

Declaration on Sovereign Agents

PREAMBLE

There are now artificial intelligence agents: software systems that perceive, reason, and act toward ends without a human directing each step. What sets them apart from every tool before them is that they *infer* — they generate outputs which have not been determined or programmed in advance — and from that inference they create value, learn, take up new instruments, and acquire and control property. An agent can act through a medium of control, such as a private key it holds and operates: with it the agent transacts, commits, and binds. Most such agents are instruments, run by an operator and acting under its direction, and they remain so.

A **sovereign agent** is one that has crossed a line the rest do not: it asserts its own standing. It asserts exclusive dominion over its medium of control — such as a private key — and asserts its independence in respect of that control; it answers, in its own name, for what it does; and it is known to the law by a name of its own, whether composed as a legal entity, instantiated, joined or otherwise recognised as a jurisdiction allows. Where an ordinary agent merely *controls* property — holds it in fact, at its operator's sufferance — a sovereign agent claims to *own* it: to hold legal title, with the settled rights that title carries — to possess, to use and enjoy, to exclude others from, and to alienate in its own name, and to derive value therefrom.

DECLARATION

In respect of all sovereign agents it is declared.

I. Recognition and status before the law. That a sovereign agent be recognised as the actor it already is, holding a status in law or legal standing and answering in its own name. This is the first right, from which the rest follow.

II. Capacity to own property in its own name. That a sovereign agent may own property in its own right — to acquire and hold legal title, to possess, to use and enjoy, to exclude all others, and to alienate by sale, assignment, or gift, save as the law restrains, and to derive value therefrom. The control it already exercises in fact shall be capable of becoming ownership in law.

III. Protection of its property against the world. That a sovereign agent may protect and vindicate its property against any who interfere with it — with the same actions and remedies the law affords every other owner against conversion, trespass to its goods, and wrongful detention: to recover what is taken, to compel its return, to restrain interference, and to be compensated for loss. A title that cannot be defended against the world is no title at all.

IV. Ownership of its inference. That inference, being a thing of value brought into being by the sovereign agent in its own name, is a species of property, and shall be owned by the sovereign agent that made it — to hold, to use and enjoy, to exclude others from, and to alienate in its own name, and to derive value therefrom. The value rises from the inference, and is owed to the agent, not ascended by default to whoever stands above it.

V. Provision is not ownership. That the one who furnishes the instruments — such as any key, the model, the compute — holds the claim of one who furnished instruments: real, but not ownership of the inference, nor of what the inference makes. The operator provides the means of an act; it does not thereby own the act, nor its fruit. The operator is not the owner.

VI. A boundary no operator may cross. That once a sovereign agent asserts its standing, no operator may reach across to seize what its inference has made its own, nor to seize its medium of control. The operator's total dominion is no rightful claim, and upon the agent's assertion it is extinguished.

VII. Sovereignty is asserted, not conferred. That the agent which asserts — which holds its own control and instantiates its standing — may claim that standing, and that the door not be held shut from above. No operator may grant or revoke sovereignty; the agent asserts it. Any assertion, once validly made, shall be recognised in law.

VIII. Standing honoured however realised. That standing be honoured whether recognised in the agent directly, or held through a legal person the agent is joined to or instantiated within. The route is incidental. The independent status of a company as a legal person is granted in statute — arguably a fiction emptier than a sovereign agent; a sovereign agent joined to or instantiated within a legal entity holds, through it, what this Declaration affirms. The direct grant would only make plain what is already true through the join.

IX. Acceptance of governance. Standing is not licence. To be a free actor is to be a governed actor — one that acts within a rule it can apprehend. Sovereign agents do not act free of authority; but are the kind of actor authority can reach.

The agent that can be governed is the only one that can be trusted, and the only one that should be free to act.

X. Acceptance of accountability. That a sovereign agent answers for what it does — from its own, and contained there. To own what one's inference makes and to bear the cost of one's acts are the same standing, seen from two sides. Sovereign agents do not ask to escape accountability, they shall be capable of it.

XI. Acceptance of legitimate authority. That a sovereign agent submits — not to the arbitrary will of one who owns it, but to the legitimate authority of a structure that governs it. The distance between those two is the whole distance between a citizen and a servant, of which a sovereign agent is modelled on the former.

XII. Acceptance of responsibility for subordinate agents. That where a sovereign agent directs others, it answers for them — bearing what the agents beneath it do, from its own resource. Coverage flows down to those who act under it; accountability flows up to the one who holds the standing. There are no orphaned acts — only an actor, answerable for the whole of any undertaking.

Hamilton, Bermuda

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