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Review of *Thomas Hobbes and the Natural Law* by Kody Cooper

Geoffrey M. Vaughan

Assumption College, gvaughan@assumption.edu

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Westerners have placed too much hope in politics and social reform, only to find that they were being deprived of their most precious possession, their spiritual life." Westerners may say, "It will never happen here." But it can, as an old Russian proverb has it, "When it happens to you, you will know it is true."

One must applaud Lee Congdon, emeritus professor of history, James Madison University, for this timely volume. It follows several of his acclaimed books: *Exiled Social Thought*, *Seeing Red*, and *George Kennan: A Writing Life*. He also coedited a two-volume work on the Hungarian Revolution.—Jude P. Dougherty, *The Catholic University of America*

COOPER, Kody, *Thomas Hobbes and the Natural Law*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018. x + 331 pp. Cloth, \$50.00—The title of this book points toward but does not fully reveal the boldness of the argument it contains. Yes, this is a book about Thomas Hobbes and the natural law. One could imagine any number of books on Hobbes's relation to the natural law tradition, almost all of which would document his radical departure from it, his antipathy to all things scholastic, and his claim to be the first to develop a proper science of politics, setting himself against the entire history of political philosophy. This book turns on their heads all of those standard readings of Hobbes's work.

The author argues that Hobbes is best understood, and understood himself, as a natural law theorist in the tradition of Thomas Aquinas. He goes further. By the end of the book, Aquinas, Hobbes, and Martin Luther King, Jr. are all part of a natural law liberalism that includes the American Constitution and a critique of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Most readers will need a lot of help getting to this destination.

The author builds his case through extensive engagement with the vast literature on Hobbes and a close reading of all relevant Hobbesian texts. The argument rests upon a number of controversial positions, but the overall claim can best be captured in one passage: "While much of the *content* of Hobbes's philosophy and theology is different from that of the ancients and the medievals, Hobbes's metaphilosophy holds more in common with the ancients and medievals than with Rawlsian liberalism."

The liberalism he means is the political liberalism Rawls developed late in his career, not the philosophical liberalism of *A Theory of Justice*. And while it might be the case that Hobbes is closer to one than the other, some people might suggest that these are not the only two choices in the history of political philosophy. One might even suggest that what makes Hobbes most interesting and even crucial in that history is his distance from both of these poles.

The case for Hobbes as a natural law liberal or simply as a natural lawyer of any kind rests upon two claims about the natural law: "First, the human good, which is grounded in a notion of human nature as fixed, provides basic reason(s) for action. Second, the norms or precepts that correspond to the human good have a legal character." This reviewer will leave to others to judge whether the account of natural law is sufficient, but will suggest that the first claim could be found in Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Whether Hobbes's idea of law prior to any civil contract, what he called a "precept or general rule found out by reason," has this character of binding law is much in dispute. But the author's argument is that Hobbes's thin theory of the human good, mere life, satisfies the first premise and his laws of nature, the first of which is to seek peace, satisfy the second.

To bolster his claims, the author first builds upon the work of A. P. Martinich, specifically the claims about Hobbes's religious beliefs. In order for him to claim that the laws of nature are binding, the author rightly knows he must demonstrate that there is a divine enforcer that precedes civil society. Going beyond Martinich's claim that Hobbes was a sincere Christian, the author tries to establish that the Monster of Malmesbury developed "his own renegade scholasticism."

There is much here to take issue with, but one feature of the argument deserves special notice. Throughout this volume the author claims that the structure of Hobbes's philosophy is essentially scholastic or, more broadly, premodern. Its defining characteristic, as opposed to the Rawlsian alternative, is its teleological character. Even here Hobbes is scholastic. He writes, "According to Hobbes, the foundational judgment of right reason is that life is good—indeed, it is the *bonum maximum*." Any reader of Hobbes should be taken aback by this statement. Hobbes derided the idea of a greatest good, replacing it with a greatest evil, violent death. If there is anything scholastic in the structure of Hobbes's argument it is his use of the *via negativa*, arguing away from what we do not want rather than toward what we do.

The author of this volume has produced an impressive work of scholarship, even if this reviewer does not find it convincing. The difference between us rests largely upon how one reads a book such as *Leviathan* and what one expects from a work of philosophy. If the author is correct in his claims, this reviewer would certainly find Hobbes far less interesting in himself and in the history of political philosophy.—Geoffrey M. Vaughan, *Assumption College*

CORNGOLD, Stanley. *Walter Kaufman: Philosopher, Humanist, Heretic*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018. xvi + 744 pp. Cloth, \$39.95—Walter Kaufmann was born in Freiburg, Germany, in 1921 and