absolute sovereignty is most likely to eradicate completely the state of nature since for him, absolute sovereignty has unlimited power. Furthermore, Hobbes posits that society can only be peaceful and stable when it is subjected to an absolute

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sovereign. Man cannot coexist peacefully without a strong established authority since man is quarrelsome in nature (Wolfenden, p. 1). Since life in the state of nature is not good for anyone and following the troublesome of humankind, formation of a commonwealth is logical and necessary in order to maintain peace and security through a covenant. Through this covenant, individuals surrender their freedom to Leviathan, the state, in order to escape from the terrible life in the state of nature. Under the monarch government, all the private and public interests are the same. However, he says that the authority of any government should stand for challenge by people because the government is a commonwealth. Moreover, Hobbes argues that monarch authority is the best since it concentrates power without any constraints (Wolfenden1). Some criticisms have been advanced against Hobbes's arguments. Firstly, his theoretical explanation about the formation of the government is cannot be applied practically. Hobbes claims that all governments are formed through a covenant, but this is not the case because governments are imposed on willing subjects. Hobbes himself seems to justify this by stating that all men behaving rationally would want to consent to the commonwealth since the alternative, that is, the state of nature is so terrible and unappealing and actually no one would wish to leave in that state (Wolfenden1). Another criticism against Hobbes' arguments was advanced by one of his main opponents, John Locke. Unlike Hobbes, Locke presented strong arguments for limited government. According to Locke, the state of nature is actually of freedom since no man is expected to obey any other and that there are laws of nature that guide individuals and ensure that they coexist peacefully (Dawkins). This criticizes Hobbes' stand that the state of nature is unappealing and that man can only coexist peacefully in <https://assignbuster.com/hobbes-unlimited-government/>

the presence of absolute authority. However, based on the first criticism, Hobbes would reply by stating that it is only when individuals come together to form a commonwealth through a covenant when a strong authority is formed. Furthermore, he would argue that the formation of a commonwealth, Leviathan, was because of man being tied with the life in the state of nature. Following the second criticism, Hobbes would respond that absolute sovereignty guarantees all peace and enforces peaceful coexistence between people in the society. This is so because for Hobbes, under monarchy, the private and public interests are the same since the monarch's riches come from his subjects. In addition, man cannot fully enjoy their freedom when there is no authority to govern their behaviors and help maintain order amongst them. In summary, Thomas Hobbes prefers absolute sovereignty as the most appropriate form of government that promotes peace and maintains stability in the society. He argues that the state of nature is unappealing and no would like to leave in that situation and so merging together to form a commonwealth is necessary in order to coexist peacefully. Some of the criticisms advanced against his arguments are, first, his explanation of the formation of the government has been refuted with his opponents arguing that governments are not formed through a covenant but through individuals' wills. Secondly, Locke has disagreed with Hobbes with his claim that the state of nature is terrible and man cannot coexist peacefully, and according to Locke, state of nature symbolizes absolute freedom and there are laws of nature which enable individuals to coexist peacefully. Works Cited Cox, Chana B. Liberty: God's Gift of Humanity. Lanham [u. a.]: Lexington Books, 2006. Print. Dawkins, Ellie. A Comparison of Thomas Hobbes in Leviathan and John Locke in His Second Treatise of <https://assignbuster.com/hobbes-unlimited-government/>

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