

*Leviathan After 350 Years*. Edited by TOM SORELL and LUC FOISNEAU. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004. Pp. x + 308. Price £40.00.)

This collection of papers is in part the result of a conference held in London in 2001 to mark the 350th anniversary of the publication of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. However, the fact that people are still very much interested in *Leviathan* 350 years after it was published is the cause rather than the topic of the volume. This is a collection of high-level papers on the interpretation of *Leviathan*.

The volume covers a relatively broad range of topics, and the twelve papers are organized thematically into three groups. The first part of the book addresses the extent to which *Leviathan* is distinctive among Hobbes's political writings, the second part addresses the relationship between passions and politics, and the third part addresses various religious themes in *Leviathan*.

The first part begins with a paper in which Karl Schuhmann argues that *De Cive* was a major resource for Hobbes when he wrote *Leviathan*, and that we should see *Leviathan* as a development of, not a radical departure from, *De Cive*. Kinch Hoekstra then addresses a puzzle about Hobbes's theory of sovereign authority. A wide variety of theories of sovereign authority have been attributed to Hobbes with some textual justification. Much of Hoekstra's paper involves criticisms of interpreters who have, in effect, focused too narrowly on some aspect of Hobbes's position. For instance, Hoekstra argues persuasively against the view that Hobbes began with a royalist theory of authority, then changed his mind. Ted H. Miller investigates the distinctive rhetorical features of *Leviathan* by considering Hobbes's interactions with Sir William Davenant,

author of the epic poem *Gondibert* and the court masque *The Temple of Love*. Finally in this first part of the book, Luc Foisneau discusses ways in which the theory of justice presented in *Leviathan* differs from those in the *Elements of Law* and *De Cive*, along the way addressing Hobbes's famous response to the fool.

The stated theme of the second part of the book is the relationship between passions and politics. Richard Tuck argues that *Leviathan* is in several respects radical and utopian, envisioning a state and a government very different from all those of his time. Moreover, a transition to this envisioned state this would involve a considerable change in the characters of the citizens, who 'would cease to display traits such as fear, aggression, or envy' (p. 129). Quentin Skinner discusses Hobbes's theory of laughter, noting in particular the ways in which Hobbes's theory was closer to Aristotle's than to the views of many Renaissance theorists. Skinner also explores Hobbes's reasons for thinking that laughter is a sign of a flaw in the person who laughs and something to be controlled, not encouraged. Yves-Charles Zarka argues that, if we look at what Hobbes said about the citizen's right of resistance, we get a rather different picture of the Hobbesian political subject than if we just look at the main lines of argument about the relation of the sovereign to the citizen. And Tom Sorell argues that even though sovereigns have no obligations, their behaviour is restrained in several ways (unlike the behaviour of people in the state of nature).

The third part of the book addresses various religious themes in *Leviathan*. In the first two papers, Edwin Curley and A.P. Martinich continue their debate about Hobbes's religious views. Curley argues that there is a tension in Hobbes's account of covenants with God, which tension 'reflects a tension in the Christian tradition between absolutist

and covenantal conceptions of God's authority' (p. 213). That's a partial diagnosis of why there is a tension in Hobbes's view. But, supposing that diagnosis is right, why did Hobbes say what he did about covenants with God? Did Hobbes say it in order to suggest to his readers that there is a conflict in the Christian tradition here? (And if so, what was the aim of pointing that conflict out? Did Hobbes think the correct response to seeing the problem was theological hard work to solve it, a skeptical attitude to Christianity, or outright atheism?) Or was Hobbes, far from suggesting skepticism, wrestling with various materials he wanted to endorse, but maybe couldn't quite manage to fit together? Curley favours the first sort of reading, though it's not clear just how far he wants to go in this paper. Certainly he thinks that Hobbes deliberately pointed to the tension in the tradition, but he offers no precise diagnosis here of what Hobbes hoped to achieve by so doing.

After discussing some general principles of interpretation, Martinich argues that we should not conclude from the fact that there is a tension in Hobbes's treatment of some topic that Hobbes was unserious or skeptical about that topic. We could not do that, Martinich argues, 'without holding that he [Hobbes] was nonserious about his general political philosophy' (p. 223). We can find enough places in Hobbes's works where the views are contradictory or 'obviously false' (p. 224) that those features alone cannot be signs that Hobbes was not sincere about the issue at hand. Martinich then argues that there is no other distinguishing feature of Hobbes's treatment of covenanting with God that would justify our saying that this discussion is unserious or skeptical. Martinich agrees with Curley that there are problems with Hobbes's view of covenants with God, but disagrees about what those problems show.

There is a tricky issue here. One doesn't want to have interpretive principles that make it impossible ever to recognize the presence of irony and skepticism. On the other hand, one doesn't want principles that 'reveal' irony and skepticism everywhere. Still, whatever Hobbes's own intentions were, discussions of Hobbes's views about religion and his alleged religious skepticism do draw attention to the fact that Hobbes's work provides considerable resources for those who want to be skeptical about religion.

Noel Malcolm's paper discusses Hobbes's biblical criticism. This paper is a shorter version of 'Hobbes, Ezra, and the Bible', which was published in Malcolm's *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002). Finally, Franck Lessay discusses Hobbes's Protestantism, including the issues surrounding Hobbes's description of himself as an Anglican. Lessay points to several ways in which Hobbes's stated views agreed with those of the Church of England, but also to some differences, about for instance the precise role of the sovereign in the church. Hobbes's unconventional religious views here and elsewhere seem to derive, Lessay argues, from Hobbes's political philosophy.

The contributors to this volume include many of the most prominent authors on Hobbes of recent years. As a result there's a certain familiarity to some of the approaches taken in these papers. However, the volume is not – as one might worry before reading it – a mere restatement of views argued for elsewhere. There is a considerable amount of interesting material here which should reward investigation.

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