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# POTENTIA

## HOBBS AND SPINOZA ON POWER AND POPULAR POLITICS

Sandra Leonie Field

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Hobbes and Spinoza on  
Power and Popular Politics



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We live in an age of growing dissatisfaction with the standard operations of representative democracy. The solution, according to a long radical democratic tradition, is the unmediated power of the people. Mass plebiscites and mass protest movements are celebrated as the quintessential expression of popular power, and this power promises to transcend ordinary institutional politics. But the outcomes of mass political phenomena can be just as disappointing as the ordinary politics they sought to overcome, breeding skepticism about democratic politics in all its forms. *Potentia* argues that the very meaning of popular power needs to be rethought. It offers a detailed study of the political philosophies of Thomas Hobbes and Benedict de Spinoza, focusing on their concept of power as *potentia*, concrete power, rather than power as *potestas*, authorized power.

### FEATURES

- Puts the political philosophies of Hobbes and Spinoza in critical conversation and establishes a new interpretation of the relationship between them
- Carries out a sustained analysis of the political concept of power as causal capacity, *potentia*
- Proposes a new criterion for political phenomena to count as expressions of popular power

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