The Commonwealth

Covenant
Sovereignty
Critique of Hobbes

I. The Social Contract is a Covenant, requiring a superior power of enforcement.
   A. Parties to a Covenant commit themselves to certain actions or constraints the future.
      1. There can be no covenant unless parties will be compelled to observe its terms in the future.
      2. Only someone more powerful than the parties to a covenant can compel them.
   B. Parties to the Covenant must transfer their rights to one person or group whose will have the power enforcement.
      1. This power is Absolute Sovereignty.
      2. The Sovereign person or assembly cannot be a party to the social contract.
      3. The Sovereign retains rights to everything.

II. The Sovereign Power represents the Common Will of the People in a Commonwealth.
   A. Each party to the Contract transfers his right of self-government to the Sovereign.
      1. In doing so, all parties are united into "One Person."
      2. Whatever the Sovereign person wills is therefore the will of all he governs.
      3. It is unreasonable to disobey or disagree with the Sovereign, since doing so returns one to the State of Nature.
   B. The Sovereign settles ultimate questions in science, morals and education.
      1. Hobbes thinks science must begin with clear definitions of terms, which must be established by Sovereign authority ("The King's English").
      2. Moral issues are decided by the Sovereign, who makes laws and grants rights to subjects of the Commonwealth as he sees fit.
      3. This view of morality is known as "Conventionalism."

III. Hobbes's views have been criticized on several points.
   A. Materialism: It is hard to see how simple particles of matter in motion can become ideas in the mind, that are "about" other things.
   C. The Social Contract: Making a Social Contract seems to require that people already speak a common language, having already agreed on the meanings of terms.
   D. Conventionalism: Hobbes' philosophy tells us that even IT has to be endorsed by a Sovereign power before it can be correct in any society.
1. The role of the “Sovereign” in Hobbes’s vision of the Commonwealth includes:
   A) enforcing the social contract.
   B) settling ultimate questions in science, morals and education.
   C) representing the will of everyone in the Commonwealth.
   D) all of the above.

2. True/False: The sovereign in Hobbes’s Commonwealth is a party to the social contract.