



AP GOVERNMENT

Unit 1: Foundations: American Democracy

TWO SIMPLE DEFINITIONS

- ▶ **Politics** is “the activity—negotiation, argument, discussion, application of force, persuasion, etc.—by which an issue is agitated or settled.”
 - ▶ It comes from the Greek *politikos*, which means “citizen.”
- ▶ **Government** means “the system by which a nation, state, or community is governed.”
 - ▶ It comes from from the Greek verb κυβερνάω [*kubernáo*], which means “to steer.”



ARISTOTLE

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

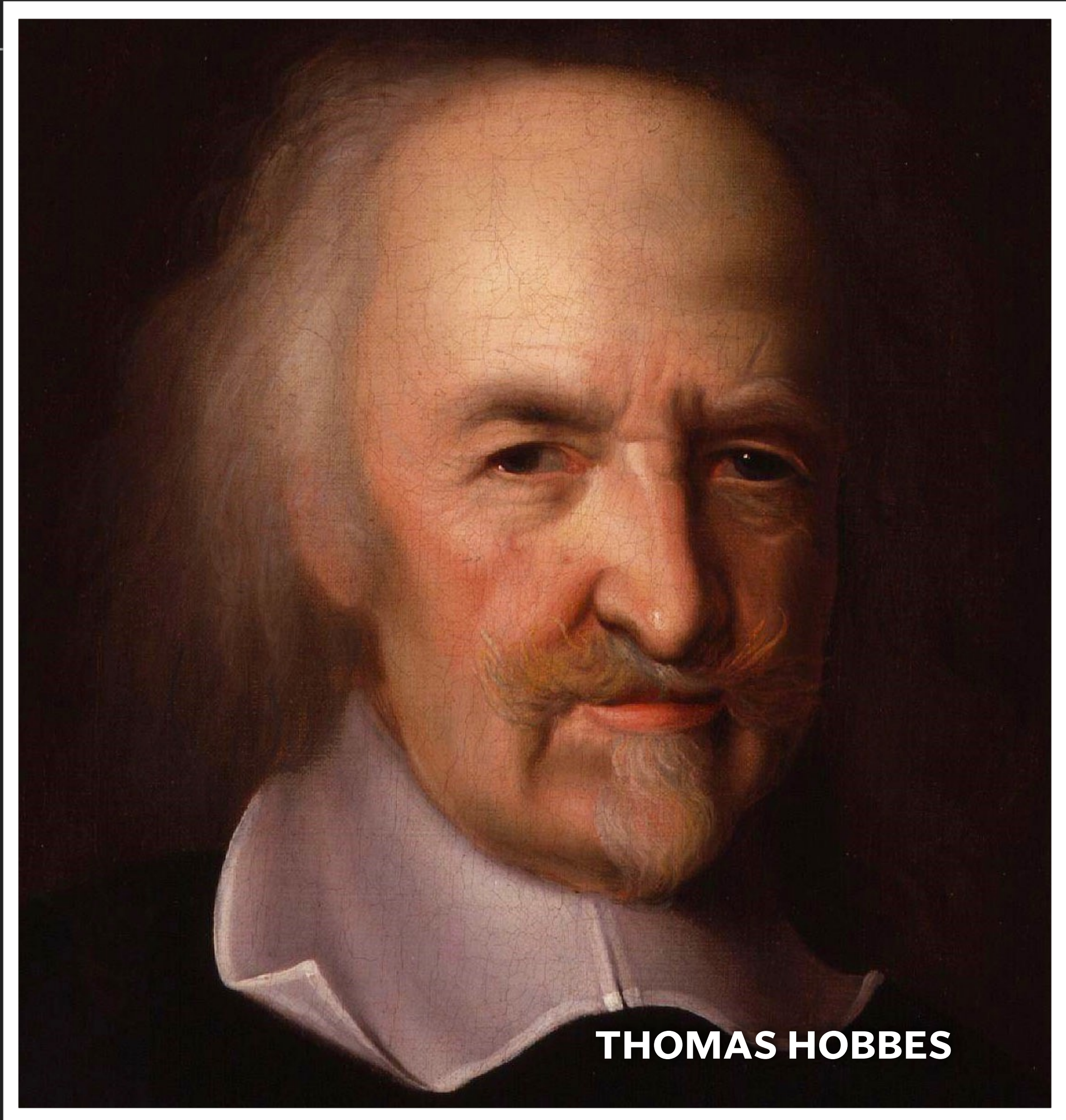
- ▶ **Direct or Participatory Democracy** comes closest to the Ancient Greek definition: a government in which all or most citizens make decisions directly.
- ▶ Today, we more often mean **representative democracy** when we refer to democracy.
 - ▶ Economist Joseph Schumpeter defined it this way: “The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals [i.e., leaders] acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.”
- ▶ **DISCUSS:** What are the benefits and drawbacks of each form of democracy?

OBAMA VOTING IN 2016



THOMAS HOBBS

- ▶ In his book **Leviathan**, Thomas Hobbes argued one of the first claims about the existence of a **social contract**, asserting that humans should give up rights for safety.
- ▶ Hobbes believed that in a the **state of nature** humans would fight, kill, steal, destroy without pause for causes ranging from greed to honor. We'd live in a state of constant war.
- ▶ This led him to believe we should accept a king as a rational transaction, not because of the **divine rights of kings.**



THOMAS HOBBS

THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

- ▶ After winning the Revolutionary War, the Founders nearly lost the peace with the **Articles of Confederation (1781)**, which they called a “**league of friendship.**”
 - ▶ The government had no power to tax, no power to draft a military.
 - ▶ It had no uniform currency.
 - ▶ It had no Supreme Court and a powerless Presidency.
 - ▶ Passing laws required 9/13 votes, and amendments required the consent of all states.
- ▶ The **Shays Rebellion** of 1786-87 was the final sign that the Articles could not succeed.



THE END OF SHAY'S REBELLION