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The Limits of Reason in Hobbes's Commonwealth

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early modern successors. Compared to thirteenth and fourteenth-century authors, he argues, 'the later textbooks are shadows on the cave wall'. (p. 12). This notion of later scholastic authors as slumped in a trough, philosophically speaking, stems from Pasnau's argument that the most creative and significant metaphysics is to be found, roughly speaking, at the beginning and the end of his period. However, it seems harder to give a fine-grained account of exactly why the scholastic synthesis declined in the mid-seventeenth century without considering its early modern permutations in more detail. But this would be the subject of another, equally long book. It is also occasionally possible to quibble over Pasnau's selection criteria. His trenchant comments about those who tend to over-value the contribution of Francisco Suárez to early modern metaphysics (as he puts it, describing Suárez as 'the main channel through which medieval philosophy flowed into the modern world' 'makes as little sense as describing David Lewis as the main channel through which analytical philosophy flowed into the twenty-first century') are probably fair, but the book's overall preference for arguments over intellectual context sometimes make it hard to see how more minor authors such as David Gorlaeus or Gerard and Arnold Boate (all of whom, it must be said, are carefully and perceptively handled) fit into the overall picture of early modern scholasticism.

One of the many significant achievements of *Metaphysical Themes* is to put scholarship on medieval and early modern metaphysics into a creative dialogue – this is a historiographical project that has so far inspired many articles, but which has rarely been attempted in monograph form. There is much here to engage and provoke historians of both medieval and early modern philosophy. Overall, this is a controversial (in the best sense of the word), stimulating, and often witty book that deserves to make a major impact.

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Michael P. Krom: *The Limits of Reason in Hobbes's Commonwealth*. London and New York: Continuum Press, 2011, pp. xi + 216. £65.00/ $120.00 (hb.). ISBN 9781441182616

'Is instrumental rationality sufficient for politics? Can self-interest guided by reason lead to a long-lasting political order?' (86). In *The Limits of Reason in Hobbes's Commonwealth*, Michael P. Krom considers these questions in the context of Hobbes's philosophy and responds with a resounding 'no'. Reason alone cannot serve as the basis for a Hobbesian commonwealth but must, in his view, be supplemented by the necessary evil of human pride.

The first three chapters provide a rational reconstruction of Hobbesian political theory, which consists of a retelling of '…the ideal political story, namely the genesis of the rational individual who directs himself out of the state of nature and into political life' (62). Chapters 1 and 2 review some familiar topics in Hobbes studies, including Hobbes's understanding of various aspects of human psychology (5–26), the state of nature (27–35), the laws of nature (35–8) and the social contract (46–7). Chapter 3 takes up Hobbes's analogy between the body politic and the human body, a topic that is less frequently discussed, and Krom's attempt to fill out the analogies between the parts of the commonwealth and the parts of human anatomy is impressive. He ends the chapter by suggesting that colonization can be seen to serve a reproductive function – if an asexual one – for the commonwealth (61). This suggestion is intriguing; however, in my view, Hobbes is more naturally read as seeing colonization as a solution to the problem of overpopulation, rather than as a good in itself or as one of the key functions of the commonwealth. Perhaps this shows the limitations of the analogy (a point which Krom is willing to accept). Overall, these early chapters are well grounded in the secondary literature and they offer a competent, clear introduction to Hobbes's thought.

In Chapter 4, 'Dominated by the Passions, Irrationality and the Prideful Individual', Krom gives an analysis of Hobbes's account of pride and its connections with the related ideas of glory, vainglory and honour. He defines 'the prideful' as a class of glory seekers who are 'dominated by this passion to the extent that they are rendered incapable of recognizing their true interests'. He argues that such men fail to 'strike a proper balance between self-preservation and pre-eminence and thus risk their lives when to do so is unnecessary' (79). Pride is a desire for (or belief in) one's own superiority (thus violating Hobbes's ninth law of nature requiring people to acknowledge one another as equals); and, importantly for Krom, pride outweighs one's desire for self-preservation. On Krom's account, then, prideful people risk their lives for the sake of glory.

It would appear, then, that prideful men are a threat to the commonwealth, but in Chapter 5, 'The Moralization of Pride', Krom argues that prideful men are also *necessary* for the maintenance of the commonwealth. He makes a convincing case that rational self-interest and death aversion are a major obstacle in defending the commonwealth. The rational Hobbesian actor will be the 'first to flee' at any sign of danger, and Krom presents Hobbes's own flight from England to the perceived safety of France during the English civil wars as evidence for this claim (93). If every subject acted like Hobbes, no commonwealth would survive in the face of an internal or external threat. Krom thus argues that what he calls 'generosity' is needed to ground the willingness to sacrifice one's life for one's country.

In Chapter 6, 'Taming Curiosity, the Commonwealth's Philosopher', Krom turns to the problems posed by 'vain philosophy'. Thinking his or her own speculations are better than others, the vain philosopher uses 'obscure

language with its meaningless and ill-connected names out of an inordinate desire to have power over others' (118). Of course, the vain philosopher has virtually no power on his or her own, but '[t]hrough the schools, the philosophers disseminate their prideful and harmful teachings, corrupt the youth, and lead into madness all those who learn their useless methods of reasoning. The vain philosopher wields immense power in this manner'. As such, vain philosophers 'ultimately destroy all possibility of peace' (122). From these claims, Krom derives an indictment of philosophy itself, claiming that it 'is an activity that of its very nature is associated with pride, that those motivated by curiosity do not always recognize their true interests and thus tend towards irrationality. ... The vain philosopher, while an extreme type who must be rooted out from positions of power, is always lurking within the recesses of the curious man's heart' (128–9). Curiosity must be 'tamed', as the chapter's title indicates, because it inevitably poses a threat both to the curious and to the commonwealth. But like the generosity of the soldier, curiosity serves a valuable purpose. Not only is it an incentive for peace – knowledge is one of the goods provided by security for which people exit the state of nature (129) – but the well-functioning commonwealth needs philosophers, what Krom calls 'the commonwealth's philosophers'. Krom argues that they serve well as counsellors to the sovereign (134), but one could also point to the need for scientific and intellectual progress, as well as the social, material and industrial products of ingenuity, and so on.

Chapter 7, 'The Desire for Divinity, Spiritual Pride in the Commonwealth', completes Krom's critique with a discussion of pride and religion. Drawing the parallels to the earlier cases, he says that 'While love of God can be used for ill, Hobbes does not deny its beneficial nature and, as I will argue, even its necessity. Just as the rational commonwealth needs the irrationality of the generous man and the commonwealth's philosopher, so too must it call upon the promptings of those who serve God out of love rather than out of fear' (137). The latter is what Krom calls 'charitable obedience'.

The material in these core chapters is suggestive and brings out some interesting and less explored aspects of Hobbes's thought. In the end, however, I suspect that Krom cannot sustain a conclusion with the force and the wide scope he intends it to have. He wants to argue that all of the motivations that prove troublesome for Hobbes can be subsumed under the category of pride. Even with military service, it is not clear that pride – understood as ambition or the desire for glory that outweighs self-preservation – is doing the work in every case. Nationalism, patriotism or a commitment to other ideals might make a person willing to risk her life for her country, and we cannot say in every circumstance that that person was motivated by a desire for honour of some sort. Similarly with philosophy and curiosity; while it is true that Hobbes knows ambitious men can muster intellectual resources in ways that are threatening to the commonwealth, it is not clear that philosophy always contains the seeds for this in the way that Krom claims it does. While some (perhaps many) intellectuals are driven by

vanity, it is not clear how intellectual curiosity *itself* is legitimately indicted as prideful. Krom's attempt to reduce everything to pride is least convincing when it comes to his discussion of charity and 'charitable obedience'. Why should we think that 'love of God' must be motivated by something that violates the ninth law of nature? While some who obey do so out of love for God rather than fear of the earthly punishment of the sovereign, it is not clear why we need to cash this out in terms of *pride*.

I suspect that Krom is gesturing toward a more general point: the need for motivations that go beyond narrow self-interest (self-preservation and commodious living). At a couple of points later in the book, Krom offers a much more general characterization of pride. For example, he says 'Pride is a general condition in which one pursues the satisfaction of certain passions despite the fact that doing so runs contrary to one's own interest' (166). But this is not how Krom defines pride originally, and it is certainly not *Hobbes's* understanding of the term. More argument is needed to show that charity, generosity and loving obedience to God can be linked to a conception of pride that is true to our everyday understanding, and to Hobbes's own understanding of the concept. While Krom's case for the claim that 'Hobbes's rational commonwealth depends on irrational motivations' is compelling, it is less clear that those irrational motivations are all reducible to pride. Yet while Krom's conclusions may not ultimately be convincing, his discussion of the irrational in the Hobbesian state nevertheless makes for a valuable contribution to a growing literature on Hobbes's political psychology.

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Susan James: *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 288. £30.00 (hb.). ISBN 9780199698127.

Among philosophers, Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise* tends to receive much less attention than the more systematic *Ethics*. However, two recent monographs on the former text by leading scholars – Susan James and Steven Nadler – together with the imminent publication of Volume II of Edwin Curley's edition of the *Collected Works*, which includes the *Treatise*, are sure to stimulate further discussion of Spinoza's second masterpiece. James's *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion and Politics* will make a valuable contribution to those discussions.

As its title suggests, James's study is more understated than Nadler's *A Book Forged in Hell* (Princeton University Press, 2011), but it is no less engaging. One distinctive virtue of James's approach is her careful and thorough contextualization of Spinoza's text. As well as discussing the