

A longer discussion of Callicles's democratic psychology, begun in the section on Polus, would have been welcome.

The brief concluding chapter on Hobbes presents him as a materialist with a "mechanized picture of the world" (10), bracketing his political science *more geometrico* (143). Hobbes's new political science installs power as the basic unit of analysis, which, in Varma's view, displaces the erotic foundations of political philosophy. The Hobbesian turn in modern political philosophy is risky because eros (unlike the will to power) can be redirected towards philosophical knowledge.

The book is strong on exegesis, and especially eloquent when presenting analogical and metaphorical accounts of ascents and descents. Some of the characterizations of psychagogy are memorable and deliver a real punch. The book's metaphorical or actual dualism is sometimes at odds with its interest in coercion in different regime types (aristocracy, oligarchy, and democracy). More generally, whether coercion and punishment have a "fundamental nature" (1) or "essence" (148) is not fully argued. The sustained focus on tyranny provides helpful guidance concerning the psychology of an Alcibiades or a Raskolnikov, half Napoleon and half louse, but pushes aside other justifications of coercion and punishment and other motivations of criminal conduct.

The correctness of Hobbes's state-of-nature psychologizing haunts Varma's book and establishes Hobbes as perhaps the key interlocutor of Plato and his dramatic persons. As an implication of Varma's dialogue with Hobbesian materialism, modern theories of punishment such as deterrence and retribution are placed in a somewhat Procrustean bed. Variations within modern theories of punishment are homogenized: very different thinkers such as Beccaria and Kant become part of a single modern moment. One antidote is to read ancient materialists such as Epicurus and Lucretius for evidence of their rejection of the will to punish. Whether and how they succeed in doing so is an interesting question, given this book's premises.

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Christopher Holman: *Hobbes and the Democratic Imaginary*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2022. Pp. 328.)

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Recently, scholars have turned to Thomas Hobbes as an unlikely source of inspiration for engaging the challenges of democratic theory. In one of the first book-length treatments of the subject, Christopher Holman illuminates both sides of this complicated story. A cogent and insightful review of

Hobbes's critique of democracy is followed by a penetrating account of why such an antidemocratic posture may have been myopic on Hobbes's part. Crafting a constellation of democratic "imaginaries" across three distinct parts, Holman contends that beneath Hobbes's rejection of democratic sovereignty are the resources needed to construct a case for its normative preference.

Two initial chapters explore Hobbes's dissection of the "madness" of democracy. In Holman's view, Hobbes's critique reveals that the key characteristic of democratic sovereignty is the existence of concrete institutions that mediate a generalized participation in public affairs (against Tuck's distinction between sovereignty and its administration). The apparent problem with democratic arrangements is that these are "hubristic," lacking the capacity for self-limitation, prone to inflaming passions, and so associated with a certain madness. Where Holman goes further than most is in asserting that Hobbes's distaste for democracy stems from "the extent to which its internal dynamics represent a reemergence within the commonwealth of the logic of multitude" (40–41). Holman's suggestion that the problem of the multitude is never really overcome in democratic political bodies is a foundational claim for his thesis, even if it remains in the background for much of the work.

Hobbes's corresponding antidemocratic impulse can be traced out to better explain the well-known trajectory of developments from *Elements* to *Leviathan*. One of the great assets of this study is its careful recapitulation of these shifts. Holman crafts a compelling portrayal of the increasingly urgent attempts on Hobbes's part to foreclose a "democratic normativity" from asserting itself in his texts. A commonplace desire for liberty and political participation accompanies *Elements's* early, if limited, affirmation of democracy. By *De Cive*, however, Hobbes was tinkering with his definition of liberty and denying any widespread participatory desire in order to temper the positive conclusions that might be drawn from those earlier admissions. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes employs an even more rigorous strategy to abrogate all possible grounds in which a preference for democracy might take root. Thus, Hobbes's prior sketches of an originating democratic moment all but disappear, and representation and authorization are offered in their place.

While this initial thesis is well-made and undoubtedly deepens existing contextualist explanations, some of the most difficult puzzles linger. Viewing democracy, and its negation, as Hobbes's core focus not only proves a somewhat deflationary explanation of *Leviathan's* innovations, it fails to explain why Hobbes continues to insist that a democratic assembly *can* wield sovereign power just as legitimately, if not as conveniently, as a monarch. What lacks clarity here is whether there is any meaningful distinction, on Holman's account, between a democratic *founding* and a democratic sovereign's *reign*. The inevitable reassertion of a multitude's chaotic heterogeneity would, indeed, seem to make a democratic sovereign unthinkable on Hobbes's terms. But Hobbes's continued affirmation of the possibility of just such a sovereign representative (notwithstanding the consistently voiced set of concerns regarding the institutional risks of assemblies) may

imply that a commonwealth's founding is more transformative in Hobbes's view than Holman's account allows. If Hobbes insists upon the sharp contrast between a multitude and a people (or an "Artificial Man"), then Holman gives too little attention to the central conundrum of what Hobbes understands to occur when this "multitude" *becomes* a "person."

Part 2's investigation of the "ontological conditions" of democracy offers some insight into why the possibility of transformation remains obscure for Holman. This part of the study is devoted to unearthing Hobbes's thoroughgoing nominalism and the radical singularity of individuals that permit little basis upon which any "civil" transformation might be predictably seen to unfold. Refuting those who take Hobbes's materialist determinism to buttress an ambition for a totalizing systemization of nature, Holman denies Hobbes's intent for rational mastery. Instead, he draws attention to the conceded complexity of the natural world and man's epistemic limits in Hobbes's account. In contrast to the study of natural bodies (whose causes remain in the power of the divine will), political science is artificial, better likened to geometry. The utter creativity and openness of the political project finds its most profound expression in an autonomous, democratic self-institution. The democratic ontology that makes this possible is the radical equality that undergirds Hobbesian anthropology. Manifesting itself in human difference, rather than in homogeneity, the most important and neglected dimension of this equality, on Holman's reading, is an equal capacity for reason.

While Holman nicely underscores the dueling impulses at work here—radical creativity and equality of reasoning, which nonetheless fail to attain or aspire to total mastery—it would seem that this assessment risks both over- and underestimating Hobbes's ambition. In stressing the nondeterminate form of individuals, Holman's reconstruction obscures the limits supplied by the rationality of the created order of sensory bodies, as well as Hobbes's contention that this must be *imitated*. At the same time, Hobbes's healthy belief in the potential of science to deliver benefits, and definitively mold indeterminacy, is downplayed. The thrust of Holman's reconstruction is to underscore the absence of all limits on political institution. In this respect, Holman offers an excellent *diagnosis* of the difficulties posed by Hobbes's anti-Aristotelian contention. At the same time, the potential avenues for resolutions to which Hobbes alludes do not always emerge with the same clarity.

Some of the work's most interesting analysis comes in part 3, particularly in Holman's perceptive acknowledgment that the lack of any transcendent standard for politics might just as well justify a "radically antipolitical imperative" (150) that aims to neutralize all political disagreement. Here, however, Holman explicitly states that this antipolitical impulse only plagues monarchical sovereignty—by contrast, assemblies (whether aristocratic or democratic) entail negotiations between natural persons, and thus remain "intrinsically political" (153). This seems to misconstrue Hobbes's view; the artificial person of the commonwealth, whether democratic or monarchical, is defined by its unity. Nor is such unity in an assembly implausible if one

concedes that civil, internal peace might be purchased at the expense of external contention (foreign wars or deadly viruses readily serve as the object of bipartisan enmity, for example). Whether Hobbes is right to be so ambitious is another question, but insofar as Hobbes asserts that democratic assemblies wield sovereign power legitimately, the “antipolitical” risk seems to threaten even where the sovereign is democratically represented, if in less obvious ways.

Perhaps paradoxically, it is in the book’s final section—acknowledged to be an engagement that goes beyond Hobbes’s authorial intentions—that we get the clearest analysis of the substantive strictures that shape Hobbes’s vision. Having gutted natural law of its traditional content, Hobbes supplies a positive desire for self-preservation, liberty, and political participation that coalesce to provide grounds for preferencing democracy. Holman’s rejection of Hobbes’s critique leads him to imagine deliberative spaces and institutions that can produce “reasonably accepted decisions whose legitimacy is affirmed by each participant” (174). Yet, insofar as this provides the *unified* basis for a sovereign *will*, expressed in shared political institutions, it is unclear how far Holman’s reconfiguration really is from Hobbes’s original offering. Perhaps this simply means Holman succeeds in convincing his reader of Hobbes’s democratic credentials, but one must ask whether Holman’s imaginary really permits a serious risk that the multitude remains or will reemerge at any moment. Either way, Holman’s engrossing study has plenty to commend it to those with interests in Hobbes’s thought and democratic theory alike. It underscores Hobbes’s continued relevance in a provocative and interesting way, and it shows this famous advocate of monarchy to be a curiously helpful interlocutor for democratic theorists, even today.

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Alex Zakaras: *The Roots of American Individualism: Political Myth in the Age of Jackson*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022. Pp. x, 418.)

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The era named for Andrew Jackson remains poorly understood by most Americans. This lack of knowledge is unfortunate, especially considering how important the decades between the War of 1812 and the US-Mexican War are to understanding the nation’s development. Even more problematic is the mythologizing of Old Hickory by pundits who favorably compare