



# *Theorising the Democratic State*

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## Lecture 4

# Who Rules? I





# The Elite Theory of Government

## Democratic Principles

1. Principle of autonomy: *Individuals should participate in governing structures*
2. Principle of collective self-government: *People together should organise governing structures*
3. Majoritarian principle: *The alternative that has the support of the majority should be agreed to*
4. Principle of representation: *Where individuals cannot be directly involved in decision making and oversight their representatives act for them*
5. Principle of autonomous formation of opinion: *Nothing but the force of the better argument should persuade a person to change their mind*
6. Principle of deliberation: *The decision to pursue a course of action should be transparently and logically connected to the public reasons given in collective deliberation*
7. *Compare with:* Principle of secret ballot: *Individuals should form their preferences independently and autonomously; and express them in a voting procedure free of domination*

# Objection

*Voting systems typically deliver decisions which would not be the decision of the majority of the electorate*



**Kenneth Arrow**  
**b.1921**

No method of aggregation of preferences (where more than 2 options) meets all these conditions:

*It copes with every possible individual ordering of options;*

*Guarantees that if every voter prefers  $x$  to  $y$ , the outcome will rank  $x$  over  $y$ ;*

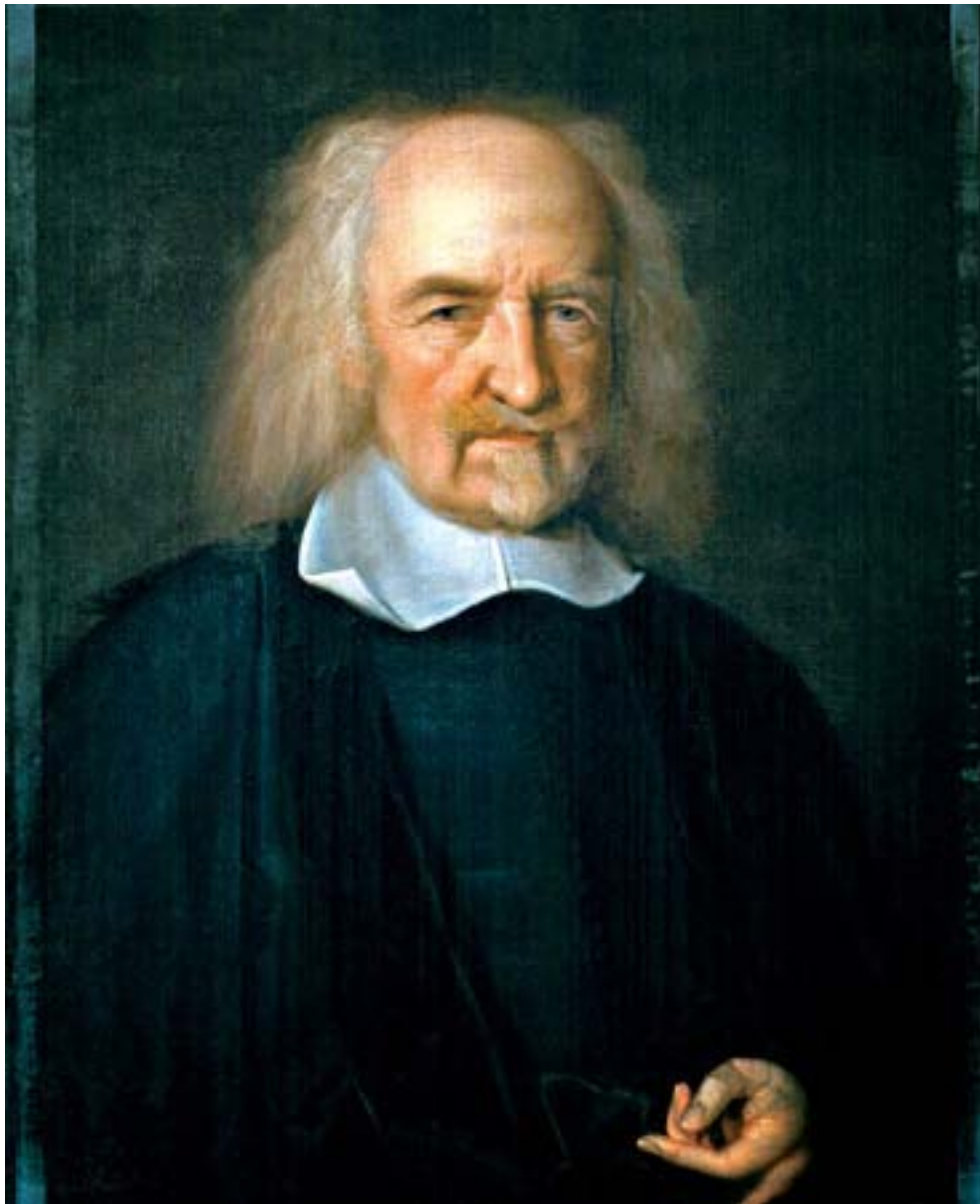
*The outcome rank ordering of each pair of options is not affected by the rank ordering of some other pair of options*

*There is no 'dictator': someone whose preferences win out irrespective of what others prefer*

*Non est potestas Super Terram quam Comparetur ei Iob. 41. 24.*



**Does Democracy always involve Dictatorship?**



# Thomas Hobbes

1588-1679



**Leviathan pub: 1651**

# Gibbard Satterthwaite Theorem:

*any voting system is liable to  
manipulation*

[Iain McLean *Public Choice* 1987]





**Niccolo Machiavelli**  
**1469-1527**



**Joseph Schumpeter**  
**1883-1950**

# Schumpeter's criticism of traditional theories of democracy

- *there is no 'common good' – no unique solution - that people can agree on*
- *even if some single solution were agreed on, there would be disagreement about how to pursue it*
- *autonomy conditions are not met in conditions of mass democracy – in public decision making people are dominated by affect and failures of rationality*
- *public affairs are distant from the interest (and hence capacity) of individuals*
- *government needs to be conducted by experts*

A grayscale portrait of Joseph Schumpeter, a man with a receding hairline, wearing a suit and tie, looking slightly to the right. The portrait is semi-transparent and serves as a background for the text on the left side of the slide.

## Schumpeter's new theory of democracy

*'The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.'*

Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy  
(1942)

**NOT: People will x be done; select representatives to do x;**

**BUT: People select a government; government makes policy and executes it.**

What must be true about people, if Schumpeter's theory is valid?

either

- *there are two kinds of people: those who are and those who are not competent in public affairs;*

or

- *some people are positioned in the social structure in such a way that they are close enough to public affairs so that their perspective on them is not different from their perspective on their personal affairs*

but:

*a necessary condition of attaining the power to govern is being willing to compete for authority*

## Schumpeterian citizens?

- *If electors are as irrational as he argues, can they be relied upon to vote out bad governments?*
- *What education is needed for competence as a voter?*
  - *Schumpeter: the same that is needed for competence as a consumer*

## Freedom

- *For Schumpeter this model of democracy is freedom maintaining;*
- *Freedom to choose occupation; to associate; to organise*
- *Freedom from public obligations*
- *Freedom to live a non-participatory life*

# Political Theory

## 1. Ideal:

*measures the distance between us and the ideal;  
tells us what the standard should be or what to aim at.*

## 2. Non-ideal :

- *Ideal constrained by what's possible (theory of least-worst, or 2<sup>nd</sup> best)*
  - *Description of how things are*

Does Schumpeter

- propose an alternative ideal model of democratic government?
- offer a non-ideal theory (theory of 2<sup>nd</sup> best)? or
- offer a descriptive account of how things are, their implications and likely outcomes?

