

*The Cambridge Companion to*  
**HOBBS'S LEVIATHAN**

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## 6 Hobbes on Persons, Authors and Representatives

### 1

Hobbes offers his most extended analysis of the linked concepts of authorisation and representation in chapter xvi of *Leviathan*, the chapter in which he rounds off Part I, 'Of Man', and paves the way for his discussion 'Of Commonwealth' in Part II. This pivotal chapter, 'Of persons, authors, and things Personated', has no counterpart in either of the earlier recensions of his civil philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Nothing like it can be found in *The Elements of Law*, which he had circulated in manuscript in 1640, nor in *De Cive*, which he had published in 1642. Hobbes never speaks in these texts of representation or representatives, nor of the underlying suggestion that it is possible to serve as an 'author' who can authorise the performance of an action by someone else. By contrast, in *Leviathan* these concepts form the bedrock of Hobbes's theory of the legitimate state, and in the Latin version of 1668 he was content to offer a simplified version of essentially the same argument.

Deploying his preferred method of beginning with definitions, Hobbes opens his analysis in chapter xvi without preamble as follows:<sup>2</sup>

A person is he whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man, or of any other thing to whom they are attributed, whether truly or by fiction. When they are considered as his own, then is he called a natural person, and when they are

<sup>1</sup> I wish gratefully to acknowledge permission from Blackwell Publishing to re-use some material from my article 'Hobbes on Representation', *European Journal of Philosophy* 13 (2005), 155–84.

considered as representing the words and actions of another, then is he a feigned or artificial person.

Hobbes's basic suggestion here is that persons can be defined essentially in terms of their capacity to represent and be represented.<sup>3</sup> A person is someone who, in speaking or acting, either represents himself – plays his own part – or else represents another person or thing. If you represent someone else – if you play his part, speak or act in his name – then you count as an artificial person, if you speak or act in your own name, then you count as a natural person. (As these passages illustrate, Hobbes always uses 'he', 'his', etc. when referring to agents, and I shall generally feel obliged to follow his usage.)

As this analysis makes clear, an artificial person is merely another name for a representative, and in the Latin version of *Leviathan* Hobbes drops the former term altogether, preferring simply to contrast 'natural' with 'representative' persons.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, a natural person is someone whose words and actions, as Hobbes puts it, are 'considered as his own': he is someone who is capable of 'owning up' to them, taking responsibility for their occurrence. To this analysis Hobbes then adds that anyone who owns his actions may also be said to be their 'author', whether the actions in question are performed by the agent himself or by a representative to whom he has granted authority to act in his name. As Hobbes puts it:<sup>5</sup>

Of persons artificial, some have their words and actions owned by those whom they represent. And then the person is the *actor*, and he that owneth his words and actions is the *AUTHOR*, in which case the actor acteth by authority.

If, in other words, I genuinely have authority to act as a representative of someone else, this can only be because the other person has authorised me to perform the action in their name.

To be able to act in your own name, it is necessary to be a natural person. But to be able to act, it is not even necessary to be a person at all. For as Hobbes begins by laying down, it is possible for actions performed by authorised representatives to be attributed not merely to other persons but even to things – and even, he adds later in the chapter, to mere figments of the brain. As an example of the last possibility, he takes the case of the Gods of the heathen.<sup>6</sup> They had no existence, but they were nevertheless able to hold and dispose

of property through the agency of the priests who served as their representatives and were authorised to do so by the state.<sup>7</sup>

When Hobbes turns in chapter xvii to examine the nature of the covenants that bring civil associations into being, one of his main purposes is to bring out the political implications of this analysis of persons, authors and representatives. He first declares that, when the members of a multitude covenant to submit to a common power, what they do is 'confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will'.<sup>8</sup> Speaking in *The Elements and De Cive* about this act of conferment, Hobbes had described it as a simple relinquishment and hence an abandonment of rights.<sup>9</sup> But he now speaks in startlingly different terms. To speak of a multitude conferring their power and strength, he now declares,<sup>10</sup>

is as much as to say, to appoint one man or assembly of men to bear their person, and every one to own and acknowledge himself to be author of whatsoever he that so beareth their person shall act, or cause to be acted, in those things which concern the common peace and safety.

The political covenant, in other words, is now said to take the form of an act not of relinquishment but of authorisation, an act by which every member of the multitude makes himself the author of whatever is said and done in his name by his sovereign representative.<sup>11</sup>

One of the most striking features of this new way of explicating the covenant is that it picks up and deploys the distinctive vocabulary originally put into currency by the parliamentarian and radical writers of the 1640s. Henry Parker, for example, had similarly opened his *Observations* of 1642 by declaring that man, not God, 'is the free and voluntary Author' of whatever powers are 'derived' into the hands of kings and magistrates. The people are always 'the Authors, or ends of all power' and hence 'the final cause of Regall Authoritie'.<sup>12</sup> The anonymous *Maximes Unfolded* (1643) had likewise argued that 'God is not so exact in the choice of Magistrates as to be their Authours', preferring to leave it to the people to decide by whom they wish to be governed. He had concluded – in an astonishingly Hobbesian turn of phrase – that it is always men who act as 'the Authors, Instruments, matter, forme and end of Government'.<sup>13</sup>

A number of parliamentarian writers had gone on to add that, if lawful governments can be instituted only when the people make a

grant of their own original authority, we can equally well say that the people must *authorize* their kings and magistrates to rule, and thus that governments are lawful only to the extent that they have duly been authorised. William Bridge explains in *The Truth of the Times Vindicated* (1643) that the legal act involved is that 'some are authorized to exercise jurisdiction in Commonwealths over others'.<sup>14</sup> Philip Hunton in *A Treatise of Monarchie* (1643) underlines the strictness of the boundaries imposed by this agreement on the jurisdictions of kings. When the people authorise a ruler, 'then is his Authority limited', and 'neither are the instruments of his will exceeding those lawes, authorized'. Should he subsequently violate the terms of this authorisation, then his resulting acts 'are not *Legal* and binding, that is, are *non-Authoritative*'.<sup>15</sup>

Developing a very similar line of thought, Hobbes begins by echoing the account given by the parliamentary writers of the people as the authors of all power. As we have seen, he fully agrees that, when we covenant to institute a commonwealth, we become 'by this institution author of all the actions and judgements of the sovereign instituted'.<sup>16</sup> He likewise agrees that, unless we are the authors of the powers to which we submit, those powers themselves will not be legitimate. The reason is that 'no man is obliged by a covenant whereof he is not author, nor consequently by a covenant made against or beside the authority he gave'.<sup>17</sup>

Hobbes continues to follow the parliamentary writers when he turns to consider what it means to speak of authorising someone to speak or act in our name. He had opened his discussion in chapter xvi by invoking the theatrical understanding of this question that Cicero had originally put into currency, and that many of the parliamentary writers had taken up. First Hobbes reminds us that in Latin the word *persona* 'signifies the *disguise* or *outward appearance* of a man, counterfeited on the stage, and sometimes more particularly that part of it which disguiseth the face'.<sup>18</sup> He then explains that this is why 'he that acteth another is said to bear his person, or act in his name',<sup>19</sup> and quotes the passage from the *De oratore* in which Cicero had spoken of sustaining three persons, 'my own, my adversary's, and the judge's'.<sup>20</sup> Hobbes's first suggestion is thus that the act of authorising someone is that of granting him the right to personate someone else.

As he correctly observes, however, this originally theatrical terminology was eventually generalised to apply 'to any representer of

speech and action, as well in tribunals, as theatres'.<sup>21</sup> His considered view of what it means to personate someone is thus that it is equivalent to appointing just such a 'representer'. To which he adds that anyone authorised to serve as such an actor is nowadays susceptible of being described in a variety of ways. His list of equivalencies includes 'an *attorney*, a *deputy*, a *procurator*'.<sup>22</sup> but it is noticeable that he begins by singling out the term 'representer', the term that the parliamentary and Leveller writers had originally introduced into the debate.<sup>23</sup>

These arguments constitute a remarkable extension of Hobbes's earlier analysis in *The Elements* and *De Cive* of the covenant as a mere relinquishment of rights. Previous commentators who have focused on Hobbes's very different way of presenting his theory in *Leviathan* have generally concluded that he must have identified some weaknesses, difficulties or even contradictions in the initial statement of his case, and must have decided to recast it in an effort to cope with them.<sup>24</sup> By contrast with these somewhat speculative and question-begging hypotheses, my principal aim in what follows will be to suggest a different kind of explanation for the modifications that Hobbes introduced. What seems to me crucial is the extensive use he makes in the revised version of his theory of the distinctive vocabulary developed by the parliamentary propagandists of the 1640s, the propagandists whom he stigmatises in chapter xxix of *Leviathan* as the 'democratical writers' and denounces for destroying the English monarchy.<sup>25</sup> What Hobbes is doing, I shall next attempt to show, is seeking to discredit these writers by demonstrating that it is possible to accept the basic structure of their theory without in the least endorsing any of the radical implications they had drawn from it. It is this new rhetorical strategy in *Leviathan*, and the way in which it leads Hobbes to enunciate a strongly contrasting theory of representative government, that next needs to be investigated.

## II

To see how Hobbes follows out his new strategy, we need to begin by focusing on the moment at which he parts company with the democratical writers and their views about the genesis of lawful government. They had invariably assumed that civil associations must have arisen out of free and natural communities and had inferred that the whole body of the people must therefore be regarded (as Parker puts

it in his *Observations* as 'the proper Subject of sovereign power'.<sup>26</sup> This, according to Hobbes, is an egregious error, and one of his basic purposes in presenting his melodramatic description of the state of nature in chapter xiii of *Leviathan* is to lay the error bare. There is simply no such thing, he retorts, as the body of the people. If we look beyond the bounds of civil association, what we find is nothing more than a throng or multitude of 'particular men'.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, it is a multitude in which, due to the similarity of everyone's desires and powers, we are all 'dissociate' from each other and 'every man is enemy to every man'.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the natural condition of mankind is not merely a state of men 'in solitude', a state in which there is 'no society' and 'neither propriety nor community', it is actually 'a condition of warre one against another', a perpetual war 'of every man, against every man'.<sup>29</sup>

The crucial significance, according to Hobbes, of failing to recognise the frightening truth about our natural condition is that it betrays the democratical writers into giving a misleading account of the political covenant. They had generally argued that the body of the people, acting in the manner of a single Person, contracts with a designated ruler and consents to submit to his rule. They had assumed, that is, that the people are capable of acting as a unified community or group. As Parker puts it, the people need to be viewed not merely *divisim*, as single subjects, but *conjunctim*, as a *universitas* or 'politique corporation'.<sup>30</sup> This means, as the author of *Maximes Unfolded* adds, that when the people act by 'the common consent of all', they may be said to act as a 'union' and by 'their united power' as a corporation, and hence in the manner of a single person acting with one will and voice.<sup>31</sup>

Hobbes is now able to dismiss out of hand this aspect of the democratical writers' case. Before becoming subject to sovereign power, he retorts, the people 'are not one person'; they are nothing more than the individual and mutually hostile members of 'a disunited multitude'.<sup>32</sup> It follows that the parliamentarian vision of 'the whole multitude, as one party to the covenant' is, as Hobbes blankly asserts, 'impossible'.<sup>33</sup> To suppose otherwise is simply to misunderstand the natural condition of mankind.

If the political covenant cannot be an agreement between the body of the people and their designated ruler, what form can it possibly take? Hobbes's ingenious answer is that it takes the form of a

covenant between each and every individual member of the multitude. Everyone agrees with everyone else 'to submit their wills, every one to his will, and their judgements, to his judgment', with the result that the sovereign receives his authority from 'every particular man in the commonwealth'.<sup>34</sup> It is true that, once the individual members of the multitude have performed this act of submission, this finally has the effect of converting them from a mere throng into one Person. This is because they now have a single will and voice – that of their sovereign representative – which counts 'as the voice of them all'.<sup>35</sup>

'A multitude of men', as Hobbes's summarises, 'are made one person, when they are by one man, or one person, represented'.<sup>36</sup> The outcome of the covenant is accordingly 'a real unity of them all, in one and the same person'.<sup>37</sup> very much as the democratical writers had maintained. As Hobbes continually insists, however, this is the sole way in which a multitude can ever be viewed as a unified body of people. He concludes by recalling the rival parliamentarian analysts and repudiating it at the same time. It is only 'the unity of the representer, not the unity of the represented, that maketh the person one'.<sup>38</sup> To which he adds that, in spite of what is generally believed, 'unity, cannot otherwise be understood in multitude'.<sup>39</sup>

So far these claims would have been largely familiar to any reader of Hobbes's previous attacks on the theory of popular sovereignty in *The Elements* and *De Cive*. There Hobbes had already argued that the people in their natural condition are a mere multitude;<sup>40</sup> that the political covenant takes the form of an agreement between 'every several man',<sup>41</sup> and that the act of instituting a sovereign alone has the effect of converting the multitude into a unified body of people.<sup>42</sup>

If we now return to *Leviathan*, however, we find that beyond this point Hobbes's argument begins to move into completely new terrain. Once we recognise, he now suggests, that there is no such thing as the body of the people, we can hope to discredit the entire theory of authorisation and representation that the democratical writers had put into currency in the course of the 1640s.

Hobbes begins by underlining his contention that, because 'the multitude naturally is not one, but many', the members of the multitude 'cannot be understood for one, but many authors of every thing their representative saith, or doth in their name'.<sup>43</sup> We have to envisage 'every man giving their common representer, authority



from himself in particular, and owning all the actions the representor doth' in his name.<sup>44</sup> According to Hobbes's social ontology, there is no other means for a sovereign to be authorised.

The significance of this way of understanding the covenant becomes apparent as soon as Hobbes turns to consider the radical implications drawn by the democratic writers from their rival account of the unified body of the people as the original author of all power. One inference they had drawn was that, when the people covenant with a king, the body or *universitas* of the people must remain *maior* or greater in standing than the king himself. Any king, as Parker had declared, 'though he be *singulis maior*, yet he is *universis minor*', always lesser in standing than the *universitas* or 'politique corporation' from which his rights and powers are derived.<sup>45</sup>

Hobbes offers no comment on this line of argument in *The Elements* or *De Cive*, but in *Leviathan* he immediately deploys his individualistic analysis of the covenant to wave it aside. '[T]here is little ground', he scornfully replies, 'for the opinion of them that say of sovereign kings, though they be *singulis maiores*, of greater power than every one of their Subjects, yet they be *universis minores*, of less power than them all together'.<sup>46</sup> The reason is that, because there is no such thing as the *universitas* or body of the people, we can only make sense of the statement in one of two equally unsatisfactory ways. One is to suppose that, when the democratic writers talk about 'all together' in contrast with 'every one', they are referring not to the Person into which the multitude transforms itself when it authorises a sovereign representative, but simply to the multitude itself. But if this is so, then their argument can readily be dismissed. 'For if by *all together* they mean not the collective body as one person, then *all together*, and *every one*, signify the same, and the speech is absurd'.<sup>47</sup> The only alternative is to suppose that, when they say 'all together', they are referring to the Person into which the multitude transforms itself by authorising a sovereign representative. But if this is so, then their argument can be no less readily dismissed. For 'if by *all together* they understand them as one Person (which person the sovereign bears), then the power of all together is the same with the sovereigns power, and so again the speech is absurd'.<sup>48</sup>

A second inference drawn by the democratic writers had been that, as Parker expresses it, when the body of the people authorises

a sovereign, it 'may ordaine what conditions, and prefix what bounds it pleases', thereby placing its ruler under an obligation to govern according to the terms of a 'conditionate' trust.<sup>49</sup> Turning to this argument in chapter xviii, Hobbes seeks to demonstrate that it is even more obviously entangled in absurdity. Suppose the members of the multitude make a covenant with a designated ruler who, after his institution, acts in such a way as to produce 'a breach of the Covenant' to which he had initially agreed.<sup>50</sup> By this stage the ruler will have entered upon his sovereign rights, in consequence of which every one of his subjects will be obliged to 'own' and 'avouch' whatever actions he may choose to perform in their names, because he will be performing them 'in the person and by the right of every one of them in particular'.<sup>51</sup> But this means that, whatever limitations on his actions he may have accepted beforehand, these agreements will now be null and void because 'what act soever can be pretended by any one of them for breach thereof is the act both of himself, and of all the rest'.<sup>52</sup> Any subject who now complains about his sovereign's behaviour will be lodging a complaint, ludicrously enough, against himself.

The last and most explosive implication drawn by the democratic writers had been that, as William Pryme had proclaimed in *The Sovereaine Power of Parliaments and Kingdomes* (1643), any king failing to honour the terms of his covenant can be resisted by his own subjects and removed from power 'by necessary defensive Armes'.<sup>53</sup> Hobbes recurs to his rival analysis of authorisation to show that this is the greatest absurdity of all. Given that 'every subject is author of the actions of his sovereign', any subject seeking to punish his sovereign will be condemning him, even more ludicrously, for 'actions committed by himself'.<sup>54</sup>

### III

The analysis of the political covenant offered by the democratic writers generally formed only the first part of a two-part analysis of how legitimate governments evolve over time. They had usually gone on to postulate that, in order to check the tyranny of kings, the people eventually found it necessary to institute Parliaments as a means of representing themselves and upholding their interests as a whole.

When they say that Parliaments *represent* the people, some of these writers emphasise the idea of representation as the act of picturing persons and things, and accordingly speak of Parliament as an image or likeness of the people as a whole. Henry Parker employs exactly this vocabulary, describing Parliament as a 'representation' of the 'real body of the people' and as a 'representation' on a smaller scale of 'the whole body of the State'.<sup>55</sup> He is closely echoed by the author of *A Sovereigne Salve*, who likewise speaks of Parliament as a 'representation' of 'the whole kingdome',<sup>56</sup> and by a number of other parliamentary writers, including John Goodwin, Charles Herle and Philip Hunton, all of whom describe the two Houses as an image or 'representation' of the kingdom, nation or people at large.<sup>57</sup>

Fundamentally, however, when the parliamentary writers say that Parliament represents the people, what they mean is that it has authority to speak and act in their name. The two Houses of the English Parliament, as Parker puts it in his *Observations*, have been 'vested with a right both to counsell and consent' and 'appeare in the right of the whole Kingdome'.<sup>58</sup> Philip Hunton later speaks in very similar terms in his *Treatise of Monarchie*. When we say that 'the house of Commons is chosen by the people and they represent the people', we are saying that the members of the Commons have the same 'power to doe an act' as was originally 'in the people' who chose and elected them.<sup>59</sup>

The essence of the constitutional theory put forward by the democratic writers is thus that, to assure peace and avoid tyranny, the best solution is to have a monarchy checked and balanced by representatives of the people. They are exponents, in other words, of the ideal of the mixed constitution. Parker enunciates the ideal in its classic form in his *Observations*, as does Hunton in his *Treatise of Monarchie*. Both contend that sovereignty under the English constitution is in normal circumstances held jointly by the king and the two Houses of Parliament, and that each of these three Estates must give its consent before any proposed enactments can become law.<sup>60</sup> After the outbreak of English civil war, however, a number of propagandists followed the more aggressive lead offered by Charles Herle in his *Fuller Answer*, of December 1642. Herle accepts that the three Estates must normally work together, but insists that in any disagreement the two Houses must predominate over the will of the crown. The main outcome of the argument I have been tracing was

thus a theory of Parliamentary sovereignty. As Herle concludes, 'the final and casting result of the States judgement' must always reside 'in the two Houses of Parliament'.<sup>61</sup>

Confronting these arguments in book II of *Leviathan*, Hobbes has no quarrel with the claim that Parliaments may be described as representative assemblies, and he agrees that assemblies no less than individuals may be authorised to serve as sovereign representatives.<sup>62</sup>

What he cannot accept is the suggestion that Parliaments can be regarded as images or representations of the whole body of the people. As he has already explained in chapter XVI, there is no such thing as a body of people awaiting representation. Because nothing exists in nature except 'a multitude of men', there is nothing to be pictured or represented except 'every one of that multitude in particular'.<sup>63</sup> This commitment prompts Hobbes to question the entire parliamentary analysis of the representation of the people. One of his contributions is a negative one and may be said to take the form of a derisive silence. The parliamentary writers, and later the Levellers, had endlessly debated the question as to what a satisfactory image or representation of the people needs to look like. How many social groups should be included in the picture? How large should the representative body be if it is to speak and act effectively for the 'real' body of the people? How can the correct proportionality be maintained between the features of the representative body and the features of the real body being pictured or represented? These questions all presuppose exactly what Hobbes denies: that civil associations are created out of preexisting and unified bodies of people. So he fails even to acknowledge the resulting debates.

Hobbes's individualistic premises also enable him to make a positive and still more challenging intervention in the debate. The democratic writers had invariably taken it for granted that a satisfactory image or representation of the body of the people must itself be a body of people. By the end of the 1640s this assumption had become so deeply entrenched that we find them referring – in a now obsolete usage – to any body of people with the right to act in the name of a larger body as 'A representative'.<sup>64</sup> They had come to assume, in other words, that what it means for the body of the people to be represented is to have a smaller body of people acting in its name.

Hobbes counters that, since there is nothing to be represented except the individual bodies 'of all and every one of the multitude',

there is no reason why this act of representation should not be performed equally well by an individual body as by a body of people.<sup>65</sup> He draws this inference as forthrightly as possible when he turns in chapter xix of *Leviathan* to consider the different forms of lawful government: 'It is manifest', he proclaims, 'that men who are in absolute liberty may, if they please, give authority to one man to represent them every one; as well as give such authority to any assembly of men whatsoever, and consequently may subject themselves, if they think good, to a monarch as absolutely as to any other representative'.<sup>66</sup>

In announcing this commitment, Hobbes is not in the least abandoning the idea that what it means to offer a representation of someone or something is to furnish an image or likeness of their external bodily appearance. On the contrary, he already assures us in the opening chapter of *Leviathan* that to speak of 'a representation' is equivalent to speaking of an 'appearance'.<sup>67</sup> When he speaks more specifically about political representation, he likewise maintains that any magistrate can be characterised as a 'representation' and hence an 'image' of his sovereign.<sup>68</sup> He adds that any sovereign can in turn be described as a 'representation' of his people, and he cautions such sovereigns against allowing any other representations of the same people to be produced.<sup>69</sup>

For Hobbes, however, what is crucial is that, when we speak of offering a representation of the people, we cannot be referring to the act of picturing a unified body, but only to the act of picturing the individual members of the multitude. But if this is so, then there is no reason why this act of representation should not be performed by an individual body with a representative character. Hobbes's key concept is thus that of *representativeness*. He maintains, that is, that one way to represent the members of a multitude (in the sense of speaking and acting for them) will always be to appoint a single person who can represent (in the sense of offering an image or likeness of) the individuals involved. A satisfactory 'representer', on this analysis, will simply be someone who can stand as a representative person, a person representative of each and every individual who is being represented.

So confidently does Hobbes set aside the usual corporatist pieties that it seems natural to ask if there may have been any obvious precedents for his line of thought. One intriguing possibility is that he may

have been influenced by the English covenanting theologians of the early seventeenth century.<sup>70</sup> A number of puritan divines, including Paul Bayne, William Bridge and Richard Sibbes, had developed out of Lutheran sources an argument about Adam and Christ as 'common persons', representative of all mankind. The pioneer among these writers was William Perkins, but perhaps the most suggestive development of their ideas can be found in Thomas Goodwin's treatise of 1642 entitled *Christ Set Forth*, to which Hobbes's analysis of representativeness in *Leviathan* bears some astonishingly close resemblances.

The figure of Adam, according to Goodwin, was the first 'Common person representing all Man-kind', while the figure of Christ was the second 'Common person representing us'.<sup>71</sup> One of the senses in which they were common persons is that both embodied the characteristics common to us all.<sup>72</sup> They may thus be said to constitute an image or representation of each one of us. As Goodwin explicitly says of Adam, he is 'not to be considered as a single Man, but as one that was *All men*, by way of representation'.<sup>73</sup> Goodwin proceeds to infer that, because of their representativeness, Adam and Christ were in turn able to represent us in the sense of bearing our persons and acting in our names. He goes so far as to suggest that Christ 'had no other end to come downe into this world, but to sustaine our persons, and to act our parts'.<sup>74</sup> Both he and Adam acted representatively, and hence in the name of us all. We can therefore think of ourselves as 'included, and involved in them', while they may be said to be 'standing for all the rest', who are 'typified out' by them.<sup>75</sup> As Goodwin concludes, it is because Christ was 'a Common person representing us' that we are 'virtually, and representatively sanctified in him'.<sup>76</sup>

While these are extraordinarily suggestive passages, the idea of Hobbes as a close reader of such theological texts may seem implausible.<sup>77</sup> If there is a more likely source of inspiration, it may perhaps be found in Dudley Digges's analysis of political representation in his treatise of 1643, *The Unlawfulness of Subjects taking up Armes*.<sup>78</sup> Digges speaks about the representativeness of kings in the course of countering the parliamentary suggestion that they are *maior singulis sed minor universis*. He responds that this doctrine is 'evidently false' because any supreme ruler possesses the entire power of the multitude and is thus 'the representative all' and 'legally



the whole people'.<sup>79</sup> Later he recurs to the point when summarising his reasons for believing that in the case of England 'the King is not *minor universes*'.<sup>80</sup> 'There is a great difference', he repeats, 'between the real and representative all.' Where the king is absolute, 'there he is *Populus Anglicanus*, legally the *English Nation*', and in that case we may say that 'the King is the whole people, and what he doth is legally their Act'.<sup>81</sup>

If we now return to *Leviathan*, we find Hobbes speaking in almost identical terms. He enthusiastically endorses the key assumption that it is possible for a single individual to exhibit general representativeness. He repeatedly affirms that a sovereign monarch can stand as a 'person representative', as 'one representative person', as 'the person representative of all and every one of the multitude'.<sup>82</sup> It is always possible, that is, for an individual sovereign to be 'representative of the whole number', thereby typifying or exemplifying them all.<sup>83</sup> Closely echoing the language of the covenanting theologians, he adds that 'the king of any country' can therefore be described as, 'the *public person*' who is 'representative of all his own subjects'.<sup>84</sup>

As this analysis reveals, Hobbes takes it for granted – as did the covenanting theologians – that the features of the multitude requiring to be pictured or represented are common to everyone, men and women alike. One implication is that the multitude can equally well be represented by a queen regnant as by a king. The frontispiece of *Leviathan* admittedly suggests that Hobbes's own preference may be for the representative person to be a man.<sup>85</sup> But he is careful to allow that a woman can equally well stand as the person representative of us all.<sup>86</sup> He even suggests that, because women are sometimes more prudent than men, and because prudence is self-evidently a desirable attribute in a representative, women may in some cases be better suited than men to exercise dominion over others.<sup>87</sup>

Hobbes also agrees that, because a single person can be typical or representative of us all, such a person can in turn serve as what he describes – again following the covenanting theologians – as our 'common representer' or 'common representative'.<sup>88</sup> Here Hobbes has a more general as well as a more specific claim to make. His general claim is simply that any natural person can be assigned the right to speak and act in the name of us all, and can therefore serve as 'an absolute representative to all intents and purposes'.<sup>89</sup> As we have seen, however, Hobbes also believes that, when the members

of the multitude authorise someone to serve as their sovereign representative, this decision has the effect of transforming them into one Person, since it has the effect of endowing them with a single will and voice. His more specific claim is thus that the Person in whose name the sovereign acquires the right to speak and act will be the Person engendered by the multitude out of its agreement to be represented. As he expresses the point at the outset of chapter xviii, the sovereign is assigned 'the right to *present* the person that the multitude thereby brings into existence'.<sup>90</sup>

As we have seen, the upshot of the argument presented by the democratic writers had been that the best form of government must be a mixed monarchy. The people of England, they had added, eventually succeeded in establishing just such a monarchy, one in which the people were able to institute a representative assembly to check and balance the powers of their kings. Turning to this final argument, Hobbes abandons his normally objective manner of writing and allows himself to respond in what appears to be a tone of real outrage.<sup>91</sup>

I know not how this, so manifest a truth, should of late be so little observed, that in a monarchy, he that had the sovereignty from a descent of 600 years, was alone called sovereign, had the title of Majesty from every one of his subjects, and was unquestionably taken by them for their king, was notwithstanding never considered as their representative.

What the democratic writers completely fail to acknowledge, Hobbes is claiming, is that the act of instituting the monarchy of which king Charles I was the eventual inheritor was *already* the act of authorising a representative.

Once we recognise this cardinal truth, we can readily see according to Hobbes that the theories of mixed monarchy propounded by the democratic writers are dangerously confused. He begins by referring to the most familiar version of the theory, according to which 'the power of making laws' is made to depend (as he scornfully puts it) on 'the accidental consent' of one man with two separate representative assemblies.<sup>92</sup> This system requires that 'the king bear the person of the people' while 'the general assembly bear also the person of the people' and 'another assembly bear the person of a part of the people'.<sup>93</sup> But this arrangement cannot be described as a viable system of 'mixed monarchy' because it is not a viable system of

government at all.<sup>94</sup> The effect is to institute 'not one person, nor one Sovereign, but three Persons, and three Sovereigns', thereby creating 'not one independent Common-wealth, but three independent factions', a perfect recipe for chaos and civil war.<sup>95</sup>

Hobbes admits, however, that this is not the understanding of mixed monarchy most favoured by the democratical writers. As we have seen, they had generally maintained that there are only two elements in the mixture, king and Parliament, and that Parliament as the representative assembly of the sovereign people must predominate over the king. Hobbes replies that this is simply to repeat the same mistake. When the people of England instituted their monarchy, they granted to their kings 'the right to present the person of them all'.<sup>96</sup> But 'where there is already erected a Sovereign Power, there can be no other Representative of the same people, but only to certain particular ends, by the Sovereign limited'.<sup>97</sup> The reason, Hobbes reminds us, is that otherwise the effect will be 'to erect two sovereigns, and every man to have his person represented by two actors'.<sup>98</sup> The only possible outcome will again be war, an outcome 'contrary to the end for which all sovereignty is instituted'.<sup>99</sup>

What, then, is the true status of Parliaments within hereditary monarchies? Turning to this question in chapter xxii, Hobbes again underlines the absurdity of supposing that they can ever be representative assemblies in the sense of having an independent right to speak and act in the name of everyone. The reason, he repeats, is that the monarch will already be 'the absolute representative of all the subjects', from which it follows that 'no other can be representative of any part of them, but so far forth, as he shall give leave'.<sup>100</sup> Hobbes's answer is thus that Parliaments can never amount to anything more than purely consultative bodies that monarchs may choose to summon from time to time if they happen to want some information or advice.

This is an astonishingly reactionary response. Despite everything that had happened in the 1640s, Hobbes is simply reverting to the position adopted by the most high-flying defenders of divine right at the start of the civil war. There can be little doubt, however, that he fully intended to adopt as deflating a tone as possible in confronting the theory of Parliamentary sovereignty that had triumphed in the intervening years. He is willing, of course, to allow that any sovereign monarch, should he happen to think fit, may choose 'to give

command to the towns and other several parts of their territory, to send to him their deputies, to inform him of the condition and necessities of the subjects, or to advise with him for the making of good laws, or for any other cause'.<sup>101</sup> He is even willing to concede that we can think of such deputies as representatives of the people so that when summoned and brought together they may be said to constitute 'a body politic, representing every subject of that dominion'.<sup>102</sup> But he is unrepentant in insisting that we cannot possibly think of them as having an independent right at any stage to speak and act in the name of the populace as a whole. As he never tires of reminding us, to grant them this status would be to institute 'two sovereigns over the same people, which cannot consist with their peace'.<sup>103</sup>

## IV

Hobbes's theory of representative government might appear to leave him with an awkward difficulty. Of whom, on his account, is sovereignty to be predicated? To put the question the other way round – as Henry Parker had done in his *Observations* – who is 'the proper Subject' of sovereign power?<sup>104</sup> The defenders of divine right had responded that sovereignty is the defining attribute of kings. But according to Hobbes no king enjoys a status any higher than that of an authorised representative. The democratical writers had retorted that the body of the people is the original and natural subject of sovereignty. But according to Hobbes there is no such thing as the body of the people. So if sovereignty is the property neither of the king nor of the people, who can possibly lay claim to it?

To this conundrum Hobbes supplies an epoch-making answer. To show he arrives at it, we need to begin by recalling two distinctive features of his analysis of the covenant. The first is that, when the members of the multitude authorise a man or assembly to serve as their representative, the effect is to transform them from a mere aggregation into one Person because they are now endowed with a single will and voice.<sup>105</sup> Hobbes's other distinctive contention is that the sovereign is the representative of the Person engendered or created by the multitude out of this agreement to be represented. In short, the members of a multitude institute a sovereign, become one Person and acquire a representative to 'bear' or 'present' that Person at one and the same time.<sup>106</sup>

What we need to know, therefore, is the name of the Person engendered by the multitude out of their agreement to authorise a representative. This will be to know the true subject of the sovereignty that the sovereign representer merely holds the right to exercise. Hobbes finally lets us into the secret in the pivotal and magnificently resonant passage in chapter xvii in which he describes the moment when the political covenant takes place. When the members of the multitude agree 'every man with every man' to authorise an individual or an assembly to represent them, the name of the Person they generate is 'a COMMONWEALTH, in Latin CIVITAS'.<sup>107</sup> Hobbes thereupon summarises his doctrine in two crucial definitions that immediately follow. First we are told that 'a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE, (in Latin CIVITAS)<sup>108</sup> can be defined as 'one person, of whose acts a great multitude, by mutual covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the author'.<sup>109</sup> Then we are told that the name of the person who 'bears' or 'carries' this Person is the sovereign, who may consequently be said to 'present the person' of the Commonwealth or State.<sup>110</sup> As Hobbes later confirms, the sovereign may therefore be described as 'the public person' who serves as 'the representant of the commonwealth'.<sup>111</sup>

It is true that the living person of the sovereign is always liable to occlude the purely fictional Person of the Commonwealth or State. As Hobbes acknowledges, 'a commonwealth, without sovereign power is but a word, without substance, and cannot stand'.<sup>112</sup> But this consideration only renders him the more anxious to insist that sovereigns are nothing more than actors who body forth the actions of Commonwealths.<sup>113</sup> When a natural person or assembly of persons receives authorisation to represent a Commonwealth, the actions they perform in the name of the Commonwealth will always be attributable to the Commonwealth itself. Hobbes makes this commitment unambiguously clear at the outset of his discussion of civil law in chapter xxvi. Although the Commonwealth 'can do nothing but by the Person that Represents it' the Commonwealth remains the Legislator, and 'the name of the person Commanding' is 'persona civitatis, the person of the commonwealth'.<sup>114</sup> We may therefore say – and Hobbes repeats the phrase throughout the chapter<sup>115</sup> – that civil laws are always 'the commands of the commonwealth', and that it is only 'the commonwealth, and his command, that maketh law'.<sup>116</sup>

Hobbes tells us in the Epistle Dedicatory to *Leviathan* that 'I speak not of the men, but (in the Abstract) of the Seat of Power'.<sup>117</sup> He concludes by insisting that this seat is occupied not by any natural person or body of persons, but rather by the disembodied and fictional Person whose generic name is the State.<sup>118</sup> However, he is conventional enough to believe that, like the offspring of any lawful union, the Person 'generated' by the union of the multitude deserves its own name as well. Following out his metaphor of marriage and procreation, he accordingly goes on to perform the appropriate act of baptism. He announces in his gravest tones that 'this is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that *Mortal God*, to which we owe under the *Immortal God*, our peace and defence'.<sup>119</sup>

Hobbes's allusion is to the sea monster described in chapter 41 of the Book of Job, which he treats as an image of terrifying and overwhelming strength. The claim that we need to submit to such an absolute form of power had been denounced by the newly sovereign House of Commons as recently as its *Declaration of March 1649*. 'Such an *unaccountable Officer*', Parliament had warned, would be 'a strange *Monster* to be permitted by mankind'.<sup>120</sup> Hobbes unhesitatingly picks up and hurls back the taunt. The main burden of his political theory is that we have no option but to permit our sovereign to personate just such a monster if we are to have any prospect of living together in security and peace.

## NOTES

1. For especially valuable attempts to explicate Hobbes's argument in this chapter see Pitkin 1967, Gauthier 1969, Baumgold 1988, Runciman 1997 and 2000.
2. *Lev*, xvi, 1, 2, 80/101.
3. For a fuller analysis of the complications raised by Hobbes's initial statement, see Skinner 2002, esp. 181–3, 187–90.
4. See Hobbes 1841, 123 on the *persona representativa*.
5. *Lev*, xvi, 4, 81/101.
6. *Lev*, xvi, 11, 81/103.
7. *Lev*, xvi, 11, 81/103.
8. *Lev*, xvii, 13, 87/109.
9. See Hobbes 1969, 104, 110. Cf. also Hobbes 1983, II, III, 100, where he uses the verb *relinquere*, and V, XI, 134, where he uses *decedere*.

10. See Hobbes 1969, 104, 110.
11. Hobbes fully works out this analysis only in the case of what he calls 'Common-wealth by Institution', not in the case of 'Commonwealth by Acquisition'. See *Lev.*, xvii, 15, 88/110. I therefore confine myself in what follows to commenting on the former case.
12. [Parker] 1642, 1, 2, 3.
13. [Anon] *Maximes Unfolded*, 1643, 14.
14. Bridge, 1643, 3.
15. [Hunton] 1644, 27, 31.
16. *Lev.*, xvii, 6, 90/112.
17. *Lev.*, xvi, 6, 81/102.
18. *Lev.*, xvi, 3, 80/101.
19. *Lev.*, xvi, 3, 80/101.
20. *Lev.*, xvi, 3, 80/101.
21. *Lev.*, xvi, 3, 80/101.
22. *Lev.*, xvi, 3, 80/101.
23. *Lev.*, xvi, 3, 80/101.
24. See, for example, Gauthier 1969, 99, 120, 126, Zarka 1999, 325, 333.
25. *Lev.*, xxix, 14, 171/215.
26. [Parker] 1642, 44.
27. *Lev.*, xiii, 12, 63/78.
28. *Lev.*, xiii, 9, 62/76.
29. *Lev.*, xiii, 8, 61/76.
30. [Parker] 1642, 18 and cf. pp. 1-2.
31. [Parker] 1642, 26.
32. *Lev.*, xviii, 3, 88/111.
33. *Lev.*, xviii, 4, 89/111.
34. *Lev.*, xvii, 13, 88/109.
35. *Lev.*, xvi, 15, 82/104.
36. *Lev.*, xvi, 13, 82/104.
37. *Lev.*, xvii, 13, 88/109.
38. *Lev.*, xvi, 13, 82/104.
39. *Lev.*, xvi, 13, 82/104.
40. Hobbes 1969, 104, 108-9; Hobbes 1983, 136-7.
41. Hobbes 1969, 119; cf. Hobbes 1983, 133.
42. Hobbes 1969, 103, 108-9; Hobbes 1983, 133-4.
43. *Lev.*, xvi, 14, 82/104.
44. *Lev.*, xvi, 14, 82/104.
45. [Parker] 1642, 1, 2.
46. *Lev.*, xviii, 18, 93/116.
47. *Lev.*, xviii, 18, 93/116.

48. *Lev.*, xviii, 18, 93/116.
49. [Parker] 1642, 2, 4.
50. *Lev.*, xviii, 4, 89/111.
51. *Lev.*, xviii, 4, 89/111.
52. *Lev.*, xviii, 4, 89/111.
53. Pryne 1643, 1, 91.
54. *Lev.*, xviii, 7, 90/113.
55. [Parker] 1642, 15, 45.
56. A Sovereigne Salve, 8.
57. John Goodwin 1642, 2; [Herle] 1643, 12; [Hunton] 1643, 47.
58. [Parker] 1642, 9-10.
59. [Hunton] 1643, 47.
60. [Parker] 1642, 16. But Parker adds [pp. 16, 34] that in emergencies the two Houses of Parliament can act without the concurrence of the king. Cf. [Hunton] 1643, 27-9, who refuses to concede that, even in emergencies, any one element can predominate.
61. [Herle] 1643, 2.
62. *Lev.*, xviii, 1-4, 16.
63. *Lev.*, xvi, 13, 82/104.
64. See, for example, the *Act Abolishing the Office of King* in Gardiner 1906, which speaks [p. 386] of the right of the people to be 'governed by its own representatives or national meeting in council' and declares [p. 387] that 'supreme authority' now resides 'in this and the successive representatives of the people'.
65. *Lev.*, xix, 1, 94/118.
66. *Lev.*, xix, 3, 94/119.
67. *Lev.*, 1, 1, 3/6.
68. *Lev.*, xlv, 16, 358/444.
69. *Lev.*, xix, 3, 94/119; *Lev.*, xxii, 5, 115/146.
70. For this suggestion see Hill 1986, 318-19 and Martinich 1992, 147-50.
71. Thomas Goodwin 1642, 48, 49.
72. See also Bridge 1649, 117, who describes Adam as 'a Common person' in that 'he was made up of soul and body, and so are we, His body had legs, and arms, and other members, and we have member for member, we have head for head, and arms for arms, and legs for legs: And so, he sinning, we have sin for his sin, pride for his pride, and unbelief for his unbelief'.
73. Thomas Goodwin 1642, 59.
74. Thomas Goodwin 1642, 60, 58.
75. Thomas Goodwin 1642, 57, 58.
76. Thomas Goodwin 1642, 73.

77. It is evident, however, from Chapter xlii of *Leviathan* that Hobbes must have immersed himself in a wide range of theological texts in the 1640s.
78. See also *An Answer to a Printed Book* 1642 – which has been ascribed to Dudley Digges – for a discussion (pp. 13–14) of the ‘fiction of law’ by which the people are said to accept, and indeed to enact, what is done in their name.
79. [Digges] 1643, 33.
80. [Digges] 1643, 149.
81. [Digges] 1643, 151–2.
82. *Lev*, xix, 1, 94/118; *Lev*, xxix, 16, 172/217; *Lev*, xxv, 11, 134/169.
83. *Lev*, xxii, 1, 115/146.
84. *Lev*, xxxv, 15, 219/277.
85. But perhaps the head of the sovereign is shown as that of a man simply because this would have been expected.
86. *Lev*, xx, 4, 102/128. Hobbes speaks of sovereign Queens in Chapter xx and specifically mentions Queen Elizabeth of England in Chapter xlvii 47 [*Lev*, xlvii, 20, 34].
87. *Lev*, xx, 4, 102/128.
88. *Lev*, xvi, 14, 82/104; *Lev*, xxv, 11, 134/169; cf. also *Lev*, xxii, 18, 118/150.
89. *Lev*, xix, 3, 95/118; *Lev*, xxii, 5, 115/146; *Lev*, xxii, 25, 120/152.
90. *Lev*, xviii, 1, 88/110.
91. *Lev*, xix, 3, 95/119.
92. *Lev*, xxix, 16, 171/216.
93. *Lev*, xxix, 16, 171/217. Hobbes first refers to this version of the theory at *Lev*, xix, 10, 89/123.
94. *Lev*, xxix, 16, 172/216.
95. *Lev*, xxix, 16, 172/217.
96. *Lev*, xviii, 1, 88/110.
97. *Lev*, xix, 3, 95/119.
98. *Lev*, xix, 3, 95/119.
99. *Lev*, xix, 3, 95/119; see also *Lev*, xxix, 16, 172/217.
100. *Lev*, xxii, 5, 115/146.
101. *Lev*, xxii, 25, 120/152.
102. *Lev*, xxii, 25, 120/152.
103. *Lev*, xxii, 25, 120/152.
104. [Parker] 1642, 44.
105. *Lev*, xviii, 1, 88/110.
106. *Lev*, xvii, 13, 87/109; *Lev*, xvii, 14, 88/109; *Lev*, xviii, 1, 88/110.
107. *Lev*, xvii, 13, 87/109.
108. For this formula see *Lev*, Introduction, 1, 1/3.

109. *Lev*, xvii, 13, 87/109.
110. *Lev*, xvii, 14, 88/109.
111. *Lev*, xlii, 130, 317/395.
112. *Lev*, xxxi, 1, 186/234.
113. *Lev*, xxvi, 13, 87/109. See *Lev*, xxx, 2, 175/219 for a particularly clear distinction between sovereigns and commonwealths, together with the claim that the person of the sovereign always represents the Person of the commonwealth.
114. *Lev*, xxvi, 2, 137/173.
115. *Lev*, xxvi, 11, 140/176; *Lev*, xxvi, 12, 140/177, and so on.
116. *Lev*, xxix, 6, 168/212; *Lev*, xxvi, 11, 140/176.
117. *Lev*, [1]/2.
118. That Hobbes's State is a Person ‘by fiction’ is convincingly argued in Runciman 2000.
119. *Lev*, xvii, 13, 87/109.
120. *Declaration* of March 1649, 14.

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## 7 Hobbes on Glory and Civil Strife

Hobbes's readers generally agree on the centrality of the concept of glory in his system as presented in *The Elements of Law* and *De Cive*, but no such consensus exists concerning the relevance of glory in *Leviathan*. The main aim of this chapter is to argue that the significance of glory in *Leviathan* cannot be overemphasised as it not only provides the foundation of Hobbes's political theory, but also furthers our understanding of Hobbes's philosophy of man. This chapter is organised in four sections. I argue in section I that, even though the definition of glory given in *Leviathan* may appear *prima facie* different from that provided in earlier works, the meaning of glory remains unchanged: glory is the joy of superiority and as such it implies comparisons between individuals. In section II a comparative analysis of the status of glory in *The Elements of Law*, *De Cive*, and *Leviathan* reveals that in the latter Hobbes replaces his former claim that glory is the ultimate motivation of all people with the milder claim that glory motivates some individuals. Section III presents the central claim of this essay that in *Leviathan* glory is the Archimedean point of Hobbes's theory of the state. The behaviour of glory-seekers is identified as the original source of conflict both in the state of nature and in the political state, as well as the reason why nothing less than the absolute, indivisible and irrevocable power of a Leviathan is required to guarantee internal peace. Section IV concludes by exploring some of the implications of the preceding argument and the function of education in the political