

What the best form of government is?

Government



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The purpose of this essay is to examine how the philosopher Thomas Hobbes answers the question of " what the best form of government is" in objection to Plato's answer that philosophers should rule.

In this paper, I will defend this statement by using the arguments Plato has made in *The Republic* on why philosophers should rule and responding to them with critics from Thomas Hobbes, explaining Hobbes belief in absolute monarchy, and using a real-life example of why Thomas Hobbes belief in absolute monarchy is the best form of government. To begin, we must understand the reason behind why Plato decided to make this argument for philosophers to rule.

At the time, the Athenian democracy was very unstable; which is the main reason why Plato decided to write *The Republic*. He believed that he knew the answer to why this instability was happening; " no competent leadership" (501b), and that is why in the first couple books, Plato focuses on defining the term " justice" and the prevention measures that a state can take in order to avoid the tyrannies that occurred in the Athenian democracy.

As we unravel more, he goes on to write about the importance a governing body has to the state; because it takes the best people found in society and allows them to become moral and political examples for the other " classes" of citizens. In the *Republic* Book VIII, he mentions five types of regimes starting off with the best form of government which is called " aristocracy". Philosophers ruling in the aristocracy means this regime is funded from wisdom and reason according to Plato.

For every regime in Plato's books, he has a man that illustrates what they stand for and are analyzed by Plato to advocate for his best form of government; philosophers as kings that rule. Plato has the aristocratic state divided into three caste-like parts: the ruling class, the auxiliaries, and the rest of people (majority.) Focusing on the ruling class, they are considered the "golden" ones because they have gold souls and are the only ones capable of ruling.

Plato believes that a philosopher king needs to go through proper training from the day they were born in order to become "golden". The philosopher kings go through an educational system that aims in training them to become selfless and upright, and they are taught "The Truth" based on Platonic ideas which allows their souls to become calm and aware of absolute Good.

That brings us to an important question; what is absolute good? According to Plato, the absolute Good that philosopher kings can see is the metaphysical origin of all that is good, which includes happiness. Philosopher kings do not focus on personal interests or shadows of Good (such as money, fame) but instead shift their focus towards real happiness.

Real happiness for philosopher kings is not to abuse the power given for his own selfish desires, but to dedicate his life into establishing Good in the state. Plato writes in *The Republic* that humans generally want what is intrinsically good, "even if the person does not realize the nature of what is good" (Plato 505d).

This means that although each person has the ability to commit bad actions, it is general and not based off a fundamental law, but instead appetites and desires. Now we can mention philosopher Thomas Hobbes (who I feel answers this question best) who writes in the "Leviathan" with a similar belief of strong power and human appetites and aversions, but he does not agree with Plato's statement of humans wanting good necessarily, but rather wanting what protects them best.

Hobbes goes on to write how a man in the state of nature living is at risk of a state of chaos because of his appetites and how humans will "provoke the rest" and create war and aggression. The way both Plato and Hobbes feel about what humans want shapes what kind of ideal society they feel would best work in order to prevent chaos.

For Plato, the philosopher kings are the only ones who possess truth and therefore are the only ones who can show average people how to act in society. Meaning that people in society are going to obey the philosopher kings because at the end of the day; everyone wants the general good.

However, Hobbes criticizes Plato's theory of this by writing how nobody can achieve the possession of truth and therefore will be incapable of seeing the good for the state and not themselves.

Hobbes feels because nobody can possess the truth; they also can not pass down moral understanding to something they lack and are not qualified in. Hobbes focuses more on ration and logic and does not consider religious aspects or morals when it comes to government which is more effective to this day.

The reason he argues for this is that each person has different moral standpoints and it can not simply be summarized for the over all majority because it is simply not fair. Religion as well varies from person to person and a very common reason for civil war in a state comes from the church and the state, when people are having religious practices forced upon them. In an absolute monarchy, everyone must follow the rules placed upon them which are made to keep peace and avoid all these conflicts.

Thomas Hobbes does not believe that morality has any importance when it comes to government. The purpose of government according to him is to protect every citizen by reinforcing the laws which keeps society at peace. Hobbes summarizes his theory in the Leviathan by explaining, " If two want the same thing and they both cannot have it, they become enemies and endeavor to destroy one another" (Hobbes 141).

This becomes the political theory he stands for because it further means that unlike Plato, men are constantly in battle with other men due to the lack of satisfaction for what he already has. Hobbes believes because humans are selfish, the only proper form of government is absolute monarchy. In the Leviathan, he uses the argument that a civil society would not be subject to destruction within if it is constructed with an absolute monarchy.

An absolute monarchy is a form of monarchy that has one ruler being the supreme power and that power is not limited to any laws that are written, legislations, or customs. He explains how any disagreements between state and church or rival governments or any factionalism in general within society can lead to civil war. He holds onto the concept that any form of civil

government that all people of society submit to will maintain common peace because those arising conflict issues will not happen.

The sovereign is in charge of running the government, this includes creating the laws, controlling the churches, determining first principles, and solving any conflicts that happen because of different philosophical beliefs.

According to Hobbes, only this absolute sovereign can maintain a civil society, and avoid war from being entered into society. Equality also plays an important role in why Thomas Hobbes believes in absolute monarchy.

Unlike Plato, he does not believe that anyone is better than anyone else, regardless of differences, no man can see ultimate truth and therefore are not so different after all. I agree with Thomas Hobbes belief in absolute monarchy because as he mentions in the Leviathan his main purpose of supporting absolute monarchy is to try to avoid destruction happening within the state.

Civil war can occur in a state from any type of disagreement as Hobbes mentioned between church and state for example that can lead to destruction within, so he feels the best way to avoid that is to create an absolute monarchy so that people will be safe. A real-life famous example of a successful absolute monarchy is in Swaziland and goes way back to the seventeenth-century.

Swaziland is the last monarchy left in Africa, but many middle-eastern countries in the world still have this form of government. The power an absolute monarchy has is still shown today when we look at the 1973

emergency act the king of Sobhuza II took declaring the state in emergency in the country is still in effect today.

In Swaziland, the king had total authority over the cabinet, legislature, and judiciary of the country. In an absolute monarchy, the ruler can impose rules everyone must follow to aim at protecting the country and keeping peace within. Another real-life example from a more personal standpoint would be the country Jordan, which is in the Middle East and my home country.

Jordan is one of the only countries in the Middle East that does not have conflict destroying their countries and does not have war going on. The reason behind this is simply their form of government which is an absolute monarchy. All the power lays on the Hashemite King of Jordan, his name is Abdullah and he is well loved and respected from all the residents living in Jordan.

He has managed to keep the country one of the safest countries in the Middle East and has taken care of the general good of everyone in the country. King Abdullah has so much power to the point where there is no freedom of speech when it comes to the royal family, meaning anyone saying anything negative about the king is a crime and can be imprisoned.

The reason for this law is that there are many great supporters and lovers of the king who would cause harm and start war with those who speak badly of him and for the general good of keeping everyone at peace; the king just puts those people away to prevent things from escalating.

When you really think about it, in this kind of situation both the name of the King and the person who is speaking bad is being protected, which avoided a conflict from rising and creating civil war.

Hobbes is right when he says humans are selfish beings who always want more because other countries in the Middle East who are not ran by an absolute monarchy are destroying one another through civil war within their country.

In conclusion, Hobbes had a main concern regarding that the most effective form of government- whatever its form- must have absolute authority. He states that their powers must be neither divided nor limited.

The reason he feels this as I had mention was for the general well being of the state in avoidance of conflicts occurring from civil disputes. The reason he emphasizes the need for absolutism is because once the authority opens room for limitation of their power, people will over step their limits and their selfish wants will come out and fear is the only way to keep the majority safe.

The only uncertainty Hobbes is yet to explain is his treatment of religion. My paper was only looking at the Leviathan, where it becomes unclear how religion plays out in his whole political theory. In other books, Hobbes discussed his Christian religion in each revision for his political philosophy.

Conflicting examinations from readers on whether Hobbes meant to use his core Christian commitments that come from absolutism, or if he just disregarded the readers religious beliefs by using irony. Regardless of how

Hobbes intentions in Leviathan are understood, it seems to me that Hobbes is a rational thinker who only speaks the truth that many people only obey and treat people well due to fear from higher conquerors.

In a state of human nature, everyone would do whatever they please because there is no fear; meaning selfish humans will all destroy themselves.