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## **A History of the Personified State**

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# **A History of the Personified State**

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## Abstract

This thesis seeks to answer two sets of questions. One set refers to metaphor generally, and another set refers more specifically to metaphors attached to the concept of the state within the European and North American tradition of political philosophy. Questions of a general nature include: Is metaphor purely decorative? Do particular metaphors encourage certain ways of thinking and discourage others? Are abstract concepts constituted by their metaphorical associations with other domains? Are transformations in social knowledge over time defined, or limited by, the kinds of modifications in metaphor that are plausible for, and conceptually available to, individuals within particular linguistic and cultural communities? Engaging with texts from within philosophy of language, I will argue that metaphor is not wholly decorative, that it can encourage certain modes of thinking and discourage others, and that significantly abstract concepts are partly constituted by influential and widely held metaphorical associations.

Building on these conclusions, I will address questions more precisely focused on the concept of the state. Such questions include: Did personification encourage certain ways of thinking about the state and discourage others? Was the concept of the state partly or fully constituted by those metaphorical associations with i) the human body, ii) the “pre-social”, atomised person, and iii) the socialised person? Can we attribute changes in understandings of legitimate political structure to the kinds of metaphor that were conceptually available to individual writers within the linguistic community of European and North American political writers? In response to these questions, and based on analysis of key texts from the history of political thought, I will argue that personification has proven itself capable of endorsing a wide programme of political perspectives; metaphorical utterances about the state depended on, and developed, prior utterances within their philosophical tradition, such as those targeting the literal connection between the individual ruler and their personalised power over persons and territory, as well as those ancient metaphors likening a social or political entity to the (human) organism; our modern understanding of the state has retained and deepened such utterances, such that states have come to be understood as entities

in possession of substantive unity and indivisibility, significant moral status, a (general) will, a (national) interest and identity, and (international) rights and duties; international theory is predicated on a particular personified account of the state; and in many cases, the conceptual and linguistic entrenchment of the personified state is such that to hypothetically excise that metaphorical connection would be to fundamentally change how the state has been commonly understood. In short, personification played a key role in the development of the concept of the state.

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## | Chapter One |

### Introduction: The Person and the State

There have been many different metaphors central to political reflection that have been passed down, hand to hand, by an accepted literary canon that we now call our own. We could point to Plato's (and later Jean Bodin's) *ship* of state (Plato, 2003: Bk VI; Bodin, 1955: 88, 133, 209), Virgil's allusions to society as a *bee colony* (2005: Bk VI), Claude de Seyssel's three *bridles* restraining princely power (1981: Ch VIII; see Keohane, 2017: 35-8; Vincent, 1987: 86-7), Robert Filmer's *paternal* king (Filmer, 1680: Ch I), or the countless tracts discussing the social *contract*. We need not minimise the significance of such metaphors by suggesting that one other metaphorical connection has proven itself to be more central, more foundational, to our philosophical tradition. This form of metaphor is personification and has produced in various guises what I shall call the personified state (see Barbera, 1993: 143).

Reflecting on the history of European and North American political philosophy, we find the repeated appearance of depictions of the state employing language more commonly reserved for descriptions of the individual human being. Perhaps the most famous example, and therefore a central text of this thesis, is Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, wherein the titular state is conceptualised as an artificial person, depicted on the frontispiece of the published<sup>1</sup> book as possessing a human head with a body comprised of smaller individual figures who all look up at this giant face. We can trace how Hobbes came to arrive at this image by looking to a vast lineage of earlier accounts of the political entity. We can look to the philosophy of ancient Greece, and we find a resemblance in Plato's suggestion that the city-state is the soul of the person writ large, or we can look to the Christian tradition's emphasis on the Pauline doctrine of the "body of Christ" as the community of the faithful, both of which proved so influential over medieval philosophy. More immediately, decades before Hobbes, Grotius put forward the



related proposition that “from the point of view of the whole human race, peoples are treated as individuals” (Grotius, 2004: 31).

We can also follow where this Hobbesian image of the state was to lead in later political philosophy. Vattel, extending the wisdom of a century following Hobbes’ work, wrote that “...nations composed of men, and considered as so many free persons living together in the state of nature, are naturally equal, and inherit from nature the same obligations and rights” (Vattel, 2008 [1758]: 75). A few years later, Rousseau claimed that just as nature gives “each man absolute power over his members, the social pact gives the body politic absolute power over all of its members, and it is this same power which, directed by the general will, bears, as I have said, the name of sovereignty” (Rousseau, 1997 [1762]: 61). Moreover, in texts associated with European nationalism, this Rousseauian general will became national *identity*, and within the texts of 20<sup>th</sup> century international political theory, attention turned to the national *interest* or *self-interest* and the nation’s striving for security or power within a primitive *society* of states (see Bull, 2002 [1977]).

In my view, all of these descriptions speak to one another. They develop an underlying conceptual connection that ties an understanding of the social whole to an understanding of the individual person. These metaphors closely relate to one another, reflecting a body of shared knowledge and understanding, further evidenced by the explicit reference that such writers make to each other in the articulation of their own ideas. Just as L’Hôpital had developed Seyssel’s metaphor of the prince as a bridled horse, restrained by domestic bodies, into one wherein the King takes the place of the coachman and thereby substitutes a more absolutist theory for a more constitutionalist one (see Keohane, 2017: 66), the history of political thought reveals that forms of personification developed out of and in reaction to prior forms.

While it is a long story, as all stories discussing semantic and conceptual change must be, I believe we can chart the history of European accounts of the state through an exegetical exploration of the development of this metaphorical association between the political entity and the individual person. This thesis is

an attempt to tell such a story. We may say, borrowing a metaphor from Arthur Lovejoy (2001 [1936]: 22; also see Croft & Cruse, 2004: 204-5), that this is a biography of a particular metaphor's life history. As for any biography, another interpretation of the same life is certainly possible.

## The Significance of Metaphor

A critical reader of the last paragraph may have the following kind of question already in mind: "so what if we can trace the development of the concept of the state relative to some pattern of figurative language use?" It seems clear that my project demands a strong defence of why it matters what figurative language we use when articulating the concepts that form our language. One could of course seek such a defence firstly by noting that the various tokens of this type-concept we now call the "state" are entities that people have repeatedly proven themselves willing to fight and die for, or indeed have been compelled to do so, and so *any* exploration of this strange notion is thereby justified. However, it will not be at all clear, I suspect, to many readers why we should think that the risking of one's life, or the being compelled to do so, has any relationship to the figurative language that has been tied to this concept of the state.

Therefore, instead, my answer to the "so what?" question rests on an analysis of the particular character and significance of metaphor. Joseph Strayer wrote that "[i]f we cannot escape from the state, it is of some importance to understand it" (2005: 4); my suggestion is that the state is inescapable both literally in terms of its fortified borders, but also conceptually, and so the metaphors that render the state conceptually alive are worthy of exploration. This is a topic I will turn to in more detail in Chapter Two, so I will therefore only briefly prepare the ground here by giving some indication of what is to follow.

Our initial thoughts about personification in this context are likely to be either vague or contradictory. We might, for example, recognise that "...we can scarcely hope to talk coherently about the nature of public power without making some

reference to the idea of the state as a fictional or moral person distinct from both rulers and ruled" (Skinner, 2010: 45). We might also agree with Bartelson that "...states have become persons by virtue of having been spoken of as such across different historical contexts, until this idea has become a social fact in its own right" (Bartelson, 2015: 102). Yet we might also be drawn to the argument that, as Edwin DeWitt Dickinson suggested, it is simply sophistry to claim that just "as individual human beings are born, attain the age of majority, and die, so States come into existence, obtain full international recognition, and cease to be" (Dickinson, 1917: 589). Related forms of language that afford the state personality might be deemed nothing but "legal mysticism" (Vincent, 1987: 9). Following this line of thought, we may regard all such metaphors as dangerous in their evident potential to *mislead* us as to the true nature of the political world (see Bull, 1966a; Beitz, 1979; Lawrence, 1990; see Sontag, 1978: 3 for a similar view of metaphor). Our resolution to such potential sophistry might run something like as follows: *if only we were to stop using these metaphors, our view of politics would be less confused and much clearer.*

This thesis attempts to unravel how these different thoughts are related and whether there can be any reconciliation between them. The attempt begins by suggesting that existing philosophical approaches to the topic of metaphor are best conceptualised as lying somewhere between two ends of a continuum concerning its nature, scope and significance. At the one end, we have an approach that views metaphor as being merely decorative; it is an "add on" or addition to literal language, and it is literal language that more truly and more accurately communicates facts about the world. In short, metaphor is superfluous to sensible thought and true knowledge. If they can be said to make assertions at all, metaphors are wholly reducible to a paraphrased literal utterance. It is implied, I suggest, by this approach that metaphor is fairly limited in its frequency and that we think fundamentally in a literal manner, whilst retaining the possibility that we are sometimes misled by the obfuscatory effects of metaphorical decoration. Even if certain metaphors and their effects help us to see the truth, the latter remains the natural preserve of the literal. By contrast, at the other end of the continuum stands an approach to metaphor which asserts that metaphors form

the bulk of our language and are not decorative but rather constitutive of the very things to which they are conceptually tied, such that literalised paraphrases cannot be found which exhaustively capture that which a given metaphor conveys.

To be clear, in this somewhat artificial image of a continuum, I have bundled together claims about the *frequency* of metaphor with claims about its *cognitive effects* and claims about its *relationship to truth*. While it is possible, for example, that one could think of metaphors as being both ubiquitous and yet cognitively inert and irrelevant to matters of fact or, alternatively, one could perhaps view metaphor as being both ubiquitous and impactful yet misleading, on the whole, the close relation between significance, ubiquity and truthfulness seems the most natural marriage: the more frequent metaphors are, the more likely they are to impact our thinking about the world, the more likely we are to accept them as potentially expressing the facts of the matter. In the following chapter, I will outline in more detail these two ends of the continuum as signifying markedly different approaches to metaphor, which I refer to as the decorative and constitutive approaches - names adapted from Miller (1979) and Boyd (1993) (also see Rayner, 1984; Camp, 2006).

In marshalling the merits of these divergent approaches, I aim to work towards the following claims regarding the scope and significance of metaphor. Metaphor has played a fundamental role in articulating the central concept of modern political existence - the state. The state cannot be perceived directly and in its entirety by our faculties of perception and is thereby cut off from simple ostensive definition. Because what cannot be seen must instead be *imagined*, we are invited towards metaphorical articulation. Such metaphorical articulation should not be seen as something which is *added* to the underlying concept as if adorned in flowery prose that is best pruned back for a clearer view, but rather *partly* constitutive of it (see Miller, 1979: 155). Such an act of pruning would, in the end, reveal that there is much less to see than first thought. Metaphors associated with the concept of the state are best understood as partly constituting that which renders the target concept - in its present form - as thinkable at all. In such cases, the metaphorical utterance is like any other utterance that describes a subject; it

is the vast accumulation of *all* such utterances - wherever they are understood and judged true by interlocutors - that forms the meaning of our words.

I will adopt a modified form of the *constitutive* approach. In saying that my own approach leans towards the constitutive end of the continuum, I intend to characterise it as the more direct heir of the position advanced by Iver B. Neumann: “[i]f one believes, as I do, that thinking depends on the language in which it is couched, and that language cannot help but be metaphorical, then the key question is not whether a certain phenomenon is metaphorical or not, but which metaphors constitute it, with what effects and at what alternative cost (in terms of the relative merits of using other and competing metaphors)” (Neumann, 2004: 254). By extension, to say that my account largely focuses on the constitutive aspect of metaphor use is to say that it identifies strongly with a more general claim about the relationship between political language and thought, such as that espoused by William E. Connolly in his assertion that “[t]he language of politics is not a neutral medium that conveys ideas independently formed; it is an institutionalized structure of meanings that channels political thought and action in certain directions” (1974: 1). I will argue that metaphor can be the very material out of which abstract concepts like “state” are, at least in part, conceptually “built”, and thereby taught and learnt. Political thought has a strong imaginative element (Wolin, 2001[1960]: 17-20), and this element, I will argue, is one bound up with metaphor. I will argue that it is precisely because politics, and especially political philosophy, are disciplines which deal almost exclusively in the abstract realm that metaphors are so important here. I am thus also in broad accord with Richard Rorty’s suggestion that it is “pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical convictions” (1979: 12).

Nevertheless, I call my position a *modified* constitutive approach because I think one can concede the above arguments without fully relinquishing the appealing claims that aspects of state-ness exist “out there” in the world of causally-efficacious, temporal and material phenomena. As I will explain in the next chapter, concepts rarely have no referential relationship to particulars that permit

perceptual interaction, and it is precisely this relationship which gives credence to the decorative approach. Nor do I wish to deny that we can be misled by metaphor, that some metaphors are best understood via a literalised paraphrase, or that in some cases we might be awakened to the metaphoricity of an utterance through the incongruity of an initial, literal interpretation. I wish to refrain from making universal or categorical assertions about the semantic or conceptual nature of all utterances that we might class as metaphorical. It may be that in some cases our metaphors are purely decorative in nature and there is therefore the perpetual risk of our taking our own metaphors too “literally” (Turbayne, 1971: 6), while in others we are left with little but a series of metaphors in rendering phenomena comprehensible through the concretising association to more tangible experience for which we already possess accepted forms of language.

## **Defining the State and the Person**

It is a commonplace feature of academic texts that near their beginning the author attempts some ground clearing by explaining their understanding of those key terms that will be under discussion over the course of the following pages. What I understand exactly by metaphor and personification will be discussed in Chapter Two, but two other terms immediately present themselves as standing in need of definition: “person” and “state”. Unlike other forms of research, however, defining each is difficult to do here without making key presuppositions about the conclusions that this thesis seeks to work toward. I do believe though that in explaining this difficulty and others, the sense of “state” and “person” which I wish to convey will emerge.

### **i) The State**

I will begin with the concept of the “state” and explain the associated difficulties. Firstly, I will argue in the following chapters that defining the state must in fact be done with reference to metaphor due to its frequency in those texts dedicated to

its articulation. However, if I were to attempt to define “state” here by using metaphor or attempt to do so in a non-metaphorical manner, I must either beg the question or undercut what is yet to be fully argued for regarding metaphor’s relationship to certain concepts. One cannot talk about *what* was being personified without being interpreted as suggesting that the act of personification stands apart, as a subsequent, rhetorical act, from the concept in question. This would then undermine any subsequent claims about the centrality and the constitutive role of personification. Such a tension is present in the title of this thesis, I should note.

Secondly, a possible objection to any attempt at defining the concept of the state is that talk of concepts of any kind introduces unnecessary entities into the discussion. Talk of concepts might be said introduce some quasi-mystical realm that is ultimately superfluous. I will, however, continue to refer to concepts in the following pages. My reason for this is that there is simply no alternative; the obvious contender to talk of “concepts” is to stick purely to talk of “words”, but ultimately we must realise that words too are equally abstract, their existence not wholly exhausted by a particular set of marks on a page or a computer screen in a particular script or font, but also encompassing a particular arrangement of sounds spoken in a particular dialect and with a particular inflection. The unity among such instantiations of wordness must to some extent also be formed in the abstract realm. In short, talk of words is talk of abstract entities too. The second reasons why I will talk of concepts is that there are some things which can be said of concepts which cannot sensibly be said of words. The utterance “my concept of God differs from yours” has a wholly different sense to that of “my word “God” differs from yours”. Talk of concepts imply a network of interrelated, potentially unspoken or even unthought but nevertheless plausible utterances and imaginings that are not so immediately invited by talk of words. As it is precisely the former that interests me, I remain committed to talk of concepts.

A third, closely related problem in defining the concept of the state is that it is reliant upon an account of concepts that is itself the product of metaphor. This would be problematic for any history of an idea but particularly so for the history

of an idea's association to a metaphor of the kind I am about to embark upon. This critique in its general form is old. Louis O. Mink questioned the very possibility of writing a history of *an idea* or of *a concept* wherever there exists a tendency, one which is prevalent within the history of ideas, to view ideas or concepts as if they are physical things (Mink, 1968). Mink rightly viewed this tendency as inherent to Lovejoy's account of "unit-ideas", highlighting his use of metaphors derived from the natural sciences, which describe ideas as chemical elements distilled from the compounds of past discourse (Mink, 1968: 10-11; Lovejoy, 2001 [1936]: 3-4<sup>2</sup>; also see Macksey, 2002: 1094-5). It is true that we tend to talk about concepts as mind-independent, publicly accessible "entities" hovering above yet tethered to their sign, and which we as competent language users jointly access. This way of "seeing" concepts is itself bound up with metaphor, as we can recognise if we consider the language used to talk about concepts in English; whenever we refer to concepts as things that we "grasp" or "possess", for example. We are likely bewitched by the fact that signs (as marks on a page, for example) often possess much clearer individuation than the conceptual phenomena to which they are attached. Instead, therefore, we must stress not *the* concept as entity but rather emphasise individual acts of conceptualisation that are encouraged by the hearing or reading of certain words in a particular context. Nevertheless, there is a good deal of overlap between how different individuals within a linguistic community will conceptualise what is being said or written when hearing or reading a particular sign; these overlapping conceptualisations will determine the parameters of what we may justifiably gloss as the singular, individuated concept. Concepts' ontological existence extends no further than the kind of overlap I have just been discussing. Therefore, talk of *the* concept of X implies our shared recognition of certain conceptualisations or possible conceptualisations, which can be inferred from our ability to successfully communicate with one another about X. To meet the criticism of Mink we must loosen our commitment to the metaphorically induced idea of ideas or concepts as having the kind of individuation and boundedness possessed by material objects (see Briggs and Nederman, 2022, for an attempt to apply a similar account of concepts to the historical analysis of political texts).



Fourthly, a related difficulty in defining the concept of the state arises due to the fact that each of our concepts are historically and culturally located, such that it can be denied that we are able to talk of them as existing through time, or at least whether we, as historically located individuals, can discuss them from some neutral vantage point. A concept will naturally implicate a whole host of other related words and concepts that hold this first concept in place within a language synchronically. Explication of a concept like that of (political) “protest”, for example, will implicate an array of other concepts, such as “politics”, “democracy”, “tyranny”, “freedom”, “action”, “will”, “morality”, “violence”, “police”, “banner”, “placard”, “weekend”, “traffic”, and so on; linguistic entwinement of this kind exhausts a language in its entirety. Consideration of a particular concept will also invite associated images or memories; for protest, no doubt many readers will call to mind similar images of persons marching down wide, public streets that they have seen in person or on television and in films. This poses problems then because defining a concept cannot be levied from neutral linguistic terrain, nor from an ahistorical perspective, since it will require the use of other historically and culturally located concepts, as well as their associated images. For example, a modern discussion of 17<sup>th</sup> century “protest” will inevitably be infused with how that word is used in our own present. We may fancy that our concepts are shared with past language users if we think of them as independent “entities”, but once we abandon strict adherence to this metaphor, an awareness of how our concepts are contingent upon other concepts, and all are related within the expanse of our current language, becomes available.

A fifth problem with defining the concept of the state relates to how we should locate the origin of a concept historically. Etymology is perhaps the natural starting point. Yet, while etymology may help us here, it cannot necessarily provide us with a definition that we can confidently assert as fully our own. A great deal rests on where we are to trace the concept to etymologically: for example, are we to begin with prior usage of those five letters (s-t-a-t-e) in order on the pages of historical English texts, or to its sister words in other languages, or to words that are similar in reference though divergent in signifier, and so on? Etymological histories of the concept “state” will often trace the English term to texts of the early

16<sup>th</sup> century, such as Thomas Starkey's *A Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*, written sometime between the late 1520s and the early 1530s (OED, 2020). Instead, we might look to sister terms in other languages. For example, Skinner stresses that medieval political literature often talked about how the ruler might "maintain their state". In this context, the Latin for "state" referred to the "condition", "standing" or "status" of the entity or person to which it was linguistically attached, not to some independent political entity itself. This is evident from the fact that one often finds talk of the 'state of the realm' (*status regni*) in the later Middle Ages (Skinner, 2002b: 370-1), which would be tautological if our modern sense of "state" was intended. While Machiavelli usually employs the older sense of "state" in his *The Prince*, he does occasionally also suggest the newer usage (Skinner, 1978b: 353-4; cf. Mansfield, 1996: 288-9). As Skinner argues, the "linguistic slippage was slight, but the conceptual change was momentous" (Skinner, 2010: 28). In terms of etymology, one should note a further possibility, that of its connection to "estate". Indeed, Harding and Vincent have traced the origin of "state" to a contraction of "estate" (Harding, 1994; Vincent, 1987: 16-9; Vincent, 1992: 43). Oakeshott argued that this contraction from "estate" means that the concept begins its life as a metaphor (Oakeshott, 1975: 197). However, one should also note the potentially literal connection, because historically being in possession of a large estate and significant social status meant being capable of political rule. If we are to trace the concept of the state back to talk of "estate" then our object of inquiry broadens substantially. In any case, it is not at all clear how much weight we should place on etymology in discussing the origins of the idea of the state.

These five problems are genuine, and I do not think can be casually cast aside. They will continue to plague however we proceed in defining the concept of the state. Some definition of "state" is nevertheless required. Therefore, I should forewarn the reader that my references to the state intend to invoke a political *entity* of a most general kind.<sup>3</sup> I follow here Weldon (1947: 28-9) and Bosanquet (2001 [1899]: 19) who both begin their account of the state by first admitting a very general, preliminary definition, that is then subject to modification and clarification. As a preliminary definition, I should say that what interests me in the

following pages is the large, individuated social unit upon a territory governed by relatively impersonal, formalised and hierarchically structured power relations. I am drawing on Vincent's minimal definition of the state here, referring to "a continuous public power distinct from rulers and ruled" upon a "geographically identifiable territory with a body of citizens" (Vincent, 1992: 44; also see Vincent, 1987: 19). This opening definition accords with many common definitions of statehood, not least the well-known one presented in the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, which recognised these three features - government, a permanent population and a defined territory - while adding the additional feature of a capacity to enter into international relations. This sense of the tripartite connection between population, government and territory as defining features of the state has long been recognised as the "three elements of statehood" (Kantorowicz, 1932: 6; also see Oakeshott, 1975: 197).

Given then that the term "state" is of relatively recent heritage, the term "political entity" may refer less prejudicially to the kind of generality I am aiming at. I am concerned with the state as "a civic not a stone structure", "a metaphysical, not a physical place" (Brett, 2011: 1). Admittedly, we are perhaps already in the realm of metaphor as soon as we start defining the state in relation to "entity" insofar as we first require a concrete template in order to mentally fashion the concept of the abstract political entity. If to talk of abstract entities in this context involves metaphor, it is one of a most general and imprecise kind, but what I mean to suggest is that whenever descriptions of the state are fleshed out beyond this, the features filled in have most often been those associated with that of the human person. Despite evident issues with use of the term "state", I will continue to use the term while intending to invoke by it this kind of generality, since it is a less cumbersome, more familiar term than "political entity", and one that has proven itself able to withstand for centuries a lack of definitional clarity.

I should also stress that the state is both a descriptive and normative concept and is used in both, and overlapping, ways in ordinary language, in the sense that it evaluates as well as describes (Tully, 1988: 13; also see Vincent, 1987: 24, 41). The concept of the state is used not only to describe a discrete state of affairs in the

world but also - especially within the history of ideas - explores what the politically entity *legitimately can do*. This opens up discussion of how it is formed, what justifies its formation, the correct reach of political power within and outside of itself, how its component parts may (legitimately) interact, and so on. This normative dimension is bound up with metaphor. Most debates regarding ethics, whether in popular or academic discourse, proceed on the basis of metaphor or analogy; we argue about a target issue by reference to a securely held "source" belief (presumed to be shared by ourselves and our interlocutors) that we feel has relevant similarities to the target issue. The underlying drive here is towards the coherence and consistency of our moral convictions, which is the common bedrock beneath which we cannot explore and still hope to understand each other; a community that does not place significant value on the consistency and coherence of members' beliefs is unimaginable. The nature of debate about ethics is crucial in understanding the kinds of discussion we find regarding the state and this discussion's relationship to metaphor and analogy.

In the following chapters, I will survey texts which employ metaphors to describe things their authors variously refer to as (or commonly translated into English as) "republics", "city-states", "commonwealths", "kingdoms", "realms", "dominions", "nations" and so on. I would now like to pre-empt the charge of anachronism in this decision. One could of course trace only the discussion of the word "state" in English-language texts, as Skinner has attempted in light of his related (if even more precise) concerns that "[t]o attempt a broader analysis would be to assume that such terms as *lo stato*, *l'État* and *Der Staat* express the same concept as the term *state*, and this would be to presuppose what would have to be shown" (Skinner, 2009: 325). Moreover, one could assert that it is precisely the baptism of a concept by the proliferation of a single signifier which helps to reify the associated concept, and so one must pay particular attention to the use of signifiers in forming lexical-concepts (Gentner and Christie, 2010: 268, 271-2; see Koselleck, 1996: 64 for a similar point). There are, therefore, reasonable objections to my rather loose use of the term "state" here. My defence of the relevance of such texts' inclusion in this thesis is as follows.

I include discussion of such texts firstly because the descriptions of the political entity that ultimately emerge firmly attached to the English word “state” were highly influenced by prior texts that discussed related topics using different signifiers, or multiple different signifiers. Discussions of earlier metaphor help us to understand how our modern concept of the state first emerged. If we look only at utterances that explicitly employ the English word “state” we will miss the important contribution earlier texts made to later understandings of politics.<sup>4</sup> To take an analogy, it seems reasonable to trace our concept of “concept” not simply to the word’s first textual appearance in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, nor even to its etymological roots in the medieval Latin for “to take in and hold; become pregnant” (Harper, 2021), but rather as far back as Plato’s discussions of “forms”, which included no mention of the word “concept” at all. To be clear, I am not suggesting that the writers discussing “commonwealths” in the medieval period were self-conscious contributors to the development of the concept of “the state”, but rather that *we can now see* that their utterances relate to later ones that were to develop their fledgling ideas in more detail and attach them to a new signifier (Bevir, 1994: 11).

Secondly, it is important to recognise that we face, as members of the human species, perennial problems of a most basic kind, such as how to subsist and to flourish, how to avoid mental suffering and physical pain, how to interact with others socially, and so on, and these basic perennial problems form perennial topics of theoretical discussion of the kind that interest historians of ideas, such as how we should think about the structures which have arisen around groups of individuals maintaining routinised social interaction in accordance with norms, the transgression of which are accepted as worthy of punishment. For these reasons, I believe we can speak of perennial concepts so long as we formulate each in sufficiently general language (Bevir, 1994: 14-17), hence my keenness to stress the generality with which I intend the term “state”. The social wholes that individual writers comprise form part of one such perennial topic of enquiry that writers of all ages are likely to approach in one way or another. I am prompted therefore to assume some basic continuity between earlier discussion of “commonwealth” and later discussion of “state” because both denote features of

the social world that while not necessarily synonymous are nevertheless closely related. This is an imperfect answer and opens up doubts about how clearly we can delineate between, for example, the family and the state, or the church and the state, but this kind of indeterminacy between concepts is unavoidable once one abandons the idea of their having some perfectly bounded essence. Once we relax our commitment to the notion that the “state” (or any other concept) has those permanent, fixed, essential, synchronically-held features that our metaphorical manner of talking about concepts invites us to accept (cf. Skinner, 2002a: 85-6), our anxieties about their potential lack of *diachronic essence* should by extension also ease.

## ii) The Person

Additional problems plague definition of “person”. This text is chiefly concerned with elucidating the nature of the political entity as understood within political philosophy. However, one could equally have explored those metaphors that constitute the concept of “person”. One might start, for example, by studying how our word “person” derives most immediately from the Latin word “persona”, which originally referred to an actor’s role or mask in Roman theatre (Mauss, 1999: 14-7; Brouwer, 2019). We might perhaps devote attention to the essays of Montaigne and his understanding of the metaphorically divided self who, in the “arrière-boutique” (“room behind the shop”) separating us from the social world, carries on a conversation “between us and ourselves” and where the soul can “can keep itself company”<sup>5</sup> (trans. Bennett, 2017: 103; Keohane, 2017: 19-20). Then, we might explore how the mind-body dichotomy was navigated metaphorically in texts of the early modern world, such as in Andrew Marvell’s 17<sup>th</sup> century poem, “A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body”. Such a narrative of the metaphors underpinning our concept of the person would be a thesis in its own right. Recognition of this possibility though reminds us that discussing personification of the state does not involve a linguistic or conceptual relationship between one domain that has proven itself to be immutable and permanent – the person – and another which is constructed and historically located – the state. Nevertheless,

while a simultaneous reading of the emergence of each concept (state and person) and its relation to surrounding metaphorical utterances would be most compelling, it is beyond the scope of this thesis, even if something of its spirit remains in parts of the following chapters. In short, while I admit that aspects of the concept of the person are also metaphorically constituted, I do not worry so keenly about invoking in a structured way such metaphors in my discussions of the state.

This thesis will, however, involve a discussion of a number of interpretations of “person”, and, just as for “state”, I intend by this second term a most general definition. I will explain some relevant interpretations below and suggest how they may each constitute different kinds of personification. Today, we understand the person to be a fundamental unity, perhaps *the* fundamental unity. It is a unity that is supposed to exist in space and through time. This appears entirely natural to us since it is the conceptual substructure upon which the entire edifice of our ontological and ethical convictions stands. However, we may say as a general rule that the perception of unity depends to a great extent on our distance from that which we are perceiving. Despite this acceptance of unity, we retain some sense of that dualism which animated both Christian thought and early modern philosophy. I speak of the dualism between mind and body mentioned above. I relate this to Christianity firstly because the figure of Christ is one predicated on just such a dualism between a suffering, human body and a divine presence within (yet in *hypostatic union*), and secondly because of the scholastic insistence that it is through our quasi-divine reason, not our mortal bodies, that we are made in the image of God, which likewise presupposes such a dualism.

Therefore, I will employ this Cartesian distinction in part to analyse different forms of personification by first understanding the person as that entity delimited first and foremost by the boundaries of the human body. This interpretation of the person finds accord with current general usage, given that “person” is often understood as synonymous with “individual human being”, as is recognised by English dictionaries. Various forms of personification – what might be more strictly called “bodification” – invoke such allusions to the human body

when seeking to describe the state. It is routinised embodied experiences that invites the use of personification in many cases, for our corporeal existence permits and invites certain linguistic forms that are relatively consistent, and which can provide the imaginative template for other forms of knowledge that are easily sharable and recognisable by others in our linguistic communities.

Attached to this understanding of the person in the sense of the individuated human body are a number of concepts which transcend (in traditional terms, at least) the purely material, and instead invoke ideas from theology, philosophy of mind and legal theory. The concepts of “reason” or “rationality” and “essence” are in the Christian tradition bound up with its conception of the person, due to the influence of Boethius’ and Aquinas’ definitions of the person as an individual substance of a rational nature (Teichman, 1985; Williams, 2019). While talk of reason and rationality are less common today, we still generally commit to the attached notion that persons are entities of particular moral significance and to the idea that the existence of free will permits genuine talk of a person’s moral responsibility (LoLordo, 2019a: 2-3). We have preserved a number of other ideas in our own epoch that stems from this conceptual matrix, including desire, self-identity, self-reflection, and self-consciousness, amongst others, all generally thought to reflect particularly human modes of activity (see Taylor, 1999b: 257). The stability of such activity as experienced by the individual themselves and as witnessed by observers leads us to suppose a dispositional core to each of us - a “personality” - which are the parameters assumed to determine - in standard contexts - the expected kinds of thought and behaviour a person will engage in. It is this account of the person that is most familiar to us in our current, largely secularised tradition, and it is this account and its associated concepts that will tend to be reached for when describing the person in a sense that transcends the corporeal. The connection between these different concepts in our modern understanding of the person was neatly encapsulated by Locke’s definition of a person as “a thinking, intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking” (Locke, 1824a [1689]: Bk. II, Ch. 27, p. 333; also see LoLordo, 2019b). Though over



three hundred years old, this account of the person largely concurs with our own vernacular one, I would suggest, untroubled by the doubts Hume cast just under three hundred years ago (see Hume, 2007 [1739]: 166-7).

Law has added into the mix the concept of “legal personality”, which accords with a more general account of personhood that treats it as the fulfilment of certain socially mandated roles (LoLordo, 2019a: 2-3). This developed first out of the ancient Roman identification of the person with the theatrical mask and was later developed by Patristic writers to explain the three different persons comprising the Christian God: the father, the son, and the holy ghost (LoLordo, 2019a: 5-6; Williams, 2019). Within legal theory, the corporate understanding of the person again abandons the commitment to the centrality of the human body whilst preserving the idea of a unified and indivisible actor with the capacity to enter into contracts and be held legally responsible. Whilst such a conception must have certain philosophical and sociological arguments as presuppositions, its particular character now is determined not directly by philosophical or sociological reflection but rather by the examination of legal texts used to govern relations and arbitrate disputes between citizens and collectives of various kinds – corporations, clubs, religious orders, and so on.

To distinguish between these different facets of personhood that we have inherited today, I suggest we make a distinction between three different forms of personification that relate to different understanding or aspects of the person. These form the basic structure of my three historical chapters (chapters three, four and five) where they are considered in turn. I will explore the person – and by extension personification - in relation to i) the material human body ii) a unified, indivisible, rational essence iii) a social being whose exists in legal and moral relation to other symmetrically constituted beings. This three-part distinction reflects a distinction between mind and body, the material and the ideational, that is found in many of the texts I will be surveying. Likewise, the distinction between ii) and iii) reflects in a loose sense another philosophical debate of contemporary relevance to the texts in question - that between an atomistic understanding of the individual and one more alive to the way in which

the world, including our understanding of ourselves, is at least in part the product of the cultures and languages through which we come to possess all knowledge. The latter position has been designated “constructivist” (see, for example, Berger and Luckmann, 1991 [1966]), while the general theme was also discussed within political philosophy of the 1970s in debates between “individualists” and “communitarians” (e.g. Rawls, 1971; Sandel, 1998 [1982]; also see Bell, 2023). I should stress that this three-part distinction has been chosen not for the clarity that it brings to an account of the person, but rather because the different forms of personification they relate to reflect quite distinct kinds of linguistic practices and traditions within philosophical accounts of the state, as well as different stages in the development of accounts of the political entity.

## Methodology

In this section, I will explain my methodology, the rationale behind the selection of those texts I discuss in subsequent chapters, and the relationship between my approach and existing methodologies associated with the history of ideas, genealogy, and conceptual history. First of all, I should state plainly that my approach is largely descriptive in nature insofar as I do not intend to put forward a constructive theory of the state, or indeed of domestic or international politics. Instead, I intend to trace the historical developments of a particular metaphorical connection. It should be clear then that my focus is on the use of language and, given the kind of historical context already hinted at, therefore necessarily involves textual analysis. The relevance of the historical *event* here is therefore secondary, except insofar as the publication of a text is considered to be an historical event in its own right (see Pocock, 1990).

To say that my focus is on texts is not of course to say that texts have no relationship to or influence over social or political practice. Such an argument would have to contend with religious texts, political constitutions, declarations of war, as well as the relationship between a writer’s work and their other activities; we should remind ourselves of “Marx the revolutionary, Clausewitz the soldier,

Freud the analyst” (Acharya and Buzan, 2017: 352; see Wood, 1978: 347-50 for a long list of canonical European theorists and their engagements in contemporaneous political affairs, as well as a defence of the relevance of these biographical facts for textual interpretation). Moreover, I also accept that concepts “do not simply provide a lens through which to observe a process that is independent of them” because they are “themselves part of that political life—they help to constitute it, to make it what it is”, such that “changes in those concepts, once accepted by a significant number of participants, contribute to changes in political life itself” (Connolly, 1974: 180). Recognising this, one could of course directly assess the role that personification of the state in political philosophy has on perceptions of the political at a particular point in time among a general populace (for some of the few attempts to do this, see McGraw and Dolan, 2007, Landau et al., 2009; for further discussion see Bougher, 2012). However, my concern here is not primarily with political practice nor with a wider linguistic community than that which we can identify through the self-referential chain of texts to which European scholars took as influential and paradigmatic and which, in being taken as such, formed the canon of texts of European political philosophy, and which more recently has admitted North American entrants. I suggest we treat such texts as *analytically* distinct from wider political and social developments (see Wendt (1999: 74-5) and Hacking (1986: 234) for relevant discussion). Besides, written text does not *necessarily* reflect contemporaneous *spoken* language (see Pocock, 1990: 36), nor should its author be taken as in any way representative or emblematic of a wider national culture or indeed of an epoch. Texts are written by individuals for specific contexts and purposes and readerships, and those texts that have survived the ravages of history are usually the produce of the powerful, produced for the powerful (see Pocock, 1990: 24). I am therefore also not claiming that by analysing well-known texts within the history of ideas we can arrive at an account of the state that was widely shared among the contemporaneous general population.

My focus in this thesis is on a particular linguistic community. While all texts are the product of individual authors, such authors acquired their forms of language within social contexts and following a process of education (see Connolly (1974:

36-38) for relevant discussion in regard to political concepts). To study language diachronically is to take as one's subject not the individual person existing at a particular point in time and their language use but rather an intertemporal linguistic community. The structures of language "perform the intentions of the user only through words formed by sedimentation and institutionalization of the utterances performed by others whose identities and intentions may no longer be precisely known" (Pocock, 1984: 31; also see Nederman, 2009: 27-8). To be clear, discussion of the linguistic community is intended as a heuristic. Indeed, the metaphor of the linguistic *community* likens the sharing of certain linguistic tools and the coexistence within a chain of intertemporal semantic change to being in some form of personal relationship. Academia houses multiple communities that share certain concepts, presuppositions, distinctions, historical narratives, and, crucially for my purposes, canonical texts and metaphors. Such communities have been referred to by the idea of the "paradigm", most directly when reflecting a Kuhnian reading of natural scientific enquiry, but also when being adapted to other areas of academia, such as politics or the history of ideas wherein single dominant discourses, or paradigms, do not necessarily prevail in the same manner as the hard sciences (see Pocock, 1981: 964-6).

The initiation into one of these communities by the student is a process of familiarising oneself with an array of this specific knowledge with the expectation that the initiated will be able to converse using the language and conceptual tools that constitutes the particular discourse (see Ashley, 1984: 230). Engaging with canonical texts means being asked to acquiesce to or dispute the arguments they make, and thereby requires an engagement with their foundational concepts; we imbibe their logic, we consider the conclusions they seem to imply, we dispute their efficacy from a position of familiarity, we appeal to their authority through citation, we bolster our own authority by conveying such familiarity to the reader, and so on. Such a process can be considered as "secondary socialization" whereby inculcation into these more specialised bodies of knowledge is often "reinforced by specific pedagogic techniques" that "bring the knowledge home" such as by "linking them to the relevance structures already present in the 'home world'" (Berger and Luckmann, 1991: 157-8). Just as certain linguistic communities will

employ a particular set of concepts somewhat idiosyncratically, so too will their employment of metaphor in order to explicate these concepts be particular to them. We are frequently introduced to concepts, especially complex ones by being invited to see their relation to aspects of the world we already freely comprehend through language. Metaphor and analogy are thus one way in which we are taught to “see” new concepts.

The texts that I engage with in the following thesis are those which I interpret as constituting a particular linguistic community, one which is united by a shared topic of inquiry, that of politics, and by reflection on canonical texts, shared concepts, and, crucially for the current thesis, metaphors. Personification of the state, it will be argued, is but one of many such ways of discussing and conceptualizing politics within this community or intellectual tradition. Despite the different variants of personification that we find in the annals of political philosophy, I suggest viewing them all – both particular utterances and the collected “metaphoric network” (Ricoeur, 2004 [1977]: 288) of a single text - as constituting together a particular mode of interpreting the social and political world. I interpret them as relating to one another, whether or not the great extent of their interconnection could be recognised by each individual contributor. The language under discussion is not one vernacular (e.g. English, French, German etc.), but rather a mode of discourse that evidences an underlying sense of intellectual heritage and, ultimately, a shared literary canon of political thought. The kinds of language I have in mind then include “idioms, rhetorics, specialised vocabularies and grammars, modes of discourse or ways of talking about politics which have been created and diffused, but, far more importantly, employed, in the political discourse of early-modern Europe” (Pocock, 1990: 21).

Writers such as Skinner would no doubt take issue with my focus on certain “classic” texts and their authors instead of adopting his sensitivity towards “the more general social and intellectual matrix out of which their work arose” (1978a: x) by devoting greater attention to lesser-known texts (see Keane, 1988: 208 for a criticism of Skinner on this point). My rationale for doing so is that I contend metaphors are crucial for how we come to understand a concept and so we need

to examine that body of literature that forms a crucial part of our coming to know a particular discourse, namely, the canon of classic texts. I would offer the same defence – that of taking as my subject a particular philosophical tradition – against a criticism of the kind levelled at Koselleck’s conceptual history project, namely that of betraying an elitist bias towards high culture and a lack of sufficient interest in other forms of writing, such as diaries, dictionaries and the personal correspondence of more “typical” citizens (see Richter, 1987: 255-6).

I will now turn to my methodology’s relationship to existing academic approaches. To recapitulate, the approach I adopt is diachronic and therefore, given that “state” is a wholly familiar term to us, broadly genealogical in nature (Chapters 3-5, at least). Because of its genealogical nature, it is thereby closely related to that which has been adopted by those authors associated with conceptual history, as expounded by Koselleck (1989a, 1989b). What unites approaches associated with genealogy as employed by Foucault and his followers<sup>6</sup> and those within the conceptual history tradition is that they seek to historicise naturalised knowledge. My approach and its discussion of concepts is highly sympathetic to Koselleck’s argument that “[w]ithout concepts there is neither historical experience nor historical knowledge” (Koselleck, 2011: 30). Koselleck recognised that concepts are integral in both registering experience (*Erfahrungsregistraturbegriffe*) and creating experience (*Erfahrungsstiftungsbegriffe*) (see Müller, 2014: 83; also see Berenskoetter, 2016: 1-21, for an exploration of this approach’s relevance to world politics), and that they close off certain kinds of experience and misdescribe others, since “every semantics points beyond itself, even if no subject area can be apprehended and experienced without the semantic performances of language” (Koselleck, cited in Müller, 2014: 83).<sup>7</sup>

The conceptual history approach has long recognised the significance of metaphor. In fact, one cannot undertake a conceptual history without also undertaking an analysis of metaphor (or analogy), a marriage which both Ihalainen (2009: 1-3) and Müller (2014: 88) have alluded to in their approaches to conceptual history. Koselleck’s own work referenced this connection too; for example, he begins his historical analysis of the concept of “crisis” by noting that

a medical understanding of the term meaning “illness” was dominant until the 17<sup>th</sup> century when it began being used as a metaphor and expanded into other areas of thought, such as politics, where crisis as in “illness” could befall the “body politic” (Koselleck, 2006: 358-62; also see Koselleck, 2004: 42-3 for a discussion of the metaphors attached to “revolution”).

There are hazards with this kind of historical research. Firstly, genealogies are concerned with “submerged problems that condition us without our fully understanding why or how” (Koopman, 2013: 1). The point of a genealogy is to render “(historically) contingent that which was assumed to be (metaphysically) necessary” and “to show how that which is so easily taken as natural was composed into the natural-seeming thing that it is” (Koopman, 2013: 129). Genealogies are often “histories of present subjectivities, for their critical impact depends on people still being immersed in the beliefs and practices that they denaturalize” (Bevir, 2008). In bringing to light the past histories of received wisdom, there is of course therefore a danger of the genetic fallacy; that of making irrelevant conclusions based on something’s origins. It may well be that a belief system’s origins have no bearing on its current status, and we should be careful about seeking the “distant ideality of the origin” (Foucault<sup>8</sup>, 1977: 145). Genealogy should be careful not to suggest an “unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form to all its vicissitudes” (Foucault, 1977: 146). One must remain vigilant against the inviting conclusion that the history of a concept *necessarily*, if surreptitiously, influences, constitutes, or constrains our current thought or action. Nevertheless, the conceptual connections that have historically produced the state of affairs wherein a concept can be written about in a particular way is therefore not necessarily insignificant.

Secondly, since genealogical analysis is married to the commitment that beliefs are the product of a particular historical and cultural milieu, it has commonly been associated with a push towards relativism (see Bevir, 2008). Yet we should note how the locating of a belief or set of beliefs as contingent upon a given social

context also always commits itself to an account of how things *really* are, however minimalist. Ashley, for example, takes as an essential part of the genealogical approach the commitment that “[t]here are no constants, no fixed meanings, no secure grounds, no profound secrets, no final structures or limits of history” (Ashley, 1987: 408). But what could be more fixed, more profound, more secret, more true, than such a claim, or the claim that “there is only interpretation, and interpretation itself is comprehended as a practice of domination occurring on the surface of history” (Ashley, 1987: 408)? I am reminded here of Ricoeur’s characterisation of Freud, Marx and Nietzsche as being engaged in an exercise of suspicion in that they “look upon the whole of consciousness primarily as “false” consciousness”, yet “far from being detractors of “consciousness,” aim at extending it” (1970, 32-4; see Taylor, 1984: 152 for a similar discussion of Foucault’s work). We cannot defend the genealogical method without implying its objective validity in some sense, including that of even its most basic appeals to evidence and logical reasoning. Even if we seek merely to point out the historical contingency of those beliefs which would otherwise appear to us as mere brute facts about the world, that very act of “pointing out” is surely the grasping towards an extension of consciousness, and through its communication, to the consciousness of others. We must be careful then in implicitly claiming for the genealogical approach some objective position, but we must also admit that a striving for such objectivity is the underlying animating force of all philosophical and historical analysis.

Beyond genealogy and conceptual history, I have also been influenced by Skinner and Pocock’s approach to the history of ideas. I share their acceptance that our beliefs are the product of our particular cultures and contexts, and admit that their identification of the dangers of anachronism when historians of ideas seek to characterise a particular text as being but one of many interventions in a discussion of an ostensibly perennial philosophical issue has made an important contribution to the discipline (see Tully, 1988: 7-8; Femia, 1988: 156-61 for differing perspectives on Skinner’s thought but which align mostly on their interpretation of the core strands of his approach to historiography). But I do not share Skinner and Pocock’s focus here on recovering the particular contexts that



animated a writer to *intentionally* write as they did (Skinner's emphasis on intention appears to follow from his borrowing Austin's distinction between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts (see Skinner, 2002a: 104-7)). I recognise the importance of this mode of historical analysis but do not see that this focus on the intentions of the author is wholly in line with the conviction that our beliefs are historically conditioned. What the latter suggests to me is that much of what we believe is informed by notions that we simply presuppose because they appear so conventional within our particular epoch and culture that they could not, without great imagination and the risk of ridicule, be challenged. What interests me most here then is not what a writer *intended* to do in writing, but rather the kinds of conceptualisations they unthinkingly accepted in the course of putting forward their ideas in the manner in which they did (see Keane, 1988: 205-7, 213; Femia, 1988, Shapiro, 1982: 542-3; and Skinner, 1988; Skinner, 2002a: 110-1 for a response).<sup>9</sup> I believe metaphor has something important to tell in *that* narrative.

### Structure of the Following Chapters

The next chapter explores philosophical issues bound up with the topic of metaphor and personification more specifically. It is especially focused on how metaphorical and literal language relate to one another, and whether there is a conceptual dimension to metaphor use. It also engages briefly with broader philosophical debates that are conceptually tied to the topic of metaphor. The chapter seeks a reconciliation between potentially competing accounts of metaphor. Following this, the subsequent three chapters are different in style and content. They shift away from the theoretical and philosophical style of Chapter Two and begin the genealogy of metaphor proper. As discussed, I identify three different kinds of personification and use them as the basis for each of my three historical chapters. In each chapter I survey political texts that reflect the form of personification under discussion.

Firstly, classical and medieval discussions of political structures, and group identities, frequently referred to the organism of the human body. The relationship between political power and the individual ruler-person and his “estate” was significant and was easily assimilated into a Christian understanding of mysterious, personified power. But the detachment of royal power from the natural person of the monarch and its divestment firstly in the royal office, then posed with great effect by the theory of the king’s two bodies, severed a strict synonymy between public and private authority and permitted more abstract renderings of state identity. Political power’s corporate existence was further developed in the medieval period through the discussion of the body politic or the secularised “mystical body”, which could be adapted to support a wide range of political perspectives. Therefore, this chapter discusses writing which employs metaphors and analogies involving the human body in order to conceptualise and communicate an understanding of the perfect or legitimate state.

Secondly, out of these developments, and through the permeation of legal theories of corporate personality, flowed the logic of later, still more abstract understandings of the state. I identify such a transition in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century texts of Hobbes and Rousseau, whose accounts of the state mark a clear cleavage between earlier texts still animated by the underlying notion of the state as synonymous with the person of the king or his property, as well as the metaphorical focus on the human body, and later texts who have disintegrated the identity between state and person, and replaced it with the more abstract notion of the artificial or moral person. We see in this later personification the origins of the modern state, its conceptual potency, as well as its ambivalence, deriving from “the fact that it means both ruler and people, and at the same time” (Harding, 1994: 58). In this period, the idea of the state incorporated the ideas of the state having a unified essence, distinct from ruler and ruled, bearing a moral standing over and above those individuals comprising it, and perhaps even possessing a singular will. Still, personification of the early modern period rarely stretched to include substantive talk of states existing in social relation, nor of the role of that social existence in forming the state as an individual subject. I focus on Rousseau here in particular because he responded to Hobbes, criticising the mistaken

apprehension that the individual has either language or certain natural qualities pre-socially, and instead suggested the significant role of socialisation in determining our proclivities and desires. Given Rousseau's awareness of the role of our social context in determining our most basic inclinations and proclivities, it is noteworthy that this was not carried forth into the metaphorical and analogical way in which he conceived the state and its general will. In summary, by extending the metaphor of the political body to political personality, the overlapping authorities, split loyalties and divided sovereignty so characteristic of the medieval world could be willed away, the metaphor fashioning socio-physical reality from its understandings of the abstract concept of the perfect political unit.

Third and finally, we also see, by extending the kinds of argument and imagery that was wedded to discussions of political structure-as-organism and by reference to theories of corporate personality, an increasingly complex understanding of the state as possessing substantive personhood, existing in a social world of other similar entities, and governed by laws derived from legal theory addressed originally to individual humans. In an argument that has been seen as introducing personification into the modern discipline of international relations (Luoma-Aho, 2009: 299-300), E.H. Carr asserted that "[i]t was the personification of the state which made possible the creation of international law on the basis of natural law" (Carr, 1946: 148). By extension, it is the same move which permits modern IR theory, not least because of the discipline's reliance on early modern theories of the state; like all fledgling disciplines, it sought comfort in the appeal to authority offered by early modern discussions of the personified state existing in some form of social relation. Chapter Five therefore explores more fulsome personification involving understandings of the state as a social person within a society (or indeed "anarchy") of similarly constituted "persons", a theme which, though it has its roots in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was particularly influential over later international legal theory and IR theory of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This structure relates to my assertions about how metaphors develop historically, namely, by extending existing domain associations in novel ways. These three forms of personification that I articulate above, and which form the structure of

this thesis, are neither discrete in their content nor in their historical-temporal location. In other words, some writers use body metaphors whilst simultaneously employing metaphors relating to the social person, and some writers discussed political structure in terms of the isolated individual person *before* body metaphors took on their prevalence in the Middle Ages. Yet, broadly speaking, metaphors involving the human body predominated before metaphors relating to the atomised person, and the latter predominated before those metaphors which mined a more sociologically inspired account of the individual human being. This suggested three-part evolution in the history of this basic metaphorical connection is not the first schema to be offered in academic literature. For example, Musolff (2021: 25-6) offered a five-part schema based on a changing constellation of target domains, beginning with the Patristic church, and closing with the modern nation, all of which have been linked metaphorically to either the *body* or the *body politic*. This overlaps significantly with my schema, but where mine differs is in emphasising the significance of shifts in emphasis in relation to the *source* domain, not the *target*.

### **Relevance to (International) Political Philosophy**

Several related themes animate the following thesis that are relevant for the discipline of political philosophy. Firstly, I believe that our understanding of political philosophy is benefitted by greater familiarity with those philosophical debates surrounding metaphor and language, since personification and metaphor more generally are so frequently used in this discipline. I intend my discussion of personification and the state as a specific case study elucidating a broader claim about metaphor. I will argue that since metaphors may partly constitute abstract phenomena, an exploration of metaphor is therefore particularly helpful to any discourse that deals frequently with more fully abstract phenomena that we may not be able to discuss easily in a literal manner.

Secondly, I contend that discussing theories of the state in relation to the metaphors they employ will help us to realise the difficulty in maintaining

longstanding distinctions made within the history of ideas regarding theories of the state. For example, both MacDonald's contract/organism distinction (1941<sup>10</sup>) and Weldon's mechanism/organism distinction (1947: 31; also see Deutsch, 1951; Deutsch, 1969: 26-34; Drucker, 1970; Saccaro-Battisti, 1983; Kelly, 1986) – itself likely drawn from remarks in J.S. Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government* (2015[1861]: 181-2) – are problematised by an exploration of those metaphors that seem to animate both organic and mechanical/contract accounts of the state alike.<sup>11</sup> Weldon's attempts to explain away and minimise Hobbes' use of biological metaphors already suggests the problems with this distinction if seeking to conceive of Hobbes' theory as purely individualistic and mechanistic (see passages such as Weldon, 1947: 45-6; Zaffini, 2022 has already highlighted the problem with existing interpretations of these metaphors in Hobbes' work). Weldon recognised, rightly in my opinion, that metaphor use plays a central role in determining the kind of state a writer is conceptualising; regarding the organic and mechanical divide, he argued that “[w]hich side of the fence a particular writer is on can usually be discovered by asking whether his conclusions require that his personification of the State should be taken literally, or regarded as a metaphor in to make intelligible what he says about it” (1947: 45). However, there is an ambiguity here regarding what the claim that the state *literally* is an individual person amounts to, as opposed to the lesser claim that the former shares some of the abstract relations of the latter, which a *mere* metaphor could equally countenance. While there remains some validity in differentiating writers depending on the degree of artifice they assume the creation and maintenance of the state entails, I hope to show in the historical chapters of this thesis that personification provides a through-line that connects what might otherwise be termed mechanical and organic conceptions alike.

By extension, personification should not be seen wholly as the purview of theories of the state that line up neatly with political programmes that can be mapped on a left-right continuum. Personification is far too ambivalent for this; it has been put to use in support of accounts of the state that are – to borrow the ancient categories – monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic. In modern parlance, personification of the state has been used by both right and left. Nevertheless, I do

think we can see, despite its ambivalence, that personification played a particularly important role in debates regarding popular sovereignty during the later medieval and early modern periods, as well as in later arguments relating to absolutism and nationalism in the Enlightenment and through later Romanticism. Personification's ambivalence on this issue should not suggest a causative inertness or conceptual impotency, as I hope to prove. Nor should personification be seen simply as a tool that is picked up and put down in the service of thinkers' independently held political convictions. By contrast, this research hopes to spell out some of those convictions about the concept of the state that were, and still are, encouraged by personification.

Thirdly, another recurrent theme concerns the directionality of metaphor. It is often assumed that related metaphorical utterances pass meaning in one direction, from the source to the target domain. In other words, that a metaphor is constituted by one domain providing language or conceptual content for another. In fact, in the following chapters, my case study opens up the possibility of metaphors that are bidirectional, in that content from each domain is influencing the other at different times. We might thus interpret the state as being conceptually developed by reflection on knowledge regarding the individual, but also that understandings of the individual were being developed by reflection on the nature of the state, and also particular state-rulers.

This invites the further reflection that while we may assert that the cardinal unit of sociological analysis must be the human individual, we might also discern a certain irony in that our recognition of this reflects the received wisdom of our particular intellectual tradition into which we have been socialised. Political theory has often sought to stress, for example, that divorced from the social whole, pre-political persons are quite different from political subjects or citizens, in terms of temperament and activity, whether that be due to an absence of morality, property, bodily security, political rights, or something else. In this sense, we are invited towards the position that it is the society which *makes* us what we are, including our self-images. Yet, we must also question whether our understanding of the social whole is not also implicated by our particular rendering of the

individual person. After all, since at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century, political theory has emphasised precisely that the person's individual, self-interested acts of will are what creates, often via the metaphor of the contract, the very existence, nature and legitimacy of the social whole. Therefore, political philosophy has taught us both to think of the social whole as the product of the individual person, but also to think of the individual as the product of their social milieu. It is this paradox which personification of the state has been a part of, and forms part of what I wish to discuss in the following chapters. This debate about the relation between the individual and their social milieu branches out into the one regarding that well-known dichotomy between individualism and holism that has long animated sociology and politics. What is perhaps most interesting though in relation to personification of the social or political entity is that we must ask whether the source domain of the person is wholly distinct from the target domain of the social whole.

I will now turn to why I believe an exploration of the study of personification and the state is particularly relevant for the discipline of IR theory specifically. I see the importance of this thesis for the study of international relations as being at least threefold. The reasons are interrelated, and each is not wholly distinct from the others. Firstly, historicizing and contextualizing the use of early modern metaphor is crucial for better understanding the historical development of thought regarding international relations. Since its birth as a discipline, international relations theory was forged through repeated reflection on early modern theories of the state and the metaphors they employed. That this thesis is in part addressed to the field of international relations has informed the choice of those historical texts under consideration; these choices reflect the existence of a canon of political thought that has been especially influential over the pedagogy of international relations. As a fledgling subject, IR theory demarcated its field of study through the adaptation of these theories and transposed them, by analogy and metaphor, onto the relations between, as opposed to within, states. In short then, the study of metaphor use matters here because it might be profitable for us to know how our current theoretical tools emerged historically.

Secondly, this thesis is significant in that it deals with how the basic subject matter of international theory is constructed in the here and now. A central assumption of international theory, presupposed by its own name, has been that there is a single type of social entity which constitutes the social world in its largest aspect - a second, individuated realm, divorced from that of interpersonal relations. Crucially, as I will explore in the following chapters, this assumption of a single, uniform social entity, which we now call the state, is supported by the claim that, though this entity may vary in the degree of its power, directed internally or externally, it possesses, beyond such quantitative variation, a qualitative uniformity that mirrors that of the individual person, for our modern culture agrees that individual persons vary in the degree of their faculties but nevertheless possess an underlying and fundamental moral equality. This central assumption about the constituent entities of the international world is of course now an entirely natural and justified one, for it has become manifested and valorised not simply within political theory, but also within political practice. Nevertheless, an awareness of how that ontology is metaphorically underpinned remains important.

Thirdly, I will turn to this thesis' significance in regard to the very *status* of IR theory as an academic discipline in its own right, with its own bounded field of study and its own conceptual tools. My thesis' *disciplinary* significance is that it opens up discussion of the status of international relations as an academic discipline. Exploring personification of the state, whereby assumptions about the individual are carried over to describe the state, invites consideration of whether the domestic or the international is the morally, logically, or historically prior domain. Personification of the state in the early modern period put forward an ancient idea, that of the indivisibility of the social whole. Yet the early modern metaphor also contained within it a radical proposition: the sovereignty of the pre-political individual. The contemporary assumption of the latter's foundational nature within (domestic) political theory casts the personified state as ultimately derivable from sociology, anthropology and, most significantly, political science. This poses a fundamental threat to IR as a discipline: that it is, as Justin Rosenberg wrote, "a prisoner of political science", which is itself of course, a personification



of its own (Rosenberg, 2016). Because personification may pose an existential threat to IR as a discipline with a distinct field of study, as well as to our understanding of the (political) world, better articulating the role of metaphor is crucial. We must consider therefore how international politics came to be seen as “the untidy fringe of domestic politics” or, in the context of political theory textbooks, as “an additional chapter which can be omitted by all save the interested student” (Wight, 1966: 41). Yet, we must also recognise the role that personification might play in rendering international relations a discipline at all, it affording states as social entities their particular character of being distinct from international organisations, classes, ethnicities, and so on, by dint of their personified qualities.

Lastly, perhaps the most direct contribution I hope this thesis will make to current debates is to foster inter-disciplinary cross-fertilisation between different, smaller discourses and academic enclaves that I do not feel have been speaking to one another with sufficient rigour or consistency. I will discuss this in more detail in the following section.

## **Existing Literature**

While there is limited literature directly attempting to address the kinds of question and mode of analysis which this thesis adopts, especially in its degree of generality and its historical timespan, relevant literature can be found in a number of existing discourses and disciplinary areas that have thus far rarely engaged with one another. I have sought therefore to unite literature from a number of such discourse and disciplines. My research builds on a number of reasonably distinct areas of study which it is worth outlining here if only to explain the context of my own work and identify the reading which it either regurgitates, develops, or challenges. Doing a little injustice to its multiplicity, I will group existing literature into three camps: i) the history of ideas and legal history, ii) philosophy and cognitive linguists, and iii) IR theory.

Firstly, within the history of ideas and legal history, Otto von Gierke (2003 [1900]) and his English follower F.W. Maitland (1900, 2003) both devoted historical study to the nature of group identity, the latter writing a significant essay on the history of the “corporation sole”, which itself was influential over later English pluralists. Though their work can be situated within a wider history of 19<sup>th</sup> century “organismic” theories of the state (see Coker, 1967[1910]), notable is the detail they lavish on texts of the later medieval period and early modern period. Hersch Lauterpacht (1927) completed a significant work on the analogies between the early modern state and the individual, especially the Roman citizen, explaining how legal positivism’s attempts to create an autonomous academic discipline of international law led to the refutation of such analogies. Ernst Kantorowicz (2016 [1957]), who authored a large volume on the medieval history of the theory of the “king’s two bodies” and its relationship to Christian theology, followed the work of Maitland and Gierke in several respects, but in even more exhaustive fashion. Speaking from within a branch of discourse identified as “sociology of knowledge”, Karl Mannheim (1953) also explored the role of anthropomorphic and personified conceptions of the state in European political philosophy. D.G. Hale’s work of the late 1960s and early 70s (Hale, 1971a; 1971b; 1973) offered an account of the “bodification” of the political unit up until the Elizabethan era, which, though I will challenge one of its key contentions in Chapter Four, remains a crucial text on this topic.

More recent work by David Runciman (1997, 2000) on personified accounts of the state, Maitland’s work on the medieval corporation, and political pluralism has also benefitted the field of study. Quentin Skinner’s work (2002a, 2002c, 2005, 2010) has been enormously influential over this thesis, and his essays on Hobbes’ use of personification in particular have been critical interventions on this topic. Building on Skinner’s work, recent essays from Smith (2016) and Zaffini (2022) amongst others, have furthered discussion of personification in relation to Hobbes’ political philosophy. As mentioned, the work of Koselleck and Skinner is methodologically related to my current project, but there is also thematic overlap with areas of their research too. Skinner and other writers on history and the history of ideas that I cite, such as Cary Nederman, have consciously aligned their

work with Koselleck's project through their contributions to the journal *Contributions to the History of Concepts*. In 2009, this journal, explicitly indebted to Koselleck's work, published an edition focusing on political metaphors involving the body, wherein the connection between abstract concepts and metaphor was emphasised.

Secondly, the study of metaphor generally has found increasing attention in the field of the philosophy of language and (slightly later) cognitive linguistics since the late 1970s. Two books were particularly ground-breaking in their opening up debate on this issue. These two anthologies edited by Ortony (1993 [1979]) and Johnson (1981) surveyed thought from philosophers of language on the topic of metaphor and have been particularly enlightening for their contextualisation of discussion of metaphor within wider debates regarding the philosophy of language and philosophy more generally, as has other work from contributors to both of these volumes. A later anthology edited by Ankersmit and Mooij (1993) has also been helpful for its essays concerning the relationships between metaphor and truth, and between metaphor and political theory. David E. Cooper's *Metaphor* (1986) is also worthy of note here as an authoritative account of many of the issues I will tackle in Chapter Two and is in my view the best single-author text on the subject of metaphor, especially in regard to its philosophical implications.

The work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980, 1999) and other conceptual metaphor theorists within the field of cognitive linguistics, has been crucial in suggesting how metaphor may influence and/or constitute our thinking, and they have also addressed themselves to the philosophical implications that the study of metaphor invites us to consider (also see Zoltán Kövecses, 2005, 2015). More recently, out of this general academic milieu, the study of the state-as-person metaphor has become popular, following the initial work of Lakoff (1991). Piotr Twardzisz (2013) and Andreas Musolff (2016), for example, have both studied this metaphor recently, though come to markedly different conclusions as to its significance.

Thirdly, the significance of metaphor for political philosophy has been taken forward by writers within the field of international relations theory, wherein “states-as-actors” have often been presupposed to possess certain human traits, such as “a will to survive and a will to power” and a fear of losing their possessions to others (Wolfers, 1959: 90-1). Within the field of international relations, Hedley Bull was an influential discussant of the issue; his particular object of study he termed the “domestic analogy”, whereby an account of international relations is derived from an account of domestic interpersonal relations. In fact, differences between competing IR theoretical perspectives can be interpreted as resting on different assumptions regarding human nature, which, when extrapolated to the international sphere, lead to different understandings of, and prescriptions for, international politics. Bull criticised the domestic analogy within IR theory, and particularly any suggestion of a Hobbesian resolution to international anarchy, noting that “anarchy among states is tolerable to a degree to which among individuals it is not” (1966a: 45). Hidemi Suganami (1986, 1989) followed Bull in his treatment of the domestic analogy, drawing on later historical case studies, while the work of Chiara Bottici (2009) identified the implicit relationship the domestic analogy draws between international anarchy and the state of nature, whereby the state becomes figuratively the pre-political individual.

More recently, Wendt (2004), Jackson (2004), Wight (2004) and Neumann (2004) have offered a closer focus on the philosophical implications of the personification of states in IR theory, reflecting on Arnold Wolfers’s 1959 essay on states as “actors” in world politics. Wendt has argued that states are “purposive actors with a sense of Self” and entities to which we can “legitimately attribute anthropomorphic qualities like desires, beliefs, and intentionality”, his conclusion being that “states are people too” (1999: 194, 7). We can discern a further body of literature inspired, at least in part, by this initial exchange: Bartelson (2015), Luoma-Aho (2009) and Holland (2011, 2012). There is also other IR literature which, while not discussing personification directly, addresses metaphors of other kinds, such as Richard Little’s exploration of the balance of power (Little, 2007), Marks’ more general study of metaphor within IR theory (2011), which shares my focus on academic discourse as opposed to the language employed by politicians

themselves (see Marks, 2011: 2-3), as well as the work of Onuf (2010), who has incorporated elements of the cognitive linguistics approach – evident in his notion that “[m]etaphors are concepts in the making; concepts are metaphors that we no longer recognize a such” (Onuf, 2010: 63-4) - into his study of the international also. Likewise, the work of Mutimer (1997) and Drulák (2004, 2006) draw on work from cognitive linguistics and its discussion of metaphor to explore political metaphor use, but they do not address personification of the state in detail either.

The historical scope of this thesis is wide and draws on texts from a number of different disciplines, and as such, there is of course the danger that with breadth inevitably comes superficiality, and that when we cast ourselves wide, we inevitably spread ourselves thin. This is, I admit, a real danger. Yet, any attempt at intellectual history must countenance the possibility that there is something to be gained from stepping beyond the confines of academic specialities, especially where this is invited by the thorough interrogation of a singular problem or research question. On this point, I take both inspiration and sanctuary from Arthur Lovejoy; in the first essay of his *Journal of the History of Ideas*, he makes this argument in compelling and thoroughly metaphorical fashion:

“But in most cases this propensity to disregard academic fences is not to be attributed to a wandering disposition or a coveting of neighbors' vineyards; it is, on the contrary, usually the inevitable consequence of tenacity and thoroughness in the cultivation of one's own. For - to repeat an observation which the present writer has already made elsewhere, with primary reference to literary history - “the quest of a historical understanding even of single passages in literature often drives the student into fields which at first seem remote enough from his original topic of investigation. The more you press in towards the heart of a narrowly bounded historical problem, the more likely you are to encounter in the problem itself a pressure which drives you outward beyond those bounds” (Lovejoy, 1940: 5).

## Conclusion

In the following thesis, I will suggest that we can trace metaphor usage through time and that this has something to say about the wider belief system of those employing them. Metaphors have “a life” – they are born at some perhaps indeterminate point in history, they grow, adapt and develop, before dying of neglect. I will show how the personified state began life (perhaps) with the fables of Aesop, its corporeality confirmed by medieval writers, and its social existence first structured by the Spanish scholastics under their law of nations, possessing the inter-temporality of a *persona ficta*. Under this apprehension, the state became a human psyche, an anatomical figure, a mystical corporation, a Roman citizen, and an indigenous American. In this narrative, we see the increasing extension of an underlying metaphorical relationship that begins by drawing on a materialistic source domain of the human body in an anatomical sense, and then increasingly transforms itself into the more abstract realms of the soul, the mind, the spirit, the will, the moral agent, and the social subject. We may therefore consider whether this particular metaphor’s “life” reflects something broader about the diachronic development of metaphors more generally. I will argue that such personifications have not yet met their complete demise – in this sense, this exercise is not one of obituary - and that they continue to animate contemporary thought in crucial ways and especially in certain linguistic communities.

Any assessment of a conscious or unconscious belief system must ultimately proceed by considering the possibility of its alternatives. I should therefore affirm that without personification, or at least, with less of it, the state would indeed “look” and “feel” different, though we must then consider whether we would still be speaking of the state at all. I will suggest that interpreting the world as we do is impossible without certain metaphors that not only help us to “see” it, but rather permit us. I will suggest in the following chapters that the history of a successful metaphor can also be the history of what has become a fact, truly stated, for in some cases, widely shared metaphors come to partly constitute the limits that define what can be meaningfully uttered and what can possibly be thought.

## |Chapter Two|

### The Life of a Metaphor:

#### The Decorative and the Constitutive Approaches

##### Introduction

The philosophical discussion of metaphor is both invigorated and troubled by the recognition that to talk about the subject of metaphor itself invites us - I will argue *compels* us - to employ a whole range of utterances which might themselves be classed as metaphorical. For example, discussion of metaphor is often said to involve conceptual *transfers* from one domain of experience to another, it invokes concepts that we may or may not *grasp*, and which may or may not *reflect* the world around us, and which may be treated as *ornamenting* our more literal thoughts or alternatively *constituting* them. Indeed, an examination of etymology might lead us to accept the word “idea” as once having been an ocular metaphor, “concept” an organismic metaphor, and “metaphor” itself a spatial metaphor. This is because any discussion of metaphor requires discussants to think and talk abstractly. I argue in this chapter that a linguistic community’s development of metaphorical language is bound up with the ability to think and talk in such abstract ways. I will later suggest why I think this is relevant to the concept of the state. In addition, discussion of metaphor will necessarily be conducted in forms of language betraying the presuppositions and demarcations of our particular philosophical tradition. As such, any analysis of metaphor is destined to be conducted *within* that body of philosophical language that it may simultaneously seek, perhaps vainly, to interrogate (see Derrida, 1974: 28-9).<sup>1</sup>

In what follows, I articulate an account of metaphor that defends its significance both in determining semantic change within a linguistic community through time, and its conceptual role in structuring how individuals privately reason and think. Admittedly, these might be considered distinct claims and the first might be maintained without placing special weight on the latter: one may reasonably

argue that novel metaphors ultimately produced the bulk of our current use of words without thereby relying on an explanation of this phenomenon that references metaphor's role in everyday thought. This could be done by stressing the purely habitual or idiomatic dimension to what might otherwise be called metaphorical utterances. Nevertheless, I do think the latter claim has bearing over metaphor's semantic significance, because there is no sharp divide between language and thought. While we can admit that we do not think in prose, our existing language shapes the thinkable, and our thought will be communicable only in language of some kind, and this will include novel metaphorical language wherever our literal lexicon does not furnish us with satisfactory forms of speech. In such cases, novel metaphors possess the ability to crystallise a nascent thought. In short, my interest in this chapter lies in metaphor's role in determining the emergence and development of certain relatively abstract conceptual spaces over a long historical period within a particular linguistic community.

The chapter engages with several analytical distinctions. Two are most pressing. The first is a distinction between the individual and their social milieu, as already briefly discussed in the introductory chapter. This is essential for any discussion of the development of novel metaphorical utterances over time, for it is the creativity of the individual that is the immediate source of such utterances, and yet such creativity is structured in accordance with fairly stable cultural norms, including those regarding the conventional use of words. Such creativity though has the ability to modify the background assumptions against which future novel utterances must contend. This co-constitutive relationship between the person and their social milieu is important for considering the historical continuity and discontinuity of metaphor use. As I hope will become clear, this relationship also forms the context for the kind of metaphor that I have selected for my case study, namely, those which describe the key concept to denote our current social milieu – or at least an important dimension of it - within the modern world, the state, using language typically reserved for descriptions of the individual person. This study will inevitably therefore touch on that cleavage between individualism and holism that animated sociology and political philosophy throughout the twentieth century.



The second key distinction employed over the following pages is that between experience of the external, physical world, on the one hand, and experience and knowledge that is less clearly related to the world of tangible referents, on the other. One might gloss this as the distinction between social and non-social reality if this were not to emphasise an inappropriate qualitative distinction and to suggest that we possess some way of verifying our beliefs about the non-social world unconstrained by our existences as social beings. Our experience of the world in its entirety is one marked by our dual membership of both particular linguistic and cultural communities, on the one hand, and of the human species, on the other, with all the precisely calibrated cognitive and perceptual capacities that that latter membership entails. The distinction though remains key because arguing that metaphorical utterances can have significant effects on how we perceive the world invites us to consider whether there are limits to what can be “reconstructed” through metaphor-induced conceptual change. I believe that there are such constraints. There are constraints of plausibility which relate to the likelihood that a belief induced by metaphor will gather social acceptance within a linguistic community relative to existing understandings of the world, but, quite importantly, these existing beliefs will invariably have been formed through some kind of routinised interaction with the world experienced by prior members of one’s community in pursuance of ends that, in the most general sense, are familiar to all members of our species. We can see here that discussion of the role of metaphor is one rather limited example of more general debates about linguistic relativity, philosophical realism and theories of truth. It is for this reason that I believe Derrida was correct to state that discussion of metaphor immediately draws us into entrenched debates within philosophy:

“The general taxonomy of metaphors – of what are called philosophical metaphors in particular – presupposes a solution to important problems, and first of all to problems which actually generate the whole of philosophy and its history” (Derrida, 1974: 28).

To structure this chapter, I will first attempt a definition of metaphor, although I wish to note immediately that definition presupposes answers to some of those entrenched debates mentioned above. I will then discuss in more detail two competing understandings of metaphor.<sup>2</sup> The first approach views metaphor as a decorative utterance that conveys in flowery language what could otherwise be conveyed in more literal language. Let's call this the decorative view of metaphor. On this view, the significance of metaphor is minimal, it being limited to a mode of presentation. Because metaphors under this view are fundamentally reflective of literal language, they can be reduced to a literalised paraphrase. Because they eschew literality, they possess the ever-present potential to misconstrue that literal language and thereby *mislead* us. However, the further we recognise the influence of metaphors on the way we view the world, the closer we are drawn to a second approach to metaphor, which I shall call the constitutive approach. By contrast, this view of metaphor states that metaphors *constitute* the discourses or domains they are used to articulate, such that metaphors cannot be paraphrased without propositional remainder, nor can they be discarded without resulting in an impoverishment of, or fundamental change to, that which is being metaphorically described. I will relate each theory of metaphor to a complementary account of the relationship between language and the world to which each is naturally allied, if not necessarily tied.

I will then articulate my own approach to metaphor, drawing on the merits of each opposing position, before finally explaining its relevance to my case study – metaphors which personify the state. While I am keen to ward off criticisms against the more extreme end of the constitutive approach and its potential excesses, I concur with the basic claim that there remain important cases of metaphor where the associations of one domain to another come to constitute in important ways how one domain is conceptualised, such that this conceptualisation allows for novel developments of the basic metaphorical connection by creative individuals, and therefore hypothetically excising the association would result in an impoverished conceptual grasp of that domain. It is this claim, the novel contribution that writers within the field of cognitive linguistics especially have made over the last half century, which is in most need

of securing if the following historical chapters are to be at all convincing, and if the significance of metaphor is to be secured against those who admit only its decorative function. Therefore, the arguments I intend to work towards by the end of this chapter are as follows: i) because the “state” cannot be seen, touched, tasted, heard, or smelled, it therefore has to be imagined, whenever a serious interrogation of it is attempted, ii) political theorists and philosophers imagine the state in part through metaphor, and especially through personification, and iii) we should not describe such personified imaginings of the state as “decorative” in the sense of embellishing a literalised paraphrase; they are rather better described as at least in part constitutive of what the concept of the state in fact truly *is*.

## Defining Metaphor

The later work of Wittgenstein warns us against generalising from particular cases of language use in order to create general rules across all contexts, a tendency he referred to as “the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case” (Wittgenstein, 1964: 17-9). Our use of language is highly idiosyncratic and structured within particular social contexts - what he referred to as “language-games”. I will stress exactly this need to respect the difference between highly novel forms of metaphor and more conventional metaphors later on in this chapter. Nevertheless, I do think we can tease out general patterns within our language use. Such generalisations can do good work in simplifying the various ways in which we employ language that could be termed “metaphorical” in kind, even if we cannot hope to find simple, underlying rules that govern the use of words in an ordered way in *all* cases. Exceptions, of course, abound.

While defining metaphor precisely is no simple matter, for now let us say that metaphor in its most rudimentary form involves *referring to one thing in terms usually reserved for another*. This opening definition of metaphor has been arrived at after some consideration. My chief goal in formulating it in this way is to offer a definition of sufficient ambiguity such that it withholds final judgement on a

number of key issues. This is a primary difficulty in defining metaphor – the act of definition alone has the tendency to embroil the definer in thorny disputes. There are chiefly four issues on which I hope my definition remains, for the moment, relatively silent: firstly, whether metaphor is primarily a linguistic or a conceptual affair; secondly, whether metaphor involves words (as spoken or thought) or other modes of communication, such as gesture and images; thirdly, whether essential to metaphor is some kind of revolutionary overthrow of the literal; and fourthly, whether the topic of metaphor upsets not merely the “literal” but also the “true”, and in doing so wades us into the age-old dispute between philosophical realism and nominalism. There is, I hope, enough ambiguity in the English phrase “in terms” to suit my purposes, it inviting both a precise, literal interpretation meaning something like “using the words related to”, but also a more expansive – arguably metaphorical – meaning that connotes a broader relationship between different spheres. Likewise, I hope my use of “referring” (as opposed to “speaking” or “writing”) conveys an ambivalence on whether such reference occurs in thought or in the act of communication itself, and whether the latter involves only words or also gesture, images, and so on. Lastly, I intend by “thing” a most general definition, including simply other words, physical referents, bounded particulars, universals, physical entities, or types of action denoted by verbs. While my definition of metaphor does not, on this generous interpretation, commit itself on these issues, I of course *will* throughout the course of this chapter and in later chapters. I intend the definition as offering merely a relatively neutral point of departure.

Based on this first pass at a definition, we can say that metaphor involves two (conceptual or semantic) domains.<sup>3</sup> Certain features or qualities of one domain are implied or interpreted as holding within the other,<sup>4</sup> thereby offering an understanding of one kind of experience in terms recognised as usually reserved for another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b: 5, 154; also see Kövecses, 2015: 20-1). This is certainly achievable in gesture; we only need pay close to attention to a speaker’s hands when they are outlining the relative merits of two possible, opposing courses of behaviour or activity to notice that we tend to “weigh things up” gesturally as well as idiomatically. Likewise, anyone familiar with art or

cinema will be conscious of imagery that seems to “stand for” something else without the aid of text. I will later argue, for example, that the frontispiece of Hobbes’ *Leviathan* is as metaphorical as the text which follows. Nevertheless, as most of my case study material is linguistic, I will focus chiefly on metaphor as communicated in language. I will use the terms ‘source’ and ‘target’ domains to describe the two domains involved in a metaphorical expression, wherein the target is that which is metaphorically described in language more naturally associated with the source domain.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of metaphor is not simply to assert some similarity between the two things, but rather to do so in order to express something about one of them (Fogelin, 2011: 78). Thus, certain forms of language are used to fulfil a role that is not their *primary* one – we may follow Goodman and say that such language is “moonlighting” (Goodman, 1979; cf. Hills, 1997: 129-34).

Metaphors typically involve a more abstract domain or concept deriving vocabulary more commonly associated with a more concrete one (Sweetser, 1990: 18; Traugott, 1982; cf. Allan, 2012). In this sense, we may say that metaphors are typically unidirectional; one domain borrows terms from another. As a result, target domains are more likely to be relatively abstract in nature; as Ullmann wrote, “one of the basic tendencies in metaphor is to translate abstract experiences into concrete terms” (Ullmann, 1962: 215), often by making the thing metaphorically described more tangible in some way. As Aristotle argued, a successful metaphor “puts the thing before the eyes” (Aristotle, 1909: 107; see discussion in Ricoeur, 2004: 38). The effect of this is that metaphors typically employ language about a source domain that is already “before the eyes” in some way – and, as a result, of which interlocutors share an understanding, or there is a degree of consensus about - in order to convey something about another domain whose nature or qualities are less immediately apparent to our senses or about which there is far less consensus.

I will adopt the Aristotelian model of incorporating discussion of both analogy and simile into my discussion of metaphor below (see the discussion of “metaphor *etc.*” in Cooper, 1986: 12-21). Aristotle viewed both of these as particular forms of

metaphor (see Fogelin, 2011: 30; Ortony, 1975: 52-3). While I see them as metaphors only in an extended sense, I do not follow the opinion of some that there is a great deal of difference between them. As I accept that comparison is highly relevant to metaphor, the relationship to simile and analogy should be obvious. Metaphors are often implicit similes or analogies, although implicitness may indeed have some bearing on the nature of our interpretation; it seems likely that such implicitness invites us to accept a particular way of seeing things in a potentially less self-reflective manner; the things being compared are brought closer together and their distinction less apparent wherever qualifiers like “as”, “as if”, “just as” or “like” are omitted.

Metaphors come in various forms and failure to recognise this, or to focus one’s attention on only one particular form, will lead to an impoverished or confused account of metaphor. Three forms of metaphor are immediately apparent. The first can be notated as “X is Y”, most famously exemplified by Shakespeare’s “Juliet is the sun”. Of this form we may distinguish between those where Y stands for a definite thing (“Juliet is the sun”) or a particular class of things (“Juliet is a moon”) or is a metaphorically employed adjective (“Juliet is warm”) (see Tirrell, 1991: 346). A second form can be denoted as “Y [X]” where Y implicitly stands for X in an utterance, perhaps the most well-known example of which is Aristotle’s “the lion leapt”, where “the lion” stands for “Achilles”. A third form, too often forgotten, is where the metaphor rests on the figurative use of a verb of the kind “X is Y’ing”, where Y is used figuratively, such as in Tennyson’s “aspens shiver” near the start of his poem, “The Lady of Shalott”.<sup>6</sup> An adjectival variant of the form “Y’ed X” can also be found in the same poem by Tennyson, in the phrase “bearded barley”.

Personification is a metaphor whose “source” is that of the human being. Personification therefore follows the stated types of metaphor, such that person or its associated features, in the above models, is denoted by Y (see Charteris-Black, 2005: 14). Personification, therefore, like metaphor more generally, can simplify complex phenomena and makes tangible the intangible, concretises the abstract (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b: 33; Kövecses, 2002: 35; Semino, 2008: 101; Györi and Hegedüs, 2012: 329). Personification usually focuses on human

attributes, be those related to our bodies or peculiarly human “motivations, goals, actions, and characteristics” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b: 34; also see Twardzisz, 2013: 113), but I will explore variants of this in later chapters.

I should note now that there are two slightly different uses of the term “personification” in common parlance. The difference can be seen clearly by considering how the phrase “she personifies” functions in different contexts in English. The verb in this phrase can be used to attribute to the subject a representative status (as in “she personifies intelligence”). In this case, “she personifies” is synonymous with “she is the personification of”, wherein the subject – considered as a particular – is treated metaphorically as a stand-in for something else, often an abstraction of some kind. But the verb “personifies” in “she personifies” can also be used to refer to *the attribution* of person-like features to something else itself (as in “she personifies the chair as possessing agency”). “To personify” then in English functions both to attribute to a subject a metaphorical status and also to describe that subject’s attribution of human-like qualities to something. We should note though that in neither sense are associated utterances employing this verb truly metaphorical: “Louis XIV personifies the French state” is not a metaphor, nor is “Louis XIV personified the state as possessing the particular qualities and attributes of himself”, even though they express a metaphorical connection which is not necessarily apparent to us without the utterance. In other words, such utterances are literal assertions about a person’s metaphorical status. Only “Louis XIV is the state” or “I am the state” as supposedly uttered by Louis XIV are plausibly metaphorical utterances, if they are not indeed literal, and to our ears very peculiar, assertions, or *intended* as such. When I describe my thesis’ subject as “personification of the state” I am referring chiefly to the attribution of person-like qualities of a general kind to the concept of the state within political discourse. I am less interested in how a particular subject (e.g. a political ruler) comes to be seen as a personification of the state, except insofar as this contributes to more general discussion about the nature of the state.

In this thesis, I propose that we explore those metaphors of the forms outlined above. They might take the simple form “the state is a person”, or perhaps “the state is person A”, or where the term person is taken to stand for the state as in the “X[Y]” form or as in “the state is Y’ing” where Y stands for some action associated primarily with the actions of persons. By extension, wherever it is figuratively asserted that the state has attributes associated with that of a human person, these metaphors will be relevant for the current discussion. I shall also include discussion of similes and analogies, considered as extensions of the above forms, often stating in more explicit fashion what metaphors (on a stricter, anti-Aristotelian definition) only imply. Though I will admit that analogies are not instances of non-literal, figurative language, while similes – considered as distinct from mere literal comparisons (see Fogelin, 2011) - are, both typically function in discourse in similar ways to associated metaphors and often develop out of, or lead to, metaphorical utterances in the strictest sense. I mean to isolate in this discussion all those utterances wherein the basic conceptual connection between state and person is implied or stated outright.

## **Two Traditions of Metaphor**

Having completed this rough attempt at definition, the scope and significance of metaphor, as I understand it, now needs to be considered in more detail if I am going to successfully defend the underlying thrust of this thesis. As my own view of metaphor has been shaped by a sense of being pulled in conflicting directions by competing instincts and philosophical arguments – between a kind of comforting traditionalism, on the one hand, and a somewhat disconcerting revolutionism, on the other - I will attempt to faithfully outline this sense of tension below.

I will outline two quite opposing positions on the nature of metaphor before positioning myself in between them. On the conservative or traditionalist end of the continuum is what I will call the “decorative approach” to metaphor, while at the other end is what I shall call the “constitutive approach” (see Rayner, 1984;



Camp 2006: 1).<sup>7</sup> The basic divergence between them is this: the decorative approach casts all metaphor as expressing in flowery language that which would be more directly and accurately communicated in literal language and the constitutive approach asserts that metaphor is not reducible to literalised paraphrase in this way. Each account has a number of corollary arguments that invoke topics such as the frequency of metaphor and its relationship to thought, which I will try to unpack also. Moreover, each position is allied to a particular account of the relationship between language and the world, and therefore of truth, that are seemingly incompatible and lead us back into entrenched debates, namely between realism and anti-realism (Dummett, 2003: 464; Hacking, 1999), and by extension between truth-as-correspondence and pragmatist accounts of truth.

The decorative approach treats metaphor fundamentally as a form of literary device, equally at home in rhetoric or poetry (see Ricoeur, 1981: 230-1; Richards, 1981: 48-9; Mooij, 1993:67-8). Within traditional rhetoric, it was assumed that metaphor was a deviant form of language that floridly represents a world that could otherwise (and more accurately) be described in a literal manner. As Richards argues, in this tradition, metaphor is “a sort of happy extra trick with words” or “a grace or ornament or *added* power of language, not its constitutive form” (1981: 48-9). If we are to explain this in relation to cognition, then the decorative approach would assert that “[i]f a metaphor has cognitive content, then it should be expressible in literal sentences. And the truth conditions of the literal sentences should correspond to the truth conditions of the metaphor” (Carney, 1983: 257; also see Searle, 1981). Blumenberg rehearses the view of metaphor within rhetoric as being “deemed incapable of enriching the capacity of expressive means; it contributes only to the *effect* of a statement, the ‘punchiness’ with which it gets through to its political and forensic addressees” (1960: 2). This account is more traditional and is one more likely to be found being taught in classrooms. As a result, I believe this is the account of metaphor that most of us carry by default.

There are a number of other claims that are related to this central decorative assertion. Perhaps the first to note is that metaphor is likely to be assumed to be

a relatively infrequent device. Since it is considered to be superfluous in terms of the propositional content that is to be conveyed, it would seem therefore most natural to assume that most of our language is not so; metaphor is therefore essentially aberrant. Secondly, the decorative account will also tend to stress the ways in which metaphors mislead us. As Landau suggests, according to the decorative approach, “though figurative language can provide powerful analytic tools, it can also be the source of distortion and misrepresentation” (Landau, 1961: 331). Such assumptions about the relationship between metaphor and truth within rhetoric have a long history. Plato, in his *Gorgias*, argued that rhetoric does not concern either the true or the truly good, which is particularly dangerous in regard to the language of political rulers (McCabe, 1994: 134), and is for this reason a “sham”, a “form of flattery” and the “false image of Politics” (Plato, 1892: 280-1; Nehamas, 1994: xii-xiii; McCabe, 1994: 130-1; Nehamas, 1994; Schütrumpf, 2010: 99-104; Ricoeur, 2004: 10). Contrasting it unfavourably with his dialectical method and the discipline of true philosophy, Socrates and Gorgias could agree that “[r]hetoric then, it seems, is an artificer of persuasion productive of belief but not of instruction in matters of right and wrong” (Gorgias, 1892: 278). Thirdly, the decorative account is naturally allied – though not necessarily so - to the more general philosophical position that literal language has the capacity to reflect the world as it truly is. Thus, to describe a metaphor as misleading would be to assert that it doesn’t reflect the facts of the matter, which are accurately expressed in literal language.

In summary, according to the decorative approach, metaphors are mere decoration or embellishment on independently held knowledge that could otherwise be articulated more accurately in literal fashion. Metaphor is ultimately superfluous to the conveyance of true knowledge. Metaphors are typically aberrations; they are relatively infrequent, and when they are not inconsequential, they are likely to be nefarious. Consequential and benign metaphor use is possible on this approach, but it would serve only to encourage our acceptance of a fact that could be literally communicated in other language.

I will now turn to the constitutive approach. I call this second tradition the constitutive approach to metaphor, owing to its relation to Boyd's discussion of metaphors that are "constitutive of the theories they express, rather than merely exegetical" (Boyd, 1993; also see Cummiskey (1992); Kuhn, 1993 and Onuf, 2010: 71 for similar uses of the term "constitutive" in this context). Here I am drawing together a range of different ideas from the philosophy of language and cognitive linguistics of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I feel a number of ideas, once considered in their most general form, have been recurrent in these discourses and have formed a new orthodoxy quite opposed to the traditional view of metaphor.

What I am calling the constitutive approach argues that metaphors cannot necessarily be literalised via paraphrase without remainder (see Black, 1955). The "remainder" in question here concerns the propositional content, not merely a loss in the rhetorical force, of the same idea communicated literally (Black, 1955: 291-4). At least two claims are often tied to this critique of the decorative approach. One is that metaphor is surprisingly "omnipresent" (see Richards, 1981: 50; Ricoeur, 2004: 92). The constitutive approach stresses the sheer frequency of metaphor use in all manner of discourse, developing Aristotle's claim that all of us "in talking use metaphors" (see Haser, 2005: 76); as Lycan notes, "nonliteral usage is the rule, not the exception" (Lycan, 2008: 176). The strongest articulation of this argument is that all concept formation is metaphorical. This thesis was put forward first by Nietzsche in his essay "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" (2006 [1873]), where he argued that the use of single signs to refer to multiple particulars in the world involves talking about different things as if they were the same, which he saw as the essence of metaphor.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, the constitutive approach is naturally allied to the position that we fundamentally *think in* metaphor and thereby stresses the conceptual dimension to metaphor use (Reddy, 1993 [1979]; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; see Moran, 1989: 98 for a related division of well-known philosophers of metaphor on this score). This renders the decorative approach's insistence on the search for a literalised paraphrase as simply misguided.<sup>9</sup> Building on claims about metaphor's

omnipresence, the constitutive approach can suggest the *surprising extent* to which metaphors form our beliefs about the world (see Hacking, 1999: viii). While to some extent the decorative approach recognizes the influence of metaphors over our thought, insofar as they may lead us astray, on this second approach to metaphor, the latter is so fundamental to language and cognition, it does no good to resolve to simply not use them or reserve their use for moral and knowledgeable actors only. For the constitutive approach in its most extreme articulation, we could not engage in much thought at all without the use of metaphor. This invites the further claim that we learn to grasp many concepts through an acceptance of their structural or schematic relationship to other conceptual domains, as shown by conventional metaphorical utterances found in everyday speech, which tend to reflect broad metaphoric schemas (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In this way, metaphor is not simply a tool to convey meaning through language, or “a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1981: 287), but rather at the most fundamental level shapes how we think about the world.

As for the decorative approach, the constitutive approach is naturally allied to a vision of the relationship between language and the world. I contend that underlying the constitutive approach is the conviction that there is no way to substantiate the claim that literal language provides us with genuine true knowledge of the world, and that it has no especially privileged access to it compared with metaphorical language, for there is no independent means by which to compare our language and the world. Recognition of this fact unsettles any commitment to either realism or truth-as-correspondence. In this more recent tradition, discussions about metaphor use have emerged against wider developments in the philosophy of language from thinkers who sought to advance the claim that our language more generally has a constitutive role in our perceptions of the world. Bernard Williams, in a (critical) essay on Richard Rorty’s work, correctly identifies the parallels between the later Wittgenstein, Rorty, some of the earlier American pragmatists, and the French post-structuralists on this point (1991: 26-36; also see Rorty’s own discussion in Rorty, 1994: xix-xx). Chief among their claims is the notion that language does not describe aspects of

the world that can be proven to exist independently of such description, and that because of this, a truthful account of the concept of truth cannot be conveyed by reference to a world independent of such description either (see Heyes, 2003: 5-6; also see Winch, 1972: 8-14). This aligns with Wittgenstein's suggestion that "[t]he limit of language is shown by its being impossible to describe the fact which corresponds to (is the translation of) a sentence, without simply repeating the sentence" (cited in Cerbone, 2003: 56). In short, naturally allied to the constitutive approach's account of metaphor's unparaphraseability is the suggestion that *our* image of the world is not *the* image, and that the very language of the kind exemplified by talk of *image* is part of the general problem. The relationship between this discussion of truth and metaphor is articulated by Black's claim that "some metaphors enable us to see aspects of reality that the metaphor's production helps to constitute. But that is no longer surprising if one believes that the world is necessarily a world under a certain description - or a world seen from a certain perspective. Some metaphors can create such a perspective" (Black, 1993: 38). In stark contrast to the decorative approach then, truth, while necessarily devalued, becomes expressible in metaphorical language and is not wholly the preserve of the literal (see Levin, 1993: 85-7; see Marks, 2011: 11-2 for discussion of this in relation to international political theory). This was the conclusion drawn, in the most radical terms, by Nietzsche:

"What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins" (Nietzsche, 2006: 117).

Let us summarise the dispute between the two extreme positions outlined above. On the one side, we have a theory of metaphor which stresses its infrequent and aberrative nature, which characterises our thought as being fundamentally literal,

which casts metaphor as thereby ultimately paraphraseable without propositional remainder, and which conceives of language as unproblematically reflecting the world, such that true and false refer to correspondence and lack thereof between a literal use of words and the world. On the other side, we have an account of metaphor which stresses that it is a highly frequent form of language, that our thought is fundamentally metaphorical, such that metaphors are not best understood as paraphraseable, and which conceives of language as being an active agent constituting our understanding of reality, such that we cannot step outside of language to adjudicate on the correspondence, or lack thereof, between our language and the world. In short, it seems that in these traditions we have one account of metaphor which addresses its correct or incorrect *reflection* of an external reality (see Edelman, 1984: 45), knowable (it is presumed) independently and more properly communicable in literal language, and another account of metaphor that is more interested in its role in *creating* that reality as perceived by members of a linguistic community.

I will suggest that both of the traditions I have outlined above appear to articulate something appealing and valid, and yet potentially incompatible, about metaphor. I will outline below what each approach in their most radical variants seem to get right. I will then suggest an approach to metaphor and its significance which incorporates their respective merits, and which can be taken forward to assess political metaphors involving the state. I will begin with the decorative approach and what I believe it gets right.

## **The Merits of the Decorative Approach**

### **i) Maintaining the Literal/Metaphorical Divide**

As already discussed, some wish to assert that all language is metaphorical. Nietzsche framed this by asserting that concept formation is a metaphorical process whereby one word (e.g. a sound or an arrangement of shapes) is taken to stand for many disparate particulars. He is right in one sense, but to call this

“metaphor” blunts our ability to distinguish between quite different forms of language use, for which the terms “literal” and “metaphorical” as more commonly used are still helpful. Language does rest, as a fundamental principle, on the ability for human beings to recognise via their faculties of perception, in similar and dependable ways, similarities and differences between phenomena and to employ this recognition in the development and adoption of general concept-words in social contexts. However, to call this process “metaphorical” is I think to employ the term “metaphor” itself too loosely and we should note that it effectively “defines the literal out of existence” (Hinman, 1982: 184). One is tempted towards saying that Nietzsche’s very use of the term “metaphor” is itself “metaphorical”, but it is difficult to know how to launch such a critique without first deciding what metaphor *is* when that word is being used in its primary – i.e. *literal* - sense. Such a critique would have the air of circularity, and I won’t pursue it here.

There are, however, better reasons to doubt the validity of any approach that refuses to recognise important distinctions between the literality or metaphoricity of different language use and one strength of the decorative account is that it maintains such a distinction. First of all, little sense can be made of what metaphor *is* without reference to literal language use. Most common definitions of metaphor are at least implicitly predicated upon just such a category. If there is no category of the non-metaphorical, the very notion of metaphor breaks down *semantically*, because metaphor is one half of a binary, the other half of which is “literal” such that one is parasitic on the other. We need *some* language use to be called literal in order to make sense of language use that is metaphorical (see discussion of “thesis M” by Cooper, 1993 and Hesse, 1993)<sup>10</sup>. Cooper (1986: 263-4) objects to this kind of argument by saying that while binary opposites presuppose their co-existence semantically, this does not entail our acceptance that each must be applicable to the world. He offers the example of the terms “natural” and “supernatural”, noting that we shouldn’t suppose the supernatural must exist in the world simply because it is semantically predicated on the natural. By extension, he argues, we shouldn’t assume that the “literal” must exist either, simply because it is twinned with the “metaphorical” or the “figurative”. The problem Cooper identifies is more complex than his

discussion assumes. To begin with, we should note that he has subtly swapped what most of us would intuitively accept to be the correct correlates of the analogy; we would intuitively identify the supernatural with the metaphorical, and the natural with the literal. This is because we tend to think of both the metaphorical and the supernatural as exceptions to a general rule (of a cosmological or linguistic nature, respectively). Exceptions are indeed defined in relation to the rule, but it is not so apparent that rules are defined in relation to exceptions in quite the same way. More importantly though, in most utterances that we accept as metaphorical, some of the words comprising it will be being used metaphorically and some will be being used literally. For example, the statement “the clouds are crying” operates as a metaphor because the word “crying” is understood metaphorically, while the words “the” ,“clouds” and “are” are employed literally. This was recognised by Black, who argued that “when we speak of a relatively simple metaphor, we are referring to a sentence or another expression, in which some words are used metaphorically, while the remainder are used non-metaphorically”, and that sentences comprised solely of words used metaphorically are better described as proverbs, allegories or riddles (Black, 1955: 275; also see Ricoeur, 2004: 97-8).

Secondly, then, when faced with a *highly novel* metaphor, we have to *interpret* it to decide what it means. In fact, the obvious falsity of an utterance, interpreted literally, has been said to “awaken” us to the metaphorical intention behind an utterance. This echoes Grice’s discussion of conversational implicature and his suggestion that metaphor flouts the conversational maxim of truthfulness (Grice, 1975; 46, 53; also see Lycan, 2008: 156-72). When I say that “Joe is a lion”, your knowledge that Joe is *not literally* a lion is fundamental to your interpretation – however unconscious - that the utterance is to be taken metaphorically. The novel metaphor therefore involves the unexpected upset of stable signifier-referent relationships, or at least of the more conventional interpretation of the words being used. Such stable relationships are the basis for literality, and by extension, novel metaphor, defined as the upset of such stability. To be clear, it is not always the case that the obvious falsity of a literal interpretation *awakens us* to metaphorical meaning. Twice-true metaphors such as “no man is an island” do not



fit this model. Therefore, we may need to reframe this by arguing that it is some general incongruity in terms of conversational context that alerts us to metaphorical intention. Even to this, there are perhaps exceptions of a twice-true variety, but here an interpreter will decipher metaphorical intention from extra-linguistic cues, such as a knowing smile at having successfully pulled off a double-entendre. As such, we must also accept that metaphor is by nature not simply a semantic affair but rather is one bound up with the working out of metaphor users' intentions. We must accept then that metaphors are thus cognitive as well as semantic. In fact, we might also need to concede that they are primarily cognitive since the metaphorical status of a wholly decontextualised utterance alone is not easy to determine, at least without fleshing this out ourselves based on prior interaction with the utterance in question or with related ones.

Stern (2000:3-4; also see Stern, 2006) raises what he sees as counterexamples to the above account of how metaphorical utterances relate to literal ones. Such examples are not as damning as he hopes. I will discuss two of the eight metaphors he cites in refutation. Pace Stern, our interpretation of Mao Tse-tung's comment "A revolution is not a matter of inviting people to dinner" as a (conceivably twice-true) metaphor can quite readily be explained by pragmatics, for the literal interpretation of the comment is indeed suspect once we factor in numerous contextual considerations, such as who Mao was and why such a seemingly prosaic comment is still being quoted today. Likewise, Stern quotes from Robert Frost: "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I - I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference". Factoring in the context of reading a poem by a renowned writer, it would indeed be strange to assume a plainly literal interpretation of these banal lines was intended by Frost. All the counterexamples from Stern fail for similar reasons; so long as one is willing to admit the nuance of context that guides our interpretations, the above account of the distinction between the literal and the figurative stands fairly firm. However, Stern is right to raise doubts about how well it explains what goes on when we interpret an utterance. Stern argues that we do not first interpret literally, then abandon that interpretation, and then look for other interpretations, such as an ironic or metaphoric or nonsensical interpretations, amongst others. This stronger

argument should be resolved by suggesting that, if it is the case that the literal and nonliteral interpretations are processed simultaneously, then the adoption of the nonliteral mode in a given instance is due to our interpretation of the relative merits and demerits of each, which are best explained by contextual factors including past literal and nonliteral uses of the words in question. Let us partially agree with Stern then and say then that the relative unlikelihood of a literal interpretation compared with the nonliteral invites us towards the nonliteral one as that intended by the utterer (see Stern, 2000: 6).<sup>11</sup> Most crucially, though, our account must preserve some distinction between the literal and the nonliteral, or at least between the more literal and the less literal interpretations on offer. This is by no means trivial given the Nietzschean assault on that distinction (Nietzsche, 2006: 117; see Levin, 1993: 85-7).

## ii) The Relevance of Paraphrase

The decorative approach employs the literal/metaphorical distinction to assert that metaphors are reducible to literalised paraphrases. I concur that it makes sense to assert that literalised paraphrase plays a key role in our determining the “meaning” of a metaphor. In stating this, I am affirming that some metaphors have a clear meaning and that this meaning is constituted by (inferences about) speaker intention – what has been called “speaker-meaning” (Moran, 1989: 106-7; Searle, 1975; also see Levinson, 2001 and Stern, 2006 for further discussion of what metaphors “mean”). In fact, it is generally true that when we ask for the “meaning” of an utterance – whether in our own language or a foreign one - we are requesting some kind of paraphrase using more familiar language. Davidson (1978) and Cooper (1986: 89-117) both deny that metaphors have a second meaning independent of their literal meaning. However, such denials overlook the fact that we might reasonably respond to hearing a highly novel metaphor by saying “what do you mean?” and not be asking for a paraphrase of the metaphor, literally interpreted. When a student asks their teacher the meaning of the phrase “Juliet is the sun”, they would be misled if the teacher were to offer the paraphrase that “Juliet is the hot, gaseous sphere in the sky”.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, we can deny a

metaphorical statement without referring to its literal interpretation; to the phrase, “Juliet is the sun”, one can respond “no she isn’t” and not be denying the claim that Juliet is a hot, gaseous sphere in the sky (Hills, 1997). To account for such very common uses of language, we must accept that novel metaphors have a meaning – understood as paraphrase - and *that* meaning is fundamentally speaker-meaning and our attempts to decipher it.

Literalised paraphrases are employed both to *interpret* and to *assess the aptness of* novel metaphorical utterances. When *interpreting* a metaphorical utterance of the form “X is Y”, such as “Joe is a lion”, an interpreter must work out which features of “Y” are salient in the given context. Comparisons between X and Y might be endless, and the interpreter must curate such comparisons so as to reveal the likely intentions behind the utterances. For example, in the case of “Joe is a lion”, an interpreter must infer that the utterance is not meant to convey that Joe walks on all fours and has found employment in the local circus. One should therefore note the role that consideration of the literal sense of “lion” plays in assessing possible metaphorical intent. This offers further support for maintaining the literal/metaphorical divide.

Moreover, assessing the aptness of a metaphor, or indeed justifying our own, often gives rise to the adoption of paraphrase. For example, you are likely to interpret the metaphorical utterance “the dogs sing a raucous melody” along the lines of “the dogs bark loudly”, where each word of the latter reflects their most commonly accepted usage. Indeed, we should not forget that metaphor users often offer their own “authorised” paraphrases (see Hills, 1997: 146) in the course of clarifying or justifying their metaphors; this is particularly true in academic discourse. Some novel metaphors might invite a truly literalised paraphrase in the sense that nearly all language users will accept that the paraphrased utterance contains words employed only in such a way as to reflect highly conventional and very stable signifier-referent relationships, in the given context.

Therefore, something of the suggestion that some metaphors simply present literal uses of language in a “punchy” way seems to hold. It must do so in order to

account for the fact that we accept some metaphors and reject others – class some as illuminating and others as specious based on an assessment of such paraphrases. I suggest there is an element of novel metaphors which is paraphraseable, and the “meaning” of the metaphor can be reduced to such paraphrases in many cases. Indeed, it is often such “meaning” that is intended by the metaphor user and which was the animating idea behind the use of the metaphor in the first place. This account of metaphor was clearly expressed by Carney: “[i]f a metaphor has cognitive content, then it should be expressible in literal sentences. And the truth conditions of the literal sentences should correspond to the truth conditions of the metaphor” (Carney, 1983: 257; also see Searle, 1981; Richards, 1981: 48-9; Blumenberg, 1961: 2; Mooij, 1993: 67-8). While this holds for highly novel metaphor, I will later argue that there are limits to the relevance of literalised rephrases, especially when it comes to more conventional metaphor and metaphors regarding abstract or intangible phenomena.

### iii) Metaphors Lie!

A further point at which the decorative approach is correct is in its emphasis on the fact that metaphors can mislead us. A general distrust of metaphor was not confined to the ancient world of Plato’s *Gorgias*. We find a similar hesitancy in Hobbes’ work; in describing it as an abuse of language, he notes the potential for metaphor to be used to “deceive others” including within political rhetoric and especially within the context of a large, deliberative assembly (1651: Ch. 4; also see Mooij, 1993: 67; Whelan, 1981; Hamilton, 2009: 436). Similarly, Locke wrote that “if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow, that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment” (1824a [1689]: Bk. III. Ch. X; also see De Man, 1978: 13-22). This general distrust of metaphor lives on into our own era, and is present, for example, in Sontag’s discussion of those metaphors associated with illness (Sontag, 1978: 3).

The decorative approach invites us to accept at least two senses in which metaphors mislead us. In the first sense, metaphors mislead us in that they typically assert or imply the identity between two things that we otherwise agree are not identical or the same class. In fact, it is this very agreement which allows us to identify many metaphors as such (again save for twice-true metaphors such as “no man is an island”). In this way, metaphors mislead by their very nature, by definition.<sup>13</sup> For example, interpreted literally, “Juliet is the sun” is indeed a lie. The second sense of metaphors misleading us stems from an acceptance that they replace clear, literal language use with unclear, nonliteral language. In this sense, metaphors are understood to *obscure* our understanding by dressing up ideas in flowery language (see Musolff, 2016: 138).

It is helpful here then to distinguish between what I will call the “trivial” and “substantive” truth and falsity of a metaphor (see Mooij, 1993; Cooper, 1993; Danto, 1993). It is perfectly clear that many, if not most, metaphors are trivially false (Cooper, 1986: 30).<sup>14</sup> “Juliet is the sun” and “the lion leapt” and “aspens shiver” are – in their given contexts - trivially false. As such, we might, somewhat pedantically, respond “no, she isn’t” or “no, it didn’t” or “no, they don’t” to these three utterances, responding to their literal interpretation and asserting their (trivial) falsity. But note that such trivial truth or falsity has no bearing on the substantive truth or falsity of the above metaphors’ speaker-meaning, and of the metaphor interpreted metaphorically. While the decorative approach need not assume that all metaphors mislead us in a more substantive sense, it does insist on my reading that their truth or falsity be ascertained by assessing the truth or falsity of literalised paraphrases.<sup>15</sup> The decorative account is correct that often when we do pronounce on the facticity of a metaphorical utterance, we do so with implicit reference to a literalised paraphrase in mind, or we would at least be content in restating our objection in such literal terms, wherever they are available. This seems most apparent in relation to novel metaphor of the kind I have just been discussing.

Moreover, it must be true that at least some metaphors are misleading. After all, the constitutive approach itself implies that some metaphors are misleading (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). This approach must cast as specious certain metaphors describing the very activity of metaphor “use”. Metaphors themselves are frequently described in everyday language as “tools” that we “employ” or “use”, and yet this may invite a decorative understanding of the relationship between metaphor and literal language and the world. Moreover, the English language is full of common metaphors such as “to get one’s point across” or “to convey one’s meaning” that seem to imply that our use of language is divorced from the thought that we wish to convey. Such metaphors may invite us to believe that the activity of thinking is not one wholly bound up with language. We must admit then that metaphors can mislead us, either by intention as when an utterer employs metaphor to convince of us an untruth, as in certain kinds of rhetoric, or simply by accident, as when we imbibe the logic of an innocently uttered metaphor too fully.

### **The Merits of the Constitutive Approach**

The constitutive approach’s appealing features are its foregrounding of conventional metaphor, its emphasis on the limits of what literalised paraphrase can achieve, and its convincing demonstration of how we think in metaphor. I will outline them here and then in the following section of this chapter, I will present a possible reconciliation between the two approaches.

#### **i) Foregrounding Conventional Metaphor**

One dispute between the two accounts rests on whether paradigmatic examples of metaphor use are of a highly novel and creative kind, or rather of the most conventional and uninspired kind. The decorative approach is liable to see conventional or sedimented metaphor as either purely idiomatic or the product of a word having gained an additional or extended meaning. In effect then, the decorative approach is plausibly allied to an account of conventional “metaphor”

which interprets it as essentially *literal*. On this topic, we must support the constitutive approach's acceptance of certain more conventional "metaphor" as full members of the metaphor family. The reason for this is that there is no way to sort metaphors into the two classes of the novel and conventional, and thus to cast conventional forms of "metaphor" as being of a wholly different form of language use than that of novel metaphors. The difference between the conventional and the novel is best understood as a continuum, thereby offering no demarcation between the discrete category of the "novel" and the "conventional". What unites all metaphor, and ultimately separates them from the literal, is that interpreters can recognise that words have a more primary and related sense which the utterance in question eschews.<sup>16</sup>

Literal language is therefore exemplified when words are being used in their primary sense and there is no upset of the most stable set of signifier-referent relationships connected to a word. The primary sense of a word is that which accords with the kinds of definition that adept language users would immediately offer upon request. We might say that the primary sense of a word is the first entry in our internal dictionary. Literal language is therefore exhausted by utterances such as "the dogs bark" or "the tree is green" where each of the words contained within them are employed in their primary sense. The scope of such talk is large but still surprisingly limited and the task of speaking only in a literal manner – as defined above – is by no means a simple one in many cases. According to my account, there is thus strictly literal language on one side and then there is a wide variety of metaphorical forms of language, stretching from the radically novel to the highly conventional. In terms of more highly novel metaphor, I refer to those cases of language use that require more interpretative effort on the part of the hearer or reader to understand or appreciate them. In the most extreme cases, the metaphorical connection has never been encountered before by that interpreter. Such encounters usually happen when reading poetry or rhetoric, though not necessarily so. Note here then that the unconventionality of a metaphor will vary from interpreter to interpreter, but there will be broad agreement on the relative novelty of an utterance within a particular linguistic community.

There are also metaphors towards the conventional end of the continuum that require very little interpretative effort to appreciate or understand, but yet we can still assert that they involve talking about one thing in terms *usually reserved* for another. Thus, “the mouth of the river” is arguably more conventionalised than “the mouth of the bottle”, which is arguably more conventionalised still than “the mouth of the piano”. Some writers have introduced the category of the “dead metaphor” as an intermediary linguistic form, though this is sometimes meant to invoke language use that once entailed a linguistic borrowing that is no longer decipherable to the typical language user (i.e. the non-etymologist), while by others it is used to assert some unspecified degree of conventionality but would nevertheless still include those “metaphorical” utterances whose source is still recognisable (Lakoff, 1987b). This ambiguity is unhelpful, but if metaphors do die, in either sense, their death is a fact related to the given utterance’s *interpretation*, rather than some objective statement about the utterance itself.

Instead of this live/dead dichotomy, let us simply say that novel metaphors can, upon repeated social exchange, come to appear unremarkable to users, and this process of sedimentation can end, over a great historical timespan, in the words in question taking on as their primary employment what were once only a “moonlighting” role (Goodman, 1979). It is only in the latter sense of “dead” that I say a metaphor can become literal, namely where a prior metaphorical connection has now been lost to its word history, at least to the average language user. Examples include words like “concept” derived metaphorically from words related to the Latin for becoming pregnant, and indeed “metaphor” itself, which derives from Greek terms related to the transferral of physical entities (Charteris-Black, 2005: 14; also see Ortony, 1975: 45<sup>17</sup>). We must admit the possibility that some novel metaphors become conventional metaphors and then some of those become literal utterances once awareness of their original source application is lost within the collective memory to etymological history. Language develops in this way frequently, and a great many words have histories that betray such hidden borrowings from other linguistic domains. Indeed, etymologically, most of our words betray some metaphorical transfer at some point, their having previously meant something different, or their having been adapted from pre-



existing words with a slightly different meaning. Nevertheless, most of our current words still do possess a primary sense that can be mutually agreed upon – more or less – by competent language-users.

## ii) The Limits of Paraphrase

In this section, I will outline a few preliminary issues with the efficacy of literalised paraphrase before outlining the most critical issue in the subsequent section, section iii. There are several reasons to doubt that literalised paraphrase can fully communicate what a metaphor achieves in the broadest sense. The constitutive approach would rightly, in my view, raise such objections to the decorative approach. Firstly, a metaphor's paraphrase will likely lose something of its poetic force. What makes a metaphor "sing" is not necessarily that which can be expressed in propositional form. We should note the potentially enormous "force" or conceptual significance of a metaphorical utterance over an interpreter, which can be immediately lost upon being paraphrased. We can of course paraphrase poetry, and we may do this when analysing it, but the paraphrase would generally not be equivalent in impact to what the original text possessed. In other words, we can describe metaphors as "decorative" if we wish, but we should not deride them because of this. Secondly, where a metaphor user's intentions are vague or indefinite, a paraphrase cannot fully capture the utterance itself. That a paraphrase of metaphors usually includes a list followed by "etc." or "and so on" hints at this vagueness of meaning. Most utterers of metaphors have a vague idea which they wish to communicate but they may speak metaphorically precisely to give their utterances an interpretative pregnancy. Paraphrase cannot capture the effect of this fully. Thirdly, we may argue that the experience of metaphor is fundamentally experiential, as opposed to purely linguistic. Metaphors often fix an association between two things, which allows us to see the one through the lens, or in the guise, of the other. This kind of "seeing as" cannot be fully captured by literalised paraphrase because it is not a linguistic affair but rather an imagistic one.<sup>18</sup>

Fourthly, and related to this third point, something may be lost in a paraphrase wherever the metaphor in question is related to surrounding figurative utterances. For example, Shakespeare's phrase, "Juliet is the sun", is enmeshed in related metaphorical utterances in the surrounding text that speak to one another. The guiding metaphorical structure of a passage or text will be lost once individual utterances are paraphrased for these paraphrases need not have the same degree of connection as the prior metaphors did. The metaphor "Juliet is the sun" has no relationship to "Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon" when both are paraphrased into literal language. Again, the negligibility of such a loss should not be presupposed. Often what makes a metaphor "sing" is a relationship to other metaphors in close textual proximity. In the use of thoroughgoing analogies in political philosophy, the same is true. This connection between different metaphors operates not only among the lines of individual texts but also through discourses themselves, particularly when considered historically; one writer is invited towards a particular kind of metaphorical utterance in the wake of another writer's prior metaphor in an earlier text within the discourse. The relationship between texts employing similar or related metaphors that draw on each other may well be lost once all are paraphrased. In similar fashion, what certainly cannot be successfully paraphrased is the invitation to the user or interpreter to develop further metaphorical utterances in the wake of accepting the first. What cannot be captured by a paraphrase of "Juliet is the sun" such as "Juliet is beautiful, wonderful, warm, and so on" (see Camp, 2006: 3 for an alternative paraphrase) is the immediate compulsion to follow this initial metaphor with a series of other celestial metaphors, as Shakespeare does (see Schroeder, 2004: 99-100). Recognition of this fact is crucial for an interpretation of texts rather than standalone utterances decontextualised from their textual surroundings or from the wider discourse to which they contribute.

Fifthly, we must be aware that many ostensible paraphrases do not substitute literal language for metaphorical language but rather simply offer us different, possibly more conventional metaphors. For example, "Juliet is the sun" might be paraphrased as "Juliet is warm, bright, the centre of Romeo's world, the light of his life", and so on, but it is not at all clear that such a paraphrase is a *literal* utterance,

rather than an array of highly conventional metaphors (Hills, 1997: 122; Tirrell, 1991: 341-2; Cavell, 1969). Thus, we must remember that not all paraphrases are literal, assuming we accept that highly conventional metaphors are still essentially metaphorical. However, most metaphors can be paraphrased fairly easily if we allow other metaphors to count. This invites the question of whether a *literalised* paraphrase can always be found for a metaphorical statement. I will return to this topic below in section iii.

It is highly difficult to prove convincingly that metaphors have the potential to convey that which cannot be conveyed in literal language (see Grant, 2010 on “the indispensability thesis”), principally because if one challenges the attempted literalised paraphrase of a metaphor, one must state the ways in which the paraphrase fails to convey what the metaphor in question means, which will involve you employing your own (literalised) paraphrases, which would be self-defeating, or, alternatively, simply reasserting the metaphor under interrogation in some form. Neither is satisfactory, of course. What I am suggesting, though, is that something is lost when attempting a paraphrase, including vagueness of meaning, the imagistic nature of some metaphors, and the structuring relations between metaphorical utterances. On some definitions, what is thereby lost may justly not be called “meaning” but nevertheless I suggest a loss of something is apparent and such a loss is potentially substantive, rising above the level of mere semantic *presentation* or a trivialised account of rhetorical *force*.

### iii) Thinking Metaphorically

I will build on the above considerations by exploring the topic of “thinking metaphorically”, which the constitutive approach rightly stresses. Cognitive linguistics and those associated with conceptual metaphor theory (e.g. Reddy, 1993; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999; Kövecses, 1999) are most open about their commitments in this regard. I have already shown that we cannot think of metaphor as a purely linguistic affair because metaphor must be understood as a communicative act between interlocutors and a metaphor is identified as such

through inferences about the intentions of the utterer. It is not clear from a semantic analysis of the expression alone whether “Jesus was a shepherd” is a metaphor, a lie, or a mistake without assessing those extra-linguistic intentions of the metaphor user. Therefore, in baptising an utterance metaphorical we are often saying something about our interpretation of the cognitive life of the utterer. The identification of a novel metaphor often rests upon inferences surrounding cognition, as much as the identification of a lie (as opposed to a mistake or an untruth) (Moran, 1989: 106-7; Aitchison, 1994: 56<sup>19</sup>).

Secondly, I believe that there are good grounds for arguing that we think in metaphor in surprisingly frequent scenarios. Some conceptual domains are closely bound up with associated metaphors, such that we can say they are partly constituted by them. Such metaphors involve concepts as subjects which are themselves significantly defined by their metaphorical connections, for they are so intangible or abstract as to routinely invite this kind of concretisation through a conceptual association to more conventional objects and words. Such metaphors can be paraphrased in more conventional (or simply other) language but in doing so a key conceptual connection will be lost which is integral for how most people think about the concept in question. In this regard, I suggest that metaphors are most significant when employed in relation to subjects that are in some way intangible or abstract. This might be because the subject in question cannot be ostensibly defined, or it might be because we do not have pre-existing words whose primary sense refers to the matter in question, or it might be because there is a great lack of consensus about what the nature of the thing in question in fact *is*. In such cases, a metaphorical connection will often concretise the subject matter in a schematic fashion. In such cases, metaphor, I suggest, may well be particularly significant for how we think about the subject in question. By “significant” or “important” here I mean that they have great causal power and go a long way towards explaining what possible claims we can make about the subject in question.

A few paradigmatic examples from our everyday language will hopefully elucidate the kind of metaphor I have in mind. These are by no means exhaustive. Firstly,

we tend to employ conventional metaphors that speak of ideas and thoughts as physical entities (Reddy, 1993, and his discussion of the conduit metaphor). We talk of “getting our ideas across”, “having a strong argument”, and “seeing someone’s point”. All of these are related in their ascribing physical attributes and entity-like qualities to mental phenomena (see Sweetser, 1990). I contend that the very notion of concepts and ideas would be substantively amended and substantially impoverished were those linguistic forms, those domain associations, not available to us when talking and thinking about our mental activity. Moreover, in an academic context, a world devoid of theories conceptualised as physical structures with “foundations” and connecting elements or “levels” providing the ability perhaps to withstand intellectual “assault” from our adversaries would be a markedly different one indeed. Our ability to think about thinking would be profoundly altered without such metaphors; as Ortony argues, “we have no literal language for talking about what thoughts do” (Ortony, 1975: 49). Because of this, as mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, any student of metaphor must accept the difficulty of thinking about metaphors themselves except through the language of physical movement and interrelation between different domains which must be first categorised and conceptualised as distinct entities.

Secondly, metaphor features heavily in religious texts, figurative language frequently being employed to describe the divine, often with the implicit suggestion that the metaphor seeks to describe that which is ultimately ineffable (see Tracy, 1978; Vico, 1947: S237). In Christian theology, God is variously described as the “father” or as “light” or as a “shepherd”, but any ardent believer would challenge the claim that God can be reduced to any one of these metaphors or indeed to the aggregate of them. We must consider therefore what the concept of God would be *like* if bereft of its metaphorical association to father, light, shepherd and so on. We must also wonder how the Christian account of God would remain distinguishable from conceptions of the deity found in other religions without their particular metaphorical associations. The role of personification in regard to God is particularly significant; the qualities attributed to the Christian

deity, such as love, omniscience, omnipotence and immortality all rely on their metaphorical associations with all too mortal concepts, I suggest.

Thirdly, art criticism attempts to put into words experiences of an essentially non-linguistic kind. In the course of such translation, metaphors are required. Gaut offers a short sample of those frequently associated with visual art and music: “Lines may be delicate or gentle, colours warm or cool, brutal or sedate; musical notes may be high or low, chords open or filled; sounds may be fat, one musical passage may comment on, battle with, or answer another; a chord sequence may sharply increase in tension or gently relax towards a firm resolution” (Gaut, 1997: 223; also see Scruton, 1997). Again, we may suggest metaphor’s significance here relates to its attempt to describe that for which there is no literal language commonly available.

Lastly, we may also add here the conceptualisation of time in terms of space that we find in our natural languages. In our conventional English expressions, the conception of time as a moving object is “based on the correlation between an object moving toward us and the time it takes to get to us” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 58-9). In regard to the notion that we are moving through time, it is clear that the near universal experience of moving towards a location in our field of vision in order to perform a spatially located action of some kind suggests to us that the future is physically in front of us in the direction in which we are travelling. Mirroring this, having completed the aforementioned task, we move out into our environment once more, such that the effects of the task we have just completed are behind us. Here we should recognise that *thinking* about the concept of time without recourse to the metaphorical association to space and movement in space is cognitively challenging and we again push up against the ineffable, regardless of how exactly we relate space with time in our culture; for example, whether time is fixed and we move with respect to it, or we are fixed and time moves with respect to us (Lakoff, 1993: 217-8), or whether the future or the past is ahead or behind, or indeed up or down. Moreover, as Koselleck has argued, “history, insofar as it deals with time, must borrow its concepts from the spatial realm as a matter of principle” (2002: 7).

Several thoughts tumble out of this discussion. Firstly, such metaphors possess intangible target domains, for which easy ostensive definition is ruled out. It is for this reason that metaphor permeates philosophical language, which deals primarily in the intangible (Richards, 1981: 49; Rorty, 1979). For example, Descartes' foundational distinction between mind and body as substance in thought and extended substance in his *Principles of Philosophy* is contingent upon his earlier definition of "substance" more generally as "a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence" (Descartes, 1982: 22-24). A "thing" - "une chose" in the French translation from the Latin that was published in Descartes' lifetime (Descartes, 1647) - is, I contend, when used in relation to abstract phenomena, dependent on its primary signification relating to concrete, tangible referents - to *objects* and to *stuff* (which are secondary definitions of "une chose" in French, also). Thinking or intelligent substance is therefore conceptually derivative of extended or corporeal substance.<sup>20</sup> As Paul de Man noted, Locke's account of simple ideas ("motion" and "light") and substances ("gold") employ various kinds of fairly straightforward metaphor (De Man, 1978).

Secondly, the suggestion that we think metaphorically opens the door to the claim that metaphorical thought is in some sense systematically orientated towards certain metaphors. We should not interpret metaphors as standalone utterances, which has been the standard procedure for many philosophical analyses of metaphors. Many of our most conventionalised metaphors fit into a model that recognises basic metaphoric connections between two spheres or domains (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and the development and elaboration of novel metaphor usually bears on frequent metaphoric associations. Several writers have focused on the interrelation of different metaphorical utterances. Ricoeur referred to "metaphoric networks" (Ricoeur, 2004), while Lakoff and Johnson refer to general "conceptual mappings" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), while Stern opts to speak of "schemas", "networks", "metaphor-systems", or "families" (Stern, 2000: 28, 162, 169, 176), with Goodman also referencing "families" (Goodman, 1976: 71-2). In all such cases, we must be wary of reifying the kinds of structure such expressions convey and the adoption of such language struggles with being able

to justify the particular specificity of the “mappings” it isolates. For example, Lakoff & Turner (1989) refer to the schema ‘life is a fire’ in order to account for a number of seemingly related metaphorical utterances found in conventional language but, as Jackendoff & Aaron (1991: 324-5) point out, it is not clear why the more general “life is something that gives off heat” or the more specific “life is a flame” would not be more appropriate (also see Grady’s discussion of “theories are buildings” in Grady, 1997). Even so, we must recognise the potential relationship between individual metaphorical utterances, and how they may support each other, and develop out of each other. This is quite obvious within a short piece of text, such as poem, where it can even become difficult to distinguish metaphorical utterances from one another, intertwined as they so often are (see examples given in Stern, 2000: 164-5). However, I contend that recognising networks of metaphor is important also for considering the metaphors adopted by writers in their different texts, and even when analysing a particular discourse or tradition and the metaphors that are routinely employed within them.

#### iv) Metaphors Construct Truths!

It follows from our above discussion that at least some metaphors can be said to constitute widely held truths within a linguistic community and not simply by corresponding to literally stated facts, nor directly to the world itself. Metaphors construct basic truths in at least two, closely related ways. Firstly, metaphors constitute widely held truths wherever they comprise the most natural and conventional language within which assertions of belief about the subject are communicated. I have already suggested that there are many metaphors that are so wholly conventional that there is no question of their being “flowery” ornaments to more literal language use. In such cases, we talk readily about matters of fact with no need to resort or appeal to a literalised paraphrase. In such cases, it is pointless to look for some more fully literal manner of talking. To deny metaphorical truth would therefore be to suggest that a great many of our utterances cannot be justly assessed as to their veracity; this would be a strange state of affairs indeed (see Lycan, 2008: 179).



Secondly, and more importantly for my current project, there are subject matters which do not easily admit of thoroughly literal description at all, their being so bound up conceptually with particular metaphoric schemas. When metaphors are so bound up, we may call resultant truth-claims involving them *especially* analytic in nature, that is, true by definition. For example, if we are to disallow the metaphor of Jesus Christ as “the son of God” (I will assume this is a metaphor), and replace it with some literalised paraphrase (though I doubt a satisfactory one could be found), the concept of Christ would be substantially modified, for a key attribute of Christ (as he is understood by Christians) is that he is “the son of God”. There are other such cases where the abandonment of a predicate (literally or metaphorically posed) is to alter the subject in question, perhaps even to destroy it. In this way, we can justly assert that certain metaphors are not “decorative” for they are analytically bound up with the metaphorically described thing in question. In arguing this, it should be noted, I am characterising truth as a word that is employed by language users to denote their beliefs about the world, indeed, to denote those beliefs they feel so strongly about that they wish to bestow on them the special badge of transcending *mere* belief. In other words, utterances that begin “it is true that...” should always in earnest be prefixed by “I believe that...”. Truth, in any higher sense than this, is inevitably predicated on the belief in a personified – yet omniscient – deity.

### **A Modified Constitutive Approach**

I will now discuss how the merits of the decorative and constitutive wings can be incorporated into a single account of metaphor. First of all, the explanatory power of both the decorative and constitutive accounts of metaphor rest a great deal on the relative novelty or conventionality of the metaphor in question, the target domain of the metaphor, its context of use, and its relationship to prior metaphor use. It is certainly true that many highly novel metaphors are decorative in the sense that they communicate that which could be expressed in literal language, that is, using sentences constituted by words being used in their primary sense

without any appreciable loss recognised by utterer or interpreter. It is also true that we can and often do identify the meaning of metaphors through attempted paraphrase of metaphorical utterances. Moreover, it is also reasonable to suppose that many conventional metaphors have limited conceptual significance. I contend that while the decorative approach is much better at dealing with cases of highly novel metaphor in terms of the relevance of paraphrase, the reliance on the literal/metaphorical divide, and the propensity for us to recognise novel metaphors as misleading if not flat-out untruths, the constitutive approach can explain the nature of some metaphors involving phenomena that is difficult to grasp without the concretising effects of metaphorical language. It does so by emphasising the limits of paraphrase in such cases, as well as the frequency with which conventional metaphor is attached to intangible phenomena.

However, I do also contend that in certain circumstances, the decorative approach is insufficient. Firstly, in contexts where *sustained* metaphor is employed it seems highly likely that the metaphor is playing some significant role in thought. This is clearly the case where multiple metaphorical utterances combine to form a general metaphoric schema through which a topic is being conceptualised. I focus in the following chapters on texts that employ sustained and systematic metaphors for this very reason. Secondly, while most of our language use is too immediate and habitual to justify some of the most radical interpretations of metaphor's role in our conceptual lives, cases where metaphorical utterances are preceded by careful consideration and deliberation might suggest its significant role in understanding there. This is most clearly evident in political philosophy where writers have usually thought carefully in advance of committing their metaphors to paper and publication. Thirdly, where utterers have developed and extended prior metaphors, this is suggestive of a highly active conceptual component to the metaphor use.

These three points combine to suggest the conceptual significance of metaphor in certain cases, but they do not constitute a defence of the claim that the metaphors in question are wholly unparaphraseable, nor that something of great value, broadly construed, is lost in an attempted, or even an authorised, paraphrase.

Therefore, firstly, I also wish to suggest that for topics of significant abstractness, talking and thinking in more literal language is often not fully possible. In such cases, the domain in question has, as part of its basic identity, a metaphorical relationship to another domain, and to remove this connection is to destroy or fundamentally change the nature of the target domain in question. In short, we may say they are *constituted* by this connection, the metaphor *concretising* the abstract target domain.

By abstract concepts, I refer to general concepts, especially nouns, whose referents are not entities that admit of straightforward perception, and thus cannot be ostensively defined (see Falguera, Martínez-Vidal and Rosen, 2022; Falguera and Martínez-Vidal, 2020; Margolis and Laurence, 2007; 1999).<sup>21</sup> I am adopting here psychological literature's distinction between concrete concepts (such as "tree") and abstract concepts (such as "justice"), which refers to the given concept's particular referents (see, for example, Löhr, 2021; Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings, 2005).<sup>22</sup> Abstract concepts resist easy ostensive definition, a common tactic we use when tasked with defining a word, such that we cannot throw the task of definition into the court of public appeal by reference to our overlapping perceptions of the world. The relevance of this for a study of metaphor is that concrete concepts possess a much more straightforward relationship to that which they refer to, in that a prototype or exemplar can provide a mental image that can be associated with the concept in question (Rosch, 1999; also see Danto, 1993: 32-3; Geeraerts, 2013: 577-8).<sup>23</sup> It should be clear that abstract concepts cannot have the same kind of prototype relationship to perceivable particulars. One way in which certain abstract concepts may relate to concrete phenomena is that concepts are grounded in memories of *situations* experienced by subjects (McCrae et al. 2017; see also Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings, 2005: 130-1). Prinz (2002) has sought to establish that abstract concepts are "grounded" in external referents, but this may include memories of scenarios as opposed to physical entities. For example, our concept of "justice" may be conceptualised in relation to a scenario of a judge delivering a verdict, for example, which the interpreter has experienced in person, or in media (books, film, theatre, etc.) (see Pecher and Zeelenberg, 2018: 2-3). Crucially though,

abstract concepts are also bound to the concrete world by metaphor, which helps to conceptualise the intangible.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, metaphorical utterances about abstract domains, particularly when being used in a sustained, considered and developmental manner, are liable to be at least somewhat resistant to literalised paraphrase. Something will be lost in an attempted paraphrase: firstly, the interconnection between different metaphorical utterances within a schema; secondly, the connection to prior metaphorical language; thirdly, the imagistic content that a metaphor invites; and fourthly, the kinds of thought and argument induced by a metaphorical utterance. These, I hold, cannot easily be replicated in a literalised paraphrase, such that metaphor remains both conceptually significant, and not fully amenable to paraphrase.

What follows from the recognition that metaphors can partly constitute conceptual domains, especially more abstract ones (Richards, 1981: 4-9-51), is that it may be the metaphorical expressions themselves that are acting as the driver of semantic change, *as well as* being the dressed-up, decorative versions of pre-existing, literal beliefs. We find therefore that metaphors could be both “*the product of and a means to shape* thought, emotion and social perception” (Musolf, 2016: 137, emphasis added). The relationship between the constituting influence of metaphor and its reflective or decorative capacities produces a ‘feedback loop’ wherein not only may received wisdom be *reflected* in the creation, adoption, elaboration and extension of metaphorical expressions, but these expressions in turn may further entrench these understandings of a target domain, thereby “guiding our future actions in accordance with the metaphor” and becoming “self-fulfilling prophecies” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 142; also see Geeraerts, 2010: 337-9).

I should stress here that despite by affirmation of the constitutive role of certain metaphors, the constitutive nature of metaphors is never total, and any metaphor that we can recognise as such must retain an awareness that the target is not *literally* the source. Moreover, while abstract concepts possess a less

straightforward relation to the concrete, they always retain some referential relationship to concrete phenomena. We remain able to judge, at least in the abstract, when a novel metaphor is apt and when it is not. Even where concepts are largely abstract and are constituted significantly by a metaphorical association, our recognition of the literal plays a role, even if by asserting its negation, that which is *not literally the case*. We always hold beliefs about target phenomena which do not conform with a possible expression of a metaphoric schema it holds and we otherwise use: for example, we know that though time is understood to move passed us or we through it, time, we all admit, cannot literally be *stopped* in the same manner as could a physical entity. Similarly, though we describe God using personal pronouns and describe his intelligence or his vengeance and all manner of other personified activity and emotion, most would not accept the metaphor-induced suggestion that God therefore has a liver or genitalia. I suggest both Time and God are less conceivable without their central metaphorical associations, but those associations cannot be said to exhaustively define them as target domains. The associations made possible through metaphorical interplay between source and target domain are infinite; they require our curation in accordance with beliefs about the target domain we hold independently of, and often in contradiction to, even the most basic propositions invited by any given metaphoric schema. Much like the scripturalist faced with a vast literature replete with inconsistencies and contradictions, we must pick and choose our interpretations based on independent criteria, influenced by, but not wholly constituted by, the text in question. This remains true even for abstract concepts and so our claims about the constitutive role of metaphor must therefore be softened to defend only its *partly* constitutive role in relation to substantially abstract concepts. In fact, it would be tautological to assert that some concepts are wholly constituted by metaphor; if a metaphor were fully constitutive, it would be *de facto* literal, because a metaphor can be recognised as such only by an acceptance of the cleavage between the target and source domains. Without recognition of this cleavage, a metaphor could not be identified as such at all; analogy would turn into identity, and the metaphorical into literality.

Proving the kind of constitutive role of metaphor that I have been articulating above is not straightforward and often too much is taken for granted by proponents of this position (see Murphy, 1997: 103). The mere appearance of semantic connections is too often taken as signalling some great conceptual attachment. I would concur with Bourke's maxim that etymology "is not a sufficient guide to meaning" (Bourke, 2016: 1). Moreover, empirical evidence of metaphor's role in thought is limited. Cognitively-oriented neuroscientific studies have offered some justification, establishing that when certain metaphors are used "two groups of neurons in the brain are activated at the same time; when one group of neurons fires (the source), another group of neurons fires as well (the target)" (Kövecses, 2015: 22; also see Gallese and Lakoff, 2005; Feldman, 2006; further discussion of experiments can be found in Gibbs, 1994; Gibbs and O'Brien, 1990). Boroditsky has similarly produced sociological research that supports the conclusion that "abstract domains such as time are indeed shaped by metaphorical mappings from more concrete and experiential domains such as space" (Boroditsky, 2000: 26). For one of the more convincing examples of language influencing thought more generally, consider Boroditsky's exploration of the Kuuk Thaayorre language of Northern Australia, which exclusively uses cardinal-direction terms (North, South, East, West) to discuss space (as opposed to using terms such as "left", "right", "forward" and "back"), and the influence this has on language-users' abilities to orient themselves (Boroditsky, 2009; for further discussion of linguistic relativity, see Whorf, 1956; Black, 1959; Davidson, 1973; Rosch, 1987; Reddy, 1993; Gentner and Christie, 2010).

Nevertheless, I contend that there are two ways to demonstrate the constitutive and cognitive role of metaphors in thought about certain domains. The first method involves us considering the extent to which a target domain would be impoverished were we to hypothetically excise a related metaphor or set of related metaphors. We must ask ourselves whether thinking about or reasoning about the target domain has been altered in significant ways (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1999: 71). Since the decorative approach asserts that metaphors are simply decorations on literal meaning, we should consider if there are examples where a literalised meaning, free of language usually reserved for another domain,

is difficult to find. Where the target domain cannot be spoken about easily in a literal manner, but is rather communicable in figurative language, we may here assert that the constitutive role of metaphor is strong. This tests the constitutive approach in a most stringent manner, by seeking to isolate those metaphors that are not in some sense merely guiding our thought, but rather as being the principle conceptual tool by which the target domain achieves its particular identity for us. While there are many conventional metaphors whose obliteration would have negligible impact on the status of their target domains, and therefore possibly best described as decorative in nature, there do also exist metaphors which appear to constitute in significant ways their targets. The claim that metaphors constitute reality in salient ways does not lose its force by recognising its limited and differentiated reach. This thought experiment is synchronic in nature, and it crucially relies on self-examination, which is by no means infallible. It is also of little help in studying historical use of metaphor for we cannot ask past writers to undertake such self-examination. Nevertheless, I will return to this kind of verification in my final chapter where I consider whether past metaphor use still dictates or influences current forms of conceptualisation.

A second way to demonstrate the constitutive role of metaphor is prompted by a passage from Lakoff and Johnson (1999), who suggest that the conceptual significance of a metaphor can be established whenever a novel adaptation or extension of the metaphor is readily available to us. They argue that “[i]f a metaphorical mapping can give rise to new metaphoric expressions in poetry, rhetoric, and songs, then that metaphor is alive” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999: 126). As it stands, this is a poor test for the kind of synchronic analysis that Lakoff and Johnson tended to engage in, as it is far too imprecise and conjectural to be especially helpful there, but it does, however, seem a strikingly adequate test for the diachronic study of metaphor. We can trace metaphor through time and consider how the metaphor developed and changed; looking historically, we can actually see not merely whether novel adaptations and embellishments of metaphors *was possible*, but rather whether this in fact occurred. Wherever such semantic change is occurring we may assume with good reason that there was indeed a *conceptually significant* dimension to the metaphor use and the metaphor

was constituting how the target domain was understood. I am suggesting therefore a discourse-level analysis that seeks to prove the role that a family of metaphors or a metaphoric network plays in supporting an associated discourse.

The study of metaphor has been too often inattentive to history, focusing instead on metaphor's relationship to universal and immemorial embodied experience and on synchronic elaboration of its conceptual correlates (Geeraerts 2010: 203; Mouton, 2009: 340). Cognitive linguistics in general has never been primarily concerned with history (Winters, 2010: 6) and we may say that since Saussure, linguistics more generally has been far more interested in synchronic analysis (Graffi, 2013: 471). While variation between cultures and sub-cultures in metaphor use at any given moment is considerable, it is also pertinent that metaphor use has changed historically. Taking an historical approach allows us to break free of some of the problems that plague the synchronic analysis of constitutive metaphor, such as recognition that the conceptual influence of metaphor will vary person-to-person and utterance-to-utterance, which casts the efficacy of any argument we might care to make wholly dependent on the arbitrary self-examination of the reader. We need not convince the reader that all of us think in this or that way, we need only seek to assert that this particular writer under analysis was thinking in this or that way, and that that way of thinking was influential over future writers who shared and developed their ideas within a similar literary tradition.

By studying metaphor historically, we can consider earlier periods when a now more conventionalised or sedimented metaphor retained some greater novelty. I am less interested here in the coiners of wholly newer metaphorical connections than those figures who picked up and adapted and developed, consciously or otherwise, existing metaphorical language. It is in such cases that I think the constitutive role of metaphor is most present. The period of development and embellishment following an initial coinage is the window in which embellishments and transformations occur and in which the broad metaphorical association is being used to *reason* about a particular target domain. To study metaphor *historically*, we must contend with the notion that a metaphor might



have a *life* of its own (Schön, 2013[1963]: 192-3), that a metaphor can be developed, elaborated, adapted and extended without the consciousness at *every step of all* utterers, each utterer never being fully aware of the vast and byzantine architecture of inferred meaning that precedes them and with which they are in unwitting dialogue, as they improvise, in small and individually insignificant ways, novel language and thought (see Mouton, 2009: 312-8; Musolff, 2004, 2014). We may explore the parameters of an historical periods' conceptual frameworks without supposing full recognition of these parameters by individual language-users themselves. Historical transformations and developments in metaphor use produce a vast array of connected utterances in a particular language that suggests a conceptually "live" dimension to individual utterances, but also therefore a kind of *discourse-level* "life" (see Zinken et al., 2008: 246-9), that exists at the same level as that of the linguistic community itself and indeed may be so important as to constitute it.

An utterer is both limited by the conceptual associations that they receive in their linguistic community, and also encouraged by existing conceptual associations towards modes of thinking which develop or extend in subtle ways, and yet do not wholly revolutionise, their given framework. Metaphors are the product, first of all, of individuals who coin them, and their development is the product of the creative acts of individuals, while proliferation and conventionalisation are the result of repeated linguistic exchange. However, the society and its language, however creative that individual is, defines the limits of which metaphors are deemed apt and worthy of repetition and wider dissemination. We do find a good deal of similar metaphors cross-culturally that likely relate to shared and perennial forms of human experience (Kövecses, 2005: 43), but we also find a good degree of variance too (see Geeraerts and Gevaert, 2008: 319; Geeraerts and Grondelaers, 1995; Kövecses, 2015: 14). Metaphor use reflects overlapping shared experience by different linguistic communities as well as forms of local, unique experience, insight, and ways of seeing. The individual and their language use is situated against a context of the twin forces of, on the one side, the individual's immutable biological existence within the natural world<sup>25</sup>, and, on the other side, the mutable cultures and language through which individuals

experience all things. We cannot offer a firm delineation between these two forces because they intervene on one another irrevocably (Onuf, 1989: 40). I suggest therefore that metaphor remains important in “creating a systematic presentation of reality” and in “forming and influencing human beliefs, attitudes and action” (Charteris-Black, 2004: 28). The role of metaphor in explaining semantic and conceptual change is therefore crucial (see Sadock, 1993: 44-5, Cohen, 1993: 59).

I now wish to return briefly to the topic of truth. All metaphor-induced mistakes are recognised as such relative to some relevant knowledge we more securely hold and which we possess independently. Of course, the various criteria by which we judge our beliefs more or less secure are yet another secure belief (about the correct means of verifying our beliefs) which forms part of our wider network of beliefs (see Wittgenstein, 1969: § 105<sup>26</sup>). It is therefore possible for us to clear up mistakes brought on by metaphorical language – a fact which the later Wittgenstein is keen to stress (see Wittgenstein, 1964: 41), but these are mistakes we must recognise internal to our present language, and their “clearing up” must ultimately be communicable in our current language (see Heyes, 2003: 5-6). Admittedly though, in taking this stance, we must affirm that truth is nothing other than the term we use to denote our most securely held beliefs about the world, indeed those beliefs that we believe transcend mere personal belief. On whether such transcendence has in any given case been achieved, my account of metaphor will ultimately remain silent.<sup>27</sup> Though I think comparisons between different human languages cross-culturally and through history, as well as comparisons between animal and human behaviour, may provide the basis for a profitable discussion of this topic, and indeed for the cautious affirmation that certain ways of talking do get closer to the way the world really is, independent of any individual language user or linguistic community, I will not pursue this line of argument here.

### **Application to the Concept of the State**

In the following chapters, I will develop this account of metaphor by focusing on one case study of metaphor use, that of the personified state. This case study is apt for several reasons. Firstly, the metaphors in question, those likening the state to the individual person, involve an abstract target concept, the political entity. As Vincent has rightly argued, “[t]he State is an abstraction which many find difficult to grasp” (Vincent, 1987: 31; also see Hay, 2014: 462). I suggest that metaphors are likely to be particularly significant for the state because the concept, and its particular instantiations, are intangible. The state cannot be ostensively defined; we cannot see, hear, smell, touch or taste instantiations of the concept of the state. I will seek to advance in the following chapters that the state has been persistently conceptualised through the use of metaphorical language, that is, language whose primary signification lies elsewhere, and therefore through the conceptually live development and embellishment of received language use. In many cases, we can offer no easy literalised translations of the assertions we seek to make about the state. To paraphrase the metaphor in literal language will mean the loss of the imagistic (i.e. non-linguistic) nature of the metaphorical connection. This general way of viewing the state cannot be stated to be false for it merely expresses an attitude, a way of seeing-as, that is not wholly propositional in nature, even if it is associated with possible paraphrases that do allow for veridical assessment. As a result, the state is one such example of an abstract concept that historically has been forged through its metaphorical relationship to language usually reserved to describe the individual person and interpersonal relations.

Secondly, to attempt a literal paraphrase of personified articulations of the state will also likely extinguish the connection between different related utterances both within a given text, and between different, related texts. To paraphrase each utterance as if they were standalone items will lose the guiding structure underlying well-known texts about the state. We would lose the sense in which this discourse or a particular text within it is animated by the guiding schema of the state conceptualised as a person.

Thirdly, the concept of the state in the discourse of political philosophy is so bound up with the metaphors that attempt to articulate it, that to remove certain relevant

metaphors is to alter the nature of the concept itself, and arguably to disintegrate the concept. In other words, this “seeing-as” is particularly constitutive of the concept itself. To be clear, this is not to suggest that the state is wholly constituted by the metaphorical association with the person; the state remains aloof by our recognition of the limits of that metaphor and thus of a distance between the two domains. As suggested above, nor do I intend to imply that the state is wholly untethered from concrete phenomena. We implicitly recognise the distinction between target and source domain, and we recognise that we possess other more securely-held knowledge and other language to think and write about the state, even if this is simply asserting the negation of an overly literal interpretation of a potential metaphorical association.

I therefore explore an historical example of metaphor use in line with the second kind of defence of the constitutive approach outlined above, free from the constraints that plague the first defence, but still wedded to its prognoses about the importance of abstract target domains. I engage in a study of what I identify as a transtemporal linguistic community centred on theoretical discussion of political theory and political philosophy. The individuals comprising this community make novel adaptations of and embellishments on prior metaphor use that they have encountered within texts produced by prior members of that linguistic community. Moreover, historical writers use these metaphors to reason towards conclusions about the target domain and to advance what they see as a particularly *just* form of that target domain - the state or interstate relations. Their metaphors have both a descriptive and normative dimension to them, and the latter dimension often detaches the concept of the state from its possible instantiations in the world. Philosophical discussion of the state is quite different from sociological discussion.

I would go so far as to say then that the type-token distinction in relation to the state is particularly vexed, with an idealised type considered to be quite distinct from particulars in the world. It is for this reason that I think we can say that those metaphors of the general schema “the state is a person”, when referring to discourse within political philosophy, might be better understood as being

analytically true, in a substantive sense, rather than synthetically so. It is this sense of “true” and “fact” that I think Bartelson correctly identifies when arguing that “...states have become persons by virtue of having been spoken of as such across different historical contexts, until this idea has become a social fact in its own right” (Bartelson, 2015: 102). Therefore, we can assert that while the metaphoric schema of “the person is a state” is trivially false, it forms part of what is considered substantively true regarding political and social affairs. I suggest that the schema “the state is a person” will have a series of a paraphraseable propositions underpinning it and such paraphrases can be accepted or objected to depending on the coherence of such paraphrases with other beliefs that we hold, but that there are beliefs about the state – asserted by many as truths - that are the product of this very schema and which means that it is constitutive of the concept of the state itself, which would be changed were the metaphor to be hypothetically excised. To allow for the very fact that we can recognise the metaphor as (potentially) misleading, we need to assert that the more general schema is only *partly* constitutive of the concept of the state.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to show how elements of seemingly contradictory accounts of metaphor can be synthesised. I have focused on the constitutive role of certain metaphors – those which are attached to abstract concepts. Identifying the state as such a concept due to its resistance to ostensive definition and direct perception, the state is, on my account, plausibly concretised via metaphor. I have suggested that testing this thesis is best achieved through an historical analysis of texts that discuss this concept to see whether new metaphorical utterances were actively being developed out of older utterances, further entrenching a particular metaphoric schema. This is most significant when writers are actively employing metaphor in a sustained manner. I will argue in the following chapters that personification was a key facet of the concept of the state’s emergence and development, and that an analysis of key philosophical texts on the state bear out this claim. I will suggest therefore that personification was crucial to the

development of understandings of the political entity within a transtemporal, self-referential linguistic community. This is the approach then that justifies the following chapters and their focus on how personified understandings of the state changed and developed over time.

## |Chapter Three|

### The Body Politic:

#### The State-as-Human Body metaphor in Pre-Modern Periods

##### Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore those metaphors and analogies which borrow language more commonly associated with the (human) body in order to articulate the internal nature of the political entity. I will focus in particular on those metaphors seeking to understand the political entity's component parts and their interrelation and hierarchy. Employing the body to conceptualise the state was a mainstay of ancient and Christian philosophy, flowering in the medieval period in particular. Some texts reference the connection in passing, while others are dedicated to explicating the analogy in elaborate detail. In light of the previous chapter's arguments about the conceptual significance of sustained uses of metaphor, I will devote my attention to the latter. These "organismic" (Coker, 1967[1910]) or "anatomic" metaphors (Nederman, 1987: 213-4<sup>1</sup>) culminate in the medieval period with the elaborate metaphorical structures of John of Salisbury and then later with texts associated with writers attached to conciliarism, such as Marsilius of Padua and Nicholas of Cusa.

Broadly speaking, these anatomical metaphors predominate before more fulsome forms of personification gather pace in the early modern period that focus on the more psychological and legal dimensions to personhood and personality. Such dimensions are of course themselves the contemporaneous products of a particular philosophical tradition. My discussion here then is mostly limited to pre-modern political philosophy. In later chapters, I will however challenge the notion that these body metaphors fully died out with the development of modern understandings of the state in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, only to be replaced by mechanistic metaphors. My response to this claim is not that body metaphors continued to be employed without modification into the modern era, but rather that the "bodification" present in much ancient and medieval political philosophy

became, in the modern era, more fulsome “personification”. Thus, the metaphorical association between state and person insinuates itself into later discourse without the poetic extravagance of its medieval predecessors by drawing on less corporeal and more psychological claims about the human person that strike us now as less metaphorical simply because they have been naturalised, as in talk of the “general will” or “national identity”. I should stress that no sharp historical demarcation should be inferred by the reader between “bodification” and “personification”; I will discuss pre-modern examples of “personification” at the start of the following chapter. As such, the metaphors I explore in this chapter mostly predate the development of the modern concept of the state, and certainly the use of that term in English or its sister words in French and Italian (“état” and “stato”). However, it is essential for us to understand how that modern concept of the state emerged and the kinds of metaphors which articulations of this concept were elaborating upon. I hope to show that there is a good deal of continuity between conceptions of the political entity in the medieval and modern eras, and this continuity reveals itself in – and, as I will later argue, is identical with – the kinds of metaphors that are common to both.

During the pre-modern periods, the use of organismic or body metaphors intersects with a series of wider debates within political philosophy about the legitimately constituted or idealised state. Firstly, we have a battle between (natural) hierarchy and equality. Secondly, that debate is related to, though ultimately conceptually distinct from, a debate between individualism and holism regarding whether the community or the individual is the more foundational unit of political and social analysis, and thus by extension the rights that individuals have against the social whole and the public good. Thirdly, during the period we have a debate between the temporal power of the prince and the spiritual power of the Pope, which is also apparent in the competing uses of metaphorical language. Metaphors regarding the “two swords” often sought to resolve this debate but so too did arguments relating to the fractious dispute between the temporal “head” and the ghostly “soul” of the body politic. Fourthly, disputes between the single ruler and the council first appear in the spiritual realm and were then later transposed into secular affairs. We thereby, finally, have a battle



between the head and the body – between the authoritarian monarch or emperor and the sovereign ‘people’. The conciliar movement within the Christian church which pushed for the role of the elected council above the personalised power of the papacy spawned a variety of texts invoking organic metaphors which ultimately filtered down into similar secular debates between the hereditary monarch and the elected republican assembly representing a sovereign ‘people’.

In these various debates, body metaphors proved highly important yet also incredibly malleable. At its most basic, it was used to assert the unitary nature of the political entity and the necessity that it be a functioning and harmonious entity composed of distinct and potentially diverse parts. Yet, under the image of the central organising and directing head or mind or heart or soul (see Musolff, 2021: 21-6 for further discussion of these subtle variations in the basic metaphorical connection), the metaphor could justify monarchical and authoritarian forms of rulership. Metaphors of the ancient world most often sought to defend a hierarchical vision of society in which functioning was dependent not only on cooperation but also potentially on rightful obedience to a ruler and a general acceptance that certain parts of this society will receive more than strict equality would tend to allow. Moreover, analogies and metaphors relating the state to a piece of private property held by the ruler, or those treating Kings as quasi-deities all tended to reinforce a hierarchical and monarchical vision of political organisation. Even here though, organic metaphors relating to the body tended to attempt some reconciliation between the role of the powerful and the role of those less fortunate members of the political body. Even while metaphors that conceptualised the king as the royal “head” justified the enormous relative power of the monarchy in governing the whole organism, such metaphors could never entirely overlook that the state was more than just this head, but rather a social whole whose existence required the cooperation of all.

Ultimately though, by the end of the Middle Ages, body metaphors from the ancient and medieval worlds also propelled forward conceptions of political structure in more republican and (what we would *now* call) democratic terms, though which remained somewhat holist in their stress on the corporate nature

of the correctly organised political entity. The shift towards body metaphors becoming increasingly affiliated with more democratic modes of political expression is slow but we may place great emphasis on Pauline doctrine, the particular emphasis it played in the conciliar movement of the later Middle Ages and the transposition of this religious doctrine into the secular realm.

In terms of this chapter's structure, I first explore the significance of metaphors from classical antiquity, focusing on Aesop's fable, *The Belly and the Members*, and the political philosophy of Aristotle, before turning to two understandings of the body employed in Christian theology, the focus on Christ's twin aspects, his divine and natural body, on the one hand, and the Pauline doctrine of the "body of Christ" as an image of the community of Christian believers, on the other, which was itself adapted from classical metaphors of the Aesopian variety. I finally turn to the inter-mingling of both classical and Christian ideas in medieval political texts, focusing on John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* and the shift towards an association between organic metaphors and support for popular sovereignty in texts attached to the conciliar movement, as found in texts by Marsilius of Padua and Nicholas of Cusa. In the final section, I seek to explain why all of these metaphors involving the body are so ubiquitous during the period. In short, my answer is that they are a manifestation of deep theological assumptions about the ordering of the universe. While they may, to the modern reader, appear fanciful or frivolous, these metaphors and analogies are in fact of profound significance in explaining how these writers understood the route to both instrumental knowledge and moral truths about the contested and uncertain realm of social and political organisation. I also hope to show through an examination of the development of prior metaphorical connections with texts using metaphor in a sustained fashion that they are also not simply decorative in the sense outlined in Chapter Two, but rather the means by which writers thought, reasoned and came to know the nature of the political entity.

## Classical Body Metaphors

### i) The Belly and the Members

A fable is a fiction that typically illustrates a moral teaching about the world. It is an “extended or sustained” metaphor (Turbayne, 1971: 19) that simplifies understandings of our existence.<sup>2</sup> Fables often give names and physical embodiment to abstractions of various kinds. The tortoise and the hare, for example, reflect certain attitudes within ourselves as much as distinct personalities in the world. Often, of course, the fable’s intended audience is children, in the hope of providing digestible guidance regarding how our worlds are framed by social and moral convention. Fables are of course malleable in their search for simplicity and generality, precise meaning being left at the mercy of its various interpreters. It is fitting that the “life” of the personified state as a metaphor may be said to begin with Aesop’s fable, *The Belly and the Members*<sup>3</sup>. That dating the tale proves difficult is perhaps fitting too, though it is suspected to originate from around the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Zavadil, 2009: 222; also see McVay, 2000: 136). This fable explores the nature of social and political coordination and union. It does so by reflecting on the way in which such union mirrors biological functioning among anthropomorphised organs and bodily parts. In most versions of the fable, the story is centred upon some form of dispute between the characters of the belly and other bodily parts about the fairness of the former’s selfish ingestion of food. A “strike” is organised by the other members in protest at the belly’s consumption, only for them to realise, in some versions too late, how they all suffer if the belly is not well-fed, for they are all connected and the health of each is dependent on the others. Hale cites the following as an illustrative excerpt from the simplest version of the fable (though it dates from possibly as late as the third century AD): “The belly and the feet were arguing about their importance, and when the feet kept saying that they were so much stronger that they even carried the stomach around, the stomach replied, 'But, my good friends, if I didn't take in food, you wouldn't be able to carry anything'" (Hale, 1968: 378).

The moral of the fable might appear to be that of obedience to those one depends on for survival or perhaps the need to accept the consumption of the fortunate or powerful. Yet it of course also implies the need for cooperation between distinct, potentially functionally different, entities. This imprecision is important. The moral of the fable can to an extent be amended according to the political leanings of the teller. Aesop's tale is a healthy starting point for a discussion of political metaphors involving the body because of the myriad ways in which the story was used by both classical and medieval writers (see Patterson, 1991). Due to this rhetorical elasticity, the fable "clarifies or buttresses the most diverse political arguments" (Archambault, 1967:21). Different versions of the fable have advocated "friendship or Christian love, general political obedience or specific ecclesiastical change" (Hale, 1968: 386). It is this fact which led Walter Ullmann to make the more general point that "[m]edieval allegories seem to have been double edged weapons" (Ullmann, 1965: 221).

This fable was to have a profound effect over the Middle Ages in particular, filtered especially through Roman writers such as Livy, Plutarch and Dionysius of Halicarnassus in their accounts of a speech made by the Roman consul Menenius Agrippa in which he sought to convince the plebeians (or "commoners") to end their 494 BC secession and return to Rome by recounting a version of the fable (see Smith, 2018 for a discussion of Livy's version of the fable; also see Walters, 2020: 7-25; McVay, 2000: 136-8). Livy quotes the fable that Menenius Agrippa told in the following fashion:

"At a time when the members of the human body did not, as at present, all unite in one plan, but each member had its own scheme, and its own language; the other parts were provoked at seeing that the fruits of all their care, of all their toil and service, were applied to the use of the belly; and that the belly meanwhile remained at its ease, and did nothing but enjoy the pleasure provided for it: on this they conspired together, that the hand should not bring food to the mouth, nor the mouth receive it if offered, nor the teeth chew it. While they wished, by these angry measures, to subdue the belly through hunger, the members themselves, and the whole body,

were together with it, reduced to the last stage of decay: from thence it appeared that the office of the belly itself was not confined to a slothful indolence; that it not only received nourishment, but supplied it to the others, conveying to every part of the body, that blood, on which depend our life and vigour, by distributing it equally through the veins, after having brought it to perfection by digestion of the food" (Livy, 1823: 151-2).

Here the fable was being used to defend the ideals of Roman republicanism – mixed government comprised of an aristocratic element in the senate and the people (*populus*) existing in harmony and mutual dependency. A version of such a “harmonic kind of constitution” was summarised by Cicero<sup>4</sup> in his *Treatise on the Laws* as being constituted by “the authority of the senate and the power of the people” (Cicero, 1842: 155).

The longevity of direct retellings of the fable via Menenius is suggested by its use in the opening act of Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*, which dramatizes his speech. The fable’s influence can be discerned across countless texts of the Middle Ages, including in the work of Marie de France, who offers a straightforward retelling of it,<sup>5</sup> and in her contemporary John’s of Salisbury’s *Policraticus* where it also appears in strictly fabulistic form. The chain of reference and influence between different versions of the fable is not always possible to decipher with certainty, though often there are good reasons to suggest one author directly influencing another.<sup>6</sup>

## ii) Body Metaphors in Aristotle’s *Politics*

Alongside that tradition stemming from Aesop which relates the metaphor in the narrative form of a fable, Greek philosophy additionally took up the basic metaphorical connection in a less formal, allegorical style. Instead, analogies or metaphors relating the organism to the city-state are employed to debate the correct political constitution or the just interrelation between the individual and their social milieu. Aristotle in particular is worth discussing here, both for his

significant influence over medieval thought especially following Aquinas – who describes Aristotle simply as ‘the Philosopher’ - but also because of the way in which his use of analogy interacts with a number of key theoretical issues regarding the nature of figurative language.

Aristotle’s use of the analogy was in part an inheritance from Plato. In Plato’s work, we find the association between societal “justice” and the fulfilling of one’s own, designated functions within it, such that the just society is composed of three, functionally different groups, each rightly ‘minding their own business’. Plato treats this as analogous to the harmonious relations between the three elements of the human soul or psyche: the rational, the irascible, and the appetitive. Aristotle both develops Plato’s analogy involving the reasoning and desiring elements of the soul or psyche when discussing the relationship between the statesman and political subjects, but also employs a more general soul-body analogy when talking about the ruler-ruled relationship between master and slave, arguing that “whenever there is the same wide discrepancy between human beings as there is between soul and body or between man and beast, then those whose condition is such that their function is the use of their bodies and nothing better can be expected of them, those, I say, are slaves by nature” (Aristotle, 1981: 68-9). Aristotle’s addition of this soul-body analogy serves to critique Plato’s description of the parts of the state, emphasising that “[i]f the soul is to be regarded as part of a living creature even more than its body, then in states too we must regard the corresponding elements as being parts in a fuller sense than those which merely conduce to utility and necessity” (Aristotle, 1981: 247). We thus find a mixing of two closely related analogies; the result is a broad metaphorical schema between statesman and citizens (or King and subjects), and between masters and slaves, on the one hand, and that between intelligence and desire, and between the soul and the body, on the other. This schema is tersely expressed by Aristotle in his assertion that “[t]he rule of soul over body is like a master's rule, while the rule of intelligence over desire is like a statesman's or a king's” (Aristotle, 1981: 68).

However, Aristotle also employs an anatomical analogy elsewhere in discussions of the state. In some of these instances, it is clear that we are dealing neither with Plato's psyche or soul analogy exactly, nor are we discussing specifically the master-slave relationship, as distinct from the statesman-citizen or king-subject relationship. For example, Aristotle suggests applying, by analogy, the question "[w]hat is it essential for every animal to have?" to the topic of the state and its internal composition, and thereby invites us to look for those parts analogous in their constituent status to "the organs of sense-perception", and to those parts which process and receive nourishment, such as the "mouth and stomach", and to those other parts which "enable the animal in question to move about" (Aristotle, 1981: 246-7). Moreover, later Aristotle suggests that just as "[t]he body consists of parts, and all increase must be in proportion, so that the proper balance of the whole may remain intact since otherwise the body becomes useless", the same must be true of the state (Aristotle, 1981: 303).

As in some of the above cases, Aristotle employs such analogies to justify the natural hierarchy of human life, such that "some things are so divided right from birth, some to rule, some to be ruled" (1981: 67). However, he also employs related analogies to support a holistic worldview. The question of social hierarchy and whether this hierarchy is natural should be treated as distinct from a related distinction between individualism and holism, regarding what or who is the fundamental unit of social and political analysis. Confusion does arise if we conflate these two oppositions. The metaphor or analogy of the city-state as an organism also justifies holism in Aristotle's work. Assuming that the community is a complete, functioning organism casts the constituent individuals as incomplete in some way, as merely a fragment of the wider whole of the political and social community. Thus, Aristotle claimed that "the state is both natural and prior to the individual" for "the whole must be prior to the parts", which is justified by the assertion that "[s]eparate hand or foot from the whole body, and they will no longer be hand or foot except in name" (1981: 60-1). That the state is prior to the individual indicates for Aristotle the dependency of the individual on the state, and that the individual can only be defined in relation to the state of which it is merely a part or organ.<sup>7</sup> As we shall see in later texts, metaphors conceptualising

the social or political unit as a body often synthesise support for *both* natural hierarchy and holism in Aristotelian fashion, in their combination of support for functionally different and hierarchically ordered component parts with the suggestion that each part is not itself a complete whole to the same degree in which the composed organism is. Certain Christian metaphors involving the Pauline “body of Christ” can be interpreted as subverting this slightly, by maintaining the holistic spirit of these classical metaphors while introducing a stronger assumption of natural human equality *in spite of* our differing social standings (see Siedentop, 2014: 58-66).

Aristotle also recognises a problem pertinent to the distinction between an “analogy” and an “identity” in regard to the relationship between state and individual. He acknowledges that the nature of a true state is such that a certain degree of plurality is required and that once the state progresses towards unity, “the less a state it becomes and the more a household, and the household in turn an individual”, such that it will “cease to be a state” (1981: 104). This tension between identity and analogy is evident in many later examples of metaphors describing the state by reference to the human person. Unlike, for example, Plato’s ship of state metaphor (see Ankersmit, 1993), which easily becomes absurd if any attempt is made to extend it in novel directions due to fundamental dissimilarities between ship and states in any number of respects, the relationship between the individual person and the state is at all junctures a close one, owing to the fact that the latter is always comprised of, and frequently represented by, individual persons. Aristotle’s model for phenomena evincing unity and true substance is that of the individual organism: “[w]e would all agree that the household is more of a unity than the state and the individual than the household [...] So, even if it were possible to make such a unification, it ought not be done; it will destroy the state.” (Aristotle, 1981: 104). Thus, to take the individual person as a metaphor’s source domain is to implicate something with fundamental unity (Mayhew, 1997: 329). Yet, as Mayhew argues, the city *must have less unity* than that of the person according to Aristotle, and so the analogy must remain an imperfect one, for any truly perfect analogy would, paradoxically, be no analogy at all, but rather an identity, and we would then be speaking literally (Mayhew, 1997).



## Patristic Body Metaphors

### i) Personified Divinity

Two branches of related metaphor within Christian theology of the Patristic period were particularly influential during the Middle Ages and early modern period over their understanding of the state. The first relates to the deification of the political ruler and is connected to an understanding of the God-man's twin aspects of divinity and corporeality, while the second branch is a Pauline twist on ancient metaphors associated with both Aesop's fable and its Roman variants.

While the deification of political rulers is not directly a kind of body metaphor, it relies in its turn on the bodification of divinity, which is highly relevant for a discussion of the development of the idea of the state. It is necessary to discuss the topic now in order to explicate the second branch of Christian metaphors which does employ body metaphor directly. Personification of divinity of course predates Christian thought, as did discussion of its role in religious thought; Xenophanes, for example, offered a stinging criticism of this phenomenon when arguing that,

“[b]ut mortals consider that the gods are born, and that they have clothes and speech and bodies like their own...The Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black, the Thracians that theirs have light blue eyes and red hair...But if cattle and horses or lions had hands, or were able to draw with their hands and do the works that men can do, horses would draw the forms of the gods like horses, cattle like cattle and they would make their bodies such as they each had themselves” (cited in Kirk, Raven, & Schofield, 1983: 168-9).<sup>8</sup>

Even if God is defined simply as the most perfect in all respects, this must inevitably be cashed out in terms amenable to human experience. Admittedly,

personification is not the only crucial metaphor related to Christian accounts of God; other metaphors describing God as the 'shepherd' or as 'light' have also produced a rich tapestry of meaning.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it is the depiction of Jesus Christ as a personified deity transformed into flesh, as a literal *embodiment* of the divine, and as "the son" of "the father", that is the Christian religion's most distinctive aspect. Christianity relies substantially on such metaphors in order to describe the kind of ineffability towards which it, and all religions, strive. Given the central role of religion in European society of the Middle Ages, it is of course unsurprising that religious language, imagery and ways of thinking would find their way into contemporary *political* discourse.

While kings and rulers have immemorially been "haloed" (Figgis, 1914: ch. 1), their deification being evident in Greek, Egyptian and Roman thought (see Brock, 2013: 1-14), it takes on a particular familiarity and comprehensibility in a religion where the interrelation between the human and the divine are being discussed as a matter of pressing concern. Ever since the rejection as heresy of ideas that saw Jesus either as an ordinary human being (such as *Ebionitism*) or as wholly divine (*Docetism*), attempts had been made to articulate his exact nature and the coordination of his human and divine dimensions (McGrath, 1997: 330-1). Indeed, debate over whether *homoiousios* ("of like substance") or *homoousios* ("of the same substance") more accurately described the relationship between Father and Son occupied attention at least until the Nicene creed of 381AD settled it in the latter's favour (McGrath, 1997: 335). Such as it was that a debate over the distinction between an analogy and an identity altered the course of both spiritual and temporal matters during the Patristic period and beyond.<sup>10</sup>

During the full-flourishing of Christocentric reflection in the monastic period (c. 900 – 11000 AD), comparisons between the king and Christ suggested the possibility of the secular King likewise possessing two natures, him becoming, if only briefly and by Grace, simultaneously both God and man, a "germination" mirroring the God-man (Kantorowicz, 2016: 85-6).<sup>11</sup> As Kantorowicz demonstrated, a miniature in the Gospel Book of Aachen, completed around 973 AD in the Abbey of Reichenau, depicting the Emperor Otto II, reflects this

development; Otto is seated, not on the ground, but rather in mid-air, his feet in the sky and his head passing through the firmament into heaven, highlighting his twin aspects of divinity and humanity, and an artistic reflection of similar depictions of Christ (Kantorowicz, 2016: 61-78).<sup>12</sup> It is in this light which we must see the medieval textual descriptions of the King as the “image” or “resemblance” of Christ (see Kantorowicz, 2016: 59). These descriptions developed out of depictions of the Christian Pope as the “Vicar” of God can be found. A typical example of this can be found in Roger Bacon’s 13<sup>th</sup> century *Opus Majus*, which argues that “there must be a single mediator of God and man, the vicar of God on earth, who receives the law from God and promulgates it” and this is the head of the Christian religion (Bacon, 1963: 374; also see similar characterisation of the Pope in John of Paris, 1974). However, the figure of the secular ruler came to undermine the idea of the Pope as the figure with sole connection to the divine. For example, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Henry de Bracton could state quite plainly that “the king is God's vicar” and that, in relation to a country’s laws, “judgments are not made by man but by God, which is why the heart of a king who rules well is said to be in the hand of God” (Bracton, 1968: 20, also see pg. 33). Similarly, in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, Nicholas of Cusa argued that

“the Christian emperor by virtue of his rulership is the vicar of Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Hence just as Christ is king of kings so all kings have something of the divine in their governing power” (Nicholas of Cusa, 2018: 23).

Such Christological allusions only further permeated depictions of the secular ruler in the modern period, especially those associated with absolutist theories of monarchy (see Keohane, 2017: 15-8, 55-6); for example, we find in Bodin’s work the suggestion that “the prince is the image of God” (Bodin, 1955: 36), which was adapted by Hobbes in his description of the Leviathan as a “mortal God” (Hobbes, 1651).<sup>13</sup>

Other metaphorical possibilities interplay with this hierarchical image of a Godlike King. Admittedly, in potential tension with the quasi-divine prince was the

recognition that political rule was often an exaggerated form of property ownership. I have already noted, for example, that the English word “state” is quite possibly a contraction of the term “estate” (see Figgis, 1914: 22). Moreover, even by the reign of Edward I, the king’s rights are best conceptualised “as intensified private rights” and kingly power as “a mode of dominium; the ownership of a chattel, the lordship, the tenancy, of lands...” and there was as of yet no clear demarcating line “between those proprietary rights which the king has as king and those which he has in his private capacity” (Figgis, 1914: 22; Maitland & Pollock, 2010: 539-40, 545; Morrall, 1980: 61; Carr, 1946: 147). Such ideas were, I will concede, occasionally and rather politely challenged, as in William of Pagula’s 14<sup>th</sup> century appeals to Edward III regarding property seizures (see William of Pagula, 2000). This being so, the proto state of this era could be said to literally be the King, or rather, the state literally was the King’s property. Moreover, this identity between the state and the King lasted well into the modern era. According to some, the King *literally was* the state, as suggested by Louis XIV’s own (probably apocryphal) declaration that “L’État c’est moi!” (the state is me) (cited in McGraw and Dolan, 2007: 301; Rowen, 1961: 83; Wiesner-Hanks, 2006: 318; also see Kelly, 1986).

Thus, to talk of metaphor in this context is not always appropriate, for we may not be in the presence of an analogy or metaphor between the political community and the human body, but rather an identity between them. All metaphors of the period – wherever we feel confident in identifying them as such – must be understood as gaining their force and their sense of inevitability from just such an interplay between the literal and the metaphorical use of words. This gives us an indication as to the reason behind the longevity of anthropomorphised political authority; it accorded with long-held realities regarding the individualistic nature of royal power.

ii) The Body of Christ

The second branch of Christian metaphor is best understood as a continuation of ancient metaphors likening the political entity to a (human) body and its internal anatomy. Those ancient metaphors relating to the fable of *The Belly and the Members* likely filtered down through Roman writers' accounts of the speech by Menenius Agrippa into the writings of St. Paul (see Smith, 2018; Lee, 2006: 9f; Mitchell, 1992: 158-64). This Pauline strand of metaphor was to have great significance over political thought of the medieval period, as was the work of Paul more generally (see Ullman, 1966). One crucial element of this importance is found in his *Letter to the Romans*, in which Paul stressed the requirement of a subjection to power: "[l]et every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment" (Romans 13: 1-2, Revised Standard Version). Ullmann argues that "the element of obedience presupposed the existence of faith. This is indubitably the message of Pauline doctrine" (1966: 12). Ullmann suggests that the ancient view of hierarchy was preserved in Paul's work and carried forth into the Middle Ages (Ullmann, 1966: 14), and it is striking how often we find such optimism in a divinely ordained status quo in medieval thought.

However, Paul's use of body metaphors elsewhere invites a slightly different account, one which was less hierarchical in orientation and could instead support a more egalitarian understanding of social structures, though still retaining a strong sense of holism (Black, 1997; see Nederman, 2009: 190-8 for his response). I refer here to Paul's discussion of "the body of Christ". The most important source of this metaphor is in *1 Corinthians 12*:

"[f]or just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (Revised Standard Version).

Cooperation is advocated in the plea that, despite divergent roles within the Church: "God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another". Echoing this passage, in Colossians 1:18, Christ is described as "the head of the body, the church".

While these passages clearly exemplify a holist worldview, they do not seem to necessarily assert a natural hierarchy, as some have suggested (e.g. Hale 1971a: 28-9). Instead, the emphasis on moral equality in spite of social status or role is paramount (see Lee, 2006: 16, 144-5). We may trace Paul's more cosmopolitan understanding of the "universal brotherhood of man" not to Aristotle and Plato and their understandings of the polis differentiated into citizen and non-citizen, but to the Stoic understanding of natural law (Crowe, 1977: 33-5). We therefore need to clearly delineate between the advocacy of natural hierarchy and equality, and between individualism and holism (see Macfarlane, 1992 for a theoretical examination of this distinction). Ullmann rightly interprets Paul as arguing that "each part of the human body functioned for the sake of the whole, not for its own sake" and that, once translated into the political sphere, this led to the doctrine that "the individual did not exist for his own sake, but for the sake of the whole society" (Ullmann, 1966: 42), but we shouldn't suppose that this kind of holism necessarily entails hierarchy (Smith, 2018: 153). Orientating the individual towards the common good is of course not symmetrical to their subservience to the private will of a prince or aristocratic class.

The relationship between the Pauline conception of "the body of Christ" and the more general employment of metaphor and analogy in describing secular or ecclesiastical structures was recognised during the medieval period. In other words, the expression "the body of Christ" did not pass purely into idiom. For example, Pope Leo IX (1002-54), in the 37<sup>th</sup> chapter of his letter against the claims of Michael of Constantinople, argued that "[t]he very structure of the parts of the body should teach us about the structure of the church, for it is the Body of Christ" before going on to quote the above passage from *Corinthians* by Paul (cited in Nicholas of Cusa, 2018: 14). These arguments about the structure of the

community of Christian believers and then of the institutionalised church began being adapted by political theorists to describe the political community, sometimes incorporating the church within it, and at other times not. Thus, talk of the “body of Christ” (*corpus Christi*) and later the “mystical body” (*corpus mysticum*) and later still the body politic occupy a chain of metaphorical connection which connects early Patristic thought to later medieval political philosophy.

Lastly, one should also note that the metaphor of the body of Christ denoting the universal Christian community was initially discussed by Paul in passages which also refer to the Eucharist (as in *1 Corinthians 10-11*), wherein believers consume the *literal* body and blood of Christ through blessed bread and wine. While transubstantiation was formally explored by scholastic writers of the medieval period<sup>14</sup>, *avant la lettre* this literal reading is Patristic in origin, only to be significantly, and of course most famously, challenged over the course of the Reformation in Europe. As Augustine wrote, “not all bread, but only that which receives the blessing of Christ becomes the Body of Christ” (1959: 224). Therefore, we may say that the metaphors relating the community of the faithful to a body develop *out of* Paul’s remarks about the last supper’s wine and bread. We must pay close attention here then to the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical; while we may now understand the “body” and “blood” of Christ within the Eucharist as literal (within Catholicism) and “the body of Christ” (denoting the community of believers) as metaphorical, one must consider whether such a sharp delineation is plausible. For example, Robinson (1966: 48) suggests that Paul intended in *Corinthians* a literal sense to the notion that the church was Christ’s risen body (also see Lee, 2006: 1-26). However, I will continue to treat this corporate understanding of the body of Christ as a metaphor here, particularly when discussing politics, for even if “...the church was not thought to be like a body; it was thought to be a body, and Christ its actual head”, it remains valid that “this mysterious identity could not be reproduced in politics, and so the unity and integration of the church, like that of the physical body itself, only symbolized a perfection which the state might approach or in terms of which it might convincingly be described” (Walzer, 1967: 193). In short, descriptions of the

state - or commonwealth or republic or kingdom, and so on - as a corporate or mystical body retain their metaphoric dimension.

### **Medieval Body Metaphors**

I now wish to briefly survey some of the more sustained uses of body metaphors in medieval political thought, which ultimately developed into those accounts of the modern state that employ the latter term directly. It is the continuity of language and the malleability of the metaphorical association which are most striking. In this period, as with the classical examples, medieval anatomic metaphors were utilised to suggest that within political collectives, individuals weren't necessarily "arithmetically equal units" but as socially grouped and differentiated from each other (Gierke, 1900: 28). Bodification was employed to support more absolutist strains of (often hereditary) monarchy against more popularly conceived notions of political power, since the role that the head plays in the body natural suggests a similarly constituted organisation of the body politic (Gierke, 1900: 29, 31). Yet, still others employed body metaphors to caution against royal absolutism and support popular sovereignty.

#### **i) The Proliferation of Body Metaphors in Political Philosophy**

Medieval political thought betrays the twin influences of ancient and Christian ideas. Christianity played a crucial role in the revival of this strain of metaphor during the Middle Ages, and references to the body of Christ, and the distinction between the corporeal and divine figured greatly here. In addition, when metaphors regarding the political entity as an individual "re-emerged" in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries (Archambault, 1967: 25), they were influenced by work from classical antiquity, such that we see "within the medieval husk an 'antique-modern' kernel" (Gierke, 2003 [1900]: 4). This rejuvenation of the analogy between the city-state and the body was likely spurred initially by interpretations of Cicero and Plutarch, and then from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards due to the



rediscovery of Aristotle, often with Aquinas acting as an intermediary (Warrington, 1959: xii, Archambault, 1967: 21, 52).

A significant step in the re-emergence of the analogy between the political entity and the body occurs with John of Salisbury's 1159 work, *Policraticus*, a text which has been called the "first elaborate medieval treatise on politics" (Dickinson, 1927: xvii; endorsed by Taylor, 2006: 139) and John himself has been called the "founder of western political science" (Berman, quoted in Taylor, 2006: 140). John's work has been seen by Ullmann as constituting the historical "climax" of what he terms the "organological" conception of society that so characterised medieval reflections on politics, religion and metaphysics (Ullmann, 1965: 123). In John's work, we find the extension of organicist or body metaphors taken to perhaps unsurpassed levels of intricacy. The work's originality lies in this sustained use of body metaphors (Nederman, 1987: 214). The text offers both a straightforward retelling of the fable of *The Belly and the Members*, as well as employing body metaphors elsewhere in a more discursive manner in the processes of arguing about the constitution of the ideal republic. I will focus here on the latter form of metaphor. One should stress here that the republic John is describing is indeed an *ideal* state and the prince is a model prince, with the metaphor functioning to convey the perfection of this formulation (O'Daly, 2018: 128-9, 130, 135).

John's work is notable also for the proliferation of sources from classical antiquity that it cites (Nederman, 2007: xx) and much of Books V and VI of *Policraticus* claim to echo an obscure work of Plutarch entitled the "Instruction of Trajan", which may well have been a fiction devised by John himself in order to prop up his otherwise unsupported and potentially controversial arguments (Liebeschütz, 1943: 34; Nederman, 2007: xxi). He almost implies as much when qualifying Book VI by remarking on Plutarch's influence: "I follow him and descend with him from the head of the republic all the way to the feet, yet on the condition that, if in this section I appear too caustic to those who are permitted to be ignorant of legal right, then it will be ascribed not to me but to Plutarch" (2007: 103).

While John does employ other kinds of metaphor and analogy, the human body is the guiding structural element of his attempt to describe the political entity. John positions the prince as head of his “republic”.<sup>15</sup> The senate occupies the position of the heart, whereas the judges and governors of provinces take on the duties of the ears, eyes and mouth, and the officials and soldiers assume the role of the hands. Those who always assist the prince are “comparable to the flanks” (2007: 67). Treasurers and record keepers (“the counts of the Exchequer”) resemble

“the shape of the stomach and intestines; these, if they accumulate with great avidity and tenaciously preserve their accumulation, engender innumerable and incurable diseases so that their infection threatens to ruin the whole body” (2007: 67).

Finally, the feet are those

“peasants perpetually bound to the soil, for whom it is all the more necessary that the head take precautions, in that they more often meet with accidents while they walk on the earth in bodily subservience; and those who erect, sustain and move forward the mass of the whole body are justly owed shelter and support” (2007: 67).

The importance of the feet of the body is such that, if removed, even the fittest body “either crawls shamefully, uselessly and offensively on its hands or else is moved with the assistance of brute animals” (2007: 67).

John’s work provides us a good example of how body metaphors were being used to argue about the correct coordination between wholly secular elements of the political community. First of all, John’s work evidences a focus on the “health” of the political entity, the suggestion of course being that the *body* of the republic could achieve equilibrium as a biological organism, but equally could suffer dysfunction and imbalance (Musolff, 2016: 57). Attention to the health of the political body was further developed in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries by the likes of Nicholas Oresme, who described tyranny as the excessive flow of humors into the

head, and Dante, who referred to surgery and cauterization in descriptions of political dispute resolution (see Shogimen, 2008: 88). We should note here that the focus on health reflects a form of political bodification that was thoroughly “internal”, treating the human body as if in the operating theatre or on the mortuary table as opposed to considering its interactions with other, similar bodies. As such, John’s arguments are directed inward at the composition of the political entity and the various roles ascribed to government offices.<sup>16</sup> Insofar as John’s anthropomorphism looks outwards, to beyond the flesh of the political body, it does so in order to position the state’s internal constitution both in competition with, or by derivation from, theological power structures or the celestial order.

When it comes to what a healthy political body looks like, there is some ambiguity in John’s work. On the one hand, his analogy can be seen as legitimising hierarchical structures and personalised notions of political power. This we should interpret partly as the product of the medieval period’s classical inheritance of ideas about social and political hierarchy and subordination, as well as ideas which “haloed” the singular ruler. In John’s work, the prince as head of the political body is “agreed to be a sort of deity on earth” (2007: 137) or, alternatively, “a certain image on earth of the divine majesty” (2007: 28). John follows such a claim with a quote from Paul’s *Romans*: “Whoever therefore resists power, resists what is ordained by God”, which he justifies with the claim that the prince’s power derives from God (2007: 28-9). In a later passage, John characterises the prince’s power as being such that it could overwhelm all other members of the political body; the “whole province is like the money box of the prince; anyone who exhausts it transgresses most seriously against the prince, whose wealth is reduced” (2007: 109). The Prince, John argues, should be loved by all members, but those members should also “subject themselves to the head” (2007: 127). John discusses the ordering of the body politic through allusions to function, occupation and the Platonic ideal of “minding one’s own business” and in this we may interpret a hierarchical vision of society within *Policraticus* (O’Daly, 2018: 127).

However, John's reference to the feet of the body politic, wherein argues that they are functionally necessary for the body's survival and deserving of protection from the ground, highlights the indispensability of those occupying the lowest strata of social status and the prince's duty to protect them. Indeed, the "members" and the "head" of the body must cohere into one united form and, as such, malice against *either* the head or members is a most serious crime against the corporate body (2007: 137). The members qualify the head's power, and as such it is clear that John is using the analogy to also offer a veiled critique of *absolute* royal power (Hale, 1971a: 40) and his image of the state does not countenance tyranny but rather in fact justifies, in certain cases, tyrannicide, or at least impeachment and removal (Nederman, 1992: 980; Taylor, 2006: 153-4). John takes great pains therefore to explain the difference between his understanding of a prince and that of a tyrant on the basis that the former is "obedient to law" (2007: 28). Therefore, alongside the implication of legitimate hierarchy and subordination is an emphasis on reciprocity between ruler and ruled in John's work, a marriage not uncommon in contemporaneous uses of body metaphors (Rigby, 2012: 468).<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the metaphor was often used to support the idea of a singular sovereign ruler decreeing of his own will but in the service of the public good. This combination of hierarchy and a duty of care is reflected in a passage that John characterises as a summary of Socrates' political principles: "the duty of the greater man in the republic is to protect most diligently those who are humbler" (2007: 137).

Archambault (1967) draws our attention to John's claim that the "soul", in relation to the body, is represented by the clergy, thereby fitting neatly into the dominant hierocratic theory. John was writing decades after an intense rift between the pope and the Holy Roman emperor regarding the hierarchical relationship between the two, the emperor's ostensibly immediate origination in the divine, and therefore his right to select bishops. This conflict, the Investiture Controversy, began in 1076 with a power struggle between Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV, prompting the latter's remorseful pilgrimage to the Pope in 1077, known as "the road to Canossa" following his excommunication, and lasted until 1122. Pope Gregory VII claimed the emperor to be sinful and the work of the devil, and as such,

Gierke identifies the conflict as the most significant early crack in the notion of a unified Christian world under God in which the temporal body and the spiritual soul united into a single whole (1939: 71-2). The controversy sharpened understandings of the distinct sphere of secular authority (Strayer, 2005: 21) as Strayer argues, the controversy and Pope Gregory's articulation of an independent and powerful clergy "almost demanded the invention of the concept of the State" (2005: 21). John's assessment of the relationship between the spiritual and the temporal powers has been the subject of academic disagreement, though (see Nederman and Campbell, 1991) with Nederman (1987: 212) interpreting John as emphasising a secular vision of princely power. For example, John views the prince as being "regulated solely by the judgment of his own mind" (John of Salisbury, 2007: 69). For Nederman, because the clergy is the body's soul and therefore not truly a member, the "political creature is an essentially secular entity" (Nederman, 1992: 979). It is reasonable to suppose though that John was "satisfied neither with the fanatical spiritualism of the hierocratic mind-set nor with an equally extreme authoritarianism" (Nederman & Campbell, 1991: 589). Most crucially for our purposes, John's arguments about this interrelation between the head and the soul are discussed *in* metaphor.

The twin influences of classical and Christian thought that are evident in John's use of metaphor were carried forward by later writers. The attempt to synthesise Christian teachings with the thought of Aristotle in particular is most apparent in Aquinas, who, though most well-known for his vast theological treatise, *Summa Theologica*, employed Aristotelian metaphors extensively in another of his texts, *On Kingship*. There he argued that

"where there are many people together, and each one is looking out for his own interests, the multitude would be scattered and broken apart unless there was also someone from its number to take care of what extends to the good of the multitude; in like manner, the body of a human being or any other animal would disintegrate unless there were some general regulating members" (Aquinas, 2000: 100).

It is from here that Aquinas is able to argue as follows:

“that which is in accord with nature is best: for all things function by nature in the best way; thus, every government by nature is by one man. Indeed, in the multitude of bodily members, there is one which moves them all, namely, the heart; and among the parts of the soul, one power commands them in chief, namely, reason. Even among bees there is one king, and in the whole universe there is one God, Creator and Ruler of all. And this is reasonable” (Aquinas, 2000: 104).

ii) Later Medieval Metaphors

The significance of body metaphors fractured into different strands, with different political ends and different vision of the legitimate state. Terminology changed too, with the phrases “mystical body” (*corpus mysticum*) and then “body politic” (*corpus politicum*) gaining greater prominence.<sup>18</sup> Because John’s influence over later thought was substantial (Singer, 2018: 124-7; Ullmann, 1944), this fracturing is not wholly surprising given the ambiguity in John’s own use of the metaphor. Firstly, some later writers were to simply reiterate John’s then rather uncontroversial appeal to political reciprocity and interdependence using body metaphors. For example, a similar emphasis is present in Claude de Seyssel’s use of organic metaphors in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century to explain the need for harmony between competing parts of the state’s anatomy and in turn to justify a constitutionally restrained form of hereditary monarchy (see Keohane, 2017: 32-3).

Secondly, others employed these metaphors to reaffirm the power of the monarch as its animating and guiding force, to whom all others must willingly and by Christian duty subject themselves. We find such an interpretation of the metaphor in Jean Golein’s 1379 translation of the anonymous text, *Liber de informatione principum*, which includes the following assertion:

“For just as the head is positioned above all of the members, so the control of all is raised high, and it is endowed with all of the members and it is portrayed nobly due to the uniqueness of its dignity; so too is the king or prince placed above everyone, having all of the subjects to govern and put in order; and since he is elevated above all he must raise the eyes of his people’s hearts, and their faces, to the heavens and he must surpass all in perfect knowledge, and he must shine and display himself in nobility of manners” (quoted in Singer, 2018: 125).

Similarly, Cortes of Olmedo in 1445 argued that the King was the “head, or the heart and the soul of his people, who are his members, and owe him reverence and obedience; his authority is so great that all laws are subject to him, for he holds his Power from God and not from men” (quoted in Carlyle & Carlyle, 1936: 187). Likewise, in around 1446, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, in his text *De Ortu et Auctoritate Imperii Romani*, argued in favour of universal imperialism on the model of the Roman empire (Nederman, 1993: 509-10; Carlyle & Carlyle, 1936: 188-90), and a form of political absolutism via the metaphorical argument that “a foot or a hand - by that we mean the citizens of the Republic” may be “cut off” for the sake of the mystical body's health (quoted in Archambault, 1967: 33). In 1589, Lipsius argued for the religious unity of the state, and the necessary sacrifices that must be made in order to rid the state of violent religious dissenters following the Reformation, by exclaiming “Burn, cut — for the whole body [of the state] is of greater value than some of its limbs” (quoted in Papy, 2019). Such an approach would be echoed decades later by James I when he argued that popular rebellion would be “monstrous and unnatural”, and “for the similitude of the head and the body, it may very well fall out that the head will be forced to . . . cut off some rotten members ... to keep the rest of the body in integritie: but what state the body can be in, if the head, for any infirmitie that can fall to it, be cut off, I leave it to the readers judgement” (quoted in Attie, 2008: 497). Therefore, body metaphors could often step beyond advocacy of social harmony or the placing of the public good above one’s own, and transpose themselves into a defence of political hierarchy and of royal absolutism, and thereby permit the theoretical amputation or subjugation of political subjects. It is from such interpretations that organicism

and the use of body metaphors has been considered “undemocratic, fascist, and totalitarian in its consequences” (Weldon, 1947: 39-40).

Thirdly, however, there is another form of interpretation of the body metaphor which also draws inspiration from John of Salisbury and which developed simultaneously with the more alarming variants referenced above. Some later writers developed a more egalitarian and ultimately populist doctrine regarding the true seat of sovereignty, which upset earlier assumptions of a quasi-natural social hierarchy, and yet retained a modified form of the body metaphors found in *Policraticus*. Writers employing metaphor in this way in the following centuries were often associated with the conciliar movement. They were to more fundamentally undo the connection between body metaphor and the assumption of political hierarchy and suggests that power rightly flows upwards from the people (see Ullmann, 2010 [1961]: 1-5; cf. Oakley, 1973: 7-8). In such cases, we may discern that interpretation of St. Paul which emphasised natural human equality in spite of the artificial hierarchy determined by social status and role (Siedentop, 2014). A greater emphasis of human equality could be maintained without necessarily abandoning the inherent holism that body metaphors exhibit, and it is this possibility which conciliar thought advanced (for discussion of this point in relation to Nicholas of Cusa, see Cassirer, 2011: 36).

Conciliarism within Christianity emerged from around the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards and advocated for the formation of an ecumenical council in opposition to the singular power of the pope. The conciliar movement is a perfect illustration of where the holism of organic metaphors was employed to critique the individualistic power first of the pope, and by extension later the individual prince, by advocating for the sovereignty of the holistically conceived whole social body. This can be seen through the shift made in the use of organic metaphors. While in papal doctrine body metaphors, analogies and allegories were used to assert “the direct functioning of the pope, this same allegory now in conciliar doctrine came to assist the process of the pope’s ‘incorporation’ in the Church, since the head was said to belong to the body” (Ullmann, 1965: 221). It was also in this discourse where theories of individual rights were being advanced, chiefly because the rights



of individual bishops and priests were being defended against that of the Pope, as these individuals were the “members” of the mystical body of the church in danger of complete usurpation by the centralised power of the Pope. For Gerson, this provoked the warning that the Pope’s control was unnatural: “...all is eye or head, where is the foot, where is the hand?” (quoted in Tierney, 1997: 224).

Developing out of the conciliarist emphasis on the role of the council with the power to depose the Pope, political theorists were beginning to argue in similar fashion regarding secular affairs (see Black, 1979: 196-8; Oakley, 1981: 805). They often did so using the metaphors borrowed from conciliarist thought. Thus, we find that body metaphors were increasingly being used to advocate more generally for popular sovereignty. While previous metaphors had tended to give legitimacy to the individual’s rulers license, metaphors were now being used to critique such license and argue instead for the role of the political body apart from the royal or princely or imperial or papal head, heart, soul, and so on. Their vision remained holist in orientation, often referring to “the people”, rather than to the political rights of individuals.

We should highlight the role of John of Paris, Marsilius of Padua and Nicholas of Cusa in developing political theory out of this conciliar tradition, all of whom make significant use of these body metaphors (Tierney, 1997, see Ubl, 2015: 264-5). John of Paris, for example, is notable for his support of Philip the Fair against Pope Boniface and for depicting the state as rightly unencumbered by the interference of the ecclesiastical authorities in temporal affairs (Blythe, 1992: 139, Monahan, 1974: xx), and for emphasising the role of “the People”, who possess the power, through their “will”, to choose the King based on their “consent” or “electing”, as well as the power to depose him, along with the Pope (John of Paris, 1974: ch. 10, 17, 19; Monahan, 1974: xl; Blythe, 1992: 140-2; also see Renna, 1974)<sup>19</sup>. However, it was Marsilius of Padua who was to put forward a stronger rebuke of papal authority in relation to temporal power in his controversial work, *Defensor Pacis* (*The Defender of Peace*) of 1324 (Monahan, 1974: xli). In doing so, he similarly relied on descriptions of ecclesiastical and political structures in terms related to the body. Marsilius denies that the Pope can be truly called the “head”

of the “body of Christ”, as “no one is the head except for Christ alone” (2005: 393), not even the “Vicar of Christ on earth” (2005: 466). From this notion of the body, Marsilius implicitly criticizes the power of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Marsilius treats the priesthood as but one of the city-state’s many parts, referred to as “dispositions of the body or of the human mind” (2005: 35), alongside the judiciary and the military, as well as three other “offices” (agriculture, trade, and handicraft), and implies the need for Aristotelian “justice” between the various elements (2005: 22-30).

Marsilius’s controversial scepticism regarding the supremacy of the church hierarchy is married to his advocacy of a qualified form of popular sovereignty. Chroust (1947: 439) argues that Marsilius effectively “based his entire organic social philosophy upon this analogy to animal life”, such that the spirit of popular sovereignty that pervades his work “is encapsulated in his notion of a “citizen-body” (e.g. Marsilius of Padua, 2005: 80, 89; also in Gierke, 1900). While this is perhaps an exaggeration, it is indeed true that body metaphors intervene at crucial points in Marsilius’ text (most notably, Discourse I, Chapters 2, 15 & 17). Marsilius’ many references to the body are explicitly inspired by Aristotle’s *Politics*, and thereby refer not to the *human* body as such but rather “animate or animal nature” (Marsilius of Padua, 2005: 12). His reasoning behind the use of such an extensive analogy is made perfectly plain in Chapter Two of the opening discourse:

“For an animal which is in a good condition in respect of its nature is composed of certain proportionate parts arranged in respect of each other, all communicating their actions between themselves and towards the whole; likewise too the city which is in a good condition and established in accordance with reason is made up of certain such parts. A city and its parts would therefore seem to be in the same relation to tranquillity as an animal and its parts is to health. We can place our trust in this inference on the basis of what everyone understands about both” (Marsilius of Padua, 2005: 12).

The reappearance of Aristotle's *Politics* in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, following William of Moerbeke's translations, had enabled writers such as Marsilius to challenge the notion that hereditary monarchy was the only legitimate, or simply the best, form of government, and instead to emphasise the role of the citizen body (Skinner, 2002b: 32, 36). In this, he was building on the work of Aquinas and his followers who had already questioned hereditary lordship in an Aristotelian vein, putting forward instead the merits of elective monarchy (Skinner, 2002b: 33).

In regard to body metaphor use, Marsilius' use of them is most crucial when seeking to articulate the relationship between the principate and the other parts of the political body. He invokes them when seeking to justify the centralised power of the principate, which he treats as analogous to the heart. In this sense, he is following the medieval tradition of justifying hierarchy and centralised power by recalling such organic metaphors; Marsilius recognises the principate as "analogous to the heart", and "the authority of principate granted to a particular man is analogous to the heat in the heart" (2005: 91), without which neither the animal, nor the city, can survive. However, Marsilius subverts this tradition by conceptualising the sovereign people as the body's soul and stressing its importance in relation to the principate: "For from the soul of the universal body of the citizens or its prevailing part, one part is or should be formed first within it which is analogous to the heart" (2005: 90-2). Such passages must make us realise that the analogy being employed is precisely one involving the human body, rather than simply a generic organism. Marsilius stresses that it is merely by convenience that the prince acts rather than the universal body of citizens as legislator:

"For it is more convenient for the execution of legal matters to take place through him than through the universal multitude of the citizens, since one or a few persons exercising the function of prince are enough for this business, in which the universal community would be unnecessarily occupied and would moreover be distracted from other necessary tasks" (2005: 90).

Moreover, the authority to pass law is best derived from “the universal body of the citizens or its prevailing part” as opposed to directly from the individual ruler or the rule of the few because the individual or the few are liable to pass laws biased in favour of themselves (2005: 71).

Finally, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Nicholas of Cusa also employed an organic conception of the Church in a conciliarist vein in his text *The Catholic Concordance*. Nicholas does stress that Paul’s depiction of the “body of Christ” tells authoritatively that hierarchy is natural and necessary, and that each member must be content with his assigned role and rejoice in the glorification of another member as a part of that whole (Nicholas, 2018: 15). However, he conceptualises the priesthood as “like a single soul in the one body of the faithful” (Nicholas, 2018: 2). In stressing the unity of the priesthood, he sets the stage for his later argument that the Pope, though the highest member of the priesthood, is nonetheless still but one member of this united soul, and the whole must remain above and prior to any constituent part (Nicholas, 2018: 188-9). Thus, he advocates that the authority of church councils “does not depend on its head but on the common consent of all” (2018: 76), since coercive power must be derived from “the election and consent of the subjects”, owing fundamentally to the equality of human freedom (2018: 98). It is for this reason that Gierke refers to Nicholas as “among the leading champions of popular sovereignty” (Gierke, 1939: 148-9).<sup>20</sup>

While principally a text about the internal relations of the Christian church, Nicholas does also explore the issue of the political community, specifically the holy Roman Empire, and suggests similar principles of popular sovereignty and consent. Here too he occasionally employs related body metaphors, even invoking the concept of legal personality, a topic I will return to in the following chapter:

“One who is established in authority as representative of the will of all may be called a public or common person, the father of all, ruling without haughtiness or pride, in a lawful and legitimately established government” (Nicholas of Cusa, 2018: 230).

It is in the conclusion to this text where Nicholas really explores these metaphors. Here, Nicholas, perhaps drawing on his interest in medical diagrams (Sigmund, 2018: 319f), describes the emperor, as well as being a father to his subjects and an “expert doctor” of the body’s various diseases (“usury, fraud, deceit, theft...”), as the head of this body (2018: 319). Nicholas suggests that imperial laws are like “nerves” within the body which must not be too loose or too tight. The head is just as subject to the nerves as any other member, and so the emperor must obey his own laws. The bones, which have “a sweet marrow and long duration”, represent the country, suggesting a territorialized dimension to the political entity and its existence in perpetuity.

Nicholas prefaces this passage by noting that his discussion here progresses “in a figurative way” by “a brief and pregnant comparison” (2018: 313). This casts his metaphors and analogies as just that, characterising them as decorative alternatives to what has been discussed previously in a literal manner. Yet, we must not forget their relationship to underlying related metaphors whose use warranted less self-conscious introduction, those relating the church to the body of Christ, with its priesthood soul, its Holy spirit and its body of the faithful, and those passages characterising the unity of individual wills as a single legal person.

In summary, throughout the medieval period following *Policraticus*, employment of body metaphors was common, though elastic and occasionally ambiguous. These metaphors could be employed to both stress the supreme, governing power of the head of state relative to the expendable members of the citizen body. It could also raise the possibility, to quote a 14<sup>th</sup> century text by Nicholas Oresme, of the monster “whose head is so large and heavy that the rest of his body is too weak to support it” (Oresme, 1956: 44; see Singer, 2018: 127-9). Perhaps uniting all uses of the metaphor is the advancement of the idea as the political unit as a functioning entity composed of harmoniously organised, discrete parts. It is in this sense of the political unit as just that, an *entity* of a particular kind, that the emergence of the concept of the state is in my view to be located.

## The Significance of Body Metaphors

I have made the case that metaphors and analogies involving the body are central to the history of ideas during the period preceding the full emergence of the concept of the state, and that we can see these metaphors as being the product, principally, of Aristotle and St. Paul, and that the basic metaphorical connection was employed in the middle ages to alternatively emphasize both monarchy and popular sovereignty, both hierarchy and equality. This could be interpreted as characterizing their centrality purely on the basis of their ubiquity. It could be objected, of course, that their ubiquity is of only stylistic interest, that these metaphors reflect in flowery language that which could have been expressed in another more straightforward, more literal, manner, and that therefore the charting of their history is of significance only to those studying literary tropes or rhetoric in the tradition briefly outlined in my introductory chapter as identified as allied with a decorative account of metaphor. I will now attempt to explain why I think this objection would be incorrect; by contrast, I will argue that the metaphors and analogies I have been discussing over the last few dozen pages, are in fact a manifestation of profound cosmological and theological assumptions.

These assumptions are at least threefold: one refers to the assumption of the universe's creation and coherent design by a single divine being, especially when combined with the view that the universe is made in the image of an intelligent animal as we find in Plato's *Timaeus*; a second refers to the belief that there is a necessary connection between ontological and normative affairs, often due to the fact of this creative deity also being the designer of moral law; and finally that there is some intimate connection between the individual human person and that divine being, as suggested by both Platonic cosmology and Christian thought.

These reasons combine to constitute a persuasive rationale behind the employment of body metaphors to articulate the descriptive and normative features of the political entity. These metaphors seek not only to *describe* but also to *justify* a certain kind of political constitution by employing the weight of both stylistic and rhetorical tradition, as well as cosmological and theological belief.

These descriptive and normative impulses are intertwined in the body metaphor due to these underlying assumptions, which I will explore in more detail below. In doing so, I seek to offer modest support for the conviction that, as Embler put forward, “[a] whole philosophy of life is often implicit in the metaphors of creative writers, the philosophy of an entire generation, indeed, even of an entire civilization” (1951: 84).

i) Teleology, Design, and the Use of Metaphor

The assumption of the natural world’s coherent design by a single being suggests some ordered interconnection between the disparate phenomena we find around us. Under this assumption, it is plausible that imitation of one functioning part of the world may lead us to assume secure knowledge of how another part functions or functions best. If it is assumed that nature is a manifestation of divine order, therefore, “it could be used as a model for the organization of the human community” (Struve, 1994: 305). This is a position invited strictly by the belief in a single, rational designer who has created *everything*, including our natural bodies and their various deficiencies which render social engagement necessary. This is an argument we find before Christianity, particularly in Plato with regards to God, and Aristotle with regards to personified Nature. I will explore their work in this light briefly.

First, let us consider Plato’s *Timaeus*, which was the only text of his to be widely available in Europe during the Middle Ages up until the 12<sup>th</sup> century (McDonough, 2010; Somfai, 2002: 1). It was also the means by which the medieval world knew indirectly of Plato’s political philosophy, for it is summarised in the opening sections of the *Timaeus*. In this dialogue, Timaeus expounds on the structure of the natural world and its creation by a divine craftsman. The Demiurge’s ordering of the universe already invites the use of analogy for the reason sketched above; we may readily assume echoes of one feature of the world in others since all is the product of one creative force. However, the *Timaeus* adds a more compelling invitation to the use of metaphor and analogy to describe the social world. In the

*Timaeus*, not only is the world said to be created by the Demiurge, but the whole of the cosmos itself is conceptualised as an organism – indeed, an animal with a soul.<sup>21</sup> The world is conceptualised as a generic animal (and therefore not especially human) that is an imitation or “copy” made by the personified creator “in the image of the eternal Gods” (1892b: 456). As is argued in the dialogue, the divine craftsman “must have looked to the eternal” (1892b: 450). *Timaeus* argues therefore that “the world became a living creature truly endowed with soul and intelligence by the providence of God” (1892b: 450). This single animal comprehended “in itself all other animals, mortal and immortal” (1897: 491). If Aristotle’s political metaphor and its emphasis on the animal body provided the basic content for many medieval metaphors, the underlying rationale to the application of analogy and metaphor in this way is Platonic.

Conceptualising the universe as an organism with a soul invites the suggestion that the constitutive parts of this world, including the social and political entity, are also best described, and indeed best organised themselves on the model of the animal organism. Indeed, this is exactly what Plato suggests in the *Republic* with his discussion of the just individual being “writ large” in a just society, as is summarised at the beginning of the *Timaeus*, a subject I will return to in the following chapter. This microcosm-macrocosm analogy (O’Daly, 2018: 117, 120; McDonough, 2010; Conger, 1922: 7-9) was crucial to several of the writers explored in this chapter and formed part of the background assumptions upon which their organic metaphors rested. Allers characterises the microcosm in its simplest form as the “idea that man contains within his being all the elements of which the world consists”, and stresses the influence of Plato’s *Timaeus* via the commentaries of those such as Calcidius over medieval political philosophy (Allers, 1944: 321-2).

The connection between medieval body metaphors and the *Timaeus* is not wholly speculative. John of Salisbury likely became acquainted with Plato’s *Timaeus* and what Struve terms the “the cosmological version of the *Organismusvergleich*” when he studied under William of Conches (c. 1080-1154) for three years (Struve, 1994: 308; also see Gregory, 1992: 56-7; Conger, 1922: 35-6). A group of scholars



associated with the school of Chartres, including William, had embarked on extensive study of and commentary on Calcidius' 4<sup>th</sup> century commentary on the *Timaeus* from a Christian perspective (O'Daly, 2018: 119-20). William had developed a vision of the state and society that referred back to Calcidius' commentary (see Reydams-Schils, 2007) and conceptualised four social classes, based on occupation, paralleled by the members of the human body (the head, heart, abdomen, and feet) as well as by the hierarchical order of the cosmos (Struve, 1994: 307), which again we may recognise as Platonic in spirit. Described by Knowles as an "extreme Platonist" (1998: 123), William identified Plato's notion of a world-soul with the holy spirit (Gregory, 1992: 68).<sup>22</sup>

John of Salisbury himself argues in this fashion using the language of micro and macrocosm in *Policraticus*:

"In this, nature, that best guide to living, is to be followed, since it is nature which has lodged all of the senses in the head as a microcosm, that is, a little world, of man, and has subjected to it the totality of the members in order that all of them may move correctly provided that the will of a sound head is followed" (2007: 28).

John references Plato when describing the background formula of the body politic as being that "the civil life should imitate nature, which we have very often identified as the best guide to living" (2007: 127). Moreover, John appears to make another connection to the *Timaeus* and the tripartite connection between individual, society and cosmos in a letter he wrote to his friend, Peter of Celle:

"All things on earth derive their strength from mutual aid ... it is for this reason alone that all things go upon their way, because the same indwelling spirit of unanimity nurtures the concord of things dissident and the dissidence of things concordant, and arranges the diverse parts of the body of the universe as though they were its members, in order that they may be attuned together for mutual and reciprocal service. Thus it is that in the human body the members serve each other and the offices of each are

allotted for the benefit of all. There are less of some and more of others according to the size of the body, but all of them are united to secure the body's health; they differ in their effects, but if you consider the health of the body, they are all working for the same end" (quoted in O'Daly, 2018: 105).<sup>23</sup>

We find a similar idea, though more subtly expressed, is present in Aristotle's discussion of ends or final causes (Ruse, 2022).<sup>24</sup> Aristotle argued that the structure of living things and their constituent parts exist as they do in service of the rightful ends of that particular organism (Cooper, 1982: 197). Such claims are conjoined in Aristotle's philosophy with statements that bear traces of a personified understanding of nature (Barker, 1959: 220-1) that allude to a peculiarly human capacity to reason and to set goals and indeed to design and create. For example, Aristotle discusses "the invariable plan of nature in distributing the organs is to give each to such animal as can make use of it; nature acting in this matter as any prudent man would do" (Aristotle, 1882: Bk4.x, 117-8; see Furley, 1996: 59).<sup>25</sup> While Aristotle should not be considered "designist" in the same way that Plato might be (see Furley, 1996: 63-5), something of divine intentionality is transplanted onto his understanding of "nature" or particular "natures". It is for this reason that adherents to Aristotelian philosophy in the medieval period would have readily adapted metaphor and analogy as a tool of reasoning in order to uncover the workings of a personified nature.

## ii) Moral Law and the Use of Metaphor

Beyond beliefs in divine design and the microcosm-macrocosm analogy, there is a further explanation for the proliferation of body metaphors in the medieval period, which is that metaphors and analogies of this kind were understood to provide not simply instrumental knowledge about the correct functioning of artificial, human constructions on the model of personified Nature or God's creations, but also their morally correct form. We can see the roots of this in Aristotle's discussion of final causes and his suggestion that "not everything that

is last claims to be an end (*telos*), but only that which is best" (*Phys.* 194 a 32–33). Aristotelian teleology introduces into the natural world the language of ethics through its suggestion that the final ends of phenomena are necessarily also good in a moral sense (see Cooper, 1982; Kahn, 1985; Woodfield, 1976: 205-6<sup>26</sup>). Additionally, the connection Aristotle draws between (what we would now distinguish as) aesthetic beauty and morality under the concept of *kalon* further implicates the normative with the positive (see Irwin, 2010 and Ford, 2010). *Kalon* is used by Aristotle to discuss aesthetic, natural, abstract and ethical matters (Irwin, 2010: 384), where it is intended to highlight something deemed variously beautiful, well-ordered, appropriate, or morally praiseworthy. As in Plato's work, in Aristotle's texts we must recognize that his discussion of politics is simultaneously and without distinction a discussion of both ethics and law, thereby creating a "trilogy" encompassing a theory of the state, of morals and of law (Barker, 1959: 7). This is significant because we find recurring over the centuries that underlying an understanding of the just state as a human body or person, the claim that that human body or person's particular qualities are by no means arbitrary but reflect fundamental ethical truths about the world, often conceived in at least a partly religious sense.

The Christian tradition emphasises that which was already present in ancient philosophy, insofar as it shares the belief in a cosmic order of natural kinds which lends itself to analogical reasoning and the imitation in 'art' of Nature. However, in addition, once one makes the assumption of a God who is both the creator and lawgiver, that is, he is the being who is both the creator of the natural world and all entities we find within it, and also that being who is conveyor of the moral laws which are to be obeyed by certain animate creations, metaphor and analogy take on an additional significance. Metaphors and analogies are of significance then not only because those who make such assumptions are more likely to believe they can come to knowledge about the world by employing metaphor and analogy but also because such persons are likely to believe that their knowledge will not only be of an instrumental kind but will also encompass moral truths. Metaphors seeking to characterise the social entity can thereby, it will be assumed, not only lead to knowledge of how best to design our forms of social organisation to ensure

their most efficient functioning but also to knowledge of the *morally correct* or *legitimate* forms of social organisation and political entity, based on the belief that what is naturally given has been divinely ordained.

The co-mingling of both Aristotelian and Christian justifications of analogy and metaphor is present in the work of those such as Aquinas. Aquinas' rehearsal of an Aristotelian understanding of human creations, including those in the socio-political sphere, as being justly imitative of natural entities is further justified by his faith in a personified, creative God. In the opening passage of Aquinas' *On Kingship*, we find discussion of art, that which is manmade, rightfully imitating nature as the justification for the employment of such body metaphors to describe the political:

“...because that which accords with art imitates that which accords with nature, from which we conclude that we ought to work in accordance with reason, it seems that the best royal duty to accept is formed under the guidance of nature” (Aquinas, 2000: 113).

Aquinas' language is Aristotelian in origin, but his point is strengthened by the claim that nature is the product of an all-intelligent and all-powerful God. Thus, we should imitate nature's organisms in our human constructions not simply because they appear to function well but because a perfect God has designed them in the exact manner in which he has chosen to. The goal here is to uncover the morally sanctioned form of social and political organisation by reference to other creations of the eternal lawgiver.

Such ideas remained in circulation for centuries. Indeed, Hobbes echoes them at the start of *Leviathan*. Perhaps the most direct restatement of these ideas, however, can be found in Edward Forset's 1606 text which argues that the “incomprehensible wisdom of God” through his “composing & ordering of his works in nature” has provided us with “eminent and exemplary patterns”. Forset goes on to argue that

“[i]t is beyond the compasse of any contradiction, that in the morall vertues Christes actions are our instructions; and no lesse may the like rule hold, that in the contriving of a prudent government, the impressions and footsteps of Gods wisdome (which in things naturall wee contemplate by study) be in the poynt of regiment, our directories for imitation. Wherefore seeing that the uttermost extent of mans understanding, can shape no better forme of ordering the affayres of a State, than by marking and matching of the workes of the finger of God, eyther in the larger volume of the universall, or in the abridgement thereof, the body of man” (Forset, 1606).

The belief that all things were created by the Christian deity, who also presides over the moral law, suggests no hard demarcation between the world of corporeal entities and the moral law. Within such a belief system, the “is” and the “ought” are irrevocably intertwined. God-given human reason is not only used in the pursuit of instrumental knowledge but also moral truth in the form of natural law. As Aquinas argues,

“...the light of natural reason, whereby we discern what is good and what is evil, which is the function of the natural law, is nothing else than an imprint on us of the Divine light. It is therefore evident that the natural law is nothing else than the rational creature's participation of the eternal law” (Aquinas, 1922: Part II. Q.91, Art. 2).

Here, for medieval thinkers, the existence of universal laws was intertwined with a commitment to human reason identified with a Christian God. Medieval natural law theory is thus another manifestation of this belief system - this close identification between the just and the pre-given – and is in danger always of becoming a justification of the status quo or received wisdom. In short, we can sense an underlying “cosmic optimism” (Kahn, 1985: 198) which assumed that while God might permit us to error in small ways, he would not design a world in which the greater part, nor the more “civilised” part, as was often argued, of humanity could err in matters of profound moral importance. This was to have

significant effects on the shape of political theory, and particularly another branch of law, the law of nations (*ius gentium*), a topic I shall return to in Chapter 5.

iii) The Human Body, Reason and the Use of Body Metaphors

So far, I have only sought to explain the use of analogy and metaphor in general by reference to a wider network of contemporaneous beliefs. I will now turn more specifically to why body metaphors were used so frequently to conceptualise the political community. In brief, once one assumes a special identification and connection between God and the human person, as we find in Christianity, then the propensity for *body metaphors*, as a particular class of metaphor, to take on an additional legitimacy is only increased.

The Christian vision of the world is of course profoundly anthropocentric. The concept of the body of Christ is a significant example of how the physical body is not to be understood in the modern sense as the product of somewhat arbitrary evolutionary developments over a vast span of time, but rather as the *image* of God (*imago dei*) and its existence the result of his will. This goes some way to explain the relative prevalence of these metaphors in the medieval and early modern period and their relative scarcity today. In Christian thought the body had a special significance, both through the embodiment of the deity himself in the figure of Christ and the emphasis on this physicality in many aspects of Christian teachings, and especially those metaphors navigated in the Eucharist, but also in that related metaphor of the “body of Christ” employed by St. Paul. The centrality of descriptions of the human body and the human person to Christian theology legitimated the use of body metaphors in other domains.

It should be noted that in Christian teaching, humanity being said to be made in the image of God reflects assumptions not about our existence as bodily organisms but rather about our powers of reason. Aquinas, for example, makes this point directly (see Aquinas, 1922: First Treatise, Question 93). Aquinas’ arguments about the centrality of the human being can be seen as a development of the

relationship posed by Plato. Whereas Plato in the *Timaeus* conceptualised God in the world as an intelligent soul in an animal body, Aquinas argues more specifically that “reason is in human beings in just the same way as God is in the world” (Aquinas, 2000: 113), thereby emphasising the centrality of the human being. It is precisely from this point that Aquinas goes on to argue about the correct manner of organising political and social matters and to justify individualistic rulership, as deciphered by these human powers of reason. In *On Kingship*, Aquinas argues that

“For just as the universe of corporeal creatures and all spiritual powers are contained under the divine government, so in this way are the members of the body and other powers of the soul ruled by reason; thus, in a certain manner, reason is in human beings in just the same way as God is in the world. But because human beings are by nature social animals living in a multitude, as we have shown above, a likeness to the divine rulership is found among human beings not only insofar as one person is ruled by reason but also inasmuch as a multitude is governed through the reason of a single person...” (Aquinas, 2000: 113).

We find here then a triple relationship that appears to partly explain the medieval employment of metaphor and analogy: that between the world ruled by God’s law, the individual person ruled by reason, and the community by the ruler. This triple relationship was later captured by James Harrington’s argument that “[t]he form of a man is the image of God, so the form of a government is the image of man” (Harrington, 1992 [c. 1661]: 273). Bodification’s employment when conceptualising political structure is more fully justified by Aquinas through the parallels drawn between God and the earthly ruler, and identification between God and the reasoning individual. Here is a perfect encapsulation of the underlying medieval justification for the use of bodification to describe the ideal political community. The same holds true in passages from Forset’s much later text. Here the relationship between the human body and God, and therefore its existence as a divine model for the ordering of temporal affairs is made explicit:

“As in the creating of man God conjoined a soule for action, in a body passive: so in his ordinance of mans sociable conversing (to make the union of a body politike) he hath knit together a passive subiection to an active superoiritie: and as in every man there is both a quickning & ruling soule, and a liuing and ruled bodie; so in every civill state, there is a directing & commaunding power, & an obeying and subiected alleageance, For as neither the soule alone, nor body alone (if they should be severed) can be a man, so not the ruler alone, nor the subiects alone, can be a commonweale” (1606).

In summary, body metaphors of this period should not be considered simply as *fanciful* or *decorative*. While the more elaborate metaphors may be self-consciously figurative in certain cases, such as in the final chapter of Nicholas of Cusa’s *The Catholic Concordance*, their proliferation and particular tenor are more fundamentally a manifestation of deep theological and cosmological assumptions. The intermingling of Platonic and Aristotelian cosmology and Christian doctrine during the medieval period leant these metaphors not only linguistic precedent but crucially intellectual and theological weight. These theological assumptions, namely that there exists a deity who is creator of the natural world and all living organisms, presider over the moral laws to which those organisms must assent, and a being with an especial connection to the human species, have admittedly receded from view, shattered by the prospect of a Godless, indifferent, and arbitrary world. Our understanding of the human body and human reason have since fundamentally changed, and, as a result, so have our metaphors. On this point, we should note that this reminds us of the inherent difficulty of exploring historical metaphor usage: both target and source domains are in continual flux.

## Conclusion

Our current language remains indebted to the organicism of the medieval period. They are the reason why we speak of the “head of state” or the “members of parliament”, for example. Such expressions are purely idiomatic for most people



today, possessing the conceptual significance of single nouns with easily identifiable referents. Nevertheless, at certain periods in history and within a particular philosophical tradition, such metaphors provided one of the key means by which to talk and think about the political entity as a political *entity*, and one which is functional, harmonious in its marriage of discrete component parts, and ultimately just and divinely sanctioned or mandated; the metaphors lent political discussion theological weight through the assumption that metaphor and analogy can give us insight into the intricate workings and the moral law of the divine order.

The medieval conception of the political entity as an individual human body was the product of a great deal of intermingling of thought drawn from classical antiquity, scripture, as well as contemporary spiritual and political reflection. Throughout its pre-modern history and beyond, the use of this metaphorical connection was put to by religious and political theorists was various and multiple (McVay, 2000: 135-6). In the medieval period, we find political metaphors that are largely theological in their inspiration. The role of Christianity within such metaphors was substantial. Firstly, it provided royal authority with a novel form of deification rooted in Christ's two natures, alongside more secular accounts of the distinction between the private person of the king and his royal office. This was supplemented by a broader reflection of Christ's two natures in the relationship between the temporal or monarchical and spiritual or papal dimensions of power, which resulted in great tension during the Middle Ages. The dominance of the "head" within understandings of the body of the church and later the body politic remained a significant tool in supporting an image of power that afforded the individual ruler substantial license. The increasing emergence of accounts of political organisation more favourable to popular sovereignty was, for those such as Marsilius of Padua and Nicholas of Cusa, closely associated with their refusal to admit papal power over temporal matters. Therefore, relevant metaphors and analogies extrapolate back and forth between the secular and religious spheres in seeking to describe an ideal form of social organisation and structure; as such, we find the intermingling of the language of the body of Christ, the mystical body and the body politic (Black, 1979: 12).

I hope to have shown that relevant metaphors articulating the nature of the legitimate political entity predate the widespread use of the term “state” or consistent use of any single term. My point was to suggest that these metaphors form the conceptual backdrop to the modern concept of the “state”. I also hope to have justified my assertion that pre-modern uses of body metaphors to conceptualise the political entity drew on theologically-informed understandings of the human body, the human person and the cosmic order. These legitimate the use of analogy and metaphor, and of bodification in particular, under a Christian worldview. Because of this, describing such metaphors as decorative or fanciful is mistaken. Their ubiquity can only be explained by reference to these wider beliefs. Because such body metaphors in the secular, political context derived from theological language, we should no more say that these political metaphors are merely decorative than we should say that the underlying religious metaphors about the body are decorative. Such metaphors cannot be removed or paraphrased without a profound shift in the religious belief system under consideration, just as excluding talk of the body of Christ within the Eucharist would impoverish our understanding of Christianity. Nor can the divide between the literal and the metaphorical be marshalled with any clarity except by imposing our own standards of what the literal in fact *is*. We cannot ascertain whether we drink the blood and eat the flesh of Christ at holy communion literally or simply metaphorically without wading into debates *between* religious factions.

Moreover, that writers so continually reached for body metaphors during this period, that they were consciously developing prior metaphors, and that they reasoned towards conclusions based on the metaphorical association, suggest the conceptual liveness of body metaphors. I therefore dispute Tierney’s assertion that “although the metaphor of the community as an organic whole was very common in medieval thought, it *was* only a metaphor and was commonly understood to be so” (Tierney, 1997: 299). These metaphors constituted in part what in fact the political entity was thought to be, precisely by asserting what it was thought to be like. The reality that such metaphors convey is “shaped by the very process of naming it that way – the metaphor is not a symbol for an already

given something, but symbolically shapes it – it is a symbolisation” (Visker, 2008: 16). I will echo here Michael Walzer’s characterisation of such body metaphor’s status, which emphasises how symbolic systems delineate the (not entirely fixed) parameters for the thinkable and the unthinkable:

“An image like the body politic, then, is not simply a decorative metaphor, applied by a writer who has already grasped the nature of political association and now wishes felicitously to convey his understanding. Rather, the image is prior to understanding or, at any rate, to theoretic understanding, as it is to articulation, and necessary to both. When the state is imagined as a body politic, then a particular set of insights as to its nature are made available. The image does not so much reinforce existing political ideas (though it may later be used for that purpose) as underlie them. It provides an elementary sense of what the political community is like, of how physically distinct and solitary individuals are joined together” (Walzer, 1967: 194).

In this chapter, I have been discussing the use of the concept of the human body to discuss the internal constitution of the political community. In the following chapters, I turn my attention to how new attributes of the modern state were articulated by reference to metaphorical language that deepened the already existent metaphorical association by exploring new elements of the source domain about which there was an assumed consensus: for example, that the person has an essence, has bounded individuality, possesses unparalleled moral significance, is a legal entity, and incorporates a will. In the next chapter, I turn to more fulsome forms of personification, by which I mean understandings of the person that transcend the merely corporeal. Elements of such metaphor use have already been implied in our talk of human “reason” and in passages referencing the “soul”, and there are other ancient and medieval metaphors of a relevant kind that I will briefly survey at the start of the following chapter, but by and large, the Middle Ages did not achieve in consistent fashion any fulsome personifications of the polity in the sense just discussed. As Gierke remarked, while it is true that body

metaphor and analogy opened the conceptual door to more fulsome personification, “no such result was attained in the middle ages” (1939: 149-50).

## |Chapter Four|

### The Person of the State:

#### Pre-social Personification in Early Modern Theories of the State<sup>1</sup>

##### Introduction

In the following chapter, I explore metaphors which focus not on the state characterised as a functioning or malfunctioning human body, but rather on the state characterised as “as a mental and spiritual” entity (Mannheim, 1953: 173). In this transformation, the potential for the metaphor to invigorate a particularly holistic understanding of the state, wherein “even the spontaneous parts only exist with respect to the whole”, becomes even more apparent (Mannheim, 1953: 172). Whereas the body metaphors of the previous chapter were always holistic in their stress on harmony and functionality, they still recognised the inherent divisions between the members of the body. Indeed, it was these very divisions which the metaphor could explain and reconcile into some approximate whole. However, with this later, more fulsome personification relating to the person rather than their anatomy, a sense of *harmony* was replaced by one of truer *unity*. This then is the next stage which we must explore in our sociology of knowledge; we are looking to locate those moments where the emphasis on the “body” turns into an emphasis on the “person”. What emerges from these early modern metaphors in particular is an external view on the personified state, which articulates the idea of the state as an indivisible, unified and purposive actor. We may imagine this as a perspective on the state viewed from significant theoretical distance (see Ringmar, 1996). This is markedly different from the vision that the previous chapter’s discussion of body metaphors invoked, which tended to depict the state using the tools of the anatomist or mortician.

I explore this more (metaphorically) distanced view of the state in the work of two early modern thinkers: Thomas Hobbes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. They have been selected firstly for the importance afforded them both within the history of ideas, and particularly within international theory, which I will address in Chapter

Five. An exploration of both is also helpful because they take different positions on the nature and legitimacy of the state, with Hobbes' arguing that sovereignty is alienated from individual persons via the social contract and through an act of representation, while Rousseau argues that legislative authority remains with an incorporated sovereign people (Douglass, 2013: 739). Both views, while superficially contrasting one another, are underpinned by a shared metaphor. While Hobbes' use of personification has been widely explored already (e.g. Runciman, 1997; Skinner, 2002c; Douglass, 2014; Zaffini, 2022), Rousseau's relationship to this topic has been discussed less; I will argue that his thought, particularly his concept of the general will, also stems from the same metaphoric network.

Regarding structure, I will first examine those ancient and medieval precursors to this newer form of personification that we find in the early modern period. In suggesting both a continuity between the medieval and the modern, I argue against the view that the significance of body metaphors simply declined as we move into the 17<sup>th</sup> century; instead, I argue that the use of the broader metaphoric association between state and individual was transplanted onto the more abstract plane of personality as a legal, psychological or even quasi-mystical unity. I then explore these newer forms of metaphor in Hobbes' understanding of the state-person or *Leviathan*, before turning to Rousseau's philosophy and his concept of the general will, and its relationship to later, personified accounts of the nation. Through this discussion, I will contend that personification of the state survived the emergence of newer accounts of political organisation that were more truly corporate, republican, and – in our vocabulary – democratic. Drawing on Quentin Skinner's work (see Skinner, 1989: 90-1), I will argue that metaphor played a crucial role in the emergence of a more abstract concept of the state, distinct from “the status or the standing of the prince himself”, and even from the wider social group that the sovereign figure is said to represent (Skinner, 1989: 104).

## Pre-Modern Precursors to Personification of the State

### i) Plato's metaphor of the Soul

What is so striking about Plato's use of analogy in *The Republic* to describe the just individual via consideration of the just city-state is that it relates principally not to the human or non-human organism but to the human psyche or soul; the ideal or just state, and the correct configuration of its parts, is considered by Socrates to be reflected in the soul of the just individual. Plato outlines three classes of citizen within the state: rulers, auxiliaries and the lowest property-owning class of producers, merchants, and labourers.<sup>2</sup> The ruler, auxiliary, and merchant or labouring classes are seen as mirrored in the rational, spirited, and appetitive elements of the individual human. Reason and appetite are distinguished by the recognition that sometimes humans' base appetites (urges, impulses, cravings, and so on) are held in check by some higher force, such that "men are sometimes unwilling to drink even though they are thirsty" (2003: 147). As for the city-state, justice within the individual is reached when all three elements of the person are 'minding their own business' and are therefore in harmony (2003: 137).<sup>3</sup>

This focus on the soul or psyche as opposed to the body is therefore distinct from the earliest examples of *The Belly and the Members* and many of its later medieval permutations as well as its Pauline correlates, even those which do locate a particular political figure or institution as "standing for" the soul of the body politic. Arguably, Plato's vision emphasises the primordially of the soul and views the body in a merely ancillary role (Archambault, 1967: 23). This reminds us that there is no sharp contrast between more fulsome personification of the modern period and earlier metaphor use. Nor do I wish to deny that Plato's work has been seen as an important influence over later body metaphors, as evidenced by the centrality afforded to Plato in Herbert Spencer's genealogy of the analogy between the political body and the natural body (Spencer, 1981 [1860]: 388-9).<sup>4</sup> Even so, Plato's metaphor or analogy's purpose remains to account for the divisions within society in such a way as to suggest harmony, and not to celebrate its natural or artificially forged unity. Therefore, even though we can find pre-modern examples

of metaphors being used to describe the state by reference to the individual considered in a non-anatomical manner, Plato's purpose is essentially still organicist in its stress on the harmony of disparate elements over a more fundamental unity.

One other aspect of Plato's argument is significant in interpreting later thought on the relationship between the political entity and the person. As Socrates explains, "...when we apply the same term to two things, one large and the other small, will they not be similar in respect that to which the common term is applied?" (2003: 141). Instead of exploring the virtues and elements of the state through a preliminary study of the individual, as is typical for other related analogies and metaphors, Plato's argument works in reverse; he argues by analogy from the state to the individual, such that those principles acquired from consideration of the community are then transferred to the individual (2003: 54-6, 141-2). The ideal Platonic state is often said to be modelled on the just individual person "writ large"; in fact, a more accurate reading is that Plato conceptualizes the just individual as the just state "writ small" (see Barker, 1959: 291; Hall, 1973: 423-4; Neu, 1971). This is so alien to the modern reader that many interpreters have overlooked it and assumed that Plato must be arguing in the former way but is simply not doing so in an upfront manner. However, the direction of Plato's analogy is clear; he justifies the use of it by reference to another analogy:

"Let us suppose we are rather short-sighted men and are set to read some small letters at a distance; one of us then discovers the same letters elsewhere on a larger scale and larger surface: won't it be a godsend to us to be able to read the larger letters first and then compare them with the smaller, to see if they are the same?" (Plato, 2003: 55)<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, given our discussion of metaphor in Chapter Two, namely that it furnishes abstract, complex concepts with the attributes of simpler and better-known phenomena, the fact that in Plato we can find prominent metaphors that rather than take the individual as the source domain to describe the state, instead take the state to describe and reason about the target domain of the individual, is



crucial. This reversed directionality of later metaphors invites us to consider whether there was less presumptive uncertainty about the nature of the city-state than there was about the individual human being.

ii) Medieval Understandings of Personality and the *Universitas*

We can also locate another pre-modern form of metaphor which takes the human *person* and not merely the human body as the target domain for the political entity. Since the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, Italian jurists had been exploring the nature of the corporation in relevant terms (Canning, 1980). These jurists' terms of art to denote their object of study were multiple, including "*corpus, communitas, respublica, populus, civitas, collegium, and societas*, although the most commonly used generic term is *universitas*" (Canning, 1980: 9). The idea of the corporate association had referred to all manner of collectives, including collegiate churches, schools, monastic orders, and, most crucially, the political community (Oakeshott, 1991: 215<sup>6</sup>). The Italian jurists often focused on the self-governing city-community of northern and central Italy<sup>7</sup> and sought to capture the legal basis for this form of corporation, typically referred to as the *populus*, usually best translated as simply "the people" (Canning, 1980: 10-2).<sup>8</sup> The 14<sup>th</sup> century work of Bartolus of Sassoferrato and Baldus de Ubaldis has drawn the most consistent attention in this regard, though related work by John of Segovia and others has also been explored (Canning, 1980, 2002; Black, 1979, 1980; Gierke, 1900, 1939; Radin, 1932; Kantorowicz, 2016; Tuck, 2016; Laski, 1917; Maitland and Pollock, 2010: 723).

There are strong overlaps between the jurists' work and those writers discussing politics using organic metaphor and the conciliar movement. For example, Marsilius of Padua, discussed in our last chapter, employs the language of corporation theory in his texts (see Canning, 1980: 13; Oakeshott, 1991: 217) and Baldus employed the concept of the secularised mystical body deriving out of canon law and ultimately St. Paul in order to expand on pre-existing thought about the nature of corporations (Canning, 2002: 186-7). As such, we should not

envisage any hard distinction between this legal discourse and that discourse explored in the previous chapter relating to political and theological affairs.

These jurists were referring to the *universitas* through the language of legal personality. Pope Innocent IV (formerly an Italian jurist) made decisive steps with regards to codifying such juridical personality, specifically of ecclesiastical collectives (Laski, 2010; Dewey, 1926; List & Pettit, 2011; Maitland & Pollock, 2010: 520). The characterisation of the *universitas* as a *persona ficta* (“fictional person”) possibly derives from Innocent’s commentary of 1246 on the decretals of his predecessor, Pope Gregory IX (Watson, 2019: 142; see Gierke, *Genossenschaftsrecht*, III. 279; <sup>9</sup> Dewey, 1926).<sup>10</sup> In the medieval period, the personification of corporate entities tended not to attribute to them rights, and a stress on its “fictional” aspect was often foregrounded, as in Innocent IV’s text itself (Neff, 2014: 144).

As understood by the later Italian jurists, the corporation was, in addition to being a plurality of human beings, also a single legal entity (Canning, 1980: 12). The “people” under this view becomes an abstract and immortal entity distinct from, and irreducible to, those members who comprise it (Canning, 1980: 12-3, 31). Bartolus was an early articulator of the legal personality of the *universitas*. He argues that even though we should admit that the corporation is really constituted only by its members, “*universitas rep personam . . . secundum iuris Actionem* (a corporation stands for one person...according to legal artifice)” (quoted in Black, 1980: 151). We find extensions of this kind of metaphor in his assertion that the council elected by popular assembly represented “the mind of the People’ (Concilium representat mentem populi)” (cited in Ullmann, 1965: 216).

Baldus’ position is more difficult to pin down. For him, “[t]he *universitas* can be considered in two ways: in one way, in the abstract (*in abstracto*), and in this case it is neither a *persona* nor an animate body, but a kind of mental body (*quoddam corpus intellectuale*) and a kind of legal name representing something (*quoddam nomen iuris habens quandam representationem*); in another way (it can be considered) in the concrete (*in concreto*) and then it is the name of persons and is

equated with the individual persons contained in the *universitas*” (cited in Black, 1979: 150-1; Black, 1980: 151-2). Yet he also argues that “separate individuals do not make up the people, and thus properly speaking the people is not men, but a collection of men into a body which is mystical and taken as abstract, and the significance of which has been discovered by the intellect” (cited in Canning, 2002: 187). In the latter then, we already have the notion of an abstraction of a collective of individuals, the *populus*, which is distinct from those individuals that comprise it. Because it is such a unity due to it being considered such by the intellect and therefore is artificially so, it acts and wills only through the acts and will of those members who compose it (Canning, 1980: 14). When expanding on his general conception of the corporation as a unitary entity, Baldus further claims that “[e]very collection of people, corresponding to one man, is to be regarded as a single person” because “‘person’, is sometimes used for an individual, sometimes for a corporation and sometimes for the head or prelate” (quoted in Canning, 2002: 188).<sup>11</sup> Though evidently conscious of the separation between the People or *populus* and any conception of the person that went beyond legal artifice, Baldus still reached for exactly such metaphors in communicating the nature of such entities.

The use of legal language to describe the sovereign power continued into the late medieval and early modern period.<sup>12</sup> John of Segovia, for example, argued:

“[w]hoever is made ruler or president of any people puts aside his private and takes on a public person, in that he must seek not, as before, what is useful to himself, but what is useful to all. He carries [gerit] two persons; he is a private person, and by legal fiction a public person” (cited in Tuck, 2016: 52-3).

Black has also noted the importance of John of Segovia in recognising the artificial existence, or existence by will, of certain political entities (Black, 1980). John argues as follows:

“[j]ust as the law ... is a thing of reason, so too offices, titles, dignities are things of reason...But the will itself, though unable to produce any real or natural thing ... can nevertheless produce something in the realm of reason ... Therefore, just as a political or civil cause is not a real thing but a thing of reason, so too it produces an effect that is not a real thing but a thing of reason” (cited in Black, 1980: 153).

Discussion of the corporation’s personality was carried forth into the 17<sup>th</sup> century prior to Hobbes’ intervention, such as by Althusius in his *Politica* (1603), who referred to the political association or community (*universitas*) as a “representational person” that “represents men collectively, not individually” (Althusius, 1995: 40). It is the “people” here who are being described as a person: “the citizens and inhabitants of the realm are collectively but not individually, like a ward or minor, and the constituted ministers are like a guardian in that they bear and represent the person of the whole people” (Althusius, 1603: 94). Here then we find the state as being composed not merely of the “body” of the people, but also of the legal person, fictional or otherwise, of the sovereign people. As Black (1980: 165) argues, writers of the early modern period employed the legal theorist’s concept of *fictio* and their understanding of the artificial legal personality of groups, in advancing their own ideas. As a result, he rightly argues that “[t]he theory of social contract itself may thus be seen as a logical development of this ‘artificial’ mode reasoning” (1980: 165), singling out Hobbes in particular as a writer influenced in this way. We must admit though that during the medieval period, it was not yet realised how fruitful it could be to deepen “the concept of the juristic person by combining with it the concept of the social organism, of treating the substantial living unity ascribed to the latter as at the same time a ‘subject’ of rights, and thus replacing the phantom of the “*persona ficta*” by the concept of a real Group-Personality” (Gierke, 1939: 150). I suggest that the connection between organic metaphor and the metaphor of legal personality was drawn most convincingly by Thomas Hobbes, and his work therefore marks a significant development in the history of the metaphoric schema under discussion.

## Personification in the work of Hobbes

The work of Thomas Hobbes is crucial within any discussions of the personified state firstly because analysis of it corrects the myth that so-called organic metaphor “died” in the 17<sup>th</sup> century or with the coming of the early modern period, and that it was replaced with a mutually exclusive account of the state reliant upon so-called mechanical metaphor. Secondly, Hobbes’ work was to deepen and elaborate upon prior metaphors and to develop its own metaphorical landscape in sustained fashion, its central metaphor for conceptualising the state being the individual person, rather than the body. Developing such metaphors permitted Hobbes to marry different existing political perspectives and in doing so he arrived at a more abstract conception of the state than had been previously entertained. This abstraction derives from his sustained use of certain metaphors.

### i) The Supposed Death of Organicism and the Rise of Machine Metaphors

It has been said that as we move from that vague category of “the medieval” to the equally vague concept of “the modern”, we find a marked decline in the use of body metaphors in political philosophy (Hale, 1971a, 1971b, 1973; also see Zaffini, 2022: 534). This decline has been understood as coterminous with the increase of theories of individual rights and with social contract theory ostensibly shattering medieval corporate theory and its associated organicist metaphors. David Hale argues that

“the concept of a body politic was effectively replaced by the old, but not widely popular, idea of a social contract [...] These theories of covenant and contract view church and state as artificial institutions, created by an act of will of their individual members and subject to change by them. The new analogy attempts definition in terms of origin, for which organic analogies seemed deficient” (Hale, 1973).

As Hale argued elsewhere, “the idea of a body politic had lost most of its validity by the middle of the seventeenth century” and any remaining utterances were “brief, unoriginal, and void of any implications rising from the analogy” (Hale, 1971a: 131).

The claim that the vision of the state as an organism declined and ultimately became a dead metaphor in the early modern period is in one sense perfectly understandable. Firstly, it was a period of scepticism about metaphors generally. Both Hobbes and Locke, as mentioned in the introduction, distrusted metaphor as a potential “abuse” of language (Hobbes, 1651: Ch. 4; Locke, 1824a [1689]: Bk. III, Ch. X). Hobbes, for example, argues metaphorically that reasoning with metaphor “is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities; and their end, contention and sedition, or contempt” (1651: Ch. 5; see Whelan, 1981; Abbott, 2014: 407-9).

However, it does not seem to have been the case that such metaphors did die out, or at the very least, this is far too simplistic a narrative to be useful for our present purposes, as opposed to Hale’s. Firstly, works from the 15<sup>th</sup> century demonstrate the importance of the organic analogy in supporting “liberal” ideas favouring limitations on the power of the monarch. Perhaps following Nicholas of Cusa, John Fortescue was arguing in c. 1470 that “[a]s in this way the physical body grows out of the embryo, regulated by one head, so the kingdom issues from the people, and exists as a body mystical, governed by one man as head” (cited in Archambault, 1967: 35) which seems to suggest the compatibility between these metaphors and an understanding of the state based on “origin”, as Hale terms it. Similarly, in his c. 1532 text, *A Dialogue between Thomas Lupset and Reginald Pole*, Thomas Starkey makes significant use of related metaphors in order to theoretically curb the absolutist pretensions of the king (Archambault, 1967: 49). Such works are not best understood as marking the metaphor’s decline but rather steps towards its culmination and substantive further development in the work of Thomas Hobbes and later thinkers.

Moreover, body metaphors and organicism can be found in even later texts, even if we admit that their entertainment within the Elizabethan era marked a notable

high point (see Richards, 1981: 51). Barbera has traced such organismic metaphors to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, such as in the work of French physiologist and philosopher Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis (Barbera, 1993: 143-5). Herbert Spencer's work (e.g. 1981: 383-434; 1898: ch. 12) is replete with organic metaphors discussing "society" (see Bosanquet (2001 [1899]: 31-3) for a reading of Spencer's use of analogy).<sup>13</sup> British idealists, reacting against what they saw as an overly individualistic form of liberalism, also employed organic metaphors, partly influenced here by Hegel (which I will explore further in the next chapter) (Morefield, 2002: 143; see, for example, Henry Jones' 1883 essay "The Social Organism"). Indeed, the later 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a resurgence of this type of imagery more generally; it is only in reference to this period that the dichotomy between organismic and mechanistic metaphorical understandings of the political or social structures makes sense, as articulated by Spencer at the start of his 1860 essay, *The Social Organism* (1981: 383-4). By 1908, Woodrow Wilson could state baldly that "government is not a machine, it is a living thing. It falls not under the theory of the universe, but under the theory of organic life. It is accountable to Darwin, not to Newton" (quoted in Landau 1961: 344-5). Moreover, there is great continuity between the medieval uses of metaphor and later language, and this has too often been overlooked. Therefore, as Kantorowicz argues, I will admit that we should be careful about "lightheartedly discarding the old organic oneness of head and limbs in the body politic" and replacing it with "the abstraction of a personified state" (2016: 270-1).

I do not view Hobbes' thought, which Hale rightly recognised as representing a fusion of the medieval and the modern, as employing the concept of the body politic simply as "a synonym for "political entity" with no further analogical meanings intended" (Hale, 1973). Organic metaphors not only did not die but were in fact reinvigorated by more extensive figurative connections to the language not of human anatomy or the organism but rather to the more abstract notions of legal, moral and natural personality (see Musolff, 2021: 24 for a similar reading). Such metaphors continued to reflect wider realities regarding the personalised nature of political power in various parts of Europe, such that the state was virtually synonymous with the individual ruler, thereby the relationship

between individual and state was not wholly metaphorical but also potentially partly literal. However, a more abstract, and most certainly metaphorical, concept of the state was also emerging in the early modern period, as we can see in the work of Thomas Hobbes, which was not wholly synonymous with the individual figure of the sovereign ruler.

The work of Thomas Hobbes is suffused with metaphors that describe the political entity in language more commonly reserved for descriptions of the individual body and that of the person. His work references the medieval idea of the body politic exhaustively and he reasserts the originally ancient association between the anatomy of the individual body and the political collective in its internal constitution (see Waldman, 1975: 61-3). For example, in passages from his text *Leviathan* that are reminiscent of John of Salisbury's work, Hobbes elucidates the various aspects of the commonwealth by reference to parts of the body, such that Protectors, viceroys, and governors of provinces resemble "the Nerves, and Tendons that move the several limbs of a body natural" for they are to be considered as imparting the will of the sovereign throughout the whole body of the state (Hobbes, 1985: 290), judges are the "organs of the voice" (1985: 293), and those ministers who are sent abroad "secretly to explore their counsels and strength" may be "compared to an eye in the body natural" (1985: 293-4). He later reiterates such comparisons in Chapter 29 when discussing the "diseases" of the state, which he describes as "Those Things that Weaken or Tend to the Dissolution of a Commonwealth". The diseases of "epilepsy", "Pleurisie", "wormes", "Bulimia", "Wens", and "Consumption", amongst other, are all given their analogues in the political body (1985: 374-6).<sup>14</sup> Such anatomic metaphors are nicely encapsulated in the introductory chapter of *Leviathan* wherein the state is described as an "artificial man", signalling a cohesive metaphoric schema at play in Hobbes' thought.

Aside from the suggestion that body metaphors simply died out, an alternative suggestion has been that Hobbes' work is representative of the age that rather *replaced* medieval organicism with alternative metaphors associated with and derived from a mechanistic understanding of the natural world that was prevalent



in the natural sciences. For example, Pulkkinen asserts that “Hobbes painted a detailed picture of the anatomy of a political body, viewed as a mechanical construction as opposed to a biological entity” (Pulkkinen, 2009: 49; also see Zaffini, 2022: 546-7). Likewise, Pikalo stresses this mechanistic dimension to Hobbes’ political philosophy (Pikalo, 2008: 49; also see Akrivoulis, 2008 in the same volume for a discussion of the later influence of this metaphor). Here, we may sense the influence of Weldon’s dichotomy between state-as-organism and state-as-machine accounts of politics (Weldon, 1947: 26).

This reading risks being too simplistic to be helpful for our discussion. We should not assume that a mechanistic conception *replaced* an organismic one. Weldon’s dichotomy is a false one, at least as far as Hobbes’ work is concerned. In fact, Hobbes’ work betrays not a metaphoric shift from the organic to the mechanical in terms of *political thought* alone, but rather reflects that the organic realm *as a whole* – including the human body – was being imbued with a contemporary understanding of artificial creation. Thus, to pose a hard distinction between the “mechanical” and the “organic” is to miss the ways in which the two were viewed as intervening on one another. This is evident from the opening sentences of *Leviathan*, wherein Hobbes refers to natural organisms as possessing parts equivalent to those found in man-made machines, such as when writing, “what is the heart, but a spring” (Hobbes, 1985: 81). Therefore, the natural is, in a higher sense, the artificial product of God: “the art whereby God hath made and governs the world” (Hobbes, 1985: 81).

Yet, we should also bear in mind that for Hobbes, we should not only consider the natural world as mechanistic or “artificial” in important ways, but rather also that the artificial world of *our* creations is strongly related to the natural, in that we imitate nature and thereby create an “artificial animal” that possesses an “artificial life”. On this point, Hobbes’ argument seems to be greatly indebted to an Aristotelian vision of political legitimacy, and indeed his very language is remarkably similar to that used in Aquinas’ Aristotelian justification of monarchy, particularly in its reference to the legitimacy of art imitating nature: “...because that which accords with art imitates that which accords with nature” (Aquinas,

2000: 113), as well as being indebted to the micro-macrocosm analogy derived from Plato's *Timaeus* (see Abizadeh, 2012: 127-8 on Hobbes' Platonic inheritance).<sup>15</sup> For Hobbes, the state is certainly artificial and yet is to be conceptualised as an imitation of Nature (the creation of God), as being in possession of an artificial life, as an artificial man with an artificial soul. In short, previous writers have on occasion laid too much emphasis on the *artificial* here, as opposed to *life, man* and *soul*.

## ii) Personification over Bodification

It is not the case that with Hobbes and his epoch we can locate the disappearance of organic metaphor or their total usurpation by machine metaphors. Instead, we find them morphing into more fulsome forms of personification. Hobbes' body metaphors are conceptually married to, and even the inspiration for, his other uses of metaphor which refer to the state as not simply a "man", but rather a "person". What Hobbes was able to achieve by elevating his discussion from the body politic and focusing instead with great precision on this idea of the civil person is a strong claim for the *unity* of the state (Tuck, 2010). While body metaphors may have advanced claims about the harmony and functionality of an entity's constitutive parts considered as a whole, there remains in any discussion of the anatomy of the organism a recognition that it is comprised of parts that are potentially disharmonious and dysfunctional and ultimately individuated. By transitioning to talk not of the anatomical body but of the person, the unity and singularity of the relevant entity is amplified, even if we also find the acceptance that this entity must also be in some sense "artificial". In his first text of political theory, *The Elements of Law*, Hobbes seemed to recognise this shift; Hobbes credits himself with being the first to recognise that the term body politic "signifieth not the concord, but the union of many men" (Hobbes, 1928: II.8; see Olsthoorn, 2020: 3-4). In light of my earlier discussion of medieval legal theory, Hobbes clearly gives himself too much credit here, but nevertheless it does show that Hobbes was conscious of the shift I have in mind, and I will suggest that this is also evident in his use of metaphor. Hobbes' social contract and use of

personification casts the state in a more unified, whilst also simultaneously more abstract, manner (Tuck, 2010: 179-3). This amplification of an internal unity, no doubt inspired by the decided disunity and factionalism of 17<sup>th</sup> century Britain, can be characterised as an extreme form of holism and therefore potentially bearing the spirit both of democracy and tyranny. These two potentialities of course mark out subsequent discourse.

What Hobbes' theory stressed, and which was to become most influential and carried over into the early modern social contract theory of John Locke, amongst others, is that first we have the individual with his or her natural equality, capacities and rights. Then, later, we have the society or state which emerges out of this person and these attributes under the guise of the social contract (Hacking, 1999: 156-7). The individual is thus prior to the social whole. In the work of Hobbes and Locke, it is by no means clear that this priority is intended solely in a logical or hypothetical sense, as some have suggested (e.g. Peters, 1979 [1956]: 168-9; Dunn, 1969: 96-103; Buckle, 2001: 249).<sup>16</sup> At the very least, their discussions of priority strongly rest on metaphorical allusions to temporal priority. Yet, despite this stress on the temporal priority of the atomistic individual, the state which emerges is constituted by an incorporated "people", and the metaphor Hobbes employs reflect this understanding.

In Chapter 18, Hobbes declares that a state is

"...made by Covenant of every man with every man, in such manner as if every man should say to every man: *I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my selfe to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner.* This done, the multitude so united in one Person is called a COMMON-WEALTH, in latine CIVITAS. This is the Generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather (to speake more reverently) of that *Mortall God* to which wee owe, under the *Immortall God*, our peace and defence. For by this Authoritie, given him by every particular man in the Common-Wealth, he hath the use of so much Power and Strength conferred on him, that by terror thereof, he is inabled to forme the wills of them all, to Peace at home,

and mutual ayd against their enemies abroad. And in him consisteth the Essence of the Common-wealth; which (to define it,) is: *One person, of whose Acts a great Multitude, by mutuall Covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the Author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their Peace and Common Defence.*

And he that carryeth this Person is called SOVERAIGNE, and said to have *Soveraigne Power*; and every one besides, his SUBJECT” (1985: 227-8).

It is important to note here that Hobbes had dedicated an entire chapter to the nature of “personation”. Indeed, it is the final chapter of Part I of *Leviathan*, which directly precedes his most famous discussions of the social contract and the nature of the state at the beginning of Part II, and in which he defines a person in the following manner:

“A PERSON, is he *whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of an other man, or of any other thing to whom they are attributed, whether Truly or by Fiction.*

When they are considered as his owne, then is he called a *Naturall Person*: And when they are considered as representing the words and actions of an other, then is he a *Feigned or Artificial person*” (Hobbes, 1985: 217).

Hobbes’ definition of “person” here is rather perplexing, meaning little more than that a person is someone with the capacity to speak and act, though later, in discussion of children and the insane, he suggests the further qualifying feature of “reason” (see Pitkin, 1972: 21). He expands on this by referencing theatre, drawing on the etymology of “person” as a theatrical mask: “a Person, is the same that an *Actor* is, both on the Stage and in common Conversation; and to *Personate* is to Act, or *Represent* himself, or an other” (Hobbes, 1985: 217). This goes some way to clarify Hobbes’ intentions behind his account of state formation.

Nevertheless, it is also important to note how peculiar and complex the stated scenario is. It is worth trying to paraphrase his account of the state. One reading is that, according to Hobbes, there is a sovereign person or king that “carryeth” the

person of the state or commonwealth, the “Leviathan” or “mortal God”. This sovereign person or king is not himself the “Leviathan” or “mortal God” or state; he merely acts on behalf of that “person” who is. The state-person is a person by virtue of the multitude unifying through a covenant that accepts their mutual subjection to an independent authority, which can either be a single man or an assembly. Thus, while the representer “carryeth” (elsewhere, “beareth”) the person of the state, and is thus distinct from him, that same sovereign representative is also a necessary part of what makes the multitude into a person to begin with. This somewhat paradoxical state of affairs is emphasised when Hobbes argues that “[a] Multitude of men, are made *One Person*, when they are by one man, or one Person, Represented” (Hobbes, 1985: 220). In short, the paradox is this: in several places Hobbes suggests that the representative represents that which only exists through that self-same act of representation.

In addition, as Skinner and others have noted (Skinner, 2002c: 187-9; Fleming, 2021; Simendic, 2012: 148-9; Abizadeh, 2012: 130-1; Tricaud, 1982: 96), Hobbes prevaricates on *who* exactly is the “artificial person” of the state – the sovereign representative alone or the multitude now united through representation. I suspect some of the ambiguity derives from Hobbes’ understanding of “persona” as etymologically derived from “theatrical mask”, it not being entirely clear whether the mask is the thing worn by the representative or whether the representative is himself the mask for the words and actions of another. Moreover, there is surely a plausible distinction to be drawn between the “actor” and the “mask”, but Hobbes’ discussion of the term “person” seems to float between the two (see Olsthoorn, 2020: 7 for a similar point about “person” v. “persona” and Fleming, 2021: 6 on “actor” versus “character”). Skinner does not, in my view, fully establish that once we clear away some awkward or confused passages, when Hobbes “speaks of artificial or fictitious persons, he means persons represented” (Skinner, 2002: 189; also see Fleming, 2021). While some of the quotes from the later, Latin version of *Leviathan* and *De Homine* that Skinner selects (as well as several in the English version of *Leviathan*) do indeed support such a reading, too many others are equally ambiguous on this point, and in fact might more plausibly be read as partly reasserting that it is precisely the *representative* who is deemed

to be the artificial person in question. For example, as Olsthoorn has noted, Hobbes tellingly replaces mention of “artificial person” with “representative person” in the Latin edition of *Leviathan* (Olsthoorn, 2020: 8).

Nevertheless, due to the remaining ambiguity, Skinner, Simendic and Fleming are all, in my opinion, correct to suggest a reading that incorporates both interpretations of “person”; that Hobbes, at different points, is thinking of both the representative and the represented as artificial persons. This is appealing because it would embody Hobbes’ particular emphasis on the role that representation plays in converting the multitude into a unity, and crucially explain why the commonwealth or state more generally is implied as being a “person” separate to the sovereign representative, as in Hobbes’ claims that “he that carryeth this person is called sovereign” (Simendic, 2012: 153). I will explore how such an interpretation, and the mere existence of ambiguity in Hobbes’ thought here, relates to his account of political legitimacy and its relationship to prior thought shortly.

By my count, then, there are at least five kinds of “person” at play in any plausible reading of Hobbes’ account of state formation via “institution” (see Tricaud, 1982 for a similar, though broader, attempt at calculation, and also Fleming, 2021: 17-8 for a broadly comparable reading to mine): there is the individual natural person who covenants with fellow natural persons (via an act of self-representation); there is, resulting from this covenant, the person of the state or commonwealth (as this only exists once the multitude are united via representation); there is also the natural person of the individual ruler who is party to the covenant insofar as he is the recipient of their natural right; there is, through his becoming such a recipient, the “artificial” or “representative” (as in the later Latin version of *Leviathan*) person of the monarch or ruler qua theatrical mask (see Olsthoorn, 2020: 8); perhaps more ambiguously, there is also potentially the person of the assembly as some form of intermediary entity, since Hobbes clearly writes “*he* that carryeth this person”, which in the case of rule by assembly that Hobbes discusses, would imply that it too is some kind of personified entity. In any case, it is not at all clear how the assembly fits into the general schema as far as personality is

concerned, which lends credence to the claim that Hobbes' focus remains principally on a monarchical form of government, a point that I will explore below.

Deciding which of these uses of "person" are metaphors and which are not depends on what Hobbes understood as its primary sense. It is clear that the most typical definition of "person" in Hobbes' own era was that which accords in a general way with "human being" (Tricaud, 1982: 89), and is thus not too dissimilar to our own understanding of "person" as relating to the indivisibility and the continuity of human psychological states and behavioural dispositions, as well as to our body. We can certainly find many instances of the word being used in this sense in Hobbes' work, especially – and this is perhaps revealing – in his earlier political texts (Tricaud, 1982: 92). We might thereby recognise the dimension of performance that Hobbes relates to personhood through his discussion of both the theatre and legal theory as a metaphoric extension on this primary sense (see List and Pettit, 2011: 170-85). However, Tricaud has suggested that it is the theatrical sense of person that is the "original" in Hobbes' thought, at least in the context of *Leviathan* (Tricaud, 1982: 96; also see Pitkin, 1972: 15). Regardless, it is clear that at least some of these various uses are the product of a conceptual play on, and extension or abstraction of, a more primary definition of the word "person" and are thereby metaphorical in nature. Thus, it is the metaphorical nature of the *source* domain, not the *target*, which is crucial here.

One of the potential effects of putting the concept of personhood to use in an account of the state is the attribution to it of a certain unity and purposiveness of action and of will, as well as to suggest its homogeneity and replicability as a type of entity in the social world. While Fleming interprets a passage such as "all Lawes, written, and unwritten, have their Authority, and force, from the Will of the Common-wealth; that is to say, from the Will of the Representative" (Hobbes, 1985: 315-6) as Hobbes' denial that the state has an independent will (Fleming, 2021: 20), I would argue that the metaphors that I have been discussing are precisely what permits, invites even, the slippage from the will of the representative to the will of the state to occur at all. In summary, whether we deem Hobbes' particular uses of the term "person" in reference to the state to reflect

confusion, ambiguity, or “ambivalence” on his part (as in Fleming, 2021: 12), or whether we think we can resolve this in a way satisfactory to a modern reader, matters little here. What does matter is that this confusion, ambiguity or ambivalence stems from his grappling with the various significations of “person” determined by prior metaphorical utterances.

### iii) Hobbes’ Relationship to Prior Thought and Metaphor

Hobbes’ use of personification reflects the fact that his political philosophy and theory of the state combines two prior visions of sovereignty and the state, one based on corporation theory, and the suggestion that the “people” are pre-political and remain sovereign, and another based on the personalised power of the absolutist monarch whose relationship to his kingdom is one akin to private property (Skinner, 2002c: 204-8; see Goldsmith, 1990; Burgess, 1990; Owen, 2005; Hamilton, 2009; Douglass, 2015). Both lend themselves to metaphorical description: the former visions calls forth metaphors likening the social group to the individual person, while the latter calls forth metaphors which posit a personality of the king separate from his natural body and person. There exists therefore a tension between the two theories of the state which Hobbes had inherited and which he, I contend, sought to reconcile through his particular developments and extensions of existing metaphor.

This tension and its relation to personification is reflected in the two different frontispieces produced for *Leviathan* and which depict the state as an individual human figure (see Skinner, 2019; Malcolm, 2002: 200-33). It is worth stressing that both the earlier and later designs are not best interpreted as straightforward visualisations of the ancient metaphor of the body politic, but rather precisely depict the act of personation that I have been discussing above (both images can be seen in Malcolm, 2002: 230-1). As noted by Malcolm, especially in the earlier image, the interrelation of component parts of the body is not being addressed; instead, the focus is on the notion of unity between the component bodies and their incorporation into a larger composite figure (Malcolm, 2002: 224-5). In the



earlier frontispiece prepared as part of a manuscript copy given to King Charles II (Skinner, 2019; see Hoekstra, 2015: 253 on the significance of this point in assessing Hobbes' intentions), the person of the state is depicted as composed of individual faces who look outward at the viewer. In the more well-known, published frontispiece, the person of the state is represented with a sovereign head and a mass of individuals whose backs face the viewer as they look upward at the giant head; we may say they are "held in awe" by it (see Goldsmith, 1990: 754-73; Hoekstra, 2015: 241-2 for further discussion). The contrast is one of fundamental importance in that in the latter, the individual "members" are depicted more as subjects, while in the former, they appear to constitute a corporate entity and are not characterised principally as an obedient audience of the head. This seems to reflect a certain ambivalence in Hobbes' text over which form of government is either favoured or legitimate.

The text of *Leviathan* itself evidences this tension between two competing accounts of the state. From theories of corporate sovereignty, Hobbes took the emphasis on the unity and indivisibility of the political community, ably described via the metaphor of the state-person. Like writers advancing this position, Hobbes stresses that a political ruler is but a representative, and seeks to locate their power in the will and rights of individual persons who constitute the political community. The sovereign performs an act of *representation*; he or she is a mere "Representer" of the person of the state, the Leviathan, such that the representative merely "carryeth this person" (Hobbes, 1985: 106, see Chwaszcza, 2012). Moreover, he does not stress that a king's right to rule derives from a divinely ordained succession, as had earlier and contemporary accounts of the state. Nor does he insist that political power must even be exercised by an individual monarch; he quite clearly asserts the possibility of legitimate rule by a political assembly, considered itself as a separate "person". Instead, Hobbes' vision of political legitimacy is bound up with individual right and liberty. For example, in Chapter 7 of *De Cive* Hobbes contrasts "a People" or *populus* with the "disorganised multitude to which no action or right may be attributed" (Hobbes, 1984: Ch. 7; see Tuck, 2016: 17). Hobbes makes the connection between this unity of will and an attribution to it of an act plain: "[a] *people* is a *single* entity, with a

*single will*; you can attribute *an act* to it. None of this can be said of a crowd” (Hobbes, 1984: Ch. 12). This feeds into his definition of the commonwealth in *De Cive*:

“A COMMONWEALTH, then, (to define it) is *one person*, whose *will*, by the agreement of several men, is to be taken as the *will* of them all; so that he may make use of their strength and resources for the common peace and defence” (Hobbes, 1984: Ch. 5).

In such ways, Hobbes can be seen as the heir of those earlier theorists who eschewed divine right in favour of popular sovereignty and republicanism (Hamilton, 2009: 435). As Skinner has noted, the most immediate contact with such a theory that Hobbes would have had was the texts of parliamentary writers before and during the English Civil War (2005: 157-8) who criticised that (personified) national “regal bondage” that absolute royal power entails (Skinner, 1998: 38-9). Henry Parker, for example, argued exactly that the People could be considered to be a unified whole, distinct from the individuals who comprise it, on the model of the Roman *universitas*. On this view, the “people” are constituted independently of representative power, which is ultimately derived from, and therefore arguably lesser than, that power inherent in the incorporated body of the people (see Parker’s *Jus Populi*, 1644; also see Milton, 1911 [1649]: 12).

However, Hobbes parts company with such writers and their associated metaphors in several ways, and does so decisively (Olsthoorn, 2020: 6). Unlike these writers, Hobbes does not see the “people” as an entity which emerges out of some shared purpose or collective identity. In fact, he sees pre-political life as atomistic. Where people do interact in such a “natural” condition, they do so within a context characterised by the perpetual potentiality of extreme (and by no means illegitimate) violence. His pessimism on this score is perhaps the most well-known feature of his political philosophy. What unifies the multitude into a “people” as a “person” instead is a covenant dictated by the rational acceptance that subjection to political authority is in each’s long-term self-interest.

Nor does Hobbes see the people's unity as emerging prior to their representation. This point is key. Unlike writers such as Suarez before him or Pufendorf after, Hobbes does not view the "people" as a corporate body or unity existing independently of or prior to political representation and who therefore offers up or defers their natural sovereignty to a ruler in exchange for collective protection and security (see Runciman, 1997: 12-3; Smith, 2016: 172; Kronman, 1980: 166-7). To reiterate, in *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes:

"A multitude of men are made one person when they are by one man, or one person, represented; so that it be done with the consent of every one of that multitude in particular. For it is the unity of the representer, not the unity of the represented, that maketh the person one. And it is the representer that beareth the person, and but one person: and unity cannot otherwise be understood in multitude" (Hobbes, 1985: Ch. 16).

The laying down of our natural right to limitless liberty in a moral and legal vacuum is done on an individual basis, the logic of which is demanded by the calculation of long-term self-interest, defined by reference to universal goods, chiefly the common desire for "peace". Seen from the distance of the political community, this lends Hobbes' project a distinctly utilitarian dimension; it is the horrors of the state of nature which make submission to political authority, even a vaguely tyrannical one, appealing to the rational natural person, and one might add, Hobbes' reader. Hobbes also does not view the "people" as preserving their right to revoke the power "delegated" to the ruler at any point, precisely because they do not exist as a person prior to representation, but rather only as a "multitude" (Abizadeh, 2012: 134-5). Hobbes' account of the social contract allows neither that sovereignty is only temporally gifted to the ruler, nor that the people can revoke it, and overthrow or revolt against the sovereign. Hobbes decries the possibility of revolt as inherently contradictory, for it would mean revolting against the very entity that has been instituted to provide for one's protection and security, warding against the anarchy of the pre-political (and perhaps the *post*-political, in the case of civil war) condition.

The absolutist nature of the Hobbesian state is evident too in the ways in which he frequently erodes his stated commitment to neutrality on whether the ruling power should be an individual figure or a popular assembly. Increasingly, it is the image of the absolutist monarch that seems to pull the focus of Hobbes' account, which some have attributed to his exile in France during the 1640s and the influence on him of writers such as Jean de Baricave, Cardin Le Bret, and Cardinal Richelieu (Hamilton, 2009: 419-28). The language associated with personification can invite slippage towards a defence of monarchy; as Judith Shklar argued, the metaphor of the body politic with kingly head allowed Hobbes "from the first to pretend that monarch and sovereign were indistinguishable" (Shklar, 1969: 199). Indeed, it is precisely this slippage which lends a passage like that wherein Hobbes defines the state as "one person, of whose acts a great multitude, by mutual covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all as he shall think expedient for their peace and common defence" its particular ambiguity (Olsthoorn, 2020: 12-3); it remains unclear whether the person in question here is distinct from or identical with the person of the monarch, and Hobbes seems to appeal, consciously or not, precisely to such metaphorical ambiguity in situating his argument within existing thought. If indeed unconscious, it is surely the polysemy of the word "person" which is the root of his confusion.

Moreover, Hobbes so frequently dispels potential criticisms of his defence of absolute monarchy by illustrating their absurdity when levelled at government by popular assembly. For example, his argument for the indivisibility of sovereign power leads to the rejection of the claim that though the king possesses greater power than any individual subject, it is "of lesse power than them all together", because, he claims, "all together" meaning "one Person" is symmetrical with that represented by the king. This symmetry is obvious when considering an assembly of the people, but less so when considering a monarch. His defence therefore of absolute monarchy rests on his claim that it differs from an assembly of the people only in the number of representors (the singular monarch versus the diverse assembly) (see Hobbes, 1985: Ch. 19), and not in the kind of power that each constitution connotes, most crucially the measures open to removing these

representatives, either by election or revolution. Thus, his defence of monarchy is buttressed by a metaphoric play on the term “person”.

In summary, Hobbes’ theory of sovereignty and state formation, while republican in spirit in important ways, particularly in its articulation of the personality of the state being so closely associated with the liberty of individuals to contract with one another, is - quite strangely - applied most often and most vigorously to the case of hereditary monarchy. Hobbes employs both the visions of the state in his articulation of the legitimate state, and the result is one that bears the traces of both popular sovereignty and personalised royal power. Hobbes’ use of metaphor reflects this dual heritage. Hobbes’ theory can be seen as standing apart, and yet to some extent also reconciling, the two images of the state which were available to him (see Held, 2000: 17). Both visions are communicated in personified language, and, in the case of the frontispiece, image.

A generous interpretation is that Hobbes was reacting against the absolutist monarchical vision of the state just as much as he was against the anti-royalist texts of Henry Parker and his contemporaries (see Skinner, 2005: 167). However, it is quite plausible that Hobbes’ goal in *Leviathan* is to invoke the holism of corporation theory in the service of defending the royalist cause by not taking from it the ancillary claim that the “people” are sovereign prior to their attachment to a government and thus can rightly rebel against it (see Hamilton, 2009, for further discussion of the competing, arguably contradictory impulses behind Hobbes’ thought). However, at least some of the ambiguity in Hobbes’ texts relates to the changing contemporaneous political contexts (see Skinner, 2002c: 287-307). Burgess (1990: 684-5) has offered the compelling argument that Hobbes’ began writing *Leviathan* in the late 1640s as a defence of royalist authority, but one which rests on a rightful obedience, in quite general terms, to the *de facto* ruler. Such an emphasis on submission to a *de facto* power in the late 1640s and 1650s was by no means unique, as Skinner (2002c: 287-307; Skinner, 1966: 299-303) has demonstrated, and was routinely buttressed by the well-known maxim of St Paul’s *Romans 13*. By the time Hobbes comes to publish *Leviathan* in 1651, the ‘powers that be’ had changed and the *de facto* ruler is no longer royal, and so

Hobbes' argument becomes far more ambiguous for his contemporary interpreters, and is capable of undermining the royalist cause in this new context (Burgess, 1990; also see Goldsmith, 1990: 640-1).<sup>17</sup>

Bartelson notes how Hobbes (alongside Hugo Grotius) were crucial to “the depersonalisation of political authority, and therefore also to the emergence of an abstract conception of the state as a person in its own right” (2015: 89). To quote Skinner again, “[m]ore clearly than any previous writer on public power, Hobbes enunciates the doctrine that the legal person lying at the heart of politics is neither the *persona* of the people nor the official person of the sovereign, but rather the artificial person of the state” (Skinner, 2002: 404). In Hobbes' work we may say that we can locate a new articulation of the state which is “doubly impersonal” (Skinner, 1989: 112); not only does Hobbes distinguish the concept of the state from the person of the individual ruler, but he also distinguishes it from the “people”. Yet this act of depersonalisation retained, and in fact deepened, allusions to the concept of personhood. It is an ironic fact then that this depersonalised conception was explored in the 17<sup>th</sup> century through the use of personification. It is this use of personification that Skinner refers to when he notes that “we can scarcely hope to talk coherently about the nature of public power without making some reference to the idea of the state as a fictional or moral person *distinct from both rulers and ruled*” (my emphasis, Skinner, 2010: 45). In Hobbes, we therefore find a modern concept of the political entity as abstracted away from ruler and ruled. Crucially important too, we also find the term “state” itself in use (though one should note Hobbes' reliance on other terms such as “commonwealth” and “civitas”, which he views as synonyms of “state”).

#### iv) Hobbes' Influence

Hobbes' articulation of the person of the state and its identification with the natural individual was influential over later 17<sup>th</sup> century and 18<sup>th</sup> century writers, particularly in Europe where it was received more favourably than in England at first (Skinner, 1966). Perhaps Hobbes' most immediate and direct influence was

over Samuel Pufendorf, who borrowed greatly from Hobbes' account of the social contract (Skinner, 2006: 291).<sup>18</sup> Pufendorf shares with Hobbes an understanding of the state which is abstracted away from both the person of the sovereign representative and the person of the People as constituted prior to the institution of sovereignty. According to Pufendorf's text *On the Duty of Man and Citizen According to Natural Law*, the state is constituted by "[t]wo agreements and one decree" such that individuals contract with one another (the first agreement), decide to form a particular constitution (the decree), and then contract with the sovereign representative, be that an individual or an assembly ruled by majority voting (the second agreement) (1991: 136-7; also see his articulation of this same process in *Of the Law of Nature and Nations* (1994: Book VII, Chapter 2, Part 7). As a result, his articulation of the social contract is perhaps less elegant, but also markedly less ambiguous, than Hobbes'. It appears to suggest that the image of the state that Pufendorf is working with is one more akin to some readings of medieval corporation theory insofar as the King's power is limited by the People who exist pre-politically (though not pre-socially, since Pufendorf is not Hobbesian in equating the pre-political with the pre-social). However, according to Pufendorf, it is only once this society has decreed the form that their government shall take and contracted with a sovereign representative through a submission and union of wills that the complete state can be said to truly exist. Therefore, like Hobbes, Pufendorf is working with the conception of the state which is reducible neither to the group-person of the people nor the person of the sovereign representative. The latter distinction is made clear when Pufendorf conceives of an individual as standing in relation to either the ruler, one's fellow-citizens or to "the state as a whole" (1991: 175).

Pufendorf employs personification of the state in ways, like Hobbes, indebted to medieval organicism. Like Hobbes though, it is the language involving the person which is most crucial to Pufendorf's understanding of the state:

"A State so constituted is conceived of as one person (persona), and is separated and distinguished from all particular men by a unique name; and it has its own special rights and property, which no one man, no multitude

of men, nor even all men together, may appropriate apart from him who holds the sovereign power or to whom the government of the state has been committed. Hence a state is defined as a composite moral person, whose will blended and combined from the agreement of many is taken as the will of all so that it may employ the forces and capacities of every individual for the common peace and security” (1991: 137).

The novel development that Pufendorf makes is his designation of the state as not merely an artificial or fictional person as Hobbes frequently refers to, but rather as a *moral* person. In his *Elements of Universal Jurisprudence*, Pufendorf defines a moral person as “a person regarded with the status which he has in communal life” (1994: 39). Such persons can be considered separately or conjointly. Separately, a private person is considered in relation to his age, his citizenship status, his role within the family, his lineage and his professional trade or class. A moral person considered conjointly is the result of a group of individual persons uniting and subjecting their individual wills to that of a sovereign, be that an individual or council (1994: 39-40). The ease with which Pufendorf turns from a discussion of moral persons as individuals to that of collectives suggests any distinction between the two is of negligible concern. Finally, echoing the earlier argument of Grotius (2005: 666-6) and presaging later discussion by Hume (2007 [1739]: 166-7), Pufendorf emphasises the relationship between this understanding of moral persons considered conjointly and that of the human body via the claim that in neither case is the impermanence of constituent parts or elements to be considered disqualifying of an essential unity:

“[i]t must also be observed here that just as single persons remain the same even though their bodies undergo significant changes in the course of time through various additions and losses of particles, so a society is not made other through the particular succession of individuals. Rather it remains the same, unless there falls upon it at one time a kind of change that utterly destroys the former body’s or society’s principle” (1994: 41).



## Personification in the work of Rousseau

The work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau is significant for an exploration of personification for several reasons: firstly, he employs body metaphors, developing them in his own ways; secondly, he presents the state as a “moral person”, stemming from which is his account of the “general will” that is inherently metaphorical; thirdly, such an account of the general will has significant bearing over later conceptions of “the people” and especially the nation; fourthly, his account of the individual person contrasts sharply with that of Hobbes, a notable effect of which is to problematise any account of personification in relation to the political community that rests on a clear border between the individual and his or her social milieu. I will discuss these themes in turn below.

### i) Personification and the General Will

Throughout his literary output, Rousseau employs imagery of the body politic with remarkable frequency, and more frequently and thoroughly than other metaphors (see Kelly, 1986: 16). Rousseau’s work therefore again dispels the notion that organic imagery met its demise with early modern political thought, and especially in those texts associated with democracy, popular sovereignty republicanism. For example, in his *Discourse on Political Economy* (1755), Rousseau argues as follows:

“The body politic, taken by itself, can be looked upon as an organized body, alive, and similar to a man’s. The sovereign power represents the head; the laws and customs are the brain, the principle of the nerves and the seat of the understanding, of the will, and of the senses, of which the judges and magistrates are the organs; commerce, industry, and agriculture are the mouth and stomach which prepare the common subsistence; public finances are the blood which a wise *economy*, performing the functions of the heart, sends out to distribute nourishment and life throughout the entire body; the citizens are the body and the members that make the

machine move, live, and work, and no part of which can be hurt without the painful impression of it being straightaway conveyed to the brain, if the animal is in a state of health” (Rousseau, 1997 [1755]: 6).

The use of such imagery continues into Rousseau’s later work, as we can see in the following passage from *The Social Contract* (1762):

“The body politic, just like the body of a man, begins to die as soon as it is born and carries within itself the causes of its destruction. But either body can have a constitution that is more or less robust and suited to preserve it for more or less time” (Rousseau, 1997 [1762]: 109).

Much of this is admittedly familiar territory within the philosophical tradition we have been exploring, and indeed aspects of this formulation owe their debt to medieval political philosophy and theology (Black, 1997: 653-4). There are interesting aspects to Rousseau’s use of this metaphoric schema, though. Perhaps most crucially, Rousseau places the sovereign people in the head of the body politic, allowing no room for the monarch, who, as in the frontispiece of Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, was typically understood as residing there instead. Embedded within Rousseau’s use of metaphor then is the claim that he would become most remembered for, that the legitimate state is controlled by a legislating sovereign people.

Rousseau not only employs “bodification” though, but also discusses the state as a person in the manner discussed already in this chapter. In doing so, he develops Hobbes’ thought, as well as Pufendorf’s discussion of the state as a moral person. This is crucial to Rousseau’s conception of the legitimate state and its formation through the social contract:

*“Each of us puts his person and his full power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and in a body we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.*

At once, in place of the private person of each contracting party, this act of association produces a moral and collective body made up of as many members as the assembly has voices, and which receives by this same act its unity, its common *self*, its life and its will. The public person thus formed by the union of all the others formerly assumed the name *City* and now assumes that of *Republic* or of *body politic*, which its members call *State* when it is passive, *Sovereign* when active, *Power* when comparing it to similar bodies” (Rousseau, 1997 [1762]: 50-1).

Again, this echoes passages from his earlier *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*:

“The people having in respect of their social relations *concentrated all their wills in one*, the several articles, concerning which this will is explained, become so many fundamental laws, obligatory on all the members of the State without exception, and one of these articles regulates the choice and power of the magistrates appointed to watch over the execution of the rest” (Rousseau, 1923 [1755]: 228).

Rousseau addresses the personhood of the state directly; he is keen to stress that this moral person should not be considered simply “a being of reason” [*un être de raison*] <sup>19</sup> but is in fact more substantive. His argument for this is in part consequentialist; it must be considered more than simply “fictional” if citizens are to recognise the general will and their own duties in relation to it (Rousseau, 1997 [1762]: 53).

For Rousseau, the social contract is a Hobbesian one between natural individuals, and not one between a pre-existing people and a sovereign representative, as had comprised part of Pufendorf’s theory and indeed constituted the whole of some medieval visions. The relationship between the sovereign people and the “minister” is one of “commission” or “employment” (1997 [1762]: 83, also see 1997 [1762]: 116-7<sup>20</sup>). Whereas for Hobbes the state requires the person of the sovereign representative in order for us to admit it an artificial will, Rousseau makes the conceptual leap towards suggesting that it is the incorporated body that

has a will itself, which he calls “the general will”. This is the concept for which he is most well-known and is central to his political philosophy, and so I concur with Judith Shklar’s assessment that it is his “most successful metaphor” (1969: 184). We must stress though that it clearly develops out of his metaphors involving the body politic and of the person. This is made very clear in certain passages: “[t]he body politic is [...] a moral being that has a will” (Rousseau, 1997 [1755]: 6). This reflects similar connections in prior texts, such as in Pascal’s *Pensées* (1670) wherein the idea of “will” had also been discussed in relation to both the natural body and the corporate body discussed in *1 Corinthians 12* by St. Paul (Riley, 2015: 10-3; Farr, 2015: 90). The effect in Rousseau’s work is to stress the singular and individuated nature of the state founded on the basis of popular sovereignty.<sup>21</sup>

I should stress that Rousseau applied his concept of human freedom to the general will (Cole, 1923: xxxiv-v). He began at the individual level before applying the same principles to the collective; the free individual becomes the free state, and the will of that individual is reconceptualised as the general will. Free action, Rousseau explains, is the product of two conjoined causes, that of the will, which he terms its “moral” cause, and of physical power (1997 [1762]: 82). This is imaginatively carried over to the body politic to articulate the division between the legislative and the executive, conceptualised as the division between the moral cause and the physical execution of laws (1997 [1762]: 82). While the legislative remains in the hands of the people, the execution of the law requires government (1997 [1762]: 82-3).

Rousseau’s treatment of such metaphor is a notable development on prior theory. Of course, prior writers had intimated towards the notion of a public will, such as in John of Salisbury’s rhetorical question regarding the prince as carrying of the public persona: “who in public affairs may even speak of the will of the prince, since in such matters he is not permitted his own will unless it is prompted by law or equity, or brings about judgments for the common utility?” (John of Salisbury, 2007: 30; see Taylor, 2006: 156 for an alternative translation of the original Latin of this passage). More recently, and as Tuck (2016: 113; also see Riley, 2016: 178) has noted, Barbeyrac’s 1706 French edition of Pufendorf’s *On the Law of Nature*

*and of Nations*, employs the term “general will” (*volonté générale*) when translating discussion of democratic sovereignty (VII.5.5).<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, the concept of the general will was by no means Rousseau’s invention but has its own long and interesting history prior to him, which I cannot explore fully here (see Shklar, 1974; Wood, 1983; Riley, 2015 [1986]; Riley, 2016<sup>23</sup>), but it is worth noting that in the same year in which Rousseau wrote *Discourse on Political Economy* wherein substantial reference to the general will is made, Diderot had argued in very similar terms that while particular wills can be good or evil, “the general will is always good: it is never wrong, it never will be wrong” (Diderot, 1967 [1755]: 115-6). It is also worth noting that, like the idea of the body politic, the root of the concept of the general will is plausibly Pauline (Riley, 2015: 6), and it referred initially to the personified will of God in relation to human salvation. However, despite such debts to prior thought, the notion of a political community’s personified will had never been dissected with as much thoroughness as in Rousseau’s work.

For our purposes, what is most crucial is how the general will, though of course *general*, is also necessarily *singular*. The concept functions philosophically and grammatically to denote the singularity derived from the multitude.<sup>24</sup> Rousseau states as much when noting that of the relationship between the law and a particular object, “[i]f it is outside the State, a will that is foreign is not general in relation to it” (1997 [1762]: 66). The general will is thus as unified and individuated as that will which it challenges and seeks to replace - the individual will of the absolute monarch (Wood, 1983: 305-6) - as well as those wills out of which it is created - those of individual citizens. Personification is therefore key for us to understand the general will, for otherwise it does indeed become, as Riley long ago noted, a “philosophical and psychological contradiction in terms” (Riley, 1970: 86), for a will can only be conceptualised upon the model of an individual’s decidedly “non-general” will (Riley, 1970: 93). This metaphoricity inherent to the concept of the general will has not been sufficiently emphasised in existing literature, Judith Shklar’s work being one notable exception (see Shklar, 1969: 165).

## ii) Interpretating Rousseau's General Will

There are multiple ways of interpreting Rousseau's understanding of the general will (Dagger, 1981: 359). I contend that at root confusion stems from uncertainty about how seriously the metaphorical core of the concept of the general will is to be taken. At points Rousseau appears to use it as a "mere" metaphor in order to highlight the procedural requirements of democratic decision-making, while at other times he appears to fully imbibe the image of the body politic as being in possession of its independent will. Bertram (2012) outlines the two possible interpretations, one which emphasises the general will as expressed through democratic procedure and legislative activity, and another which construes the general will as a "transcendent fact about society" regardless of whether such a fact is reflected in actual decision-making by the sovereign people. We may contrast these two positions as reflecting a tension between the democratic and romantic dimensions within Rousseau's thought, though Bertram classes the two positions as "democratic" and "transcendent", which in turn derives from Sreenivasan's distinction between the "practical" and "pure" dimensions to Rousseau's general will (Sreenivasan, 2000: 546-7).

The notion that Rousseau offers two interpretative lenses through which to understand his use of this concept has been commented upon frequently, though terminology differs. For example, Dagger (1981: 359, 363) suggested that there are "rationalistic" and "metaphysical" interpretations of Rousseau's central concept; he also distinguishes between "*a* general will" and "*the* general will" in regard to their relative theoretical closeness to, or distance from, the actual act of voting (1981: 366-7). Moreover, a similar distinction is raised by Ripstein (1993: 57) in his claim that Rousseau conceives of voting as being the means by which we both "create" and "discover", though not infallibly, the general will. Williams (2005: 395) opted to distinguish between a "positivist" and "transcendent" account of the general will, the former strongly connected to Bertram's democratic account insofar as it stresses the purely conventional status of the content that the majority wills; in a more recent work, Williams distinguishes between a "procedural" or "formal" account and a "substantive" one, but this again

seems to map onto Bertram's terminology (2015: 222). Canon (2022) also invokes an equivalent distinction but adds a third conception of the general will by further distinguishing between the will declared by a democratic assembly and that personal general will found within each citizen that is directed towards the common good. While this further distinction does highlight another sense of "general will" that Rousseau invokes in his texts, I will treat this personal general will as in fact *constituting* either a transcendent or a democratic account, depending on whether this personal will is being conceptualised as reflective of some fixed, independent and transcendent general will, or rather merely a perspective Rousseau suggests individuals *should* try to adopt when participating in the democratic creation of the general will. I will therefore preserve the dichotomy between the democratic or procedural and the transcendent accounts of the general will here.

Evidence for the democratic interpretation comes from Rousseau's emphasis on the role of voting in determining the general will: "the tally of the votes yields the declaration of the general will" (1997 [1762]: 124). Moreover, even if we allow for the fact that Rousseau admits a distinction between particular wills and the general will, he also seems to suggest that the latter can be derived from the former. His admittedly ambiguous claim that if we take away from private or particular wills "the pluses and minuses that cancel one another" then the general will is found can also be interpreted in this strictly democratic or procedural sense (1997 [1762]: 59-60).<sup>25</sup> This all seems at first sight fairly straightforward, even if a democratic interpretation of Rousseau's thought more generally is undercut by passages in Book III of *The Social Contract* where Rousseau moves on from discussing the *legislative* function of "the people" to exploring the *executive* body which, in the most ideal form that is humanly possible (for executive democracy is fit only for the Gods, in Rousseau's estimation), is an "elective aristocracy", in which electors are existing aristocrats (Frailin, 1978: 524-6).<sup>26</sup>

However, even overlooking such possible discrepancies in relation to our modern understanding of democracy, a second, "transcendent" position on the general will seems to emerge elsewhere in his texts. It is here where Rousseau is most clearly

being invited towards certain argument by a personified understanding of the state and the metaphor of the general will, and in these passages a more forceful holism emerges. Firstly, there remains ambiguity in the way Rousseau presents his argument, cited above, that the will of all differs from the general will, as if he cannot quite accept a strictly procedural understanding of the general will (see 1997 [1762]: 59-60). Secondly, it should be noted that while Rousseau stresses that voting is important, he also argues that the voter is being asked not for his private opinion on a given matter, but rather whether a proposal is in accord with the general will. This being so, calculating out the pluses and minuses of particular wills turns out to be irrelevant if all is functioning well and voters vote as citizens rather than private individuals. But this places a great deal of burden on citizens' assessment of what that general will is, and Rousseau's references to the "common good" or "common interest" do not clarify matters. While reassuring in the abstract, determining what that common interest is to which the general will aims at is immediately problematic when talk turns to particular matters; any remaining confidence we might feel on a given issue must implicitly invoke some objective standard that transcends particular wills. Thirdly, and most crucially, Rousseau argues that individuals, perhaps even a majority, may be mistaken in their interpretation(s) of the general will. For example, he entertains the scenario wherein "the characteristics of the general will" do not reside in the majority (Rousseau, 1997 [1762]: 124). This reading is reinforced by passages where Rousseau emphasises that the general will is "always constant, unalterable and pure" in spite of scenarios in which actual decisions tend towards particular, rather than common, interest (Rousseau, 1997 [1762]: 124). This presumably necessitated in Rousseau's mind the paternalistic figure of the "legislator" who will encourage this shared sense of the general will in the diverse multitude (Bertram, 2020).

For various reasons then, the voting majority is not necessarily to be considered as symmetrical with the general will (see Kain, 1990: 316-7). It becomes clear in these passages that Rousseau is invoking the idea of a singular, particular will, more determinately independent of the simple agglomeration of the wills of individual citizens, greater and greater distance being put between them once



factionalism, voter ignorance, personal self-interestedness and so on, are factored in. It is the metaphor of the general will, and its inherently oxymoronic qualities, which invites us towards these more transcendent claims about the state and its capacity for action. Due to these qualities – its generality in conflict with the inherent singularity of a will – the “general will” *must*, in some sense, be considered “transcendent” and quasi-mystical. I suggest there is a tension at the heart of Rousseau’s political philosophy stemming from the implicit reliance on personification demanded by his concept of the transcendent aspect of the general will, which proves to be incompatible with the democratic interpretation.

We can also see how contradictions in Rousseau’s texts develop out of his employment of personification in relation to the general will and the tension between the democratic and transcendent interpretations of this concept. For example, Rousseau argues that voting in the minority reveals only a “mistaken” belief about what the general will is. Those such as Kain (1990) have argued that this point is entirely self-consistent. I suggest it is incoherent. Rousseau states that “[w]hen therefore the opinion that is contrary to my own prevails, this proves neither more nor less than that I was mistaken, and that what I thought to be the general will was not so” (Rousseau, 1997 [1762]: 124). Remember that for Rousseau, one justly votes not to advance private interests, but rather to pronounce on whether the proposal in question is in conformity with the general will. All citizens are likewise voting in the same spirit. This is perfectly acceptable in itself. A problem occurs though when one attempts to make the majority decision the standard for determining the general will; this is precisely what Rousseau’s talk of the majority decision revealing one’s “mistake” entails. If majority decision is the basis for the general will, an infinite regress appears: I vote in favour of what I think the general will to be, which in turn is the majority view, while everyone in the majority is voting in accordance with what they believe everyone else believes to be the majority view (including my own). Do we vote, therefore, based on what we perceive the common interest (whatever is meant by this phrase) to be or what we perceive others to perceive the common interest to be? And what are *they* basing *their* perception on if not an understanding of everyone else’s perception of the common interest? It is

therefore incoherent to base the general will on majority decision while suggesting that people vote on what they think that general will *is* (see Cohen, 2010: 77). Only by thinking of the sovereign people as a personified, “semi-mystic entity endowed with a will of its own” (Schumpeter, 2003: 252) can we extricate ourselves from such a conceptual bind. This is because by conceptualising voting in accordance with some singular will that is ultimately distinct from our individual private wills and yet not tied to a circular definition related to perceptions of majority decision, we can still indeed be said to be “mistaken” about it.

Considered as a whole, then, this argument’s incoherence stems from an attempt to reconcile the two different interpretations of the general will being discussed. This is one of the clearest cases where Rousseau displays his desire to suggest both that the general will is determined by majority decision, while also suggesting that it is in fact independent of it. However, if the general will is *determined* by majority decision, then individual voting cannot be based on an assessment of what the general will is, and if the general will may, or equally may not, be *revealed* in the majority decision, then the importance of democratic process is significantly undermined and implies that majority decision can tell us nothing concrete about whether our assessment of the general will was correct or mistaken.

This tension between the two understandings of the general will present in Rousseau’s work might well be the product of his seeking to reconcile, or at least combine, two prior modes of thought about the nature of the political community, one being essentially more holistic and one more individualistic (see Riley, 1970). Riley views this tension as a reflection of Rousseau’s interest in an idealised image of ancient political communities, viewed as holistic, and more modern ones based in the consent of individuals (Riley, 1970: 91; also see Williams, 2005).<sup>27</sup> Like Hobbes then, we can assert that Rousseau’s use of metaphor flowed from an attempt to grapple with the ideas of prior epochs and those of his own. Rousseau, much like Hobbes, arrived at holism *through* individualism – he made both individual consent and an understanding of the individual’s will the basis for

subjection to the immutable and pure general will (see Riley, 1970; Hiley, 1990: 170) - and metaphor was, as again it was for Hobbes, crucial in this process.

### iii) The General Will and the Personified Nation

The transcendent reading of the general will was, I contend, to have significant effects over later understandings of group identity and agency in relation to the political community or nation. While too much is occasionally made of the connection (e.g. Popper, 2002), there is most certainly a line to be drawn between the thought of Rousseau and that of Hegel. Admittedly, Hegel interprets Rousseau's account of the general will as being essentially democratic in a procedural sense, and it is precisely this that Hegel critiques. Hegel argues that Rousseau "considered the will only in the determinate form of the *individual* [einzelnen] will (as Fichte subsequently also did) and regarded the universal will not as the will's rationality in and for itself, but only as the *common element* arising out of this individual [einzeben] will *as a conscious will*" (Hegel, 1991: 277). For Hegel, such an interpretation of the general will "destroy[s] the divine [element] which has being in and for itself and its absolute authority and majesty" (Hegel, 1991: 277). As Bertram has noted (2012: 417), Hegel appears to favour the transcendent conception of the general will:

"The distinction [...] between what is merely in common, and what is truly universal, is strikingly expressed by Rousseau in his famous 'Contrat Social,' when he says that the laws of a state must spring from the universal will (*volonté générale*), but need not on that account be the will of all (*volonté de tous*). Rousseau would have done better service towards a theory of the state, if he had always kept this distinction in sight" (Hegel, 1874: 252-3).

Hegel was to further the transcendent dimension inherent to Rousseau's thought, even if he did so by first denying any such dimension to it. As a result, Hegel views the general will as existing independently of those citizens who constitute the

political community (Shklar, 1974). The image of the state as an individual also appears directly in Hegel's work: "the state has individuality, which is [present] essentially as an individual and, in the sovereign [Souverän], as an actual and immediate individual" (Hegel, 1991: 359).

This transcendent interpretation of the general will, when stretched in a particular direction, contains the seeds of both popular sovereignty and national self-determination, but also a nascent tyranny. Such possibilities can be drawn out further by considering the close connection between the general will – when conceptualised, self-consciously or not, as a will independent of a collection of particular wills – and the language of nationalism. The metaphor of the general will can very easily morph into the claims of later nationalisms. Early evidence of this comes in Abbé Sieyès' pamphlet *What Is the Third Estate?* (1899 [1789]), where we find reference to the "general will" in his discussion of the third estate, which he characterises as a "complete nation", alongside talk of a "national will". Indeed, Rousseau's own words can certainly defend such a transition. In *The Discourse on Political Economy*, he wrote that "[c]ertain it is that the greatest marvels of virtue have been produced by love of fatherland: this gentle and lively sentiment which combines the force of amour propre with all the beauty of virtue, endows it with an energy which, without disfiguring it, makes it into the most heroic of all the passions" (1997 [1755]: 16).<sup>28</sup>

In fact, the concepts of the national will, national interest, national identity, and so on, all tumble out of this very broad metaphoric schema attaching the political entity to the individual person that I have been discussing.<sup>29</sup> Consider the connection between Rousseau and that of early German romanticism. For example, Adam Müller suggested that the state is "the intimate association of all physical and spiritual needs, of the whole nation into a great, energetic, infinitely active and living whole" (cited in Keroude, 1961: 38). Moreover, is there not more than a reminder of the transcendent general will in Schleiermacher's following line of questioning that pushes the mystical dimension to the personified state or nation?

“What has become of the fables of ancient sages about the state? Where is the power with which this highest level of existence should endow mankind, where the consciousness each should have of partaking in the state’s reason, its imagination and its strength? Where is devotion to this new existence that man has conceived, a will to sacrifice the old individual soul rather than lose the state, a readiness to set one’s life at stake rather than see the fatherland perish? Where is fore sight keeping close watch lest the country be seduced and its spirit corrupted? Where find the individual character each state should have, and the acts that reveal it?” (cited in Kedourie, 1961: 42).

It should be unsurprising that European nationalism of the later 19th century also employed personification when describing the nation. For example, Mazzini’s form of democratised nationalism relied upon an understanding of the nation as an “organic whole held together by a unity of *goals* and common efforts” (2009a [1871a]: 65) that in their multiplicity become, as Grotius argued, “the individuals of humanity”, each pursuing their common goals in accordance with their unique attributes and contexts (2009b [1871b]). Consider too the lineage from Rousseau to the “new liberalism” in Britain evident in the thought of Bosanquet (2001 [1899]: 25), Jones (see Morefield, 2002, Freedon, 1986: 94-116), and perhaps to a lesser extent, Ritchie (see Boucher, 1994: 675-6), all of whom employ personification at key junctures in their descriptions of the state. This shift towards a personification of the nation is present too in the cries for national *self-determination* in the 20th century. As Weitz has noted, “[i]n its origins, self-determination was an Enlightenment concept used in reference to individuals, not to collectivities” (Weitz, 2008: 1328).

What unites the thinkers discussed above is the tendency to view the state or nation – and far too much is made of that distinction in that the latter in the end always claims for itself some territorial basis (see Goldstein, 1962: 71; Gilbert, 2000: 58; Hobsbawm, 2000 [1990]: 9)<sup>30</sup> – as an entity possessing temporal (i.e. intergenerational) continuity, a distinct cultural identity, and a capacity to will and to act. It is unsurprising then that personification is found frequently in all such

literature. The most natural way in which to locate an exaggerated form of unity and individuation conceptually is, somewhat paradoxically given the ostensible demand to advance the priority of the social whole, the individual human person. If we allow that the national community must be “imagined” (Anderson, 1983), one wonders whether the particular picture of the community offered by the language of personification may not provide part of the conceptual apparatus necessary for such imaginings, embedded in talk of national identity, national will, national interest and so on, alongside the more common, and equal paradoxical, employment of ‘family metaphors’ to describe the nation.

A darker legacy of the transcendent and mystical interpretation of the general will can be located in more recent authoritarianism (see Talmon, 1919), with Rousseau being branded an “enemy of human liberty” (Berlin, 2014: 28-52; see Farr and Williams, 2015: xvii, xxxii; also see Dewey, 1946: 54). Personification asserts the true unity of the state, but in doing so it must define that which stands apart from itself, and indeed it invites us towards an exaggerated kind of separation and distinction. In short, borders here become important. The national self is asserted in part by an exaggerated depiction of the other. As Lefort argued, “it is understandable that the constitution of the People-as-One requires the incessant production of enemies” (Lefort, 1986: 298). Naturally then, nationalist dictators of the 20<sup>th</sup> century employed both organicism and personification, adapting concepts like the general will for their own ends (see Fuentes, 2013: 58-9). For example, Mussolini wrote that “the Fascist State is itself conscious, and has itself a will and a personality – thus it may be called the “ethic” state” (Mussolini, 1933: 21). The transcendent approach to the general will and its detachment from the mechanism of voting thus allowed authoritarian regimes to claim democratic status and their being representative of the general will; for example, Franco asserted that Spain under his rule was an “organic democracy” (Moradiellos, 2018: 131; Payne and Palacios, 2014: 281-2).<sup>31</sup> It is clear here how the concept of the general will, while developed to convey the internal relations and legitimacy of citizens, can be utilised to conceptualise the external relations of states within the interstate or international landscape (Boyd, 2015: 262-5); Rousseau pointed us to this topic himself when writing the following:

“...the will of the state, although general with respect to its members, is no longer so with respect to the other states and their members, but becomes for them a particular and individual will that has its rule of justice in the law of nature, which is equally consistent with the principle established: for in that case the great city of the world becomes the body politic of which the law of nature is always the general will, and of which the various states and peoples are merely individual members” (Rousseau, 1997 [1755]: 7).

Though offering, at the end of *The Social Contract*, a tantalising suggestion that he would next write about the external relations of states (1997 [1762]: Bk.IV. Ch.IX), Rousseau did not achieve this. All that has been published on the topic by him are a few short essays, sometimes only fragments. Nevertheless, it is clear from the above quotation where his account of the general will was leading him in this regard. Moreover, in the work of others, we can see that the concept of the general will had a decided influence both over later nationalist theories, and those later international theories, which, I will argue, are often strongly indebted to them. I will turn to this topic – the externalisation of person metaphors describing the state - in the following chapter.

#### iv) Rousseau and Hobbes on the Natural Person

Finally, there is one further dimension to which the topic of personification has significant bearing on Rousseau’s thought, namely, his conception of the person, and how it differs from Hobbes’. This section, I should stress, is not strictly exegetical but rather seeks to draw out some conclusions regarding personification from Rousseau’s writing on Hobbes. Specifically, I wish to return to a theme I addressed at the start of the chapter in relation to Plato’s *Republic*. I noted there that it is not at all clear that the metaphors Socrates discusses take the person as the source domain for the target domain of the (city-) state. The directionality of the metaphor is at least questionable. The same is true in parts of Hobbes’ *Leviathan*. In a passage well-known within international political thought,

Hobbes justifies his characterisation of the natural person in the state of nature by providing as evidence, amongst other things, the relation of kings or “Persons of Sovereign authority” to one another other (see Locke, 1824b [1689]: Ch. 2.14 for a similar argument). It could be argued that here, like in the passages from Plato’s *Republic* discussed above, we find an “inverted” form of personification. It is an understanding of states that is being used to conceptualise the nature of the natural person; the target and source domain are substituted for one another (see Tuck, 2001). The possibility of this interpretation is only strengthened once one recognises that Hobbes’ discussion of the person at the end of the first part of *Leviathan* is in the service ultimately of defining the state.

If Hobbes’ text in part problematises the relation between the source (person) and target (state) domain of the personified state, Rousseau gives us further reason to doubt the conceptual separation between the two domains of our metaphoric schema at all. He does this in at least two ways. Firstly, the Hobbesian state of nature, perhaps due to its focus on civil war and its assumption that individuals can be treated for analytical purposes as “mushrooms” sprung up immediately from the earth, coming to “full maturity without all kind of engagement to each other” (Hobbes, 1984: 117), presupposes a dichotomous view of political structures and sovereignty as either non-existent or existent, paying little attention to the transitional period in between. The effect of this is that an opposition between the atomistic natural person and the sovereign state emerges, and the two are treated as separate domains. In this dichotomy, the idea of society or community distinct from the ideal image of the sovereign state is often omitted. Rousseau challenges this by introducing into his account of the state of nature different “phases” of social engagement and forms of social interaction, as had Locke in his *Second Treatise of Government* (1824b [1689]: Ch. VIII).<sup>32</sup>

Secondly, Rousseau presented a devastating critique of what he saw as Hobbes’ assumption that pre-social life is still nevertheless recognisably human existence. Rousseau recognised that we cannot argue that atomised existence could possibly contain the kind of vivid, intelligent and moral experience that could give birth to any talk of rights and duties, nor the diffident, glory-seeking and competitive



impulses that Hobbes viewed as central to the state of nature. Such things, Rousseau argued, surely emerge through humanity's social existence. In effect, Rousseau is drawing the pre-political human condition closer towards other kinds of animal existence. According to Rousseau, Hobbes identifies "in consequence of having improperly admitted, as a part of savage man's care for self-preservation, the gratification of a multitude of passions which are the work of society, and have made laws necessary" (Rousseau, 1923 [1755]: 196). For Rousseau, the rational state is not merely the precondition for an individual's (civil) freedom but also an embodiment of (moral) freedom (Neuhouser, 2000: 57). Moral freedom is a more substantive freedom because it is a freedom to not be a slave to one's appetites, but rather to be obedient to laws that one prescribes to oneself. In defence of Hobbes here, we should note that his radical moral and legal positivism *does* suggest a significant change in the nature of human existence with the coming of political life<sup>33</sup>. Nevertheless, most significant here is that Rousseau's critique has much broader connections to how we think the individual comes to be who he or she is. It may be that our identities more broadly derive from our social and political existences. This argument is uncontroversial today but in its time was notable, and its effect over how we interpret personification of the state remains crucial. This constructivist dimension has the potential to fundamentally upset certain assumptions we might make about metaphor and personification in particular.

To take Rousseau seriously therefore involves questioning the relationship between the two domains of the individual and the individual's social milieu, namely their political community. Personification of the state may not involve two distinct domains of experience, but rather co-constituting domains. Any discussion of the personified state needs to consider this for it suggests that the most straightforward vision of the personified state has an air of circularity. The state is considered as a person, but the person, as commonly understood, can only exist within a particular community (in fact, can only be conceived of within a particular culture and within a language possessing the concepts "person" and "state"), which in the most general terms of our modern existences, is the self-same state identified with the person: *the leviathan eats its own tail*.

Let us not forget too that in social contract theory, even while the individual becomes the archetype for the conception of the state, the individual is also that which logically entails the formation of the state. Thus, the state is both conceptualised as the mirror image of the individual and in a certain sense also the resolution of those various defects which hinder its subsistence in a pre-social condition. Of course, insofar as it is a mirror image, the same problems which befall the natural community of mankind must befall the community of states, and it is in recognition of this that large sovereign authorities can be espoused, culminating ultimately in a supranational state with individual states as its own "citizens". This was the conclusion reached by William Penn (see Penn, 2020 [1693]: 344-362), Christian Wolff (1934 [1749]: 12-3), and to a limited extent Kant (1983 [1793]), but rejected by Vattel (2008 [1758]), in their writings on international politics. Furthermore, an acceptance of some form of constructivism invites us to consider whether the state too, considered as a person, is formed through social interaction. I will develop these themes in more detail in the next chapter, but it is worth noting how both Hobbes and Rousseau figure in such discussion. Hobbes is a crucial point of departure for this debate because of his brief thoughts on the relationship between state-persons, or perhaps sovereign representatives for the distinction is obscure in this part of his text. It is also notable that constructivists within international relation have related their work to Rousseau's critique of Hobbes (e.g. Wendt, 1992<sup>34</sup>).

One final tension arises from this entanglement of source and target domains. The general will is put forward as the moral heart of political association upon the model of the individual person's will, yet in its transcendent interpretation (which I've argued is unavoidable), the general will may quite naturally lead to the belief in the moral priority of the collective over the individual and their rights. This is of course one effect of the general will - that some must be "forced to be free" by accepting, or being punished for transgressing, those laws legislated by the sovereign people considered as a single moral person. The state might thereby become that which is complete and the individual becoming only a constituent part of this higher unity. Therefore, implicit in political personification's potential

defence of the priority of the collective is the undermining of this same claim. It must admit that our only reference point for conceptualising this moral person of the state is simply that domain which the metaphorical utterance is simultaneously seeking both to transcend and circumscribe. This is reminiscent of attempts to imbue the nation with the same moral significance as the family but only in the service of refuting those very familial bonds or duties relative to those we hold to our compatriots. It is no more or less absurd than the cosmopolitan appeal to the notion of a global family or a brotherhood of humankind, which awkwardly invokes ethical particularism in an attempt to defend universalism.<sup>35</sup> In all these cases, the conclusion drawn by the analogy destroys their premise.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to establish that the unity of the state articulated by Hobbes and Rousseau through personification produced a more abstract understanding of the state. I attempted to demonstrate that it was through sustained uses of metaphor that Hobbes and Rousseau were able to arrive at and support key elements of their political philosophy. I have focused on Hobbes and Rousseau due to their meticulous attempts to describe both the nature of the state and to give an account of its legitimacy, as well as their subsequent significance both to the history of ideas generally and to those international theories that will be the topic of the next chapter.

By developing the medieval discourse on the body politic, Hobbes was able to straddle two prior traditions by conceptualising the state as being both partially artificial and natural, abstracted away from both the person of the ruler and the incorporated body of the people. The relationship between individualism and holism in Hobbes (and other related writers) seems to reveal a strange paradox. The presupposition and emphasis on the pre-social unified individual is, once employed as the source domain to metaphorically, or by analogy, describe the state, will inevitably lend its qualities, including its unity and primacy, to that target domain. It is therefore through the analogy that individualism merges into

holism and the two are dependent on each other and yet also in tension. As we find in Hobbes, a pre-political individualism can quite naturally be married to a political holism once analogy or metaphor is central to one's political theory. Rousseau's account of the general will developed out of the language of the person of the state developed by Hobbes and Pufendorf, while its somewhat ambiguous character rests on the extent to which the logic of personification is imbibed, which the author himself appears to have prevaricated over. The potential for casting the person of the state as possessing its own independence from the agglomerated wills of its constituent members presented itself to later holist theories, such as theories of popular sovereignty, but also nationalism and authoritarianism.

I have contested the suggestion that political personification languished from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Instead, I have suggested that body metaphors became more fulsome forms of personification, involving discussion of the person of the state, the general will, and national identity. That they appear more subtle forms of metaphor is in part an effect of the fact that they are much closer to our own metaphors to describe the state, their vocabulary still very much our own.

Neither Hobbes nor Rousseau dedicated much attention to the international sphere. While they may have acquiesced to conceiving of the international landscape as one akin to the state of nature, they did not pursue this analogy fully when discussing international politics. There are rare exceptions, such as Hobbes' claim in *On the Citizen [De Cive]* that "Cities once instituted doe put on the personall proprieties of men, that Law, which speaking of the duty of single men, we call naturall, being applyed to whole Cities, and Nations, is called the Right of Nations" (Hobbes, 1984: 171; see discussion in Armitage, 2013: 64). Similarly, Rousseau argued in *Fragments of an Essay on The State of War*, that "[m]an to man, we live in the civil state and subject to laws; people to people, each enjoys natural freedom" (2021: 163). Their hesitation on this point is understandable; what they resolved internally through personification is left unresolved *between* personified states. To conceptually overthrow the state's supreme authority, which itself had been developed as a resolution, in the service of some greater resolution to

international anarchy would no doubt have seemed to undermine the entirety of their primary project. In the next chapter, I turn to those writers making such a move. The external perspective that the study of international relations adopts, and indeed must adopt, has always leant heavily, though not always consciously, on a personified articulation of its central concept - the state.

## | Chapter Five |

### The Domestic Analogy:

#### The State as a Socialised Subject in International Theory

##### Introduction

Developing out of the metaphoric schema that related the political entity to the human body and to the person as a purposive unity, other, often more recent, forms of metaphor identified the relations of states with the social relations of individual human persons. It is to this form of metaphor and analogy that I turn in the following chapter. It has been christened the “domestic analogy”. Though I have reservations about this term, I will nevertheless adopt it here for reasons that I will explain shortly. This development of the metaphoric schema under discussion emerged as the medieval assumption of a Christian imperial unity increasingly gave way to our modern, pluralistic state system. The earliest articulations of these new forms of metaphor can therefore naturally be found in work exploring international relations and international law. Texts from within this international tradition typically assume that states are persons of some kind, often influenced by social contract theory and its concept of the state of nature, which, as I’ve noted, was often explained by reference to the relations of states and state-persons.<sup>1</sup>

A great deal hangs therefore on how one characterises this natural state as a source domain for the target domain of international relations. Characterisations diverge along (at least) two aspects. Firstly, there is the question of what natural attributes and forms of behaviour natural persons engage in when interacting. We can appeal to Hobbesian, Pufendorfian, Lockean (and so on) accounts of “natural” human behaviour, which vary greatly. Remember that even though the Hobbesian state of nature is sometimes referred to as a “pre-social” condition, it is by no means “pre-interaction”; in fact, Hobbes’ whole account of this state rests on the presupposition of violent and threatening interaction between individuals. Secondly, the character of law in this original state is crucial for determining the

nature of the relations of personified states. For example, whether it is a condition in which natural law holds, and whether it is a condition in which positive (non-divine) law is possible without the real threat of temporal sanction by a sovereign figure, is relevant in determining the use that personification is put to in international theory. Hobbes, for example, offers perhaps the clearest articulation of how natural behaviour informs the absence of a *substantive* natural law that has real obligatory force in the state of nature.<sup>2</sup> Our natural behaviour and the kind of natural law that exists are of course intertwined.

Despite international theory's reliance on this early modern concept of the state of nature and state formation, what they ultimately developed was something quite distinct from, and in some ways conflictual with, these early modern theories, as I will explore later on. For example, as John Herz has argued, early modern theories of the state eliminated the international from theoretical consideration, often by locating, perhaps only implicitly, their ideal commonwealth "upon some island, wilderness, or similarly isolated place" (1950: 160).

What most forms of personification directed at international relations tend to share is the conviction that there is a single indivisible and intentional agent as the central unit of political philosophy, whether domestic or international, namely, the sovereign individual or the sovereign state. Moreover, we tend to find the assertion that this agent exists amongst other functionally symmetrical agents, who together comprise some web of interactive relations, even if they are deemed to fall short of what might be termed "society", most likely due to the lack of a governing power, legal framework or routinised interaction. Embedded within this then is the assertion of equality of type, and by extension *moral* equality; Hobbes made exactly this connection between descriptive and moral equality in his discussions of the state of nature in Chapter 13 of *Leviathan*. This applies even to many of those international theorists who have taken the constructivist turn referenced above in relation to Rousseau's thought, and argue that state identity and interstate relations are determined by interaction with one another. Even these writers - and I will argue this is due to the persistent role of personification

in modern understandings of the state - still tend to posit some basic features of state identity that predate such interaction.

In regard to the structure of this chapter, following a brief discussion of how best to define and delineate between the relevant forms of analogy and metaphor, I will explore the roots of internationalised personification by first focusing on the works of those writers widely recognised as influential in the founding of the modern discourse of European international legal theory in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Two key debates constituted this discourse: firstly, whether the law of nations, or the *ius gentium*, holds between individual people or collectivised peoples, secondly, whether the *ius gentium* is the artificial *creation* of people(s), or rather reflects underlying, eternal laws. In any case, it was analogy from either the natural law holding between individuals or municipal law holding between individuals that fostered an understanding of international law. In the next section, I turn to the repercussions of these different conceptions of interstate relations in the discourse of international relations theory and its chief theoretical perspectives within the 20<sup>th</sup> century: realism, liberalism and constructivism.

### **Defining the Domestic Analogy**

International theory - I will borrow Martin Wight's catch-all term to refer to both international legal theory and international relations theory - naturally discusses the external relations of states, rather than their internal composition. In doing so, it extends the pre-existing association between states and individual persons into one relating interstate relations to interpersonal relations. This formulation is reflected in Grewal's helpful definition of the "domestic analogy": "[t]he domestic analogy asserts a fundamental parallel between individuals and states, and hence between interpersonal and international relations" (Grewal, 2016: 625; I do not follow more well-known definitions from Bull, 1966a and Suganami, 1986, for reasons I will touch on below).



Strictly speaking, international theory might be said to employ analogy more commonly than metaphor. Analogy appears to do or achieve three related things that are notable though and mark them out as at least being a particular class of metaphor. I have reserved discussion of this topic until now because of the popularity of the term “domestic analogy”, but similar remarks could have been directed at many of the other texts I have already discussed. Firstly, analogy tends to openly invoke the *structural relations* governing source and target domains (see Hertogen, 2019: 1127). Nevertheless, certain “relational” metaphors do this too (see Gentner, 1988), and arguably the claims of conceptual metaphor advanced in Chapter Two demand that there is a “structural” aspect to metaphor use. Secondly, while metaphor typically poses some kind of comparison between target and source domain, analogy more often suggests that, due to this similarity, we can discern unknown qualities about the target domain; this is implicitly related to the fact that analogies deal in structural relations, as opposed to the individual attributes of domains. In less overt ways, though, we may say that metaphorical language more generally invites us towards certain conclusions based on the consideration of source domains. Thirdly, because analogies tend to seek propositions about one domain based on the structural relations of another, the analogical utterance often states this intention outright through insertion of phrases such as “as in..., so in...”. Analogies are thereby more likely to make the reader aware of their rhetorical function than do archetypal forms of metaphor. Given my comments on the first two features, it is only this third feature then that separates analogy from metaphor. One should note though how speakers and writers tend to move swiftly from drawing an analogy to talking in more general metaphorical terms that drop the usual linguistic markers of analogies (i.e. “as in..., so in...” etc.). We find exactly this pattern in texts employing the domestic analogy. Recognition of this advises us against assuming any hard line between analogy and other forms of metaphor. Moreover, following Aristotle’s designation, analogy has often been treated as a form of metaphor (see, for example, Derrida, 1974: 43), and the terms used to describe the structure of analogical utterances – such as “source” and “target” – mirror those within literature on metaphor more generally (see Norton, 2018: 6 and Bartha, 2009: 15).

The domestic analogy has many different variants, which can be delineated by identifying two different forms of conceptual opposition. Firstly, we can determine that the domestic analogy has both descriptive and prescriptive variants. It can be claimed that the international sphere *is* organised in ways akin to that of domestic society (or indeed will be at some future date), while it can also be claimed that while this is not the case currently (or regardless of whether it is), we nevertheless *should* organise the international sphere along domestic lines in various ways. The distinction therefore rests on whether the analogy is being used to predict state behaviour or to suggest rightful courses of action.

Secondly, we may note that, in many cases, the employment of the phrase *domestic* analogy in IR theory especially is a misnomer and has been unhelpfully adopted into academic literature. More accurately, most of the analogies employed in IR theory relate the international sphere to a state of nature (see Beitz, 1979), which precedes or is at least conceptually distinct from what we would generally think of as the “domestic” sphere. “Domestic” is a misnomer precisely because the term is usually held to presuppose the existence of the state (it implies a contrast with the “international”) and is therefore incompatible with analogies that compare international relations to the relations between pre-political individual persons where a state has not yet been formed. Therefore, beyond the descriptive and prescriptive distinction (though intersecting with it for the reason sketched below), we might then say that there is further way to class variants of the domestic analogy – that between domestic analogies proper and state of nature analogies (see Rolf, 2014 for a related, though not identical, distinction). My distinction rests on whether our source domain is the domestic political condition or the pre-political condition. There are exceptions though where talk of the *domestic* analogy would by no means be a misnomer. For example, writers commonly associated with the English School are keen to emphasise the rule-governed nature of the international world, drawing it closer to that of intrastate relations in a descriptive sense. A great deal rests here then on one’s conception of the domestic and the pre-political conditions, that is, how we characterise our source domains, and the kinds of interaction and law-governed behaviour that is conceivable. For example, English school thinkers could very fairly argue that

their conception of the state of nature is not one which would preclude such rule-governed behaviour; they would only need to deny the validity of the Hobbesian conception of the pre-state condition to do so, and instead look to other accounts of the state of nature, such as from Locke or Grotius - thinkers the English School's rationalist tradition often do draw on (see Wight, 1966, Bull, 2002 [1977]). An analogy between international relations and the Hobbesian pre-political condition is quite different in character from an analogy between international relations and the Lockean state of nature, for example. Such differences offer further variants of analogy than surveyed above.

We can combine each of these two oppositions to class any variant of the analogy. A given analogy can be interpreted as suggesting that *i*) international relations are like interpersonal relations in the state of nature, that *ii*) international relations should be like interpersonal relations in the state of nature, that *iii*) international relations are like interpersonal relations within a state, and finally that *iv*) international relations should be like interpersonal relations within a state. In truth, the most crucial forms of the analogy are *i* and *iv* above, and it is between *i* as an *abbreviated* form of the analogy, and *iv* as a more *fulsome* analogy that the main fault line between international theorists appears. For example, Hobbes' puts forward (briefly) the *abbreviated* form of the analogy at the end of Chapter 13 of *Leviathan*, as do various realist thinkers within IR<sup>3</sup>, while liberal internationalists tend to adopt the more *fulsome*, prescriptive variant. We should note though that for the analogy to hold, states must remain as the main actors within such newer supranational structures. For this reason, this latter form of analogy is necessarily statist and cannot truly entertain cosmopolitanism.

The discussion of the domestic analogy is by no means recent. Hedley Bull (1966a, 2002 [1977]) was a key discussant of it, offering an influential critique of it. Bull critiqued the analogy first in an article from 1966 and then returned to theme in his 1977 book, *The Anarchical Society*. In the latter, Bull lists three of the analogy's failings: firstly, that the international system is not fundamentally like a Hobbesian state of nature with regards to the absence of either industry, trade, or morality; secondly, that Hobbes' characterisation of the state of nature and explanation of

social order is unconvincing, and so likewise are analogies contingent upon this characterisation; and thirdly, that states are unlike individuals in a number of crucial ways (2002 [197]: 44-7). It is worth noting that only the third critique directly attacks the domestic analogy in general, while the former two more specifically critique a Hobbesian version of it. In regard to this third critique, Bull asserts that states are (the case of nuclear weapons aside) less vulnerable to swift, permanent destruction than individuals, and they are also not as *equally* so as individuals are (2002: 48-9). Yet, we shouldn't fail to note that Bull himself employed the analogy – and associated metaphors – when articulating his concept of international *society*, when arguing that states may be “conscious of certain common interests and common values” and “conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations” (Bull, 2002: 13), and when discussing states honouring agreements, practicing respect towards one another (Bull, 2002: 13), and being “united in the belief that they are the principal actors in world politics” (Bull 2002: 16-19).

I raise Bull's lack of consistency here chiefly as a way of assessing an argument which may well have occurred to the reader over the previous pages. It may be argued that the effects of the domestic analogy and personification in international theory, are negligible, because in many cases the terms “state” or “nation” or “society” might simply be “shorthand” for the individual “ruler” of that state (see Cooper, 1986: 8-12 for a more general discussion of non-literal language and its relationship to metaphor). When it is said that a state “behaves”, “thinks” or “intends” (and so on), we really mean that *the ruler of the state* “behaves”, “thinks” or “intends” (and so on). By shorthand, I mean a form of metonymy, strictly synecdoche, in that the whole (the state) is employed in language to represent the part, the individual person of the state “representative”. Furthermore, it might be suggested that not only are these metaphors and analogies innocent, but also that any utterances which take on a metaphorical tint via such synecdoche – such as Bull's talk of states having beliefs, self-consciousness, the capacity to honour, and so on – are also fairly inconsequential. This would perhaps be a damaging argument to concede whilst seeking to maintain the conceptual significance of metaphor and analogy.

Two problems befall this potential objection though. Firstly, *so much* of our language in the political realm connotes the corporate personality and identity of the state, not simply the relationship between individual ruler and individual state. As a result, it is by no means a simple matter to be “stricter” with our figures of speech; our political language is too suffused with the artefacts of prior personification. For example, replacing “state” with “state representative” resolves little given that we would then still imply that the representative “represents” something that we can isolate in language without recourse to metaphor. We would like to say of course that the representative represents, in a more direct or indirect fashion, the “people” of the state and their possessions, territorial and otherwise. Yet, how does the representative represent the “people” if not by reflecting the metaphorically conceived “general will”? Remember, we do not want to claim that state representatives do not represent the minority who either did not vote at all, or did not vote for them, in the election that brought them into office. Moreover, we would still need to overlook the fact that the representative does not truly represent only the citizens, since the state has claims over a territory not wholly coterminous with the property of its citizen-body. In short, the political representative must represent *all* citizens and not simply the citizens that voted for that representative, as well as a distinct territory.

Secondly, a related matter concerns the fact that what is most significant about Bull’s references to states’ “conceptions of themselves”, and their “beliefs” and “hopes”, and so on, is that their rhetorical effect derives from metaphor that is not easily translatable as simple synecdoche and thus cannot be satisfactorily paraphrased using literal language, in many cases. Whenever we attempt to provide a more truly literalised translation of the utterance in question devoid of reference to the given metaphors, the meaning of the utterance will be substantively changed. For example, once we literalise the supposed synecdoche from a claim such as “modern states have been united in the belief that they are the principal actors in world politics”, we arrive at the claim that “modern state representatives have been united in the belief that they are the principal actors in world politics”, which substantially alters the meaning of what is at stake. Bull’s

statement is a play on the inter-temporal and corporate nature of the state, abstracted away from any particular state representative. Removing the potential synecdoche results not simply in rhetorical banality - though it is arguably this too - but rather a quite different proposition altogether. Moreover, if we were to take seriously the idea that Bull meant only state representatives' beliefs, hopes, and self-conceptions, the study of IR would in fact become a much less expansive study of individual psychology or the sociology of small groups, which therefore undermine international politics and international law as distinct fields of enquiry. In this way and in my view, personification constitutes the disciplinary and conceptual boundaries of international theory.

## Personification in International Legal Theory

### i) The Birth of International Legal Theory

International law relies upon the analogy between the relations of individuals and that of states, either assuming that the international context is one akin to that which governs pre-political individual persons, such that a variant of natural law holds, or asserting that the international differs little qualitatively from the relations between citizens, in which case, private law analogies can justly be drawn. Hersch Lauterpacht (1927; 1946) was influential in noting the extent to which international law is based on such analogy.

The first substantial discussions of international law appear in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in the context of discussions of the Roman law concept, *ius gentium*, meaning "the law of nations". I will focus first on those theorists sometimes referred to as the "fathers" of international law (e.g. Scott, 1928).<sup>4</sup> Originally employed to govern the relations with non-Roman state citizens or peregrines, the *ius gentium* was then one of only two forms of law, the other being the civil law (*ius civile*). The emergence of a third category of law - the natural law - upset this dichotomy and ultimately cast the *ius gentium* into the hinterland between the civil and the natural categories of law (Koskeniemi, 2012: 946; Pagden, 2010:

348; Skinner, 1978: 151-2). Though well-known later definitions of this third branch of law, from those such as Gaius, Ulpian and later Aquinas, made a clear distinction between it and the law of nations (Waldron, 2010; Luscombe, 1982: 705; Canning, 1988: 445), the *ius naturale* often remained a vague expression in Roman law and was sometimes used interchangeably with *ius gentium* during the early medieval period (Watson, 1998: "Glossary"). Moreover, international law has been associated with natural law on the basis that in the international realm there is no legal framework or sovereign power upon which to base a positive law. For example, John Stuart Mill rightly argues that international legal theorists have

"done more than any others to give currency to this style of ethical speculation; inasmuch as, having no positive law to write about, and yet being anxious to invest the most approved opinions respecting international morality with as much as they could of the authority of law, they endeavoured to find such an authority in Nature's imaginary code" (Mill, 1904: 9-10).

In this way, early international legal theory often adopted analogies that took an understanding of the natural law holding between persons and employed it to conceptualise international law. Underpinning such analogies was a personified image of the state possessing legal rights and duties; it was precisely "the personification of the state which made possible the creation of international law on the basis of natural law" (Carr, 1946: Ch. 10).

It is true that by the 16<sup>th</sup> century the *ius gentium* was in fact with increasing frequency defined as a branch of positive law. Suarez is often credited in this regard (see Brett, 2012; Carty, 2012: 977), through his statement that the law of nations is "in an absolute sense human and positive" (1944: 343), if in its proper form customary (1944: 346). However, it is important to stress that writers still held that there was close identification between *all* forms of law because of an underlying assumption of God as the ultimate lawgiver and designer of the world and of the human person.<sup>5</sup> As Suarez argued, "the original derivation of every human law is in a certain sense traced back to the eternal law", just as the "the

natural law is also divine, being decreed, as it were, directly by God Himself” (1944: 47, 42).<sup>6</sup> This fundamental assumption goes some way to unpick the superficial tension in the work of early modern articulators of the law of nations. For example, it helps to explain Vitoria’s simultaneous claims that the *ius gentium* “does not have the force merely of pacts or agreements between men, but has the validity of a positive enactment (lex)” (Vitoria, 1991: 40; also see Vitoria, 1991: 281), and that it “either is or derives from natural law” (Vitoria, 1991: 278; see Scott, 1928: Appendix E, cxi–cxii; Langella, 2017: 58-60). The traditional view of international law as the progeny of natural law is not mistaken therefore, and indeed, contrary to Anthony Pagden (see Pagden, 1991: xv-xvi), Vitoria’s account of the law of nations is weighted more heavily towards the natural than the positive. Moreover, later writers such as Grotius still retain a natural law variant of the *ius gentium*. Grotius inserts in his earlier, unpublished text, *De Indis* (published posthumously in 1868 as *De Jure Praedae*), the term “volitional” or “voluntary” to flag when he is discussing principles derived from consent or human convention or tradition; he pursues the same in later texts but less consistently (see Grotius, 2005: 112, 634; also see Vollerthun, 201: 175).<sup>7</sup>

Regardless of whether the *ius gentium* was conceived of as more akin to natural law or to positive law, discussion of international relations clearly invited the employment of analogy between the nation or state and the individual living under the laws of nature or human law, as did more generally the association between interstate politics and interpersonal relations. In both cases, the crucial move occurs when we conceive of political entities as either natural individuals or as contracting individuals under government. For example, while Vitoria’s definition of the *ius gentium* in *De Indis* is taken directly from Justinian, but he replaces the word *homines* (men) with *gentes* (peoples or nations) (Brett, 2012: 1088; cf. Nussbaum, 1954: 80-1; see Castellino & Allen, 2003: 33 for a discussion of this topic in relation to Grotius). The inter-*gentes* modification has to be contextualized against the changing face of international politics wherein the medieval period’s overriding *theoretical* emphasis on universal unity under God and the Pope, as well as to the universalist pretensions of the emperor, was breaking down and being replaced by more truly international politics constituted



by individual sovereign states (see Tuck, 2001: 57-60; Nunez, 2014: 237). Vitoria's definition of the *ius gentium* as law holding between nations or states rather than individuals, which was accepted with minor adaptation by Suarez - who also took states to be "member(s) of that universal society" (Suarez, 1944: 347-9; also see Brett, 2012: 1088-90; Neff, 2014: 158; Vollerthun, 2017: 103)<sup>8</sup> - involved just such a metaphorical shift.

This association naturally tumbles out of those body metaphors present in the work of these fathers of international law. For example, Vitoria echoes *The Belly and the Members* when, following an allusion to St. Paul, he suggests that the commonwealth, like the individual, should be able to "command the single limbs for the convenience and use of the whole" to the extent that it has the right to "compel and coerce its members as if they were its limbs for the utility and safety of the common good" (Vitoria, 1991: 11). Suarez, in similar fashion, considers the state to be a "mystical body", and that

"as man – by virtue of the very fact that he is created and has the use of reason – possesses power over himself and over his faculties and members for their use, and is for that reason naturally free (that is to say, he is not the slave but the master of his own actions), just so the political body of mankind, by virtue of the very fact that it is created in its own fashion, possesses power over itself and the faculty of self-government, and in consequence whereof it is also possesses power and a peculiar dominium over its own members" (1944: 366-7; also see Skinner, 1978: 165).<sup>9</sup>

## ii) Grotius' use of the domestic analogy

Hugo Grotius drew significantly on the writings of Vitoria and Suarez in the formulation of his own thought (Coates, 2012: 792-3);<sup>10</sup> to quote Dickinson, "[t]he system of Grotius lived because it was grafted on a living tree" (1917: 568-9). It was not until Grotius that the analogy between "domestic" society and

international society was thoroughly mined. As Tuck has argued, in Grotius' *The Rights of War and Peace* (1625)<sup>11</sup>, there is

“a crucial role being played [...] by the analogy between states and natural individuals. For all the complexity and nuanced character of the book, this is the simple message which its readers received and which was so important to the later seventeenth century” (Tuck, 2001: 96).

Moreover, Tuck views the individual person, according to Grotius, as being, “morally speaking, like a miniature sovereign state” (Tuck, 2001: 84-5). Grotius' employment of such metaphors has been seen as “medieval residue” in his work (Bull, 1966b: 86-7), yet we should not overlook the function they played in opening the conceptual door to new understandings of the rules deemed relevant to international relations.

This personification is most clearly illustrated in Grotius' work in a passage from an earlier work, his *The Free Sea [Mare Liberum]*, wherein it is argued that “the people in respect of all mankind have the place of private men” (Grotius, 2004: 31), reflecting his employment of organic metaphors.<sup>12</sup> Grotius again sets up the basic terms of the analogy that will characterise his theory in the first chapter of his later work *The Rights of War and Peace*, following its prologue:

“All the Differences of those who do not acknowledge one common Civil Right, whereby they may and ought to be decided; such as are a multitude of People that form no Community, or those that are Members of different Nations, whether private Persons, or Kings, or other Powers invested with an Authority equal to that of Kings, as the Nobles of a State, or the Body of the People, in Republican Governments: All such Differences, I say, relate either to the Affairs of War, or Peace” (Grotius, 2005: 133).

Immediately we are struck by the parallels drawn between the relations of the ungoverned multitude and that which governs interstate relations, as well as by the slippage between private persons, kings, sovereign leaders, and bodies politic.

Later, Grotius asserts that “there is no Difference between a free People, and a King that is really so” (Grotius, 2005: 320). There is no difference in part, Grotius argues, because held in constant is a triple relationship between the abstract concepts of the state, the sovereign person(s), and sovereignty itself. This relationship Grotius articulates by analogy to the body, the eye, and the power of sight, wherein the “common” subject of the power of sight is the body, while the “proper” subject is the eye. A parallel is therefore set-up between the body and the state, with King or assembly conceptualised as the eye (Grotius, 2005: 259).<sup>13</sup> The generality of this relational trinity allows Grotius to countenance multiple forms of state, both that which asserts the supreme power resting solely in “the people” and that which affirms its presence solely in the person of the King, but we must remember that it is a structure that is first imagined through a form of organic metaphor. Ancient and medieval metaphors are thereby reinvigorated by the association to international interactions.

In another passage, Grotius argues that bodies politic are “like the natural” in that they possess “one spirit” with sovereignty their “Breath of Life’ and their body “continues to be still the same, tho’ its Particles are perpetually upon an insensible Flux and Change, whilst the same Form remains” (Grotius, 2005: 666-7). Public punishment for acts of interstate aggression is considered just, though stringent limits are placed upon this with regard to the private property of citizens who did not consent to the unjust public act, as well as to the timeframe over which punishments can be sought, such that this guilt is dissolved upon the death of the individuals responsible for the public act. Still, there remains the sense in Grotius’ theory that, in however vague a sense, “[t]here is likewise a Communication of Guilt between a Community and the particular Persons who are Members of it; for [...] *Where there is a Community there must needs be Particulars, because a Community is composed of Particulars, and Particulars collected and united, make up together what we call a Community*” (Grotius, 2005: 1076).

Building on such metaphors, Grotius applies personification in the form of the domestic analogy to the issue of property rights and territorial disputes. Most significant of these metaphorical utterances relate to the analogical extrapolation

of principles relating to the property rights (either natural or positive) into the international sphere. For example, in *The Free Sea*, Grotius argues that “territories are of the possession of a people as private dominions are of the possessions of particular men” (2004: 30; also see Grotius, 2005: 20-1, 404, 432-3).<sup>14</sup> Grotius’ arguments regarding the Portuguese right to trade in the East Indies are framed by the legal language of property ownership; his renunciation of Portuguese control is pursued by arguing that they cannot be lords (*domini*) of this territory because they do not in fact possess it (see Goebel, 1982 [1927]: 113; also see Hill, 1945: 145-6). Grotius argues that “whatever by occupation can become private property can also become public property, that is, the private property of a whole nation” (Grotius, 2004: 26). Grotius’ use of personification is significant then because influential later texts from Hobbes and Rousseau that I have already surveyed rarely employed personification to discuss international politics at length.<sup>15</sup>

### iii) Developments from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Onwards

This basic conceptual move that Grotius employed repeatedly was foundational to the discourse of international legal theory and to the texts which emerged on this issue in the following centuries. Christian Wolff opened his 1749 (an updated edition was published in 1764) text, *The Law of Nations*, by describing the nation in the manner so familiar to his era:

“S2. How nations are to be regarded.

Nations are regarded as individual persons living in a state of nature. For they consist of a multitude of men united into a state. Therefore since states are regarded as individual free persons living in a state of nature, nations also must be regarded in relation to each other as individual free persons living in a state of nature” (Wolff, 1934 [1764]: 9).

While it was a view that Wolff would go on to critique, he elaborates what received wisdom had drawn from this basic analogy:

“Nations can be regarded as nothing else than individual free persons living in a state of nature, and therefore the same duties are to be imposed upon them, both as regards themselves and as regards others, and the rights arising therefrom, which are prescribed by the law of nature and are bestowed on individual men, because by nature they are born free, and are united by no other bond than that of nature” (Wolff, 1934: 5).

Wolff derives from this guiding claim many other related claims about international politics about the rights and duties of states. For example, he argues that “since by nature all are equal, all nations too are by nature equal the one to the other” (Wolff, 1934: 15).<sup>16</sup> We may add Wolff’s assertion that this moral person is in possession of an “intellect” for, he argues, “[i]nasmuch as the state is considered as a single person, to it also belongs an intellect peculiar to the nation” (1934: 36). Wolff recognises the heuristic value of such metaphors and analogies in science generally, though admitting that they contain something “fictitious” (Wolff, 1934: 17). Nevertheless, the structure of this text’s prologue, which outlines the proceeding argument, can be seen as an elucidation of this central analogy from various different angles.

This analogy remained the standard basis for thinking about international law in Vattel’s tellingly-titled *The Law of Nations; Or Principles of the Law of Nature applied to The conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns* (1758). Vattel here directly explores a line of enquiry earlier raised by Hobbes, as already discussed (Hobbes, 1984: 171). As the title of Vattel’s book suggested, the relationship between individual sovereigns could quite readily be assumed to be equivalent to the relations between person-like nations. For Vattel,

“NATIONS or States are bodies politic, societies of men united together for the purpose of promoting their mutual safety and advantage by the joint efforts of their combined strength. Such a society has her affairs and her interests; she deliberates and takes resolutions in common; thus becoming a moral person, who possesses an understanding and a will peculiar to

herself, and is susceptible of *obligations* and *rights*” (Vattel, 2008 [1758]: 67).

Vattel echoes Hobbes’ theory in arguing that in the sovereign representative “is found the moral person, who, without absolutely ceasing to exist in the nation, *acts thenceforwards only in him and by him*” (Vattel, 2008: 99). Beaulac rightly considers Vattel to have been crucial in the “externalisation” of the concept of sovereignty – that is, a shift from considering the power or authority of the state in relation to domestic groups, to considering the same qualities in relation to external entities. Vattel was to further entrench the image of the state as a moral person by combining with it the idea of each being subject to the law of nations:

“Every nation that governs itself, under what form soever, without dependence on any foreign power, is a *Sovereign State*. Its rights are naturally the same as those of any other State. Such are the moral persons who live together in a natural society, subject to the law of nations. To give a nation a right to make an immediate figure in this grand society, it is sufficient that it be really sovereign and independent, that is, that it govern itself by its own authority and laws” (Vattel, 2008: 83).

Vattel is careful at several junctures about the dangers that befall theorists who seek to transpose the law of nature from referring to individuals to that which applies to sovereigns and states (Covell, 2009: 96). He specifically criticizes Hobbes in this regard, acknowledging him as the individual “who gave a distinct, though imperfect idea, of the law of nations” (2008 [1758]: 8). Vattel praises Hobbes’ perception that the law of nature can be alternately applied either to individuals or states but doubts that no amendments are required in the latter transposition. He argues that “we shall see in the course of this work, that he was mistaken in the idea that the law of nature does not suffer any necessary change in that application,—an idea from which he concluded that the maxims of the law of nature and those of the law of nations are precisely the same” (2008 [1758]: 9). Nevertheless, on the question of the equality of states, Vattel argues on the basis of a direct comparison with the equality between individuals that exists in the

state of nature. He states that since

“men are naturally equal, and a perfect equality prevails in their rights and obligations, as equally proceeding from nature,—nations composed of men, and considered as so many free persons living together in the state of nature, are naturally equal, and inherit from nature the same obligations and rights” (2008 [1758]: 75).

It would appear then that, despite his care at other points, Vattel’s notion of states’ equality derives directly from that which exists between individuals in the state of nature.

Later international legal theorists carried forward this association between the state and the person into the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They grew increasingly partial to an understanding of international law that was positivistic (which in retrospect makes figures like Grotius appear as exaggeratedly naturalistic), and they were less keen to emphasise the role that natural law plays in international politics. Lauterpacht identified that the victory of positivism over the natural law tradition within international legal theory had been achieved by the end of the nineteenth century and was still the reigning tradition in the 1920s (1927: 7). Positivism attempted to conceptualise international law by recourse only to those laws posited and agreed to by states, and so sought to purge the discipline of allusions to natural law and ostensibly also private Roman law, which had often been closely associated with natural law, such as by Grotius (see Lauterpacht, 1927: 14). However, positivism also sought to untangle the discipline’s analogical linkages to the realm of law holding between individuals, whether natural individuals or Roman subjects: “The same forces which were fighting the influence of the law of nature advocated with vigour the purification of international law from its private law ingredients” (Lauterpacht, 1927: 8).

In summary, the ostensible synonymity between the individual and the nation or state buttressed new articulations of the laws governing international relations. There are traces of the medieval organic metaphors in these works, and there will

continue to be so for many centuries afterwards, but the novel emphasis is now on the interactive aspects of states' existence, and on the suggestion that states, just like natural individuals or citizens, have the capacity to enter into legal contracts, bear moral responsibility for their actions in a corporate sense. This was based on the foundational assumption, derived from assumptions about social existence among individual humans, of their capacity for both action and reason, against a backdrop of moral equality. The echoes of personification have been felt throughout the field of international law and has influenced its key doctrines and treaties. Perhaps the most straightforward example is that of the 1933 Montevideo Convention, which offered a description of the key facets of the state and its rights and duties in the international sphere: here, the state is plainly described as "a person of international law" (Convention on Rights and Duties of States, 1936 [1933]).

### **Personification in International Relations (IR) Theory**

I will now trace the lineage of this metaphorical connection forward into the work of 20<sup>th</sup> century International Relations theory. I wish to make two key points in this section. Firstly, I suggest that it is through pedagogy and a shared familiarity with canonical texts, that personification of the state has become ubiquitous in the discipline of international relations theory. To quote Alexander Wendt on the subject of personification within IR: "[i]n a field in which almost everything is contested, this seems to be one thing on which almost all of us agree" (2004: 297). Since thought within IR theory has often been developed through reflection upon the work of early modern theorists of the state as well as, to a lesser extent, the international legal theorists discussed above, it is unsurprising that the metaphors of such work would also be adopted.

Secondly, I will argue that international theorists are inclined to accept a tacit nationalism and employ this in the service of structural theory. I therefore echo Bartelson's argument that "the theoretical impetus towards conceptualizing the state as an empirical and transcendental unity [...] pushes international political



theory in a vaguely nationalist direction” (1995: 31; also see Griffiths and Sullivan, 2008). To be clear, this is not a *political* nationalism in the sense of endorsing insular group identity as a political project but rather more akin to what writers within sociology have called “methodological nationalism” (Martins, 1974; also see Chernilo, 2006), insofar as IR theorists take as a presupposition of their theorising that the nation-state is the cardinal unit of social analysis. This, I contend, is bound up with the discipline’s use of personification, and is almost a prerequisite for developing IR *theory* involving the kind of abstraction that that word implies.

I will explore both lines of thought by considering various theoretical perspectives in turn and articulating how each relies, consciously or not, on the personification inherited from previous members of this linguistic community of scholars and their understanding of the personified state. I will first discuss those IR theories that interpret the state’s personality as “given”, namely, realism and liberalism. I will then turn to accounts of state personality that emphasise that such personality can only emerge due to social interaction within international “society”, namely, constructivism. I will contend that even here, the use of personification often permits an acceptance of some “given”, “pre-social” dimension to state identity (see Wendt, 2004, for example). In each of the theories I will explore - realism, liberalism, and constructivism - I will suggest that the analogical procedure requires subverting something simultaneously assumed about the source domain, that of the individual person existing in social relation; thus, the conclusions drawn from metaphor undermine some facet of its premise.

#### i) Realism

Whether they take their leave directly from the Hobbesian account articulated in Chapter Five, wherein states are diffident and vainglorious pre-social individuals, or from Rousseau’s parable of the stag hunt (such as in Waltz, 1959), wherein states become guileless, animalistic “primitives” satisfied by short-term, suboptimal gains, the canonical texts of IR realism are based on an abbreviated

metaphor likening the state to the “natural” human person.<sup>17</sup> As discussed, I say abbreviated here for the same reason that Hobbes’ analogy is itself abbreviated; while Hobbes’ recognised that the pre-social resolution to “domestic” anarchy was the Leviathan, his domestic analogy was not such that he thought the same resolution at the level of international anarchy could or indeed should be advanced (see Hobbes’ discussion of this point at the end of Chapter XIII of *Leviathan*).

In regard to the so-called classical realists within IR theory, unlike later authors, E.H. Carr discussed personification most directly. For example, Carr stresses that,

“The controversy about the attribution of personality to the state is not only misleading, but meaningless. To deny personality to the state is just as absurd as to assert it. The personality of the state is not a fact whose truth or falsehood is a matter for argument. It is what international lawyers have called “the postulated nature” of the state. It is a necessary fiction or hypothesis - an indispensable tool devised by the human mind for dealing with the structure of a developed society” (1946: 148-9).

Carr’s reference to a “necessary fiction” is a strange one and the reader is left wondering how a necessary fiction differs from a true statement. A fiction may be profitable in various ways<sup>18</sup>, and yet still be a falsehood. Carr’s use of “necessary” implies something further, something more categorical, but what this is exactly remains elusive. He returns to the topic of personification again most directly when seeking to refute those who believe personifying the state leads necessarily to totalitarianism and the destruction of individual liberty: “[t]he personification of the state is a tool; and to decry it on the ground of the use to which it is sometimes put is no more intelligent than to abuse a tool for killing a man” (1946: 151). This argument may be interpreted as suggesting that personification possesses an unproblematic, acausal relationship to political philosophy. He appears to suggest through this second use of the “tool” metaphor that personification is not itself implicated in the nature of the domains it discusses; after all, the tool stands apart both from the subject who wields it and the object

upon which it is used. I have argued that personification is not necessarily just something that the subject brings to bear on the object, but may also be a factor in constituting the very object itself. While I have sought to suggest the malleability of the metaphorical relationship between person and state, the previous two chapters have sought precisely to show that particular understandings of the person were employed to conceptualise the state, and that had different conceptions been available, our conception of the state would be, at least in subtle ways, different.

Despite his claims about the absurdity of either asserting or denying the personality of the state, it seems clear that the upshot of this discussion is that Carr seeks to defend personification's use, which he sees as necessary for conceptualising international relations: "it does not seem possible to discuss international politics in other terms" (1946: 149). Moreover, Carr rightly recognises that such personification cannot be literalised or captured as a form of metonymy: "'Relations between Englishmen and Italians' is not a synonym for 'relations between Great Britain and Italy'" (1946: 149). In addition, Carr wants to refute the claim that personification produces an international morality that is wholly fictitious. He argues that though personification may be a "fictitious" mental tool, the morality that it leads to is by no means fictitious as a result. In fact, Carr argues that "any useful examination of international morality" starts with an acceptance that there exist states as group-persons and that politicians merely represent such group-persons (1946: 151).

Fundamental to Carr's thought is therefore this notion of the group-person, though he accepts they differ in significant ways from natural persons and their associated standards of morality (1946: 157-61). Carr's adoption of the metaphorical language of the group-person rests on a recognition of the profound role of nationalism in political history of the previous two centuries. This was articulated in his earlier work *Nationalism and After* (1945), wherein he discusses international morality with nationalism more directly in mind (see 1945: 38-39, for relevant connections to the later text). Here he identifies *modern* nationalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the latter's "democratisation" by Rousseau (1945: 6-7),

wherein the personified nation is again recognised as essential for international relations and international law (1945: 8-9). The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw an increase in nationalistic fervour and its extension from the political sphere to the economic, ultimately producing nationalism's "climax" (1945: 17-24). Carr was writing in the wake of this 20<sup>th</sup> century climax and catastrophe of nationalism, and it is this which seemingly justifies his adoption of personification. This same position was voiced by other realists of this era, such as Herz<sup>19</sup> (1950), who equally emphasised that personification was inherent to modern nationalism, and likewise traced it to the French revolution and to the calls (and one might argue incompatibly) for *individual* freedom. In both cases, it is implicit that descriptive realism demands a recognition of nationalism, while idealism overlooks it in its naïve prescriptions of a future, better world. While Carr foresaw the potential conclusion of his vision of the world composed of free and equal group-persons (see 1945: 43), he recognised in 1946 that his analysis of contemporary international order must still be discussed in such terms.

Another frequently cited realist that engages with this theme is Hans Morgenthau. In his text *Politics Among Nations* (1948), Morgenthau stated that "[t]he essence of international politics is identical with its domestic counterpart. Both domestic and international politics are a struggle for power, modified only by the different conditions under which this struggle takes place in the domestic and in the international spheres" (1948: 17, also see pg. 21). He relates both to an underlying "desire to dominate", which can be seen in all forms of social relations, including that of individual governments, particularly when individuals compete in democratic elections for control of the polity (also see Hoffmann, 1959: 349-51). This is, in essence, Hobbesian, as Morgenthau later makes clear (see 1948: 36f, although note Morgenthau's amendments to the Hobbesian position at pg. 169) and rooted in an analysis of the personalised power of the monarch, indistinguishable from his private power, drives and desires. However, in discussions of imperialism, Morgenthau happily pivots towards talking of "nations" rather than individual men (see 1948: 21-2). For example, he considers foreign policy that aims at "an increase in the power of a nation" (1948: 26-7), as well as cases where a "country...sets out to increase its power" (1948: 27), or

when a nation attempts to “maintain its preponderant position” (1948: 27). Morgenthau’s discussion of cultural imperialism offers another clear example where the drive for power has been fully transplanted onto collective identities, though softened by his suggestion that this might take place via influencing “the intellectually influential groups of a foreign country”, which pushes us back into the realm of the individual person momentarily (1948: 40-2). His discussion of the concept of prestige betrays a similar conceptual move, wherein he argues that prestige is

“as intrinsic an element of the relations between nations as the desire for prestige is of the relations between individuals. Here again it becomes obvious that international and domestic politics are but different manifestations of one and the same thing. In both spheres, the desire for social recognition is a potent dynamic force determining social relations and creating social institutions” (1948: 50-1).<sup>20</sup>

Morgenthau provides explanation for such a move, and it is worthy of examination. As for Carr, Morgenthau relates his use of personification to modern nationalism, whereby we may talk of states as individual entities with person-like qualities. Morgenthau rightly recognises that it is an acceptance of the modern nation-state being distinct from the personalised power of the individual ruler that necessitates his figurative language. For example, Morgenthau opens his discussion of the essence of national power with a series of questions, including

“while it can be easily understood that individuals seek power, how are we to explain the aspirations for power in the collectivities called nations? What is a nation? What do we mean when we attribute to a nation aspirations and actions?” (1948: 73)

As he rightly notes, the nation is an abstraction and cannot be “seen”, but rather only its constituent members can. He resorts to a description of the state as a “legal organization” that individuals performing roles represent in various ways and it is to these individuals we refer to when speaking of a nation’s power or action, in

“empirical terms”. This simply kicks the can further down the road for we are left now with a second abstract entity, the legal organization. Yet, Morgenthau continues to talk of politicians as “representatives” who speak and act for this entity of the “nation”. He does not relinquish the notion that all citizens are in some sense also a part of a nation, as opposed to merely all those representing it in various ways, for modern nationalism means that individuals “identify themselves” with the actions and powers wielded by these representatives, such that their natural drive to power is transplanted onto the external relations of their nation (1948: 73-5). In the process, “[t]he power which our representatives wield on the international scene becomes our own” (1948: 75). This is aided analytically by the “incontestable” fact of national character (Morgenthau, 1948: 96-100), even though the latter’s existence, Morgenthau admits has been greatly exaggerated by those more extreme forms of nationalism that transform a sense of national affinity and similarity into a racist and destructive “political mysticism” (1948: 118-9).

Morgenthau’s interpretation of the national interest is likewise guided by the analogy to the individual person’s desire for self-preservation (denial of which Morgenthau dubs “national suicide”) (Morgenthau, 1949). Where national and individual interest fundamentally differ is not in their character or the nature of the agent that possesses them, but rather in the context in which each must operate. Again, Morgenthau draws on Hobbes’ “important but neglected truth” regarding the conventional origination of morality and law, which leads us towards the assertion that international society or the society of nations – which he refers to as a euphemism, though we might say metaphor - differs from domestic society principally in the mode and extent of its governance:

“[i]t is at this point that what is euphemistically called the society of nations differs from national societies. Not only are there no supra-national moral principles concrete enough to give guidance to the political actions of individual nations; there is also no agency on the international scene to protect and promote the interests of individual nations, and to guard their very existence, except the individual nations themselves” (1949: 211).

A similar tacit nationalism is also evident in Raymond Aron's work. Aron is similarly reliant on Hobbes' theory of the state of nature (see Aron, 2017 [1966]: 72). His basic supposition is as follows:

“Political units seek to impose their wills upon each other: such is the hypothesis on which Clausewitz's definition of war is based and also the conceptual framework of international relations. At this point, one question arises: why do political units want to impose their wills upon each other? What goals does each of them desire and why are these goals incompatible, or seem to be so?” (Aron, 2017 [1966]: 71)

This is shortly followed by:

“Let us start from the schema of international relations: the political units, proud of their independence, jealous of their capacity to make major decisions on their own, are rivals by the very fact that they are autonomous. Each, in the last analysis, can count only on itself” (Aron, 2017 [1966]: 72).

The parallels between states and individual persons are repeatedly drawn by Aron, inspired by a Hobbesian reading of international politics, such that Aron can concede that “man, whether individual or collective, desires to survive”, and implicates desires of security, power, and glory (Aron, 2017 [1966]: 73-4).<sup>21</sup>

In short, modern nationalism permits talk of states as individual persons in a metaphorical sense within IR theory. However, this theory is therefore in part contingent upon the presupposition that we as individuals remain identified with a nation, and that any ambivalence or dissent on that issue can be overlooked. This association between treating the state system as one comprised of morally equal, unified and indivisible states and a tacit nationalism is a product of its time (see Weitz, 2008, for example). A Wilsonian spirit of national self-determination hovered over international theory, including over the central assumptions of

realism, even while its key exponents might have rejected Wilson's own perspective as one espousing a naive idealism.

We find in classic realist texts, therefore, the assumption that the state should be treated how the majority of individual people contemporaneously experienced it; as an internationalised extension of their own identity and drives. International relations therefore began with an assumption that we should accept the language of modern nationalism and incorporate it into our theories of interstate politics; indeed, it was this assumption which permitted the discipline to carve out its own subject area, distinct from the related spheres of sociology and political science, by appealing to the authority of early modern theorists of the state and transplanting their work from the realm of natural individuals to the relations between individual-like nations, which appeared, quite understandably given the historical developments of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to be the key ideological forces behind early 20<sup>th</sup> century politics. Treating states as people was, for writers such as Carr, Morgenthau and Aron not simply the advantageous artifice of the theorist, but rather the product of considered reflection on the beliefs of their fellow citizens.<sup>22</sup>

It is crucial to note that texts of classical realism do not provide a mere adaptation of Hobbes' claims about egoistical and vainglorious individuality, but rather a complete subversion of them. Such texts replace Hobbes' explanations of such drives by reference to a natural human atomism, with the presupposition that the "self" within "self-interest" can in fact be constructed at the level of the group. After all, we can certainly imagine scenarios wherein the individual person's "self-interest" conflicts with that of their nation. A ruler, having fulfilled their natural drive towards supremacy over their fellow citizens via domestic politics (perhaps through the democratic process), may decide that their foreign policy should be conducted in a manner aimed at their personal aggrandisement instead of their interpretation of the citizen-body's common good, and there is no reason to assume that private and public interest aren't distinct and shouldn't come into conflict regularly.



The question of how we move from an underlying *animus dominandi* that is directed towards purely egoistical outcomes, to an individual drive for power that is identified with one's nation, is not examined exhaustively by Carr, Morgenthau or Aron. I contend they are blind to this problem precisely because they have fully imbibed the logic of a personified account of the state. This compelled them to undertake a profound redefinition of "self-interest", from the Hobbesian conception of the egoistical and pre-social individual person, to one which invokes the *collective* "self" whose own interests may be contrary to *individual* self-interest. Moreover, the supposed amoral outlook of international realism is in fact wholly dependent on a profound moral claim about the domestic constitution of the state and the relationship between ruler and citizen and their shared collective identity. In the process, the target domain of collective self-interest eclipses the source domain upon which they are themselves conceptualised. As a result, the very basis of the "self" becomes vague because, since biology no longer defines the tangible limits of the self, our conception of it can be attached to any form of "we-identity". It becomes rootless, though we may suspect in the final analysis that it is a category only conceptually available to us because of the experience of our individual bodies and concepts that are learned and which have attached themselves to our society's understanding of the individual person.

Classical realism and its subsequent critique (for example, Hoffmann, 1959) spurred more "systemic" theory within the field of international politics (see Waltz, 1979: 43-50, for a critique of Hoffmann on this point). When we turn to the texts of structural realists, we find that the cause of anarchy is no longer placed chiefly at the feet of our own *animus dominandi*, but rather at the structure of international anarchy (see Herz, 1950 for an early example of such a move). The state's natural response is not a quest for power for its own sake, but rather as a means to achieve security (Mearsheimer, 2001; 2020; Wohlforth, 2008: 136-8; Waltz, 1988: 616). In its desire to produce a more scientifically satisfying and explanatory powerful model of international relations, structural realism must treat the state as an entity with certain assumed attributes. What remains consistent across both classical and structural realism is the Hobbesian position that "[a]mong states, the state of nature is a state of war. [...] Among men as among

states, anarchy, the absence of government, is associated with the occurrence of violence” (Waltz, 1979: 102).

Kenneth Waltz’s delineation between explanations of the international focusing on alternately the individual, the state, and the system (his three images) were advanced by reference to Spinoza, Kant, and Rousseau, respectively (2001 [1959]). His use of the term “image”, which, in a more recently added preface to his 1959 book, he admits is more preferable to talk of “levels of analysis”, is illuminating:

“The word "image" suggests that one forms a picture in the mind; it suggests that one views the world in a certain way. "Image" is an apt term both because one cannot "see" international politics directly, no matter how hard one looks, and because developing a theory requires one to depict a pertinent realm of activity” (2001: ix).

The most relevant discussion of personification occurs in his exploration of the third image, namely the systemic level, wherein he notes the following, partly echoing and partly amending Morgenthau’s justification:

“The centripetal force of nationalism may itself explain why states can be thought of as units. To base one’s whole analysis on this point is, however, unnecessary. Rousseau has made it clear that his analysis will apply in either of two cases:(1) If the state is a unit that can with some appropriateness take the adjective "organismic." This, although Rousseau did not foresee it, has become the case in many states that in most other respects fall far short of his ideal. (2) If the state is a unit only in the sense that some power in the state has so established itself that its decisions are accepted as the decisions of the state” (Waltz, 2001 [1959]: 177-8).

Waltz of course acknowledges that internal dissent to foreign policy decisions is inevitable but concludes that “[i]n either case, the state appears to other states as a unit” (2001: 178). Waltz’s justification for personification thereby rests partly

on the argument that states *appear* to be a person, according to other statepersons. In one sense, the argument is problematically circular in nature; it begs the question by taking for granted the personality of the perceiver, the exact kind of personality that he is seeking to justify. Yet, the argument could also be read as supposing that states appear to be persons to those persons who “represent” other states in some fashion. The argument is thus still that the individual perception of those engaged in political practice should govern the theorist’s most foundational theoretical assumptions. We might add here that it is entirely plausible that such perceptions are themselves derived from, or at least influenced by, the language available to the perceiver, gained from those texts which formed the basis for the perceiver’s relevant education in the subject.

Waltz bases his later analysis of international politics (Waltz, 1979) more explicitly on economic theory. His argument is animated by analogy, justified by his claim that “[r]easoning by analogy is helpful where one can move from a domain for which theory is well developed to one where it is not” (1979: 89). Microeconomic theory becomes Waltz’s source domain for discussions of the target domain of international politics. As Waltz himself recognises, his source domain therefore takes as its basic units, persons or firms (1979: 89), the latter of which we may argue are best considered “legal persons”. Central to this analogy is the assumption that states are akin to “economic man” and each act as a “single-minded profit maximizer” (Waltz, 1979: 89).

This basic analogy permits Waltz to convey his ideas by assuming the self-identity, interests, and egoism of states. Note the range of personification present in the following passage, for example:

“International-political systems, like economic markets, are formed by the coaction of *self-regarding* units. International structures are defined in terms of the primary political units of an era, be they city states, empires, or nations. Structures emerge from the coexistence of states. No state *intends* to participate in the formation of a structure by which it and others will be constrained. International-political systems, like economic markets,

are individualist in origin, spontaneously generated, and unintended. On both systems, structures are formed by the coaction of their units. Where those units *live, prosper, or die* depends on their own efforts. Both systems are formed and maintained on a principle of *self-help* that applies to the units” (Waltz, 1979: 91, emphases added).

The personification continues when it comes to Waltz’s assumptions about the attributes of state. The core assumption he makes, quite directly, is that states seek “survival” (Waltz, 1979: 91). The second assumption he makes, less explicitly, is that states are all alike - “so long as anarchy endures, states remain like units” (1979: 93) – insofar as they are not formally differentiated. The second assumption is clarified to mean that “each state is like all other states in being an autonomous political unit” and in being sovereign (1979: 95). This might strike us as both tautological and vague; what matters is whether those entities we commonly refer to as states are indeed correctly so named. Waltz later supports this characterisation by asserting that a state is sovereign in that

“it decides for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems, including whether or not to seek assistance from others in doing so to limit its freedom by making commitments to them. States develop their own strategies, chart their own courses, make their own decisions about how to meet whatever needs they experience and whatever desires they develop. It is no more contradictory to say that sovereign states are always constrained and often tightly so than it is to say that free individuals often make decision under the heavy pressure of events” (Waltz, 1979: 96).

What’s important here is that the use of personified language already presupposes that states are “like units” and autonomous actors. The suggestion that states “develop their own strategies”, for example, presupposes that they are actors with identities and capacities that permit such an assertion. The language of this passage ascribes to them substantive agency whilst seeking to justify that very ascription.<sup>23</sup>

In summary, within structural realism, personification invariably functions to ascribe to states various human attributes without explicit mention of those particular individuals who comprise governmental bodies or who have been designated the state's ruler, by whatever process. By talking of the state's "desires", "intentions" and "identity", the neorealist can put significant distance between their theory and those domestic factors which threaten its systemic character. If one were to consistently talk of the state-person's "desire" or "intention" instead, the requisite air of systematicity would be undercut. Indeed, the very distinctions between Waltz's three images would arguably break down in terms of their conceptual clarity and use. Realism, whether classical or structural, tacitly assumes a weak form of nationalism to subtly justify their highly abstract accounts of international politics. In my view, Mearsheimer is therefore right to suggest that realism must subordinate the individual to the state, and in doing so it mirrors nationalism (see Mearsheimer, 2011: 12). Because of this connection, he rightly brands nationalism and realism "kissing cousins". I hope to have shown how this connection is fostered by, and reflected in, metaphorical language.

## ii) Liberal International Theory

In the international liberal tradition, personification often operates at a similar level to the realist approach, except that the supposedly innate characteristics of human beings advanced by liberals, including their subjection to universal moral rules, are substituted for the realist characterisation of the individual as self-interested and in practice subject only to conventional law (see Onuf, 1989: 164-167). In short, personification functions in an equally descriptive manner. However, there is a further use of the analogy within the liberal tradition of IR theory. While realism had always posited an abbreviated form of the state of nature analogy, it was liberalism that took the conceptual association between pre-social individuals and states and drew the inevitable conclusion that the sovereign resolution of pre-social anarchy could be iterated at the transnational level, potentially by drawing on the logic of the paradigmatically realist theory,

that of Hobbes. Associated with this possibility was discussion of whether this iteration *should* take place, thus invoking a far more prescriptive use of the analogy than realists could entertain. While realists often took this opportunity to pause and stress the imperfect nature of the analogy between states and individual human beings, such as at the end of Chapter 13 of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, liberal theory employed the analogy in a more fulsome manner.

Kant has commonly been seen a foundational figure of international liberal theory (see Russett, 2013: 95; Burchill, 2005: 58-9) and so I will discuss his thought first. I should justify his inclusion here since Bottici, in her study of the domestic analogy, argued that Kant is not employing the domestic analogy exactly, but is instead "deducing a principle [...] from the pure concept of law which is then applied to states and individuals without distinction" (Bottici, 2009: 7). Firstly, Bottici adopts a definition of "domestic analogy" that is far more restrictive than my own, insisting that this necessarily must include the derivation of a "social contract among states from the domestic experience of individual human beings" (Bottici, 2009: 59), which Kant's more cautious approach does not meet. So, the first thing to note is that the dispute between myself and Bottici is largely one relating to a matter of definition. Secondly, it should be noted that even if Kant did not explicitly couch his argument as the employment of an analogy (also see Chernilo, 2010: 96-7), IR theory that adopts Kant's approach frequently does employ such analogy, which alone would make his work worthy of further investigation in this discussion.

Thirdly, I contend Kant does indeed invoke the language of state personality and uses this to inform his prescriptions for international relations. His account of the state, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, includes use of this metaphor: "[e]very State contains three powers, i.e. it contains the generally united will in three persons (*trias politica*)" (Kant, 2017: 99). He emphasises this notion of a general will, arguing that "only the concurring and united will of all, insofar as each decides the same thing for all and all for each, and so only the general united will of the people, can be legislative" (Kant, 2017: 99). Moreover, his essay *To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* from 1795 opens with a description of the nation as a "moral

person" (1983 [1795]: 140). His account of international relations includes the following claim: "[a]s nations, peoples can be regarded as single individuals who injure one another through their close proximity while living in the state of nature" (Kant, 1983: 147). Such allusions to the state of nature reappear throughout the work:

"[r]eason can provide related nations with no other means for emerging from the state of lawlessness, which consists solely of war, than that they give up their savage (lawless) freedom, just as individual persons do, and, by accommodating themselves to the constraints of common law, establish a *nation of peoples (civitas gentium)*..." (Kant, 1983: 149).

Kant's project for perpetual peace does not argue that states must submit to supra-national authority; he therefore remains, despite the cosmopolitan flavour of his moral philosophy more generally, a strict internationalist when it comes to perpetual peace (see Hurrell, 1990). Blumenberg has suggested that Kant needed to toe this internationalist line precisely because a world republic risked "the self-contradiction of going against the will to self-preservation inherent to each state" (2020: 114). We find then here a tension inherent to the fact that the source and target domains are themselves so intertwined. Individual-level anarchy is resolved by the Leviathan, but to construct a greater Leviathan to resolve state-level anarchy would mean not only extinguishing the state units, but also by extension, the rationale that first justified the original Leviathan's existence. In short, the globalist resolution would mean accepting by analogy the philosophy that legitimates the state, but in doing so also negates it.<sup>24</sup>

In terms of 20<sup>th</sup> century IR theory, Michael Doyle has explicitly drawn on Kant's political philosophy (2012: 13-60). Alongside its claims about international integration, Doyle describes a basic postulate of liberal international theory as being that states are by right free from external intervention. This is argued for via analogy: "[s]ince morally autonomous citizens hold rights to liberty, the states that democratically represent them have the right to exercise political independence" (2012: 18). It is clear that part of what justifies the state's right to independence

is its conceptual connection to the individual's presupposed right to personal freedom. What Doyle highlights, though doesn't endorse, is the neo-Kantian liberal position that states which are not democratically constituted are not to be assumed to possess the rights associated with individual personality. As Doyle argues - and note the personification he uses to do so -

“Domestically just republics, which rest on consent, then presume foreign republics to be also consensual, just, and therefore deserving of accommodation. [...] At the same time, liberal states assume that non-liberal states, which do not rest on free consent, are not just” (2012: 112).

Undemocratic states are not attached to an incorporated body of people, and as such they neither possess moral agency and rationality, and nor should they be treated as true moral agents at all. Because liberal states recognise this, Doyle argues that while they may behave more pacifically with other liberal states, they are by no means more peaceful with non-liberal states, thereby articulating a “dyadic” version of the democratic peace thesis (Doyle's notion of a “separate peace”) (2012: 29, 61).

The liberal tradition has long recognised as an exception to the principle of non-intervention those cases where a people seeks to effect or defend their self-determination. J.S. Mill (2006) included this as one of his seven potential exceptions to non-intervention and Michael Walzer makes a similar appeal to it in his book *Just and Unjust Wars* (see Walzer, 2006: 91-5). In the latter text, there is the tacit assumption that a democratically constituted people is a moral agent and worthy of autonomy and freedom from coercion, over and above, but still analogically tied to, the individual right to freedom, including the individual's right to freely associate with others in the political sphere. Walzer argues that “given a genuine “contract,” it makes sense to say that territorial integrity and political sovereignty can be defended in exactly the same way as individual life and liberty”, and yet he also accepts that “states are neither organic wholes nor mystical unions” (2006: 53-4). According to Walzer, states' rights are simply the “collective form” of individual rights (2006: 54). Yet, Walzer swiftly turns to the language of



the domestic analogy, and does so self-consciously. He argues that “[i]f states actually do possess rights more or less as individuals do, then it is possible to imagine a society among them more or less like the society of individuals” (2006: 58). It is through this lens that Walzer interrogates cases where the right to non-intervention might, and perhaps should, be suspended; in the process of articulating these cases, Walzer highlights the underlying domestic analogy that partially animated Mill’s earlier text (Walzer, 2006: 86-91). Walzer has to reconcile this ascription of state rights to the issue of moral responsibility; his solution leans towards undermining the analogy. To simplify greatly, he argues that while states may have rights, only individuals have responsibilities. Accepting that rights tend to invoke corresponding duties, and by extension, responsibility for failing to act dutifully, the antonym for a state’s rights is merely its collective shame, which does not rise to real moral responsibility. What motivates this desire to even articulate such right’s antonym though is surely the guiding analogy of the state as a moral agent.

In his *The Law of Peoples* (1999), John Rawls also offered a liberal theory of international relations that drew on the analogy to the relations of individual persons. He differs here both from cosmopolitan theory, which points towards a single global polity, and arguably also from a neo-Kantian vision, as interpreted by Doyle, insofar as that vision assumes the world is carved into a pacific liberal one, a “separate peace”, with non-liberal states cast beyond this zone of mutual non-aggression (Doyle, 2011: 129-131). By contrast, Rawls’ position seeks to more clearly bring all, or nearly all, nations under his “law of peoples” by designing these laws so as to be amenable to all (or at least, nearly all), once hypothetically stripped of all their contingent features.

His starting point is to assume the existence of “peoples” that form the basic units of his legal system, replacing the individual persons that constituted the original position with its veil of ignorance in his earlier text, *A Theory of Justice* (1971). These peoples are not necessarily all liberal in their internal composition, but rather at least “decent” if still “hierarchical” (Rawls, 1999: 3; see Doyle, 2011: 135 for a criticism of Rawls’ categorisation). His defence of pursuing a more

internationalist, and less cosmopolitan, approach, appears to be simply that it is more attuned to the world as we find it and therefore well aligned with his Rousseauian project of imagining a “realistic utopia” (1999: 7). By reformulating the original position of his earlier work so as to apply at the international level, it is clear that Rawls is employing a form of personification and the domestic analogy. Indeed, Rawls notes the connection between the original position and the social contract several times (e.g. 1999: 8). He states plainly that “[t]his account of the Law of Peoples conceives of liberal democratic peoples (and decent peoples) as the actors in the Society of Peoples, just as citizens are the actors in domestic society” (1999: 23).

In his earlier, essay-version of *The Law of Peoples*, Rawls states the central conceptual move that his international law makes relative to his theory of domestic justice most clearly:

“Before showing how the extension to the law of peoples can be carried out, it is important first to distinguish between two parts of justice as fairness or of any other similar liberal and constructivist conception of justice. One part is worked up to apply to the domestic institutions of democratic societies, their regime and basic structure, and to the duties and obligations of citizens; the other part is worked up to apply to the society of political societies itself and thus to the political relations between peoples. After the principles of justice have been adopted for domestic justice, the idea of the original position is used again at the next higher level” (Rawls, 1993: 40-1).

This formulation might suggest that Rawls’ principles of justice are conceived independently of any application and can be applied to either individual actors or state actors. However, the vision of the original position that he has in mind is clearly that which was first articulated in his 1971 text. Whereas in 1971, the individual person does not know “his place in society, his class position or social status; nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence and strength, and the like” (1971: 118), in 1999 the

arbitrary features which must be analytically excised are “the size of the territory, or the population, or the relative strength of the people whose fundamental interests they represent” (Rawls, 1999: 32).

Rawls’ account therefore rests a good deal on this category of a “people”, occasionally treated synonymously with “society”. While he takes great pains to distinguish this category from the category of “state” on account of the former’s “moral nature” (Rawls, 1999: 17<sup>25</sup>), he later undermines any distinction by referring to the imagined *Kazanistan*, which surely refers to, or at least implicates the concept of, a state and not simply that of a people (Rawls, 1999: 75-8; see Pogge, 1994, for other doubts about this concept in Rawls’ work). While it is clear that by “people” Rawls intends to invoke a population with a government (see 1999: 23-4) on a territory - the latter is implicated in his discussion of people-level contingent features mentioned above - he eschews the term “state” due to its association with the tenets of international realism (1999: 27-8).

Underlying Rawls’ analogical transposition is the claim that stripped of contingent features, peoples are like individuals in their status as moral actors. However, it is not at all clear that we can separate the essential from the contingent features of peoples, even more so than for individual persons. For example, it is not clear whether we should conceive of a society’s particular constitution as an essential or a contingent feature. The idea of a person’s essence is maintained by implicit reference to an individuated biological husk, which is decidedly lacking in the case of a whole society. Secondly, even if we take individual *representatives* of such peoples, rather than the personified peoples themselves, to be those rational agents necessarily invoked to design a just, and mutually agreeable, set of international rules, each representative must first countenance what was, in the *original* “original position”, surely just a contingent feature: the very possession of a strong sense of national identity and the desire to pursue this national interest, however defined, independently of one’s own personal interests. Personification invites us to overlook such thorny issues by articulating a people’s essence *through* such metaphorical language.

In summary, within IR, liberalism tends to take as the primary moral agents of international politics, nations or nation-states. By extension, it overlooks transnational economic *classes*, or other forms of *ethnic or religious identities*, or indeed generations, or linguistic communities. There is a conceptual tension in this process, just as for realism. If IR realism borrowed the Hobbesian account of the self-interested individual only to subvert it by applying it via analogy to group identity, then IR liberalism takes the liberal assumption of the sanctity of the *autonomous* individual person only to subvert it by transposing it to the nation-state.<sup>26</sup> The latter exists to circumscribe individual freedom in (presumably) constructive or profitable ways, but not, on a (domestic) liberal account at least, to wholly overthrow and replace it. Personification, though, invites just a conceptual move. The issue is of course that, within liberal theory, the conceptual connection between individual and state is not simply analogical, but rather also causal: the individual creates the state through the social contract.

### iii) IR Constructivism

To articulate IR constructivism, I first wish to distinguish between two different accounts of state identity and personality. Each of these rely on different kinds of personification due to their differing interpretations of the nature of the individual person. On the one hand, we can conceptualise the state as existing in relation to other, symmetrically constituted entities, and view each's identity as formed exogenously, based on some basic assumptions about human nature. The state's core identity on this account is taken to be as universal and natural as the Hobbesian individual, whose equality of interest and capabilities provide the basis for his political philosophy. This is the path taken by the majority of mainstream political theory about the international sphere, at least for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both structural realism and liberalism tend to conceive of the state's identity as being formed (in its entirety) pre-socially, and that social interaction does not fundamentally change the personality of the state since its personality is in some sense fictional anyway. The state's core attributes are usually derived by analogy, as argued above, from assumptions of a Hobbesian or Lockean kind about

the natural person. We may note exceptions to this broad generalisation, such as E.H. Carr. Carr, first quoting T.H. Green's assertion that the individual does not make a conscience for himself but rather the society is its creator, then asks: "In what sense can we find a basis for international morality by positing a society of states?" (Carr, 1946: 161)

This brief statement points to a second understanding of state identity, which emphasises the role of international *recognition* and the substantive effects of international *interaction*. Some international theorists have expanded on this line of thinking and worked it into a whole approach to the study of international relations, usually referred to as constructivism. The basic line of enquiry they pursue emerged out of a philosophical context that extended far beyond the realm of international politics. For example, a comparable argument can be traced to Rousseau's critique of Hobbes, wherein the former disputed the latter's attribution of various human qualities as existing in the state of nature and instead posited them as the product of socialised humanity. What Rousseau, alongside others such as Vico (see Lock and Strong, 2010: 12-28), heralded was a line of thinking that amounted to a minimisation of the role of nature and an emphasis on the role of socialisation in determining the human person, and thereby should be seen as a forerunner to later social constructionist - as it is often known in philosophy, psychology and sociology (see Hacking, 1999; Lock and Strong, 2010; Burr, 2015; Burr and Dick, 2017) - and IR constructivist thought (as noted by Wendt, 1992).

20<sup>th</sup> century social constructionism, the more general forerunner of IR constructionism, can be boiled down to a fairly basic proposition: the human being is (surprisingly) malleable and this malleability - when defined in relation to our particular social milieus and the process of socialisation - has important consequences in determining our understandings of both the world around us and ourselves as subjects, such that they either severely constrain or wholly overwhelm the role played by brute facts about the world, however defined (Lock and Strong, 2010: 7-8). Such constructionist assertions are usually advanced by pointing out the significant divergences through time and cross-culturally in how

we understand the world and ourselves (Burr and Dick, 2017). The lineage of constructionist thought has been traced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, the hermeneutics of Heidegger, and the sociological analyses of those such as Erving Goffman (Lock and Strong, 2010). Moreover, since social constructionism often focuses on the learning of language as a key facet of our socialisation, many of the writers I have associated with the constitutive approach to metaphor in earlier chapters are associated with constructionism.

Within IR theory, constructivists in international relations have sought to argue that the state's identity and interests are either influenced or formed by different kinds of social interaction. "Thinner" (i.e. weaker) forms of IR constructivism focus on state identity being constructed *at the international level*. In talking of thinner constructivism, I am referring chiefly to the work of Alexander Wendt (Palan, 2000; Adler, 1997). By no coincidence, Wendt is the most direct discussant and defendant of personification of the state. One of his theory's central assumptions is that "states are actors with more or less human qualities: intentionality, rationality, interests, etc." (1999: 10). Wendt assumes that states' identities exist over time, transcending that of any individual person who performs a governmental role, and that a state's "knowledge" of another state, gained over centuries, is relevant today:

"Contemporary states have been interacting for dozens, even hundreds of years, during which they have accumulated considerable knowledge about each other's interests. They know something about each other's grievances and ambitions, and thus about whether they are status quo or revisionist states. They know something about each other's styles of dispute resolution. And they even know something about the conditions under which these conditions might change. None of this knowledge is perfect or complete, but neither is it wholly unreliable or irrelevant" (1999: 108).

Wendt was influenced by Berger and Luckmann's work on social construction and its focus on the role that interpersonal interaction has on the constitution of each

participant person's perception of the given situation and their role within it, particularly in face-to-face contexts (see Berger and Luckmann, 1991: 43). In fact, Wendt simply adapts a thought experiment advanced by Berger and Luckmann regarding face-to-face interaction of individual persons, so as to apply to interstate interaction. Compare the following passages from Berger and Luckmann, and Wendt, respectively:

“Let us assume that two persons from entirely different social worlds begin to interact. By saying 'persons' we presuppose that the two individuals have formed selves, something that could, of course, have occurred only in a social process. We are thus for the moment excluding the cases of Adam and Eve, or of two 'feral' children meeting in a clearing of a primeval jungle. But we are assuming that the two individuals arrive at their meeting place from social worlds that have been historically produced in segregation from each other, and that the interaction therefore takes place in a situation that has not been institutionally defined for either of the participants” (Berger and Luckmann, 1991 [1966]: 73-4).

“Consider two actors-ego and alter-encountering each other for the first time. Each wants to survive and has certain material capabilities, but neither actor has biological or domestic imperatives for power, glory, or conquest (still bracketed), and there is no history of security or insecurity between the two” (Wendt, 1992: 404).

In the process of employing their thought experiment by analogy to the interactions of states, Wendt adopts an anthropomorphic understanding of the state, a position he later defended explicitly (2004; see responses from Wight, Jackson, 2004, respectively). Palan traces Wendt's acceptance of such a core identity, founded on analogy, to his reading of symbolic interactionist literature:

“[s]ymbolic Interactionism is founded on a psychological theory of the self. That is why at the heart of the transference of this theory to international

relations is the idea that states do possess a 'Self' that behaves in ways not dissimilar to individuals in the social setting" (Palan, 2000: 581).

Wendt therefore, as for that branch of realism that he seeks both to draw himself toward while keeping still some distance from, commits what Wight has referred to as "the classic error of methodological structuralism", meaning "the attribution of agential powers and attributes of human agents to a collective social form", and, Wight argues, incorrectly justified such an assumption in part by accepting, rather than critically engaging with, the dominant practice of international relations theory (Wight, 1999: 127, referring to Wendt, 1992: 397).

Most crucial here is that in the course of the analogy, Wendt must assume the pre-existence of state identity *of some kind*. In effect, this branch of constructivism both seeks to advance the socially constructed nature of identities and interests in the international sphere, but does so by asserting that some aspects of state identity and interests are constituted pre-socially (at least relative to the international forms of interaction). In fact, then, there is no way to *fully* apply constructivism to international relations because the entity which must be presupposed by this topic of enquiry – the state – must therefore be left uninterrogated by the very analytical stance that constructivism invites us to take. Wendt's reference to this pre-social existence separates him from Berger and Luckmann, insofar as their thought experiment is more explicit that the formation of the self is inherently a social process. Wendt's formulation is in part motivated by a desire to produce a structural theory that begins with individuated agents primed for interaction (see Adler-Nissen, 2016: 31; Zehfuss, 2002). For example, Wendt acknowledges that "state identities are also heavily influenced by domestic factors that I do not address" (1999: 11) but argues that "it is necessary to treat states as, at some level, *given* for purposes of *systemic IR theory*" (Wendt, 1999: 244, second emphasis added). He is thereby not able to fully incorporate the socially constructed nature of the state at the domestic level (Weldes, 1996). Wendt's branch of constructivism thereby serves both as the means to open up discussion of the role that intersubjective beliefs and interaction play at the international level, as well as to shut down discussion of these same factors at the domestic level. Nor is he able to countenance the



possibility that such state identities are founded, unlike the human individual, on *nothing but* social interaction itself, which would undermine the position of taking any form of state identity as exogenous to the analysis (Zehfuss, 2001; also see Smith, 2000: 160-2).

It is the existence of the state-as-such which must be constructed, not simply particular kinds of state identity, and confusion may easily court any hint of conflation between “identity” signifying one’s bare existence as some entity capable of action and interests, and “identity” signifying a particular selection of attributes that an agent may possess. Wendt distinguishes personal or corporate identity as distinct from role, type and collective forms of identity but the first kind of identity is quite different to the latter three, since the first is merely, as he acknowledges, “a site or platform for other identities” (1999: 224-5). Moreover, it is the spectre of the international which permits us to think of the state as possessing any identity, including that bare identity which Wendt calls “corporate” identity. Wendt’s text relies here on the well-known distinction between the material and the ideational, here in the guise of the biological and the social, in order to defend his suggestion of one aspect of the state as “pre-social”. Wendt suggests that the equivalent of the human person’s “body” is the state’s “organizational apparatus of governance” (1999: 201, 402) or the “essential state”, existing prior to social interaction, which is tied to the “corporate identity” of the state mentioned above. He specifies relevant characteristics of the essential state, including an organization claiming a Weberian “monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence” and “an organization with sovereignty” (1999: 202). For Wendt, the essential state is thus

“an organizational actor embedded in an institutional-legal order that constitutes it with sovereignty and a monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence over a society in a territory. The class of states may be somewhat “fuzzy” in practice, but it excludes lots of things from ever being states: dogs, trees, football teams, universities, and so on” (1999: 213-4).

Notice here that Wendt's language remains metaphorically infused in its reference to "organisation" and "actor". The associated terms of "apparatus" and "structure" that Wendt employs also lend an air of concreteness to what is an otherwise intangible set of attributes. However, the crucial problem remains that the "body" of the state is more social in nature than the human body.<sup>27</sup> The body provides an ostensibly non-social basis upon which to explore the social construction of individual identities, which, through analogy or metaphor, is applied to the relations of states or societies. We should note the extent to which the person's human body grounds talk of intersubjective knowledge in concrete locations, and the extent to which the state does not possess a similar kind of physical husk as locus for the formation of international identities. It is the body as the background, tangible site of identity formation that permits the sociologist's discipline-defining distinction between the biological and the social, wherein the latter acts upon the former. As a result, a greater leap, formed through metaphor, must be taken by which to posit states as pre-constituted, pre-social persons that can legitimate talk of their identities, interests, wills, moral agency, rights, duties, and so on.<sup>28</sup>

Wendt's assertion of the prior existence of the state before its international interaction with other like units has important consequences; this conceptual move cleaves the state's actor status from its personal attributes (the two significations of "identity" above), and the "biological" (which themselves remain in fact arguably social) from the truly social aspects of state identity, as well as provides the basis for separating the domestic from the international. Just as realism and liberalism risked subverting the nature of their source domain when applying it to the target domain of international relations, so does much constructivist work within IR theory. Thin constructivism take the notion that persons are not simply born, but rather made through social interaction, and applies this to states and international social interaction, but the result is often to suggest that the state is in some sense pre-given itself and ready to be moulded through such interaction, which subverts the more general constructivist conviction that an abstract concept like the state should not be treated as in any way "given" since it is a primary concept within our social lives. Thus, the assumption that individuals are the product of their social interactions is carried

over to the international sphere but in the process this assumption is then swiftly undermined by treating one aspect of the state as itself “presocial”. I have singled out Wendt here, but the same tacit methodological nationalism is present in other thin or systemic constructivist works discussing international politics. For example, Martha Finnemore begins her text *National Interests in International Society* by posing the question “How do states know what they want?” and providing the answer that “[s]tates are *socialized* to want certain things by the international society in which they and the people in them live” (1996: 1-2).<sup>29</sup>

## Conclusion

Personification is the animating force behind both international law and international relations theory. It both produces their central theoretical assumptions and carves out their disciplinary fields as distinct from other related fields, such as sociology and political science. I have sought to trace the forms of personification that are employed in depictions of the international sphere, both that of early modern international legal theory and modern IR theory. I have stressed how international legal theory and international political theory both developed out of early modern accounts of the personified state. In so doing, however, the metaphorical association between political entity and human individual shifted from taking as its source domain the human body or the human person simply as a unified and individuated entity, to that of the individual existing in a social context. Taking the latter as source domain allowed thinkers to articulate the nature of the state’s international relations and legal obligations and rights. For some it also allowed the suggestion that a state’s identity is formed *through* social interaction, just as our individual identities are.

Taking the English School’s tripartite division between realism, the *via media* position, and universalism, we can see how such personification is embedded within each. If the individual is understood to be naturally in a world devoid of any binding moral order, then so do personified states. Thereby, the tenets of realism, such as those which stress “the importance of force within power relations and

the impossibility of an "ethics of law" (Hoffmann, 1985: 15), must be accepted. If the human capacity for agreement and contract under law is affirmed, then the same may be assumed for states, and so the more conciliatory *via media* conception of international society becomes persuasive. Finally, if individuals naturally live in a positive community of mankind, in which on the basis of our shared corporeality as biological humans or our shared access to reason, then ultimately the division of this community is arbitrary at best. With the suggestion of a world state heralding "perpetual peace", idealism or universalism is therefore suggested which may take a federalist structure, such as in Kant's aspirations for global politics and in more recent IR liberalism.

I have sought to suggest in this chapter that each IR theory surveyed here needs to subvert some aspect of their interpretation of the source domain in the process of conceptualizing by analogy their target domain. This kind of issue arises precisely because in the metaphors I have looked at over the course of this thesis, source and target domain, individual person and state, are by no means distinct from one another, nor static. By contrast, they are intertwined, and this has significant effects for the use and the coherence of related metaphors.

An effect of recognising the interrelation of source and target domains is that we must acknowledge that the pursuit of self-interest possesses a markedly different moral quality when applied to the individual than when transplanted onto the external relations of states. National self-interest cannot be construed in the same manner as purely "selfish", as potentially devoid of moral content or as the product of absolute liberty. To discuss a state's *self* involves moral claims about the legitimacy of its constitution and, most crucially, about certain special duties held among individuals internally, that is, to citizens. The notion of a self-help anarchy *between* states is one that simultaneously invites a profound moral claim about duties *within* the particular state. Only upon recognising the interplay between the two domains does this become especially apparent. The overlap between understandings of the individual and that of the state produces difficulties in making moral claims about the rights and duties of states, which appear to originate in claims about the rights and duties of individuals. We may

discern from the above analysis that external sovereignty as a concept ultimately derives, historically, out of arguments related to internal sovereignty, and also that both derive out of arguments relating the political structure to the individual, embodied person. In effect, external sovereignty, so important for the field of international relations, is often constituted by those principles, rights and liberty associated with the natural individual. However, external sovereignty is often used to deny that international intervention can be legitimate or at least that this notion of external sovereignty and non-interference *prima facie* preclude intervention. Yet we must acknowledge that it is a derivative right, asserted on the basis of an analogy that assumes natural individual rights. The problem therefore is how such a derivative right can achieve priority, and be permissibly used to deny the primacy of those very individual natural rights which the state secures through the social contract (I refer here to Locke's or Rousseau's formulation of the social contract, not Hobbes') and which are potentially in need of being secured internationally. This is one of the problems associated with moral reasoning using analogy and metaphor; moral claims exist in a world of other competing moral claims which, by analogy, may have the same root claim.

Finally, Skinner has suggested that our modern world has lost an understanding of the state as person, specifically as a person distinct from ruler and ruled (Skinner, 2016). He rightly notes the way in which common parlance often treats state as synonymous with government in a manner alien to the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Yet, I would suggest that this early modern understanding of the state that rested on personification has not fully disappeared, but remains alive and well in the discourse of international politics. It remains wherever we feel the need to impute motivations, intentions, and responsibilities to states that are not understood as synonymous with the motivations, intentions, and responsibilities of those individual persons who constitute the various institutions of government.

## | Chapter Six |

### Conclusion: The Reification of the State

In the beginning and in the end the only decent  
Definition is tautology: man is man,  
Woman woman, and tree tree, and world world,  
Slippery, self-contained; catch as catch can.

Which when caught between the beginning and end  
Turn other than themselves, their entities unfurled,  
Flapping and overlapping--a tree becomes  
A talking tower, and a woman becomes world.

(Extract from *I Am That I Am* by Louis MacNeice, 1940)

The Judeo-Christian tradition tells us that God proclaimed to Moses “I am who I am” (Exodus, 3:14). It is here, in the ineffability of the divine, that the ultimate failure of language is to be found. But it is out of this failure that the poetic mode of language emerges in its most expansive sense: that is, all attempts to comprehend that which cannot currently be discussed in literal language. It is the personification implicit in the “I” with which God refers to himself in language that allowed Moses, and us as readers of scripture, some degree of comprehension of the deity. In a more explicit case, Christ as “son” is considered to be merely “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15-16), that is, God made comprehensible. This is, however, a degree of comprehension which doesn’t transcend the linguistic, and cannot offer us a glimpse beyond itself, onto a more substantial truth. For all aspects of religious experience then, nothing truer has been said or written than “[i]n the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1).<sup>1</sup>

All of this, the more decoratively-aligned theorists of metaphor could perhaps admit. Yet, I hope to have shown that we need to go further and assert that where metaphor succeeds is not simply in describing an exogenously given state of affairs but also in partly giving rise to such state of affairs to begin with. Metaphor

is therefore not solely a matter of epistemology but also one of ontology; it is not simply a tool wielded to acquire knowledge but rather also becomes the latter's constituent material. A novel metaphor crystallises the fledgling thought, and thus stands somewhere between the exegetical and the creative act. The limits of the comprehensible and the communicable are in part defined by metaphor's reach.

Words, when used metaphorically, permit us to see one thing as another. It permits us, for example, to see God as man. What I have tried to stress in my opening chapters, and will emphasise here, is that the importance of this "seeing as" is elevated when the first thing cannot be seen independently at all. In such cases, the first subject is especially enmeshed in the language of the second, such that we may with good cause consider it as partly constituted by it. This point is relevant for the analysis not only of religious experience but also of political experience. As Walzer argued, "[t]he state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived" (Walzer, 1969: 194). To be sure, the policeman, the border guard, and the soldier are all visible enough, but the entity to which they are all attached, and which make sense of what they each are - the state - is plainly not.

We readily acknowledge that poetry *happens in language*, such that a paraphrase of a poem (as opposed to an interpretation) is considered to be of little value, or at least not of equivalent value to the original text. This is not only true of poetry; by the same token, we don't respond to a friend saying they've just seen a beautiful painting or heard a lovely piece of music by asking them to draw a sketch of it or hum its melody. We accept that in such art forms, paraphrase - even within the home medium - cannot approach the direct experience of reading, seeing or hearing the original. A black and white reproduction of a colour painting has value commensurate with it being *nearly identical* to the original, not with it being a successful extraction and transposition of the original's core ideas. However, we are not sufficiently aware, in my view, of the poetic aspect of language use within other disciplines, such as political philosophy, and we tend to think of political philosophy as constituted not by language but by ideas, as if the two could be cleaved apart and kept separate. In contrast, in these disciplines too something is

happening *in language*, in my view. Despite the development of both analytic philosophy and continental philosophy over the last century, it is still too often assumed that language is merely the incidental conveyor of independently held political thought. I have sought here to focus on particular kinds of language use within the history of political philosophy in order to advance the contrary claim.

Over the previous chapters, I have sought to show firstly that the concept of the state that furnishes the discourse of political philosophy is one that has developed out of a great chain of metaphor. Consider those common definitions of the state that we find in our discourse today. Understandings of the state usually implicate what Kantorowicz referred to as the “three elements of statehood” (Kantorowicz, 1932: 6): government, population, and territory. At the most basic level, we would no doubt relate the state as some kind of entity that contains a class of the politically powerful and a class of less powerful, yet more numerous, subjects or citizens, on a defined area of territory. While there are no doubt other related ideas, these three are central. This holds up as a reasonable definition of the political unit that has been in circulation within European political philosophy for centuries, including for some of the earliest uses of the term “state” in English, as well as for discussions which pre-date this term in English and its sister terms in other European languages. It also accords with Weber’s famous account of the state if we look beyond his most well-known description regarding the monopoly on the legitimate use of force; as Morris has pointed out, Weber elsewhere offers the following definition: “a compulsory association with a territorial basis” (quoted in Morris, 2004: 196).

I have sought to suggest the ways in which the concept that we now possess - with its interlocking relation between the smaller ruling class (government), the larger ruled class (population), on a territory - were discussed metaphorically using language bound up with the human person. Over the history of Western political philosophy, we can see that the political entity has been metaphorically described as an organism or physical body, an isolated person and a socialised individual, and in doing so the state has been “imagined” through related metaphors. Such metaphors were used to discuss a variety of associated topics, such as the correct



reach of political power, the rights of the ruled, the origin of political power, the relative priority of the individual and the wider community, the just limits of political subjection, the rights and duties of political entities towards other political entities, and the existence of interstate morality and law.

Ancient writers were employing personification to argue about whether the less powerful must accept their lowly status in service of the greater social good, upon the analogical model of the functioning organism. Others, such as Plato, were using the idea of the just individual to argue for the just delineation of classes within the city-state, with each class harmoniously “minding its own business” and accepting such natural inequality and social stratification. Early Christian writers were using personification as a means of comprehending both the deity and the community of believers, and this, once it was passed over into more secular contexts, informed discussion of the just mediation between the church and the state, the spiritual and the temporal spheres, and the pope and the prince. Others were employing it to justify the enormous power of the centralised monarch, acting as the head of the body politic. Indeed, in some such accounts, the state literally *was* the person, or akin to that of an individual property right. Other writers were employing personification, quite contrarily, to argue for the mutual recognition of all citizens’ role in the continuation of a functioning political society, and for a limitation on princely power, in line with the more egalitarian notion of the Pauline conception of “the body of Christ”. More radical writers were using these metaphors to argue that the rightful origin of the state’s power lay not in its deified head but in the citizen-body as a whole, in accounts that pre-empt later advocates of popular sovereignty, and still later, liberal democracy. In all such accounts, the idea of harmony was stressed by reference to the functioning human body comprised of mutually dependent and discrete parts.

As we move into the early modern period, speaking very broadly, understandings of the state moved increasingly from being that of fundamental identity with the individual person (via the figure of the deified monarch) to one that was more metaphorically related, and thereby distinct from one another, the king taking on a second body divorced from his natural one. I have sought to chart the shift from

Louis XIV's (probably apocryphal) declaration that "L'État c'est moi!" (the state is me) (cited in McGraw and Dolan, 2007: 301; Rowen, 1961: 83; Wiesner-Hanks, 2006: 318)<sup>2</sup> - or from that modified version of this same understanding of the state that can be rendered "l'État c'est à moi!" (the state is mine) (see Rowen, 1961: 93) - to a conception of the state that is more truly personified through a democratised understanding of the general will, which substitutes personification for a more literal rendering of the relationship between state and person. Through such a conceptual development, early modern writers adopting an increasingly abstract notion of the political entity, employing more commonly the term "state" in doing so. Writers such as Hobbes were employing the notion of personality to locate the source of the just state in the coming together - imagined as a consensual contract - of a multitude into a singular, artificial person, whilst retaining metaphoric allusions to the monarch as a mortal God and the soul of the body politic. Rousseau developed these metaphors into an account not simply of singular personality, but more specifically of a general will, the singularity of which is revealed in passages discussing its procedural revelation through the act of voting. The idea of the state as a single personality with a general will became in later texts the ideas of national will, identity, and interest. The state became a purposive entity possessing unity, rather than mere harmony.

Simultaneously, writers such as Vattel and Wolff were employing the image of the state as a natural person to articulate the relations between states, elaborating on metaphors employed by Hobbes, Locke and Grotius. Some were using the same image to justify the existence of international morality and law - as in Lockean accounts - while others were tending towards a Hobbesian denial of the same, resting on only a partial reading of Hobbes' work. Reflecting on prior metaphorical utterances, 20<sup>th</sup> century IR theory fashioned an image of the state as a person of various kinds - that of the isolated, insecure, amoral Hobbesian individual, or the right-bearing, Lockean individual engaged in the self-execution of the natural law, or indeed the fully socialised individual subscribed to the mandates of international morality and law. Accounts of the discipline such as that of Martin Wight rightly recognised this shared, yet segregated, heritage. The state became a

social being and the world was composed of symmetrically composed entities who might form, out of structural anarchy, a rudimentary kind of international *society*.

I hope to have shown that the concepts of the state and the person were intertwined in key texts of political philosophy. Metaphors have sought to describe the state by using language usually reserved for talk of individual persons. This usually means that knowledge of the individual person is more securely held and assumed to be shared between interlocutors. This appears standard procedure; using metaphor and analogy, we try to convince an interlocutor of our beliefs by reference to language use they already accept (Brock, 2013: xii). Likewise, this is the case for arguments regarding ethics, which typically proceed by analogy by presupposing the shared acceptance of certain core moral and logical beliefs, such as that the coherence of our convictions is something we should strive for. However, we must also countenance the possibility that the individual person was being, in lesser ways, metaphorically constituted by reference to the sovereign state. This interrelation is reflected in the too often overlooked fact that writers have employed the image of the society or political entity to conceptualise the individual. I have shown where this is the case in Plato and Hobbes' work; the same could be said in relation to Locke's justification of his state of nature.

The individual and social whole are irrevocably tied together, not only because the individual is the product of his or her social milieu, or because the individual subsequently modifies his or her social milieu, but rather because our conception – within the discipline of political science and philosophy - of the social whole has been greatly influenced by its metaphorical relationship to understandings of the individual. I have sought to historicise what is fundamentally a paradox. Holism has often been derived from organicist metaphors relating the social whole to the individual person as a functioning entity with internal harmony. Yet, this image of the individual stands in direct conflict with the political objectives of holism, for holism must invariably crush, at one time or other, the individual will and the right of the individual under the weight of the collective identity and the public good. Holism therefore borrows the image of the person only to later destroy it. We may

also posit the paradox in reverse. Individualism commits to an understanding of the individual which could have only been arrived at within the discourse of a political and linguistic community. We must concede that knowledge of the individual person, even where it is taken to form the fundamental foundation of all theories of social interaction, is one which must be learnt within a particular language and using its concepts, which are likely themselves to be metaphorically implicated. It is through the malleability of the metaphors that I have been discussing that we have been taught to think of the political entity as the product of individual persons, indeed to think of that political entity as itself a person, but also to think of the individual as the product of, and ultimately lesser than, their social milieu.

In the previous three chapters discussing the historical development of personification within Western political philosophy, I wished chiefly to support the claim that metaphors were important for how historical writers within the discourse of political philosophy wrote and thought about the state. My evidence for this rested on the fact of the continued development of novel metaphorical utterances by different writers who were elaborating upon, or challenging, prior metaphor use within the discourse in a sustained manner. I suggested that these metaphorical utterances were speaking to one another and constituted a self-referencing and evolving chain of creative metaphor use within a particular intertemporal linguistic community. The existence of novel developments on prior metaphorical language suggests the conceptual significance of metaphor. It suggests that writers were not merely repeating the idioms of older writers but actively using them to reason with. Such was their ubiquity, the metaphorical language employed was not merely a florid depiction of independently held ideas but rather the medium the ideas were being in part conceptualised in. The centrality of these related metaphors – that of the head of state, the general will, the national interest, and so on – were not conceptually inert but rather causative agents in discussions about political philosophy. Wherever we find writers extending such metaphors about the political entity, such as when moving from a discussion of political embodiment to political personification, we may suggest that we are in the presence of a live metaphorical association that is being used to

reason with. I hope to have fulfilled the test I adapted from Lakoff and Johnson, which locates the conceptual liveness of a metaphorical association in the propensity for new metaphorical utterances to be developed.

Of course, it could be argued that the kinds of metaphor I have been discussing are merely decorative in the sense that the figurative mode of expression adds nothing of substance to the underlying proposition to which such expressions are attached; even if it is true that these writers were reasoning using the metaphors they inherited, we may still rightly think of them as representing nonfigurative propositions, and as such they could be paraphrased without loss. I wish first to argue that, to the contrary, a great deal would be lost once paraphrases are attempted. Firstly, the imagistic force of personification would be lost, but this is not merely a matter of rhetorical *presentation* in line with the decorative approach; in fact, a great deal of what makes many metaphors “sing” is not propositional in nature. One might object that this is a linguistic illusion, one better revealed as such, but nevertheless we should admit that something is still lost in the paraphrase. Hobbes’ definition of the commonwealth as “one person, of whose acts a great multitude, by mutual covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all as he shall think expedient for their peace and common defence” (Hobbes, 1985: 227-8) has an imaginative force that would be lost if a literal paraphrase were attempted.

Secondly, a paraphrase loses the indeterminacy, the potentially deliberate vagueness of the metaphorical utterance. Hobbes’ suggestion that the state “is but an artificial man” has an indeterminacy, a pregnancy, an invitation towards metaphorical extension, that would be lost if a paraphrase could be achieved. Thirdly, the paraphrase would overlook the web of interrelated metaphorical utterances that are so frequently at play in discussions of the personified state. This is true within a single text, or within the same author’s body of work, or within a wider discourse. A paraphrase of Hobbes’ definition above would quite easily lose its semantic and ideational relationship to his earlier claim in the same text that sovereignty is “an artificial soul”, as well as to the argument in his earlier

text, *De Cive*, that a city is “*one Person, whose will, by the compact of many men, is to be received for the will of them all; so as he may use all the power and faculties of each particular person, to the maintenance of peace, and for common defence*” (Hobbes, 1984: 89), as well as to the range of related metaphors that Hobbes had encountered and upon which his thought had developed. To paraphrase the metaphors away is therefore to lose a great deal, even if we do not consider the loss to be strictly one of “meaning”, which we might assert demands (by definition) a paraphrase. To this stricter sense of “meaning” I will now turn. I must return to a more philosophical mode of discussion to address this topic fully.

Firstly, of course, it could be argued that whether past metaphors held significance in their own day, such significance has been extinguished by their repeated linguistic exchange. It could be claimed that the metaphors surveyed in previous chapters, if they were once conceptually alive, are now conceptually inert and therefore of no, or limited, significance in our thinking about our political worlds, even if we may admit their causative role in the kind of concept and related language that we still do possess. Their polysemy is no longer comprehended as such by typical language users within a designated community, such as that the root of the word “person” in the Latin for a theatrical mask, or of “metaphor” in language describing the physical transfer of objects in Greek, is no longer recognised by the average English language user. For example, I have spoken at some length about the influence of the fable of “The Belly and the Members”, out of which ultimately derives phrases like “member of parliament” and “head of state”. Few people today would recognise the term “member” as related to parts of the organism or human body. It is quite plausible that “members of parliament” is as conceptually significant today as the idiomatic “kettle of fish”. Moreover, Pulkkinen, for example, asserts that even Scottish Enlightenment figures were using the terms “body politick” and “political body” but rarely was this accompanied by metaphorical embellishment (Pulkkinen, 2009: 48-9). To be clear, even if this were so more widely, it would still, I suggest, be valid to suggest that metaphors, over the longue durée, are part of the process of semantic change which has produced the words we now employ in certain ways and in certain linguistic concepts. This would hold even if the live conceptual dimension to such

metaphors has long since passed, and those metaphors, while discoverable through etymology or close analysis, are conceptually inert and indistinguishable from idiom.

Secondly, however, I will reiterate an earlier point that since the state is not accessible to our faculties of perception and cannot be ostensively defined, we must – if we feel the need to consider it at all, of course – imagine it. Attempts to describe what the state *literally is* will ultimately fail and will tend to fall back on language relating it as a kind of “container” or “entity” (see Onuf, 2010: 71-2; Chilton and Ilyin, 1993: 9). We would then need to decide whether such uses of words like “container” and “entity” should be understood in this context as literal, or whether they are in fact metaphors themselves constituted by language that primarily refers to more concrete phenomena, such as cups, cardboard boxes, chests, rooms, and so on. I suspect adjudicating on such utterances' metaphoric statuses would be a question of arbitrarily drawing a line. Most crucially though, I contend that it would not be clear that “metaphors” of this more general kind can support claims that a state possesses a (general) will, a (national) identity, or (corporate) responsibility, which I suggest are bound up more specifically with *personification*. In this sense, even if we were to accept that talk of the state as a container or as an entity is in fact literal, it would still fail to communicate some of the most important features of our modern understanding of the state.

Because of this, I suggest that personification has done a great deal of work in articulating what the concept of the state in fact *is*, according to the discourse of political philosophy, and not merely as a vehicle delivering rhetorical force, imaginative pregnancy or discursive structure. A corollary of this is that to conceptually excise those elements of the state which are so often talked about in personified terms and which I have sought to trace to historical uses of metaphorical language – such as it having organismic unity, moral agency and responsibility, a will, a (cultural) identity, a (national) interest, moral and legal rights and duties, legal recognition, and so on - is not to be left with the concept of the state at all. The state is an entity which must act, it must will, it must have duties, it must have rights, and so on, if we are to continue to conceptualise the

state as we currently do. Such acts, will, duties, rights and so on, cannot be located in the psychology and behaviour of any one person or group of persons within the state if we are to continue to think of the state as transcending particular rulers or governments, particular generations of citizens, and particular national boundaries via conquest and secession. The concept of the state as articulated by Western philosophy in one sense, then, simply *is* personification; we do not have, on the one hand, the concept of the state, and on the other the figurative language that we employ to communicate the concept most effectively, for the two are irrevocably interwoven.

The personified state is best understood as a metaphor without a clear target, at least one that can be understood with equal clarity without reference to the source. The nature of the state would fundamentally change were we not to ascribe various person-like qualities to it. Were we never to have ascribed such qualities to it, we would not now still be speaking about the same “it”. To use an analogy, Christ who is no longer the “son” of God is also no longer Christ as we currently understand him. To remove the metaphor is to change fundamentally the subject to which it is attached, even if we preserve the current use of the word “Christ” in all other respects. Some forms of metaphor are just this important. There are certain predicates which are integral to our understanding of the subject, even if we fail at first glance to recognise their analyticity, or rather the definitional nature of associated sentences’ truth-values. It is for this reason that I wish to reaffirm that the forms of personification I have been exploring over the three previous chapters, are not “mere” metaphors and neither are they “short-hands”, but rather approach the “rock-bottom” of our conceptual experience of politics (Ringmar, 1996: 451).

Recognition of the constitutive nature of some metaphors leads to a further point. As Kukathas suggests, the state “is, ultimately, an abstraction, for it has no existence as a material object, is not confined to a particular space, and is not embodied in any person or collection of persons” (Kukathas, 2014: 357). What this points to is the suggestion that the concept of the state is metaphorically articulated not only because it is by its nature abstract, but rather also that we are



happy to call the concept of the state an abstraction because it has been so frequently attached to various metaphorical utterances. It is the metaphors, once incorporated as essential – i.e. analytically true – aspects of the concept of the state, which render it - the concept - abstract, not merely its abstraction inviting the metaphors. Runciman is I think right to suggest that the concept of the state remains “an extremely puzzling institution, both immensely powerful and immensely difficult to pin down” (Runciman, 2003: 37), but it being difficult to pin down is a product of those metaphors that have become attached to it, rather than the metaphors an effect of some independent inscrutability. The state has always been described in language that has leant it extended yet vague content through its association to language associated with the person. We can never capture what is difficult to pin down without simply restating, tautologously, the metaphor in question.

This does not mean that we don't intuitively recognise the limits of the metaphoric schema “the state is a person”. We assess metaphors in terms of their propositional content by assessing an adequate paraphrase, and there are many plausible paraphrases of the general schema “the state is a person” which would strike us as right and those which strike us as wrong, perhaps dangerously so (Chilton and Lakoff, 1995: 56; Lakoff, 1991: 8). They strike us as right or wrong because they conform with or contradict other beliefs we hold, and hold more securely. The state can be imagined or talked about as a person even while being held in check by other beliefs that contradict possible elaborations on this metaphorical association and possible paraphrases of such metaphors. Personification often acts as a *way of seeing* that doesn't rise naturally to precise propositional form, but rather freely offers content to be later amended or contradicted by other beliefs. Such revisions do not fundamentally shake the role that personification plays in concretising associated domains.

Of course, we must remind ourselves that any “misleading” that metaphor may do is one which is recognised as such internal to our particular language, including that language's standard for what counts as legitimate verification of our beliefs. Whether some aspect of our language reaches out beyond itself to perfectly

correspond with an aspect of the world is a question that I suspect has no answer, for any conclusion, indeed any study of the topic, must be conducted in some language or other, and all equally susceptible to the challenge that *that* language, that medium by which we test propositions by interpreting the world, is one that has no provably privileged access to the world as it *really* is. Moreover, it is a question which must be adjudicated in the metaphorical dialect of “reaching out”, “corresponding”, “reflecting”, and so on. To adopt another metaphor so familiar to continental philosophy since the middle of the last century (see Briosi, 1993), there can be no such wholesale stepping “outside” of our current language. We are condemned to live within it.

To be sure, most people can get on with their lives without thinking about the state very much at all. The idea of the political entity is not one that we necessarily need to engage with in any great detail in conducting our everyday affairs. Nearly all of the words that we routinely employ stand in no need of definition or elaboration or clarification. So long as their use does not baffle our interlocutors, we get along just fine. However, there are linguistic communities which are constituted by just such a shared commitment to exploring concepts like that of the state through the reading and writing of texts. Academic discourses are constituted by shared topics of intellectual inquiry. Here, in the linguistic community constituted by a shared academic interest in politics, what the state *is* does matter and a great many words and metaphors have been devoted to attempting to articulate understandings of it. The role of personification is particularly significant in relation to international relations theory, as the discipline rests on a presupposition of the state as a personified entity. Indeed, its very name may be interpreted as hinting at this. IR theory adopts political science’s suggestion of the state as *the* unit of political analysis to which all modern forms of social organisation in their largest aspect are to be assimilated into. Uniting most mainstream IR theories is the assumption that states are unitary, indivisible agents of a certain kind. It is for this reason that closer analysis of the concept which this discipline must take for granted in the staking out of its own disciplinary field is warranted.

In certain linguistic communities then, metaphors that constitute the concept of the state form part of what many of us accept as real *knowledge* about our political world. The very concept of “knowledge” though is also bound up with metaphor, whether it is considered to be something that is *recollected* by our immortal souls (as in Plato’s *Meno*), or that unique proposition which remains once we have outwitted the potentially deceptive figure of a personified, almighty God or the other half of our metaphorically divided self who may each seek to convince us of misperceptions (as in Descartes’ *Meditations*), or simply the vast array of impressions left upon the wax tablet, or characters scratched onto the *tabula rasa*, or possessions furnishing the once empty cabinet, of the *reflective* human mind (as in Locke’s *Essay*),<sup>3</sup> or something else entirely. I hope to have suggested that the history of philosophy can, with good cause, be seen precisely as a history of competing metaphors about the intangible and, ultimately, the unknown. I hope to have suggested over these pages also that we profit from exploring those metaphors that constitute the history of philosophy, and which remain – dead, living, but mostly dying - in our current language.

Such metaphors infuse a body of shared literature with which we today must contend as the inheritance passed down, hand to hand, by a particular philosophical tradition that we may say is at least partly our own, and they prescribe the conceptual backdrop to, and perhaps even the conceptual limits of, what today can be thought and said and accepted as meaningful by those with whom we are in dialogue.



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## Chapter Notes

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### Chapter One

<sup>1</sup> I will discuss the two versions of the frontispiece in Chapter Four.

<sup>2</sup> Mink describes Lovejoy's metaphors as bearing "a freight of clear and complex meaning" derived from the development of the natural sciences (Mink, 1968: 10).

<sup>3</sup> Employing more general terms like "entity" or "container" to describe the state might be interpreted as already bound up with metaphor insofar as it implies that the state is a bounded material form, distinct from the purely ideational. I will return to this topic in my conclusion.

<sup>4</sup> Weldon suggests that on a most basic account of the state, their existence could be dated to 4000BC (Weldon, 1947: 51).

<sup>5</sup> M.A. Screech (Montaigne, 1991: 7) translates these as "our normal conversation should be of ourselves, with ourselves" and "she can keep herself company".

<sup>6</sup> Stevens (2003) notes the disservice Foucault did to Nietzsche's mocking use of the term "genealogy" when aligning his own method with it.

<sup>7</sup> Quentin Skinner's work appears to have shifted after having become acquainted with Koselleck's approach. In 1969, Skinner wrote that "...it must be a mistake even to try [...] to write histories of ideas tracing the morphology of a given concept over time" (1969: 48). However, in a revised essay published in 2002, Skinner addressed the topic once more: "How far one can hope to capture the historicity of concepts by adopting Koselleck's approach remains a question. But if there are any remaining doubts, these ought not in my view to be doubts about the very idea of writing conceptual histories – or not, at least, if these are histories of how concepts have been put to use over time. It is perhaps worth adding that I have even attempted to write some such histories myself..." (Skinner, 2002a: 178).

<sup>8</sup> My own occasional references to "genealogy" or "archaeology" may signal to some readers a debt to Foucault and his own specific use of this term (see Edkins, 1990; 94). However, my use of these terms is more general, reflecting the fact that "genealogy" predates Foucault by well over a century (Burridge, 2013: 145).

<sup>9</sup> It is here that my thinking joins up with that older tradition associated with Lovejoy and his notion of "unit ideas" as those assumptions or presuppositions that animate a discourse through the adoption of certain categories or "types of imagery" (Lovejoy, 2001[1936]: 4-7, 10, 15). Skinner rejects aspects of Lovejoy's project (see Skinner 2002a: 175-187). The debate between them seems to rest chiefly on the extent to which conceptual change renders talk of unit ideas absurd.

<sup>10</sup> I should add that MacDonald also explored the utilitarian "image" of the state as a third alternative (1941: 106-9).

<sup>11</sup> This idea of a mechanical account of the state is occasionally related to the idea of the state based in a social contract directly (see Coker, 1910: 10, Hale, 1971a).

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### Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> One is tempted to employ some form of notation to make the reader aware of the number and range of metaphors in use in my own text, as Levinson (2001) attempted using asterisks. I will make note of my own use of metaphor at important junctures, if only to spare both author and reader the tedium of constant meta-linguistic interventions. However, given the thrust of this chapter, it hopefully goes without saying that this whole text will be suffused with metaphor. I will speak more generally about metaphor use within philosophical texts at the end of the final chapter.



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<sup>2</sup> I do not mean to suggest that there are the only two discrete approaches to metaphor. By contrast, for example, Ankersmit and Mooij (1993: 1-4) identified five approaches, of which two are closely associated with the far ends of the continuum I explore in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Mithen (1996, 1998; also see Fauconnier and Turner, 2002: preface) has argued, based on the study of cave painting and tools, that before the Upper Paleolithic period, the human brain was not “cognitively fluid” enough to be capable of the kind of cross-domain communication that would permit metaphoric thought.

<sup>4</sup> Metaphor, strictly defined, has been distinguished from the related concept of metonymy by accepting that the former involves two domains, while the latter involves one (Lakoff and Turner, 1989: 103; also echoed by Traugott & Dasher, 2001: 27-8; Haser, 2005: 47) and exhibit “a stands-for relationship” (Gibbs 1993: 260) wherein one element of a domain or concept stands for the whole (or another element of the whole) or vice versa.

<sup>5</sup> Ullmann (1962: 213) used the terms ‘tenor’ and ‘vehicle’ for a related distinction.

<sup>6</sup> It is important to note how fluid and open to metaphorical use verbs are in general (see Ross, 2009: 97-108, for an exploration of verbal polysemy).

<sup>7</sup> These two opposing perspectives can with justification be interpreted as loosely corresponding to the start and end points between which Ricoeur’s *The Rule of Metaphor* leads its reader, though I do not frame my discussion by reference to the different “levels” at which metaphor has been historically located – the word-level, sentence-level, and discourse-level – as does Ricoeur (see Ricoeur, 2004 [1977]: 1-7, 14). I say this because Ricoeur begins by drawing a connection between what he calls the “substitution theory” and the “rhetorical theory” (Ricoeur, 2004: 20-24), which is closely aligned to what I call the decorative approach in its claim that the metaphorically-employed word could be substituted for a literalised equivalent, before offering more contemporary rebuttals to these older perspectives on metaphor along the lines of what I am calling the constitutive approach, such as Max Black’s “interaction theory” or “view” (Black, 1955: 291-3). We may also draw under the heading of the decorative approach Ricoeur’s later references to the “classical theory” (Ricoeur, 2004: 98-9) and his incorporation of Black’s discussion of the “comparison view” (Black, 1955).

<sup>8</sup> See Cooper’s rehearsal of Gadamer on this point in Cooper, 1986, and the defence of Gadamer offered in Hess, 1993.

<sup>9</sup> The idea that metaphorical thinking exists is to some extent supported by the recognition that metaphor exists in non-linguistic forms of communication, such as painting, dance, sculpture, cinema and music (Turbayne, 1971: 12-3).

<sup>10</sup> By “Thesis M”, I intend the following proposition: “Metaphor is a fundamental form of language, and prior (historically and logically) to the literal” (Hesse, 1993: 54).

<sup>11</sup> The same critique would apply to Searle’s account of metaphor, which likewise adopts a temporally staged process wherein the interpreter first rejects the literal interpretation, before adopting a metaphorical alternative (see Searle, 1975: 63; for further critiques of Grice’s approach to metaphor, see Wilson and Sperber, 1981; Sperber and Wilson, 1986).

<sup>12</sup> Cooper (1986: 88-90), I should note, recognises that both he and Davidson employ a “strict” or “privileged” definition of the word “meaning”, which must rule out ordinary uses of that term.

<sup>13</sup> If metaphor is understood as expressing a likeness, then it might be argued that metaphors cannot be said to be true or false, as one thing can rather only be *more* or *less* like something else.

<sup>14</sup> Davidson argued as follows: “Since in most cases what the metaphor prompts or inspires is not entirely, or even at all, recognition of some truth or fact, the attempt to give literal expression to the content of the metaphor is simply misguided” (Davidson, 1978: 47). Therefore, metaphors inspire or invite or induce “visions, thoughts, and feelings” that can be said to be true or false (Davidson, 1978: 41; see Bergmann, 1982).

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<sup>15</sup> We can assess whether Juliet is the sun (according to Romeo) by assessing whether Romeo really thinks that Juliet is wonderful, beautiful, makes him happy, and so on. To assess whether Juliet (according to Romeo) is “warm” we might have to further refine our paraphrase if met by an even more meticulous pedant, such that we reach a more literal paraphrase. We might refine this as “Juliet makes Romeo feel warm inside” or perhaps even more precisely “Juliet makes Romeo feel good” or “Romeo likes Juliet” and it is with these kinds of expressions that we approach a linguistic bedrock.

<sup>16</sup> In relation to “primary and related”, I should clarify that some polysemous words have two unrelated literal senses. For example, whether the word “bank” is used to refer to that place where we deposit and draw out money, or that thing which borders a river, both are literal employments of the word on my reading, for there is no evidence of their conceptual connection ordinarily at play. Such cases are therefore not examples of metaphor on my definition.

<sup>17</sup> Ortony summarises the etymology of “metaphor” as deriving from “the Greek meta (trans) +pherein (to carry)” (1975: 45).

<sup>18</sup> We cannot offer an adequate paraphrase of a piece of music or a painting that does full justice to our internal experience of that music or art, for our internal experiences are not linguistic in nature. Indeed, that these experiences are non-linguistic suggests that the possibility of paraphrase is absurd, insofar as this is taken to imply the *putting into other words*.

<sup>19</sup> A prototypical lie asserts something false, which the speaker knows is false, with the intention of deceiving someone (Aitchison, 1994: 56).

<sup>20</sup> For further discussion of the metaphorical nature of Descartes’ distinction, see Ryle (2009 [1949]: 1-5). Ryle’s famous argument that adherence to the Cartesian dichotomy is a product of a major category-mistake is pertinent in discussion of metaphors more generally, for the examples that Ryle offers of category-mistakes can all be parsed as wrong-headed metaphors. To take one, the mistaken belief that a university is an entity of the same kind as a university library or a university office-block such that we may wrongly posit the university’s independent and equivalent existence stems in my view from our tendency to talk of universities as “things” that are as tangible as a library or office building. I should add though that Ryle rejects the idea, which I advance above, that in solving or deflating the Cartesian category mistake, the mental must be absorbed into the physical (see Ryle, 2009 [1949]: 12).

<sup>21</sup> I should note that there are many classes of words which do not admit of ostensive definition and yet sit uncomfortably with the very notion of the term “concept”. The words “of”, “instead”, and “this”, for example, cannot be ostensively defined and yet the phrases ‘the concept of “instead”’ or ‘our concept of “this”’ sounds strange to our ears (see Griffiths, 2006: 12).

<sup>22</sup> There is more agreement on the kinds of entity which fall into either camp than there is regarding how to precisely define what makes an entity abstract or concrete (Falguera et al, 2022; Rosen, 2017; Lewis, 1986). Talk of abstract objects is often understood to refer to a series of negatively defined characteristics, an approach to its definition commonly called “the way of negation” (Lewis, 1986; see Rosen, 2017, Falguera et al., 2022). Such criteria often include abstract objects’ non-physicality, atemporality or causal inertness, though the appropriateness of each has been challenged, often for failing to include one or another ostensibly intuitive example of the abstract (Falguera et al. 2022; Rosen, 2017; Cowling, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Physical phenomena often provide a conceptual prototype for a general category against which all other concrete entities are assessed in order to verify their membership. Phenomena might not need to have essential features in order to fit into a general category denoted by the concept but instead might be related by virtue of their perceived resemblance with a prototype of the general category (Rosch, 1999; also see Danto, 1993: 32-3; Geeraerts, 2013: 577-8). Such prototypes are thereby judged as the best exemplars of a given category in the manner of a Wittgensteinian family resemblance model and so

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on this understanding, a particular's membership of a category is a question of degree (Rosch, 1999: 67-9). We can extend this to say that concrete concepts are formed through the entwinement between prototypical or sample mental representation(s) or image(s) and a series of propositions that enable us to caveat or extend this mental representation or image to incorporate other particulars into the general category. For example, our concept of "fruit" is made up of mental samples (the imagistic memory of an "orange" or "apple", and so on) along with a series of propositions about the category "fruit", such as that it is food, that it is likely to be sweet to the taste, and perhaps that it has seeds, and so on, which extend the category beyond the image of the prototype.

<sup>24</sup> It is important to note here that I am overlooking various classes of words, including - but not limited to - indexicals (e.g. this, that, you, me) and prepositions (e.g. of, to, now, then), which cannot be easily analysed in the language of concepts tied to referents (see Riemer, 2010: 27-30). I am referring principally to nouns (and to a lesser extent verbs) as this class of words is most pertinent to discussion of "state". In short, I am not offering here a general theory of meaning covering all words, and I doubt all words fit neatly into the most well-known theories of meaning on offer (see Riemer, 2010: 13-42).

<sup>25</sup> Research from cognitive linguistics over the past several decades has stressed the role that our embodiment has over the language that we use (see Niemeier, 2008: 349; Kövecses, 2015: 14). See Özcaliskan (2009) and Johnson (1997) for discussion of the development of metaphorical comprehension and use in children. Because faculties of perception differ among members of the human species, so does experience of metaphor; research suggests that sighted and blind people conceptualise time in relation to space differently (Rinaldi et al. 2017; cf. Bottini et al., 2015).

<sup>26</sup> As Wittgenstein argued, "[a]ll testing, all confirmation, and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. This system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life" (Wittgenstein, 1969: §105).

<sup>27</sup> This account of truth is allied to pragmatism and the coherence theory. Indeed, I believe the pragmatic account of truth, especially that first articulated by John Dewey, dissolves into coherence theory on close inspection (for further discussion see Davidson, 2001: 141; Rorty, 1979: 178).

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### Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> To save the reader excessive terminological baggage I have not discussed the following connection in the main body of the text above, but I will note here that some of those metaphors I am calling "body metaphors" or "organic metaphors" have been labelled by some as "physiological metaphors" in their stress on the interrelation between different entities within the functioning organism (see Nederman, 1987; Singer, 2018: 124).

<sup>2</sup> See Cooper (1986: 10-11) for possible objections to classifying fables as metaphors.

<sup>3</sup> Brock (2013: 69) argues that the imagery associated with the body politic appears first in Greek literature of the early sixth century.

<sup>4</sup> Cicero also employed body metaphors in his descriptions of politics (see Smith, 2018: 156).

<sup>5</sup> The moral that Marie de France draws from the fable is particularly frank and concise: "From this example, one can see / What every free person ought to know: / No one can have honour / Who brings shame to his lord. / Nor can his lord have it either / If he wishes to shame his people. / If either one fails the other / Evil befalls them both" [trans. Forhan, 2000].

<sup>6</sup> While according to Nederman and Forhan (2000: 24) it is plausible that Marie's version was heard by John of Salisbury and it influenced his own use of anatomic metaphor,

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O'Daly (2018: 115/f.84) argues that it is more likely that Marie de France's text was composed later than John's *Policraticus*. Indeed, Nederman and Forhan's own suggestion that Marie was active only from c. 1160 onwards is difficult to reconcile with the c. 1159 date most often associated with John's *Policraticus*.

<sup>7</sup> We should note though, that Aristotle is somewhat ambivalent about whether this means that we should treat the state as capable of action: "some say that an action was taken by the state, others that it was taken not by the state, but by the oligarchy or by the dictator" (1981: 167).

<sup>8</sup> This quotation is composed of three surviving fragments. We may note their relation to a passage from Aristotle's politics: "[j]ust as men imagine gods in human shape, so they imagine their way of life to be like that of men" (1981: 258).

<sup>9</sup> The question of literality has been the subject of debate involving many related analogies. For example, Aquinas argued that God was not literally a father, but rather *like* a father, articulating the structure of a metaphor or simile; he wrote that "[i]t is befitting Holy Writ to put forward divine and spiritual truths by means of comparisons with material things" (1922: 10).

<sup>10</sup> Even while the divinity and humanity of Christ was accepted, the relationship between the two was still debated during the following decades, with the Alexandrian school emphasizing the two elements' unification in Christ's one nature, and the Antiochene School more predisposed to see within this union, two distinct natures. The Council of Chalcedon of 451 settled this dispute in favour of Christ's two natures in hypostatic union, but withdrew from offering more detailed analysis on their interrelation (McGrath, 1997: 336-43; also see Kantorowicz, 2016: 49-50).

<sup>11</sup> This idea transcended the long-held notion of a king possessing both personal and kingly rights and duties, as expressed by Aquinas when he says of the king that "[i]t is one thing when he serves [God] because he is a man, and it is another thing when he serves because he is a king" (quoted in Kantorowicz, 2016: 57).

<sup>12</sup> The King's two natures was no doubt aided by associated religious concepts such as the notion of the *persona mixta*, which recognized a bishop's dual status as "not only princes of the Church but also feudatories of kings"; in England, the dual status of the bishop was defined by the concordat of 1107 (Kantorowicz, 2016: 43-4).

<sup>13</sup> This notion of the divine king carried through into the early modern era with Bodin, Condillac and Bossuet affirming the potential deathlessness of the monarch, the latter claiming in 1662 that "[m]an dies, it is true, but the king, we say, never dies: God's image is immortal" (quoted in Kelly, 1986: 6). Condillac later argued that though body politics do die, "each state can and should aspire to immortality" (quoted in Kelly, 1986: 18-9).

<sup>14</sup> Building on the Fourth Council of the Lateran of 1215's earlier declaration of the doctrine of transubstantiation (McFarland, 2011: 516), the Council of Trent in 1551 affirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation.

<sup>15</sup> It is worth stressing here that only from the early 15th century, and specifically the work of Leonardo Bruni, onwards did "republic" increasingly take on the meaning of a form of political organisation in opposition to that of monarchy (Hankins, 2010: 464).

<sup>16</sup> It is true that for John, the "armed hand" of the republic is the military who defend against external threats through warfare, while the unarmed hand discharges domestic justice through law; as a result "the armed hand is exercised strictly against enemies, but the unarmed is extended also against the citizen" (2007: 104). Nevertheless, the state's enemies are notional and there is no suggestion of this body possessing legal or natural rights vis-à-vis other bodies. I will return to examples of more fulsome personification in John's text in the following chapter.

<sup>17</sup> Writers are not always easy to classify in this regard. Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the Body Politic* (1404-7), for example, employs metaphor in as elaborate a fashion as John, both to advocate for subjects' obedience to and love for their prince, and yet also to serve as a warning to the ruler about forsaking the reciprocal relationship between ruler and ruled (Pizan, 2000: 231).

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<sup>18</sup> While the idea of the body of Christ (*corpus Christi*) derives from scripture, the notion of the mystical body (*corpus mysticum*) only rose to prominence during the Carolingian period and referred originally to that divine aspect of Christ, as opposed to his human body. However, increasingly from the middle of the twelfth centuries onwards, it was the language of the “mystical body” that was used to refer to the church or the community of believers. For example, it was to this later definition of *corpus mysticum* that Pope Boniface VIII referred in 1303 when he sought to summarise the institutional power and structure of the church against the rivalry of Philip the Fair of France by arguing that the church was “one *mystical* body the head of which is Christ”, and therefore represented on earth by the pope (cited in Kantorowicz, 2016: 193). This understanding of the “mystical body” was carried forth by Thomas Aquinas through his frequent references to not the “mystical body of Christ” but “the mystical body of the Church”. As a result, the Pope was more easily understood as the head of the body of the church; as Alvarus Pelagius explained, “[t]he mystical body of Christ is where the head is, that is, the pope” (cited in Kantorowicz, 2016: 204). *Corpus mysticum* became, in the later 13<sup>th</sup> century, largely interchangeable with the more nakedly secular notion the “body politic” (Musolf, 2016: 59, Kantorowicz, 2016: 15-6).

<sup>19</sup> John of Paris was also significant in discussing the relationship between the secular and religious powers, as well as challenging imperial power (see John of Paris, 1974: 9-10, 14; Monahan, 1974: xvii-xxiv; Renna, 1974: 255).

<sup>20</sup> In a conciliarist vein, Nicholas of Cusa’s teacher, Velde argued from St. Paul’s organic analogy that “just as such limbs are joined up to one root principle of life [...], which is the heart so all the members of the Church are coordinated in one original or root principle of mystical life [...], which is Christ” and that therefore “the jurisdiction of... Christ is more vigorous and more authoritative in the general council than in the supreme pontiff” (cited in Black: 1979: 3-65). Black argues that in Velde’s work, we find in particular then premonitions of a later conception of “real” group personality (1979: 67-8).

<sup>21</sup> It should be added here that though based on the Form of the genus of Animal, the world has no need for limbs or external faculties of perception for it is singular and exists with nothing external to it which would necessitate external perception or interaction (see Sedley, 2008: 112).

<sup>22</sup> Similarly, a contemporary of John, Bernard Silvestris, compared, in a commentary on Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the four types of dwelling in Aeneas’s city to four parts of the human body, and Bernard’s *Cosmographia* (tellingly comprised of two books, *Megacosmus* and *Microcosmus*) further develops Plato’s ideas of the reflection between the cosmos and the individual, as O’Daly has noted (O’Daly, 2018: 120).

<sup>23</sup> This recollection of Plato’s theory echoed much later and formed the background assumption upon which social structure could be conceptualised in the medieval period and even early modern period. As late as 1609, for example, King James I could remark, amongst a host of other body metaphors, that “...kings are compared to the head of this microcosm of the body of man” (quoted in Zaffini, 2022: 541).

<sup>24</sup> Conger does though trace the analogy forward into the work of Zeno and Seneca amongst other Greek and Roman stoic writers (1922: 14-15). Conger cites, for example, Seneca’s argument that “[t]he whole art of nature is imitation...The place which God has in the world, the soul has in man; that which in the former is matter, is in us body” as clearly closely related to the Platonic formulation.

<sup>25</sup> I therefore wish to challenge assertion made by Sedley (2008: xvi-ii), Falcon (2023), Cooper (1982: 221-2) and Collingwood (1945: 83).

<sup>26</sup> See Gotthelf (2012) for a denial of the idea that “the fundamental account of what it is for something to be an end for Aristotle must—or indeed should—refer to the goodness of that end” (2012: 47).

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## Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup> My use of “pre-social” here refers not to assumptions about the *source* domain of the individual person (though as I focus on social contract theory, the comparison between the state a pre-political person is indeed apt), but rather about the characterisation of the *target* domain itself, namely, that the state is considered as an isolated person.

<sup>2</sup> Plato’s perfect state is understood to contain four positive qualities: wisdom, bravery, self-discipline and justice (2003: 131).

<sup>3</sup> The analogy is extended when Socrates discusses the various forms of government a society may institute or may subjected to. The favoured monarchical or aristocratic form of government, as well as the remaining four ill-favoured forms, are reflected in corresponding personality types of the individual (2003: 275-334).

<sup>4</sup> Spencer rightly notes that Plato focuses on the human soul, not the human body, when articulating the just society. While Spencer correctly highlights a distinction between these slightly different source domains, he is wrong in my opinion to imply that Hobbes’ work is a source of body metaphors only (Spencer, 1981: 389). It is worth noting that Spencer disagrees with both Plato and Hobbes’ assumption that the organism best compared with society is that of the *human* organism (Spencer, 1981: 390-3), but does relate the more complex or higher forms of civilisation to the higher forms of organism, such as vertebrates (Spencer, 1981; 428).

<sup>5</sup> However, it is true that Socrates reverts to the individual in his initial attempt to define self-discipline in the state (2003: 134-5) and is transparent that the qualities of the state derive from individual citizens for “it would be absurd to suppose that the vigour and energy for which northern people like the Thracians and Scythians have a reputation aren’t due to their individual citizens....” (2003: 142).

<sup>6</sup> Oakeshott traced such developments as far back as the 12<sup>th</sup> century (1975).

<sup>7</sup> Much of the work of Bartolus and Baldus can be seen against the backdrop of contemporary political disputes, especially those related to Italy. Arguments against imperial control was most stridently put forward by Bartolus and later Baldus, no doubt reflecting on the history of the city-states of Northern Italy (Skinner, 1978: 51-3).

<sup>8</sup> As a possible precursor to these texts, Skinner argues that during the 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> century Azo and his teacher Bassianus were employing this concept of the *universitas* and the idea of collectives as legal persons “capable of speaking with a single voice and of acting with a unified will in the disposition of their affairs” in order to defend the notion of popular sovereignty (Skinner, 2002b: 14-5).

<sup>9</sup> As Holland (2011) has rightly pointed out, we should be wary of adopting Gierke’s terminology here. As comprehensive as Gierke’s texts on this matter are and as influential as he rightly is, he was clearly directing these distinctions towards contemporary affairs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which is all too easy to overlook.

<sup>10</sup> I disagree with List and Pettit’s (2011: 170) contrary suggestion of Innocent offering a nonfictional account of the medieval corporation (see Kusch, 2014: 1591). Innocent’s account was animated by an attempt to defend an ecclesiastic *collegium* or *universitas* from excommunication, owing to their lack of a physical body or will. On Innocent’s conception, excommunication could be applied only to those individuals comprising the chapter, for example, as opposed to the chapter itself (Dewey, 1926: 665). Its status as a *persona ficta* ensured that it was immune from charges of crime as well as, owing to its lack of a soul, incapable of sin (Oakeshott, 1991: 204; Freund, 1897: 11). The fiction theory of corporate personality is at this stage therefore intimately associated with anti-liability (Hager, 1989: 588).

<sup>11</sup> Baldus considered that such a person existed through time, such that “the *respublica* does not have an heir because it lives forever in itself” (quoted in Canning, 2002; 215).

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<sup>12</sup> One should also note certain terminological difficulties; the so-called fiction theory, which states that the corporation exists as an artificial, “fictitious” legal person, and the concession theory, which characterises the corporation’s existence as derived from their incorporation by a superior legal power (Harris, 2006: 1424; Dewey, 1926: 667), are often treated as one single theory (e.g. in Phillips, 1994: 1063-5; Harris, 2006: 1424; Hager, 1989: 579-80. Also see Watson, 2019; Radin, 1932: 644 on this topic).

<sup>13</sup> Spencer self-consciously reflects on his use of analogy and metaphor at one moment: “Here let it once more be distinctly asserted that there exist no analogies between the body politic and a living body, save those necessitated by that mutual dependence of parts which they display in common. Though, in foregoing chapters, sundry comparisons of social structures and functions to structures and functions in the human body, have been made, they have been made only because structures and functions in the human body furnish familiar illustrations of structures and functions in general” (Spencer, 1898: Ch. 12).

<sup>14</sup> That Hobbes both criticises the use of metaphor in language that is itself metaphorical, and yet his wider political philosophy is enconced in metaphorical language, has often been remarked upon (see, for example, Willson-Quayle, 1996: 15-6 for a discussion of this topic and an attempted defence of Hobbes).

<sup>15</sup> It might be objected that *De Cive*’s preface only furthers such mechanistic analogies (see Hobbes, 1984: 32). It is true that Hobbes discusses his study of civil government in relation to the internal workings of a watch, but it is crucial to note that Hobbes is discussing the *method* of his examination more than the nature of the particular topic being examined.

<sup>16</sup> It is problematic to refer, as some have done, to the state of nature as merely a series of logical postulates or simply as an “hypothesized” condition (Peters, 1979: 168-9; Dunn, 1969: 96-103; Buckle, 2001: 249), and to deny its characterisation as a piece of conjectural history or anthropology, for this mistakenly overlooks the consequentialism inherent to accounts of the social contract; the legitimate state, and the legitimate reach of sovereign power, are always tied in relative terms to that condition which precedes and justifies it, the state of nature. The state of nature must be a convincing potentiality and if it were the case that no such condition had existed, one would have to wonder why this was so and what had prevented such a condition being an historical reality; social contract theorists recognised this potential problem and sought to address it, which alone gives a strong indication of their own thoughts on its status as a topic of conjectural history or primitive anthropology (Hobbes, 1651: Ch. 13; Locke, 1824b [1689]: Ch. 2.14).

<sup>17</sup> Hobbes disputed the contention, held by his parliamentarian contemporaries, that a free state guarantees individual freedoms, arguing instead that freedom is dependent on the extent of law not its source, and so one could be free in popular and monarchical states alike (see Skinner, 1998: 60, 85-6).

<sup>18</sup> Pufendorf notes, in the preface to his text *On the Law of Nature and of Nations*, the influence of both Grotius and Hobbes over his own thinking (1994: 95-6).

<sup>19</sup> Cole translates “un être de raison” as “persona ficta”, while Gourevitch opts for the more literal rendering of “a being of reason”.

<sup>20</sup> It is made clear in Rousseau’s argument that the act through which a people subjects itself to a prince is not a contract, as “[t]here is only one contract in the State, the contract of association; and it, by itself alone, excludes any others” (1997 [1762]: 83, 117).

<sup>21</sup> One should note that Spinoza had previously, in his *A Political Treatise*, discussed the citizen body forming from a multitude and becoming guided “as it were, by one mind” (Spinoza, 1891: 296-7; see Saccaro-Battisti, 1983: 36).

<sup>22</sup> In the same chapter of Pufendorf’s work, Rousseau would have encountered discussion of the concept of a “moral person”, and the distinction between “a People” and “a disunited Multitude, to which it will not be possible any more to attribute its rights and actions”.

<sup>23</sup> There are other aspects of the history of the concept of the “general will” which I do not explore here. Crucial earlier interventions included by Pascal in his *Pensées* (in a passage

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that is highly reminiscent of earlier discussions of the body politic and of Pauline doctrine) and Malebranche, who employed the term in relation to God's design of all laws and of Grace (see Riley, 2016: 18-9; Shklar, 1974). Montesquieu had also employed the term in his text *The Spirit of Laws* (2001 [1748]: 175) in a political context, as had Diderot in an article entitled "Natural Right" from his *Encyclopédie* (2006 [1755]: 100-1) (Riley, 2016: 4, 141; also see Keohane, 2017: 46; Canon, 2022: 354-5).

<sup>24</sup> Rousseau refers to the general will in the singular just as, we might add, "the people" is treated as a singular noun for the purposes of verb conjugation in French.

<sup>25</sup> Riley has offered one possible solution to this tension. He interprets Rousseau as arguing that it is the individual who possesses either a particular will as a man, or a general will as a citizen (Riley, 2016: 249; also see Dagger, 1981: 360). Shklar similarly views the general will as "a specific form of the human faculty of willing, and one that each citizen ought to possess" (1969: 185).

<sup>26</sup> In these passages it becomes increasingly clear how important the executive is in both executing the law but also even *proposing* it, with the people being left to merely vote on such propositions put forward by the executive.

<sup>27</sup> The transcendent position has a distinctly Platonic feel. It seems to echo Plato's suggestion that the happiness of the state is best calculated not by considering the happiness of individuals within it, but rather by measuring the whole.

<sup>28</sup> The inherent danger in the transcendent interpretation of the general will became apparent in the following decades; as Blanning has noted, the French revolutionaries interpreted Rousseau as arguing that the general will was "both infallible and indivisible" and that this produced "a Manichean world of absolute good and absolute evil, with a pure revolution opposed by the black treason of aristocratic conspiracy" (Blanning, 2001: 352).

<sup>29</sup> German Romanticism's focus on individuality, individual experience and achievement, became, through personification, a tendency to valorise the individuality - its experience and its achievements - of the nation. As Lukes wrote, "[t]he same progression from the individuality of the person to that of the nation or state occurred in countless German thinkers of the early nineteenth century-notably, in Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and even, in a sense, Hegel" (Lukes, 1971: 57). Moreover, it was through the German tradition, and particularly the translations by F.W. Maitland of Gierke's work, that a more holistic understanding of the state filtered into English-language political philosophy.

<sup>30</sup> Any distinction between the concepts of state and nation should not be exaggerated. While famously difficult to define (e.g. see Renan's "What is a Nation?"), as Gilbert argues, our modern concept of the nation is "inextricably linked to the concept of the state, so that nationality connotes membership of a nation only because it can connote membership of a state" (2000: 58), which echoes Hobsbawm's similar claim that the nation is a social entity "only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state" (2000 [1990]: 9).

<sup>31</sup> Spain's Franco appealed to organic metaphor, such as in a November, 1957 speech to his army: "If whatever we do in order to forge unity amongst the peoples and lands of Spain is transcendental, it is equally or more transcendental when we apply it to the army. The army is the backbone of the nation. What unifies, sustains and maintains the rigidity of the whole. Through the bone marrow runs the vital essences of the sacred values of the fatherland. It is not the head that directs and reflects, or the other parts that organically make it up, but the spine that binds and holds it. With this broken, the body would be in tatters" (quoted in Moradiellos, 2018: 131)

<sup>32</sup> The connection Rousseau draws between "early" human existence and animal existence is followed through in his depiction of natural law: for Rousseau, because animals partake "in some measure of our nature, in consequence of the sensibility with which they are endowed, they ought to partake of natural right; so that mankind is subjected to a kind of obligation even toward the brutes" (Rousseau, 1923 [1755]: 172)



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<sup>33</sup> Hobbes' legal positivism is striking at many points, perhaps most so in his claim that natural laws "without the Sword, are but Words, and of no strength to secure a man at all" (1984: 223) and that therefore justice and injustice emerge only with the sovereign power able to enforce law.

<sup>34</sup> Wendt has made exactly this move with regards to treating states as persons in social relations. He cites Rousseau's critique of Hobbes directly in his article *Anarchy is what States make of it* (1992). The connection between constructivism, holism and Rousseau was also noted by Wendt (Wendt, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> By particularism here, I do not mean the term as employed by Jonathan Dancy (1983) referring to a rejection of moral principles, but rather as it used by Alan Gewirth (1988) and David Miller (1997) to suggest the idea of special duties distinct from universal ones.

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## Chapter Five

<sup>1</sup> In the same light, we may say that external sovereignty was "conceptually parasitic" (Thompson, 2006) on understandings of internal sovereignty, the one developing out of the other.

<sup>2</sup> Hobbes is ambiguous on the topic of the basis of the natural laws he discusses in the first part of *Leviathan*. On the one hand, they are outlined as being mere dictates of reason or – to borrow Kantian language – "hypothetical imperatives" (Raphael, 1978: 32, 51-2) at the start of Chapter 14; that is, rational principles that operate on the basis of mutual self-interest. Yet, Hobbes also relates these laws – in rather lukewarm fashion – to a divine creator towards the end of Chapter 15. In light of the latter passage and other evidence, Warrender (1957), Taylor (1938: 409-10) and Hampton (1986) all cast doubt on the well-known claim that Hobbes was an ethical subjectivist, and that he was therefore "guilty" of the contemporaneous accusations of atheism that plagued him (see Zagorin, 1990: 327-8).

<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that several writers have critiqued the easy identification between Hobbes and realism (such as Malcolm, 2002: 432-56; Grewal, 2016), but nevertheless IR theory has consistently made such an identification.

<sup>4</sup> It should be obvious though that there had long existed laws and treaties that were agreed between particular political adversaries and allies. For example, ancient Greece developed complex mechanisms and administrative roles to serve their international relations, due to the interdependency between city-states (Korff, 1924: 250-1).

<sup>5</sup> This was being questioned to some extent by Grotius in his famous *etiamsi daremus* clause (see Grotius, 2005: 89-90), but he was highly tentative, and pushed little further than Gregory of Rimini writing centuries earlier.

<sup>6</sup> Suarez entertained the notion of the *ius gentium* as an "an intermediate form...between natural and human law" and this informs the structure of his survey of the various forms of law (1944: 325).

<sup>7</sup> While Grotius does appear to suggest the possibility of a truly positive law of nations when referring to the body of positive international law agreed by common consent as being "*what is called the Law of Nations, when used in Distinction to the Law of Nature*" (2005: 94; also see 2005: 112-3), elsewhere he notes that the law of nature "may also be called the Law of Nations" (2005: 189).

<sup>8</sup> Suarez argues that while all individuals exist in a "state of mutual justice and peace", it is demonstrable that "the whole of mankind does not constitute one single commonwealth or kingdom" (1944: 376-7, 388).

<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the metaphor is extended by his suggestion that such a "single mystical body", which he considers to be "morally speaking" "essentially a unity", needs "a single head" (Suarez, 1944: 375).

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<sup>10</sup> Grotius cited Vitoria 68 times in his *De jure praedae* and 58 times in *De jure belli ac pacis* (Todescan, 2017: 22)

<sup>11</sup> Note that others, including Stephen C. Neff's student edition (2012), have translated the title of this work as *On the Laws of War and Peace*.

<sup>12</sup> Grotius was also aware of Aesop's fable and approvingly quotes Cicero's novel adaptation of it (Grotius, 2005: 184-5).

<sup>13</sup> Grotius then immediately questions the extent of the organic analogy by noting that the political head may govern multiple different bodies politic (2005: 260).

<sup>14</sup> Grotius argues, "*for as in the natural Body, so in the political, the Preservation of the Parts depends on that of the Whole*" (Grotius, 2005: 347). Grotius understands the body politic as being destroyed when all or the vast majority of its members are destroyed or these members become scattered and disunited, such as through war (2004: 669-70), in which "every Soldier represents the Body of the State, and executes the Business of the whole political Body" (2005: 1333), while the spirit is destroyed when they lose significant rights that they share in common, such as if their sovereignty is denied them (2005: 670). In both cases, therefore, the metaphor of the state's internal anatomy is married with an understanding of the external threat of international warfare and the "death" of the state (2005: 1077).

<sup>15</sup> I should note here that Grotius was of course well aware that there were indeed literal differences between the state or nation and the individual body or person, and the problems of analogy and metaphor more generally. In fact, Grotius spends some time discussing the slipperiness of words and the fact that "a Word can have several Significations" and may therefore be ambiguous in its intended meaning (2005: 851). While discussing the body politic, he notes that "this Body that we are now speaking of, is of a very different Nature from that, it being formed by Compact and Agreement only, and therefore the Right that it has over its particular Members, is to be determined by the Intentions of those who originally framed it; which can never be reasonably imagined to be such, as to invest the Body with a Power to cut off its own Members whenever it pleases, and to subject them to the Dominion of another" (2004: 569). He also readily admits that "The Liberty of a private Person is one Thing, and that of the whole Body of the People another", and that distinctions between the community and individual persons, and therefore between the nature of the state and the individual place (such as the latter possessing a "physical Will" and the former not) are relevant for consideration of justice and punishment in the international sphere (2005: 1078). Yet, at crucial moments, Grotius reaches for just such metaphors and analogies.

<sup>16</sup> That states possess equality with one another has now progressed into the received wisdom of both international relations theory and international law. Drawing on various 20<sup>th</sup> century United Nations sources, Covell (2009: 15-8) outlines this equality as one of the fundamental principles of international law. A great debt is owed in this regard to the work of Vattel and his 1758 text (Shaw, 1982: 26). This work became enormously popular in the decades following its publication, a copy of which was one of two books found in the effects of the then recently deceased George Washington (Neff, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> The fundamental distinction between realism and non-realist IR theory has been well-articulated by Kratochwil (though speaking here of a dichotomy between realist and idealist thought more specifically) as resting on the interest that the theorist has on norms (Kratochwil, 1989: 45), with realists denying their importance, or at least revealing their disinterest in them, for either ontological or methodological reasons.

<sup>18</sup> Carr himself seems to suggest there is profit; he argues that it is necessary to believe in such personification in order for individuals to pay taxes domestically and conduct "orderly international relations" based on the assumption of international duties and responsibilities between personified entities. In other words, personification of this kind performs (by its consequences) a *moral* good. More generally, Carr's discussion evades a key issue, which is that he himself recognises the influence of metaphor, since he explains the development of international law historically (in the quote that opened the section on

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the *ius gentium*) on the basis of the assumption that the analogy is a reasonable one to pursue.

<sup>19</sup> Stirk (2005) highlights Herz's contribution to realism, though Herz's work is marked by an emphasis on the middle ground, what he terms "realist liberalism" (1950: 177-180).

<sup>20</sup> Morgenthau here recognises that one's self-image is contingent upon the reactions of those with whom we are in social relation, and yet his discussion centres on collective, not individual, identities. He refers to "international society" (1948: 56), a concept that the English school were to pick up and adapt in their own work (and which I will explore later).

<sup>21</sup> We should add here that Aron offers detailed analysis of how to construe national interest and identity in Chapter 10 (2017 [1966]: 279-306).

<sup>22</sup> We need to bear in mind that explanations of behaviour which share the assumptions of that behaviour's presuppositions risk reinforcing both presuppositions and behaviour, and that it is precisely these explanations which have constituted wider perceptions about, in this case, state identity and behaviour. This of course invites broader questions, such as whether we, as the researcher of human behaviour, should employ the same conceptualisations that our objects of study employ in their own thinking about the given topic? Should, for example, the historian of theology refer to Christ as the son of God?

<sup>23</sup> Even when Waltz's analogy is more clearly between the firm and the state, personification remains, such as in his claim that "[s]tates are the units whose interactions form the structure of international-political systems. They will long remain so. The death rate among states is remarkably low. Few states die; many firms do." Personification is present here not simply in the use of the words "life" and "death" or "die" but also in the implicit assumption, embedded within the argument that "the death rate among states is remarkably low", that life and death are being implicitly measured relative to the human lifespan.

<sup>24</sup> Rawls' attempt to iterate his "original position" at the international level in his *The Law of Peoples* rests upon the plausibility of personification. The argument works only by making certain assumptions about the people placed behind this veil of ignorance (see Frost, 2004: 59).

<sup>25</sup> "The idea of peoples rather than states is crucial at this point: it enables us to attribute moral motives— an allegiance to the principles of the Law of Peoples, which, for instance, permits wars only of self-defense—to peoples (as actors), which we cannot do for states (§2)" (Rawls, 1999: 17).

<sup>26</sup> It is for this reason that liberalism as a theory of society and the state stands so far from liberal IR theory, and by extension why domestic liberals can simultaneously be international realists.

<sup>27</sup> Wendt later recognises exactly this: "Although people can have multiple identities, and often engage in contradictory or irrational behavior, biology gives their bodies more coherence, and constrains their action to a greater extent, than is the case for the discursively constituted state" (1999: 221-2). The full force of this point though has to be minimised for his theory to work.

<sup>28</sup> As Campbell has noted, the Cartesian dichotomy between the materiality of the body and the ideational bound up with intersubjective interpretations has of course long come under criticism from postmodern writers, particularly those writing about gender (Campbell, 1998: 220-1; e.g. Butler, 1993). However, Wendt's commitment to a "rump" materialism that at various points intervenes on or influences the ideational sphere, in a relationship characterised as ambiguous and inconsistent by Smith (2000), cuts his theory off from incorporating the most radical ideas from within this tradition.

<sup>29</sup> According to Wendt, the state literally *is* a person, no "as ifs" at all (2004). With Wendt's constructivism, we return then from discussions of analogy and metaphor to one ostensibly of true identity, if perhaps only by the subtle abstraction of the state's sister

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term, the *person*. However, we may doubt the sincerity of such a move because of the simultaneous commitment to materialism that Wendt advocates. Neumann (2004: 261) notes slippages in Wendt's claim to not be putting forward an "as if" form of personification; occasionally Wendt refers to the "body" and the "life" of a state using inverted commas. This punctuation might suggest that Wendt is in fact arguing in an "as if" manner after all. It is in Wendt's references to the body especially that his claims about state personality being literal personality falter.

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## Chapter Six

<sup>1</sup> The passage continues, "...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made".

<sup>2</sup> This is perhaps most clearly articulated in the divine right theory present in Bossuet's claim, directed ostensibly at the eldest son of Louis XIV, that "[t]he prince, in his quality of prince, is not considered as an individual; he is a public personage, all the state is comprised in him; the will of all the people is included in his own. Just as all virtue and excellence are united in God, so the strength of every individual is comprehended in the person of the person. What greatness this is, for one man to contain so much!" (1999: 160).

<sup>3</sup> I refer here to the following passages: Plato's *Meno* 79e-86c; Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation I and Meditation II; Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Bk I, ch. 2, §§ 1-5 and 12-16; Bk II, ch. 1, §§ 1-5. On the latter, we should also note the importance of Locke's "mind-as-empty-cabinet" metaphor, which conceptualises the mind as being "furnished" by sense perceptions. This metaphor, or extrapolations from it, appears numerous times in his text.