

bring a wall on stage. Again they agree that 'some man or other must present Wall',²⁹ and when they later perform their play the wall is duly personated by the tinker Snout.³⁰

The anxiety of Shakespeare's rustics to demonstrate their mastery of theatrical terminology is of course part of the comedy. But the passage reminds us that, in drawing on the same terminology in *Leviathan*, Hobbes was merely 'translating', as he puts it, a range of concepts long familiar in the playhouse to encompass 'any Representer of speech and action, as well in Tribunalls, as Theaters'.³¹ The outcome, as he adds, is that in his theory 'a Person, is the same that an Actor is, both on the Stage and in common Conversation'.³² As Hobbes's theory continually reminds us, *persona* is, in Latin, the ordinary word for a theatrical mask.

The term *attributed* was likewise a familiar piece of legal terminology, and was evidently chosen by Hobbes with some care. The Latin verb *attribuere* had always been used to convey the sense that something should be counted as belonging to someone. Furthermore, there was always the implication – as in the case of attributing an anonymous text to its rightful author – that the responsibility for a work may sometimes be hard to assign, and that appearances may often be deceptive. These considerations had already been highlighted by the ancient theorists of forensic eloquence. They had made it a principle that, whenever the wording of a text is in question in a court of law, you must seek to cast doubt on whatever attributions of meaning and authorship have been made by your adversaries.³³ The parallel with attributed action is close: while it may be evident who performed a given action, it may not be evident who should count as its true author, and hence as responsible for its consequences. These were exactly the parallels that Hobbes was concerned to bring out.

With the introduction of the key concept of an attributed action, Hobbes comes face to face with the principal problem he needs to address. What is to count as the valid representation of one person's words or actions by someone else, such that it will be proper to say of an action performed by a representative that it ought to be attributed to the person – or thing or collectivity – being represented? What, in a word, distinguishes representation from misrepresentation?

Hobbes grappled with this problem in every recension of his civil science, but it was only in *Leviathan* that he arrived at an answer that he

²⁹ Shakespeare 1988, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. 1. 62, p. 326.

³⁰ Shakespeare 1988, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V. 1. 154–5, 160–1, p. 330.

³¹ Hobbes 1996, ch. 16, p. 112.

³² See, for example, *Ad C. Herennium* 1954, II. IX. 13, p. 80 on how a *ventrator* should be *adtributa*.

seemed to find satisfactory.³⁴ Once again his solution wears an air of remarkable simplicity, but it constitutes one of the most important theoretical advances he made between the publication of *De Cive* in 1642 and *Leviathan* nearly a decade later, and arguably embodies his most original contribution to the theory of the state.³⁵ His suggestion is that an action can be validly attributed to one person on the basis of its performance by a representative if and only if the representative has in some way been duly authorised,³⁶ and hence instructed and commissioned, to perform the action concerned.³⁷ The crucial concept is accordingly that of authorisation,³⁸ and more specifically that of being an author and hence in a position to grant authority.³⁹ These terms make no appearance in *The Elements of De Cive*. Although Hobbes gives some consideration in those texts to the question of where authority may be said to reside, he never considers how it comes to be authorised. In *Leviathan*, by contrast, he deploys the concepts of authorisation and of 'being an author' to furnish the entire theoretical grounding for his theory of the legitimate state.⁴⁰

This terminology is introduced at an early stage in chapter 16 of *Leviathan*. Hobbes first employs these terms when considering the sense in which we can speak of actions, by analogy with possessions, as 'owned' by particular individuals:

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. For that which in speaking of goods and possessions, is called an *Owner*, and in latine *Dominus*, in Greeke *κruptος*, speaking of Actions, is called an Author.⁴¹

³⁴ Although Hobbes made several changes in the Latin version of *Leviathan* to his theory about the person of the state, his theory about authorisation remained unchanged.

³⁵ Rightly stressed in Gauthier 1969, p. 120 and Zarka 1995, p. 197.

³⁶ Note that 'duly' need not mean 'explicitly': implicit authorisation is a possibility for Hobbes.

³⁷ Hobbes does not say that the representative has to be authorised by the person being represented. As we shall see in section III, he needs to leave space for the fact that this will sometimes be impossible in principle.

³⁸ Hobbes 1996, ch. 17, p. 120 and ch. 21, p. 151 explicitly invokes this terminology. On Hobbes's concept of authorisation see Copp 1980, pp. 582–95, a discussion to which I am particularly indebted.

³⁹ On 'authors' and 'authority' in this period see Elsky 1989.

⁴⁰ My discussion is mainly confined to the basic case in which one natural person or body of persons directly authorises another to act either on their behalf or on behalf of a third party. Hobbes adds many possible refinements: conditional authorisation (Hobbes 1996, ch. 16, p. 115); authorisation of Assemblies (Hobbes 1996, ch. 19, p. 129); and authorisation not by mutual covenant but by covenant with a conqueror (Hobbes 1996, ch. 20, p. 141). A full analysis of Hobbes's theory would need to take account of these refinements, but in the meantime there are several good reasons for concentrating on the basic case. One is that Hobbes does so himself. Another is that he is not always successful in explaining how the refinements fit on to the basic case. As we shall see, one consequence is that sometimes there is insufficient textual basis for discussing them.

⁴¹ Hobbes 1996, ch. 16, p. 112.