Book Reviews

Thomas Hobbes


This is a most welcome and scholarly edition of Hobbes’s *De Homine* (On Man) – the second part of his projected philosophical trilogy, though the third to be published. The book was printed in 1658, when Hobbes was seventy. It was preceded by *De Cive* (On the Citizen) and by *De Corpore* (On Body). It is not entirely clear when Hobbes embarked on the plan to write three works which together would cover the whole of his philosophical interests, beginning with body (or matter in motion), proceeding to man (or human bodies and especially their psychological aspects), and ending with people in political society (or as members of a city). Perhaps Hobbes formulated the project as early as 1637. Certainly, plans for a trilogy were in place by 1641, when he completed a manuscript of *De Cive*, and styled it the third part of the Elements of Philosophy. A small number of copies of *De Cive* were printed in 1642, and a much larger and revised edition came out in 1647. *De Corpore* – the first section of the projected three – was published in 1655. *De Homine* followed in 1658, and appeared once more (with some revisions) in 1668, as part of Hobbes’s collected Latin works, published at Amsterdam by Johan Blaeu.

*De Homine* has been rather neglected by Hobbes scholars. Indeed, it has never been fully translated into English, though a translation by Charles T. Wood of the dedication and the final six (of fifteen) chapters was published in 1972 as part of a selection of writings by Hobbes entitled *Man and Citizen*, edited by Bernard Gert. The current edition presents the original Latin, and, on the opposite page, a French translation. It is the work of eight scholars connected with the Hobbes Group of SPH (Sciences, Philosophie, Humanités).
at Bordeaux. A notable feature of *De Homine* is that it includes a detailed treatment by Hobbes of optics – the subject of eight of the chapters. The volume begins with an informative and well-documented general introduction (pp. 11–164). The manuscript and printed sources of the text are then described (pp. 165–172). Most of the rest of the book (pp. 173–463) is taken up with the text, and with extensive and helpful explanatory notes, placed at the end of each chapter (while textual matters are dealt with in footnotes on the relevant pages). One Appendix discusses the genesis of Hobbes’s treatment of optics (concerning which *De Homine* draws heavily on Hobbes’s earlier manuscript treatise *A Minute or First Draught of the Optiques* (1646)), while a second surveys the ancient, medieval, and early modern sources of Hobbes’s analysis of optics. The eight plates which Hobbes used to illustrate his optical ideas are reproduced. A useful table lists parallels between passages in *De Homine* and in other writings by Hobbes (pp. 503–512). There is no general index, but there is an index of optical terms (in Latin), and a glossary of non-optical Latin terms (e.g., *Turpe*, *Verbum*, *Virtus*). This glossary refers to passages in the text and so serves to some extent as an index. The volume ends with a Bibliography, and brief biographical notes on the contributors.

This edition of *De Homine* is a work of fundamental importance for all who are interested in Hobbes’s optics, and says much that is interesting about his discussion of other matters including language and sciences (the subject of chapter 10), religion (the topic central to chapter 14) and the concept of a fictitious man or person (“De Homine fictitio, sive de Persona” is the title given in the table of contents to the book’s final chapter). The introduction plausibly argues that a key purpose of the discussion of the fictitious man was to incorporate into the trilogy ideas about persons and things personated, which had featured in *Leviathan* but had been omitted from *De Cive*. Rather than re-do *De Cive*, so the argument goes, Hobbes chose to introduce the new insights in *De Homine*. At the end of the *Minute or First Draught of the Optiques* Hobbes claimed that he had established the foundations of two sciences, namely optics and natural justice. The editors of this volume note that Hobbes made mistakes in optics, but also that his efforts to ground his theories about vision on a rigorous materialist monism did have considerable originality. They convincingly argue that the non-optical sections of the book are more interesting and original than is often supposed. For example, Hobbes places much less emphasis on power in *De Homine* than in his earlier writings, and the book stresses hope as well as fear in its account of the origins of religion. They plausibly suggest that the inclusion in *De Homine* of such an extensive discussion of optics was in part the result of the death in 1648 of Marin Mersenne, an event