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**Johnston, David, ed., Leviathan by Thomas Hobbes.
Second Norton Critical Edition. Norton Library edition.
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Introduction by Kinch Hoekstra and David Johnston.
Norton Library edition**

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NB : Les pages dans la publication originale sont indiquées entre crochets et en caractères gras.

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Johnston, David, ed., *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes. Introduction by Kinch Hoekstra and David Johnston. Norton Library edition. New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton, 2021. 624 pages. isbn 9780393543490.

[201] The new Norton Critical Edition (NCE) of *Leviathan* is a boon for students, and its twin, the Norton Library (NL) edition is a boon both for students and teachers alike. The NCE *Leviathan* was first published by Richard Flathman and David Johnston in 1997. After Richard Flathman passed away, Johnston decided to entirely redo the edition on a new textual basis. While the first version included only parts of Hobbes's masterpiece, the second version not only includes the whole of the book but is also a completely re-edited version based on the 1651 Head edition, and in particular on the large-paper copies of this edition (NL, p. xxxiv) with a careful comparison with the manuscript version on a luxurious *vellum* that was designed by Hobbes as a gift to Charles II. The new NCE version has a clear intention: "The aim of this Norton Critical Edition is to render the text of *Leviathan* as accessible as possible to twenty-first-century readers while avoiding any modifications that would lead to a loss or distortion of Hobbes's meaning" ('A Guide for Readers', p. vii). There is no doubt that the aim has been reached, and for sure it was not an easy achievement since making *Leviathan* accessible to contemporary undergraduates requires that many linguistic simplifications be introduced in the text and some didactic help be provided. The spelling and some of the punctuation have been modernized, all words and short phrases that are archaic or whose meaning has changed since 1651 have been carefully annotated, and the major references to other Hobbes's works, and to historical figures and events are explained in short and clear footnotes. But the meaning of the text has remained intact since David Johnston has done a very scrupulous work, notably when changing the punctuation – suppressing **[202]** commas, semi-colons or colons, never adding any – so that it can facilitate the understanding without any loss in meaning. Yet, as it is important that contemporary students may have a precise idea of what a seventeenth-century text looked like, some textual elements have been kept as they were in the first original edition, that is, the Head edition that has been used by Johnston rather than the 1651 manuscript copy on *vellum* or the 1670 Bear edition, which is the second edition and the last one to have been revised by Hobbes (to a certain extent). Among those original textual elements there is, notably, the epistle dedicatory to Francis Godolphin, that properly "give[s] readers a sense of the form and flavor of the original text" (NCE, p. vii). A very good editorial choice, indeed.

If one wants to assess the advantages of the revised NCE edition, one has to compare it with its direct competitors. If the original 1997 NCE *Leviathan* could not really compete with the 1991 Cambridge edition by Richard Tuck, since the latter gave the entire text with a learned introduction and excellent "Biographical notes and references" due to Ian Harris, the 2020 NCE surpasses it by far since it has benefitted from the incomparable work done on the text by Noel Malcolm in his three-volume Clarendon edition published in 2012. The 2020 NCE is thus both complete, simplified, and follows precisely the Head edition with the scholarly help of the Clarendon edition. If there are variations from the English version presented by Malcolm those

are mainly to be found in the presentation, to make it more palatable to undergraduates – you will find three telling examples of those “slight” changes in “A note on the text” in the NL edition (p. xxxvi-xxxvii). As for the 1670 Bear and the 1668 Latin editions, the main reason why Johnston has “excluded the Latin *Leviathan* from consideration” (NL, p. xxxv) and has “given only incidental consideration to the Bear edition” (*ibid.*) is that the historical context had changed, and that the 1650/51 context was more favorable to freedom of thought. In a time of religious and political unrest such as the early years of the Commonwealth of England it was easier for a philosopher to publish what he had on his mind, especially in matters of religion, without “the constraints of censorship” (NL, p. xxxv); after the Restoration, when the Anglican Church had reconquered its predominance in the kingdom, it was no longer possible to publish views on the Trinity such as the ones that could be read in chapter XLII of the Head edition (chap. 42.3, p. 267-269 – page-numbering of the Head edition is given by NCE and NL editions, which we use in the present review).

Notwithstanding the paradox there is in preferring the version of a text less constrained by censorship when the philosopher defends a doctrine of subjection to the sovereign in matters of doctrines, this choice of the Head edition makes sense. It has a consequence though on the comparison between [203] NCE and NL *Leviathan* edition and Curley’s edition. If the 1651 English and 1668 Latin *Leviathans* are really, as the editors claim, two different books, it certainly deprives of all relevance a comparison between the two Norton editions and the Hackett publishing edition: “the Latin *Leviathan*, the text of which differs considerably from that of the Head and Bear editions, should be considered a different work” (NL, p. xxxv). In his pioneering French translation of *Leviathan* (1971) François Tricaud translated some of the more important Latin variants that he put in footnotes, and it is that French lead which Curley followed in his Hackett edition (“My greatest debt is to François Tricaud...”, p. lxxvi). Tricaud’s justification was – it must be remembered – that the Latin *Leviathan* published in 1668 was based on a Latin proto-*Leviathan*, never published, that might have been written around 1648-1649 (*Léviathan*, ed. F. Tricaud, 1971, p. XXVI). That hypothesis, that was initially formulated by Zbigniew Lubiński in 1932, has been abandoned today, even by Martine Pécharman in her introduction to the French translation of the Latin *Leviathan* which she completed after François Tricaud’s death (*Léviathan*, traduit du latin et annoté par François Tricaud et Martine Pécharman, 2004, p. XXVII-XXX). But Curley was relatively agnostic about the proto-*Leviathan* hypothesis, stressing only that, “whenever Hobbes may have written a particular passage, the Latin version represents the way he presented his thought in 1668” (p. lxxvii). So the reason why Johnston considers it worthwhile not to have notes with the Latin variants is precisely the reason why Curley did consider it indispensable to include them. The difference in historical context is for the former an excellent reason not to mention the Latin variants to American undergraduates, whereas, for the latter, it is a good reason to mention the most significant of those variants. If there is no doubt that the NCE has now to be preferred because it benefitted for the latest scholarship on *Leviathan*, it is not so sure that it should also be preferred *because* it hasn’t included the Latin variants. After all, the title of the 1651 and 1668 editions is *Leviathan* ; if the books were so different, why keep the same title? Moreover, since nobody denies that many chapters of the Latin *Leviathan* are identical to the early edition in English, and that in both versions the structure is the same, trying to figure out why there are substantial differences, notably but not only in the concluding part, could be considered as an excellent exercise for philosophers in the making. But it is also true that such a pedagogical work may be too demanding for students who are no longer used to working in languages other than English.

Some other arguments could be added in favor of the NCE *Leviathan*: Johnston’s modernization in these editions is more carefully done than Curley’s since he had Curley’s to work from and think through, and maybe also because it happens to Curley to ‘modernize’ the

punctuation in ways that [204] actually change the sense, a fault not to be found in Johnston's more recent editions – to say it less dogmatically, a fault that the present reviewer has not yet found. Though, as simplifying and modernizing are not exact sciences the two Norton editions will be judged by their respective users. Another argument for using the revised NCE *Leviathan* is its selection of historical sources: if Leibniz's text on State-Sovereignty has disappeared from the list, there is a text from Aubrey's *Brief Lives* that adds important biographical elements to the extract from Pierre Bayle's *Dictionary Historical and Critical*. As for the choice of extracts from scholarly papers, it has been entirely renewed with papers that have been published since 2005. The 1997 choice of "interpretations" included Michael Oakeshott's introduction to *Leviathan*, an extract from Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, Johann P. Sommerville's "Hobbes on Political Obligation", Richard Tuck's "Hobbes on Skepticism and Moral Conflict", Jean Hampton's "The Failure of Hobbes's Social Contract Argument", David Johnston's "Theory and Transformation: The Politics of Enlightenment", George Kateb's "Hobbes and the Irrationality of Politics" and Richard E. Flathman's "Of Making and Unmaking". The new selection, presented under the heading "Criticism", includes an extract from Kinch Hoekstra's "Hobbesian Equality", Jane S. Jaquette's "Defending Liberal Feminism: Insights from Hobbes", and extracts from Eleanor Curran's "Blinded by the Light of Hohfeld: Hobbes's Notion of Liberty", Teresa M. Bejan's "Teaching the *Leviathan*: Thomas Hobbes on Education", Quentin Skinner's "Hobbes on Representation", and Arash Abizadeh's "Hobbes's Conventionalist Theology". Those papers are all outstanding, and reflect recent Anglophone scholarship. This selection will help students situate Hobbes's ideas on equality, liberty, education, feminism, representation and theology.

If we now turn to the NL edition, it might be preferred to the NCE for a variety of reasons, and for sure by teachers, since some addenda to the text makes it a very useful instrument. As for the edited text of *Leviathan*, it might be said that it is identical in both editions. That affirmation is 99 percent true, but for the purists it must be added that it benefitted from a last complete read by David Johnston, and also from the attention of Kinch Hoekstra, whose contribution to the editorial work was already hailed by David Johnston by special thanks in the NCE – for his "clearness of judgment, largeness of fancy, strength of reason, and graceful elocution" he compares his colleague to Sidney Godolphin who received the same compliments from Hobbes ("Acknowledgments", p. 649). Among the addenda, one should mention the "Further Reading" section that gives a series of contributions with summaries, so that students and teachers may easily find intellectual resources when dealing with other works by [205] Hobbes, the "composition, title, and frontispiece of *Leviathan*", "Responses to *Leviathan*", "Biography", "Introductions and classic interpretations", "*Leviathan* in its broad and immediate contexts", "Collections of Essays", and various topics. The choice of references is again exclusively Anglophone. The introduction plays of course an important part – there is none in the NCE –, and it is a real compendium of all that a student cannot but know about Hobbes and his work. The summary of "Hobbes's life" is a model (NL, p. xii-xv), what is said on the limitations of philosophy an excellent way to introduce the reader to Hobbes's method, and the part on "The ideological Aims of *Leviathan*" is a subtle answer to Quentin Skinner's provocative argument that *Leviathan* might be just another "tract" among the so many that were published in the troubled time of its publication. A quote is the best way to pay homage to the "clearness of judgment" and "graceful elocution" of the authors: "Especially central to his argument is the picture he paints of some aspects of the history of Christianity. Hobbes's rendition of this picture focuses on the immense power of ideas as tools that shape human behavior and as weapons in the struggle for power. The ideological campaign he [Hobbes] launched in this work is at the heart of some of his most impassioned passages, and helped lift *Leviathan* out of the category of locally significant political tracts and into the category of long-remembered works of political philosophy, where it firmly resides today" (NL, p. xxi). The

authors are right to recognize the ideological dimension of the book, and its defense of a certain model of sovereignty in a time when it was attacked when threatening the authority of clerics, and right to say that *Leviathan* is not only an intervention in a particular context, but a view of “the struggle between king and parliament [...] within a long historical perspective” (NL, p. xix).

The new NCE is therefore a huge improvement on the previous edition (not least – but not only – because it includes the whole of the text of the *Leviathan*), and the NL edition should now be the preferred teaching edition, at least, to put it in American terms, for undergraduates.

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