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The question of, what is significant about authorisation by the people for an absolute sovereign power in Hobbes contains the implicit assumption that it is in any way significant at all, that it is the authorisation element which is doing the work in Hobbes' theory. This is wrong on two counts. First, despite the efforts of authors such as Hampton to render it consistent, Hobbes' method of authorisation, from the people in the state of nature to the sovereign is incoherent. Second, it is not this authorisation which is doing the real work in justifying absolute power; more central is what Hobbes believed people, already in a state, sought rationally to do. Thus, Hobbes' theory of authorisation is irrelevant for his model of absolute power. Rather, Sommerville is correct in seeing 'Leviathan' as a polemical, context driven text, and not as an early precursor to contract theories of government.

In order to unpack its irrelevance to Hobbes's theory, it is first necessary to outline Hobbes's argument of authorisation and the sovereign power. In essence, Hobbes argues that men, in a state of nature without a state, will have a constant disposition to conflict. Three forces drive this - competition, diffidence and glory - and all men are equal only because each has the strength to kill the stronger. From this state, the people will come together and form a covenant to contract absolute power to a sovereign power who will rule over them and so prevent a state of "war against all". Men cannot alienate their "right of nature" (self-

preservation), but in all other things they must obey the sovereign without question. This clearly does have elements of a contract theory of government. The people contract with each other, not the sovereign directly, and so obedience is owed as much as a duty to other members of society as to the sovereign itself. Hobbes' is clear men can only form this contract with people who are genuine "authors" and so likely to be able to fulfill it. "Children, madmen and jokers" can be no authors", suggesting Hobbes' contract is literal for it must occur between cognitively sound and rational beings. Thus, there are passages in Hobbes' discussion of the covenant which suggest he is literal in believing this act is what creates the model of an absolutely powerful sovereign.

If this is, so, however, Hobbes' theory of authorisation by people literally creating sovereign power is an incoherent one (and the reason for this incoherence, as explored later, is that the contract is but a prop and a device, rather than literal). In order for people in the state of nature to agree to a covenant they must, as Hobbes argues in chapter 13 of *Leviathan*, act rationally. This creates the problem of an 'assurance game', for how<sup>am</sup> I to know that, if I act rationally and give up my arms and power, you will do so to rather than just kill me? Even if the game is iterated, unless the stakes are low and I can guarantee I will always face the same other person, it is safer for me to not act rationally and co-operate, for, otherwise you will kill me. This rationality element therefore creates a paradox in Hobbes. Either, men will always be so fearful they will never be able to covenant,

or, if it is so rational to do so, they will presume everyone will act & rationally. The latter here seems intuitively more likely and, if this be so, why will we need to covenant at all? The state of nature will be one of rational co-operation, not war.

The solution to this paradox, <sup>and</sup> which explains why men always opt for war not co-operation, in nature is the passions account (Ch. 15). ~~By this~~ ~~to~~ This ~~for~~ chapter explains that in addition to rationality, men are also motivated by passions, such as vain glory. This explains why men don't ~~not~~ naturally rationally co-operate, for there is the additional ~~for~~ of the person you co-operate with acting on passion not rationality. This salvages Hobbes state of nature, and the need for a covenant, but it fails to explain how men ever come to leave the state of nature, jammed as they are in a ~~par~~ of passions overtaking their plans. Hampton attempts to resolve this paradox by reference to a "short sightedness account", but it is an explanation which, while logically sound, is not supported in the text. He argues what prevents <sup>covenant</sup> ~~covenant~~ is "bad reason", that is, people not seeing co-operation is in their interests, and that this need only ~~become~~ ~~only~~ overcome one to absolve men from the state of nature. Hobbes is clear however that you cannot contract with fools, so it is unclear why men of poor reason would be any different. If Hobbes account of power authorised by the people is meant to be literal, it is insignificant simply because it fails logically as an argument.

It is not really the mechanics of the contract, however, which is really used to justify absolute power in Hobbes. It is, at best, a hypothetical kind of contract, one of what men would or should have done and, as Pitkin pithily puts it "a hypothetical contract is no contract at all". Rather, Hobbes uses his device of authorisation as a device to show why people already in a state owe it their obedience, for it is rational for them to do so. The laws of nature. This is supported by the elements of Hobbes's theory that don't naturally fit with a ~~socio~~ contractual theory of government. He argues, for example, that if authority changes we owe this new sovereign our allegiance, but it is not clear, if consent is what drove formation of a sovereign, how being invaded and so part of a new group of people the old covenant could still hold. People covenant to form a sovereign, and if this is replaced by invasion people are surely then subject to a new community or state they never consented to? Similarly, Hobbes throughout 'Leviathan' emphasises why a single monarch is the best form of government, but this does not follow logically from the covenant. Sommerville argues this can be seen as an assertion based on Hobbes's political ideas and context, caught in civil war, rather than as a logical corollary of his theory. The same applies to Hobbes's model of sovereign power. The device of authorisation is simply a way for Hobbes to show why loyalty to a sovereign is rational, and should be performed in England, rather than as a coherent contract theory. Thus, for Hobbes what is significant for absolute power is that this is what people should obey, not its significance.

those not really arise from the fact people have agreed to.

Therefore, the authorisation by the people of sovereign power is but a trap; it possesses no significance of its own. As a theory Hobbes's contract is incoherent, and his reasons for favouring a sovereign (that it is logically best) do not depend on any literal contract ever having occurred. The contract is then of no real theoretical significance for Hobbes's model of absolute power.