

Deborah Baumgold

Paper: *The Composition of Hobbes's Political Theory: Textual and Interpretative Difficulties*
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Deborah Baumgold is a Visiting Fellow at Wolfson College in 2007-8. She is on sabbatical leave from the Department of Political Science of the University of Oregon (USA). Her research project for the year concerns slavery discourse in the seventeenth century.

Baumgold is the author of *Hobbes's Political Theory* and of a series of articles on seventeenth-century political thought. As the title indicates, her book concentrates on Hobbes's political arguments, both empirical and prescriptive; it emphasizes his accounts of institutions and political dynamics, in contrast to a focus on questions of subjects' duties and obligations. A 2005 piece – [“Hobbes's and Locke's Contract Theories: Political not Metaphysical”](#) – won the CRISPP (*Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*) essay prize for that year.

The present essay extends to *De Cive* and *Leviathan* a vein of analysis that was first presented in [“The Composition of Hobbes's Elements of Law”](#) (*History of Political Thought*, 2004). That article traces the layers of composition in the first version of Hobbes's political theory: the evidence suggests that the defence of absolutism was an argument which he initially had to cobble together under the pressure of completing the work during the Short Parliament.

In the present essay, Baumgold makes the case for the need for a combined edition of the three major versions of Hobbes's political theory – the *Elements*, *De Cive*, and *Leviathan*. She has completed preliminary work for such an edition, in which the three texts would be reproduced side-by-side, paragraph by paragraph, in the fashion outlined here in the Appendices.

Baumgold is presently studying slavery discourse in the first half of the seventeenth century, in the early stages of the slave trade prior to its explosion in the latter half of the century. The puzzle, long-noted, is the relationship between abstract philosophical argumentation in the period and the realities of the trade. While there is considerable literature on this with regard to Locke, it is less well studied for the earlier period. The key to attacking the puzzle is to sort through the relationship of philosophical

argumentation to a welter of relevant sources. This is a case of too many, rather than too few, potential influences. These include inherited discourse, particularly from Roman law; popular conceptions of slavery of Africans; and emerging legal and bureaucratic regulations.

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