

sake of political security. It closes off politics as the path to other-worldly rewards. Many have found modern politics frustrating for these reasons and have railed against it. Many still do. But most of us seem broadly to accept it, especially once political stability has proved its worth by greatly enhancing our prosperity. Hobbesian politics, even when it's been democratised, tends to produce unengaged, unadventurous, crabby citizens who accept politics as a fact of life but don't expect too much from it. They look for adventure elsewhere. They rarely come together to make big decisions. In fact, on Hobbes's account, they only do that when their fundamental safety is at risk, which is never pleasant and best avoided. Hobbesian citizens prefer to take their chances outside politics. I think we can recognise something of ourselves in this picture, however much we may dislike it. Our political world is very different from the one that Hobbes found himself living in. But it is still Hobbes's world.



THE DILEMMA OF DIRTY HANDS

There is one question that Hobbes did not fully answer. What's it like to *be* the sovereign? How does it feel to be the one who actually has all that power? Mostly he was writing about what it's like to live under a sovereign (basic message: it could always be a lot worse). But there is enough in Hobbes to suggest that being a sovereign is never going to be easy. It is a double role. Yes, you have fearsome power, including the power to use unassailable violence, which you will need