Captives of Sovereignty

JONATHAN HAVERCROFT

A picture of sovereignty holds the study of politics captive. Captives of Sovereignty looks at the historical origins of this picture of politics, critiques its philosophical assumptions, and offers a way to move contemporary critiques of sovereignty beyond their current impasse.

The first part of the book is diagnostic. Why, despite their best efforts to critique sovereignty, do political scientists who are dissatisfied with the concept continue to reproduce the logic of sovereignty in their thinking? Havercroft draws on the writings of Hobbes and Spinoza to argue that theories of sovereignty are produced and reproduced in response to skepticism. The second part of the book draws on contemporary critiques of skeptical arguments by Wittgenstein and Cavell to argue that their alternative way of responding to skepticism avoids the need to invoke a sovereign as the final arbiter of all political disputes.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to reverse the academic tendency of thanking one’s colleagues first and one’s family last. At least in my case this seems unfair, as my partner Alice Kloker and my parents Peter and Phyllis Havercroft have endured the burdens of this project more than anyone else. My parents from a very early age instilled in me a love of reading and writing and encouraged my academic interests. While they were a bit concerned about what I was going to do with a Ph.D. in Political Science, I hope that the fact that I have found gainful employment and have (finally!) finished this book will go some way to answering those concerns. Whether upon reading this book they start to ask themselves whether it was all worth it, is another matter. Alice has often heard and read my ideas in their earliest stages. She has been encouraging throughout the project. I cannot count how many times I have had to abandon her on the weekend or on a weeknight in order to plow through some pressing task. She has also encouraged me to take breaks from the book when necessary, and pointed out the light at the end of the tunnel when I could not see it.

I first worked with James Tully more than twelve years ago as a Master’s student at the University of Victoria. He first introduced me to Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin in a directed readings course in the fall of 1998. I recall him asking me, “How about you work through the first 200 remarks in the Investigations for next week?” At the time I thought “That’s it!?!?” Here I am, twelve years later, still grappling with the first 200 remarks! Through the years Jim has been everything one could ask for in a mentor. He points out the blind spots in my arguments, offers encouragement during the difficult times, and a nudge when I need to work harder. Lisa Disch has read countless different versions. She has a keen eye, and has on many occasions asked just the right question at just the right moment to get my thinking back on track. She also came up with the title for this book after I had struggled for so long with different combinations of the words sovereignty, captivity, and pictures. Jeff
Lomonaco, who has since left the world of political theory for the world of political practice, was the person who persuaded me of the importance of Stanley Cavell’s work for political philosophy and who led me through Cavell’s work for the first time. Jeff also suggested to me following my dissertation defense that my project was really about skepticism and sovereignty. He was, of course, correct, and this simple comment prompted me to fundamentally re-think and re-write my book from the ground up. Without Jeff’s advice and mentorship, this project would not be what it is today. Bud Duvall’s nickname amongst his advisees is the “Budviser,” in large part because Bud is such a great supervisor. He allowed me the freedom to pursue my interests and develop a voice in the discipline that is my own, while at the same time reminding me of the difficulties of developing a project with ambitions of speaking to scholars in both international relations and political theory. He has read and commented upon more iterations of this project than any person should. He has always been available as a sounding board for my ideas, and to dispense advice on everything from how to frame an argument to how to dress for a job talk.

In a certain sense, I first began working on this project as an undergraduate student at Concordia University. I was working on a presentation on Isaiah Berlin’s “Two Concepts of Liberty,” and Jim Moore recommended that I read Hannah Arendt’s “What is Freedom?” as well. Her declaration: “If men wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty that they must renounce” leapt off the page, and in many ways it has held me captive for all these years. In the intervening years my thinking on sovereignty has developed through numerous conversations with friends and scholars across North America. At the University of Victoria my ideas were prodded and transformed through classes and conversations with Warren Magnusson, Rob Walker, Avigail Eisenberg, and Brad Bryan. At the University of Minnesota I learned so much from Mary Dietz, Jim Farr, Bill Scheuerman, Dick Price, Colin Kahl, Kathryn Sikkink, August Nimtz, John Mowitt, and Martin Sampson. The graduate student cohort at Minnesota was an intellectually lively one, and there was a strong tradition of more senior students mentoring junior ones. While there, I made many friends who have helped this project in numerous ways. Thank-you especially to Ashley Biser, Amy Skonieczny, Shirin Deylami, Bill Gorton, Roudy Hildreth, Ann Towns, Helen Kinsella, Meghana Nayak, Kartik Raj, Michael “Grover” Nordquist, Isaac Kamola, Serena Laws, Susan Kang,
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Acknowledgments

Alsi Calkivik, Cigdem Cidam, and Ayten Gundogdu. At UBC I benefited once again from Dick Price’s mentorship, and I began new conversations with Brian Job, Barbara Arneil, Karthika Sasikumar, Veronica Kitchen, Alana Tiemessen, Erin Williams, and Kai Kenkle. Finally, at the University of Oklahoma, thanks to Justin Wert, Paul Goode, Eric Heinze, Don Maletz, Keith Gaddie, Ann-Marie Szymanski, Luis Cortest, Jason Houston, and Michael Lee.

I have presented various parts and versions of this book at several APSAs, CPSAs, ISAs, and colloquia at University of Minnesota. I thank Janice Bially-Mattern, Craig Borowiak, Ron Krebs, Arjun Chowdhury, Duncan Snidal, Alex Wendt, Michael Goodhart, and Jens Bartelson for comments on the presentations that I made at these venues. At various stages of this project I have received financial assistance from the SSHRC, the Graduate School at the University of Minnesota, the Security and Defence Forum of the Canadian Ministry of Defence, and the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Oklahoma. Two anonymous reviewers provided very helpful comments on the penultimate draft of this book. Steven Koskela provided editorial assistance and insightful comments on the manuscript that I submitted for review. David Newstone has commented upon most of the chapters in this book, and has always offered insightful criticism on everything from my reading of democratic theory to my selection of cover art. Susan Storch prepared the index. Finally, I thank John Haslam at Cambridge University Press for shepherding this manuscript through the review process and out into print.

Norman, Oklahoma