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Julian H. Franklin, Ed., *Jean Bodin*. International Library of Essays in the History of Social and Political Thought. Hampshire, U.K., and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006. xvii + 453 pp. Index. \$225.00 U.S./£ 120 U.K. (hb). ISBN 13: 978-0-7546-2545-2.

Reviewed by Daniel Engster, The University of Texas at San Antonio.

Jean Bodin (1529/30-96) is best known for his theory of sovereignty, but his intellectual interests and accomplishments extended far beyond this singular concept. During his lifetime, Bodin made major contributions to the philosophy of history, economics, politics, religion, and natural history, and further played an important role in some of the major political events of his day. This volume, one in a series on major figures in the history of social and political thought, brings together many of the most significant articles and essays published on Bodin in English over the past seventy years. The essays admirably situate Bodin in the intellectual and historical context of his times, elucidate the philosophical and religious influences on his thought, highlight and clarify his contributions to politics, economics, religion, and other fields, and resolve some of the seeming paradoxes within his writings while highlighting others.

The book is divided into six parts, with the first two devoted primarily to Bodin's theory of sovereignty and subsequent parts addressing his views on taxation and inflation, religion, natural philosophy, and history and climate. The organization of the work is useful in highlighting Bodin's diverse interests and accomplishments but can seem at times overly schematic; as several authors in this collection note (e.g., Lewis, Kuntz, Baxter, Rose, Blair), Bodin's political, religious, and natural philosophy are all closely interlinked. Some of the essays included in part four on religion, for example, are especially important for understanding his political ideas, which are discussed primarily in the first part of this volume. Some of the essays seem misplaced. McRae's essay on "Ramist Tendencies in the Thought of Jean Bodin" seems to share more in common with the more methodologically-oriented essays in the second part of this collection than with the conceptually-oriented essays in the first part. The essays in part one serve to clarify Bodin's contribution to the modern theory of sovereignty and further trace the legacy of his theory in modern political thought. While medieval thinkers had routinely designated the ruler as the supreme power, Bodin was the first theorist to argue that one ruler or corporate group within each polity should possess all the powers necessary for political supremacy. He also removed many of the traditional limitations on the law-making powers of the sovereign ruler, freeing him (or them) to make or change the laws almost at will. In an essay in part one, Julian Franklin demonstrates that Bodin endorsed a fairly traditional and limited vision of government in his 1566 *Methodus ad Facilem Historiarum Cognitionem* (*Method for the Easy Understanding of History*) and shifted to his more absolutist theory of sovereignty only in his 1576 *Six livres de la république* (*Six Books of a Commonwealth*). Franklin hypothesizes that Bodin probably changed his views in reaction to the deteriorating political situation in France after the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572. In another essay, Franklin argues that Bodin's conception of sovereignty led him mistakenly to deny the possibility of dividing and sharing the supreme governmental powers within a state. Franklin then shows how seventeenth-century German thinkers worked out this alternative concept of shared sovereignty. J. U. Lewis emphasizes, in turn, just how different Bodin's theory of sovereignty is from the ideas of writers in the positivist legal tradition such as John Austin and H. L. A. Hart. Bodin maintained that human beings existed in a moral universe where order and stability followed naturally from adherence to the divine and natural law. According to Lewis, this moral conception of rule explains the various limitations that Bodin placed upon the otherwise absolute sovereign. Even if sovereign rulers were not subject to earthly powers, Bodin

maintained they were subject to divine and natural laws, since failure to observe these laws would undermine their own power.

The subject of limitations on sovereignty is also a central theme in several of the essays on Bodin's economic theories. Although Bodin argued that sovereign rulers should hold all the supreme powers within a state, he nonetheless held that they could not rightfully impose taxes upon the people without their consent. At the Estates-General at Blois in 1576, he even led the Third Estate in opposing the king's request for new taxes and the sale of royal domains (Owen Ulph's essay). Although Bodin's position on taxation would seem to be inconsistent with his absolute theory of sovereignty, several explanations are offered for his views. Franklin suggests that Bodin opposed taxation without consent because he regarded it as an infringement on the private property of individuals, which was forbidden by natural law (Franklin's essay [1986]). Bodin also believed the king should be able to defray the costs of operating the government through revenues from his patrimonial income; therefore, the power to tax was not an ordinary or necessary governmental function (Franklin's essay [1973b]). Martin Wolfe argues that Bodin's position on taxation was driven not so much by theoretical commitments as by his concern to preserve a strong and centralized monarchy. According to Wolfe, Bodin saw arbitrary and excessive taxation as an attack on the family and a central cause of civil strife. Paradoxically, then, he regarded his general opposition to new taxation and insistence on taxation only with the consent of the Estates as wholly consistent with his commitment to a strong and independent monarchy. Denis O'Brien rounds out the essays on economic theory with a careful discussion of Bodin's analysis of the causes of inflation in sixteenth-century France, highlighting the considerable economic insights found in his chief economic work, *Response to Malestroit* (1568 and 1578).

Bodin's fascinating religious writings have garnered more scholarly attention in recent years, and the essays included in this volume represent some of the best of this recent scholarship. Marion Kuntz's excellent introduction to Bodin's *Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis* (*Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*) highlights the major themes of this religious dialogue, relates the dialogue to Bodin's major work on witchcraft and demons (*De la démonomanie des sorciers*, 1580) as well as his major work on natural philosophy (the *Universae naturae theatrum*, 1596), and places his ideas in the tradition of the Renaissance Neoplatonism. Gary Remer further compares Bodin's use of dialogue in the *Colloquium* with Erasmus's use of dialogue in *De libero arbitrio* (*On Free Will*). Because each of the seven speakers in Bodin's dialogue is unwilling to change his religious and philosophical views and the dialogue concludes with the speakers agreeing never again to discuss religion, scholars have often viewed it as a failure. Remer argues, however, that Bodin intended for his dialogue to conclude without any clear resolution in order to convey his belief that religious truth is a complex whole with each religion forming a part of the greater unity.

Essays by Maryanne Cline Horowitz, Paul Rose, and Christopher Baxter further outline some of Bodin's more heterodox religious views. All three authors portray Bodin as a "Judaizer," if not an outright convert to Judaism (Baxter), who found in the Jewish religion a close approximation of the true universal religion. Baxter's essay, which suggests that Bodin underwent an abrupt conversion to Judaism after experiencing a vision of a daemon, probably goes too far in suggesting that Bodin ever settled on one religious orthodoxy, but nonetheless serves as a valuable corrective to anyone inclined to read Bodin as a narrowly secular theorist.

The essays in parts five and six of this book describe the central elements of Bodin's natural philosophy and philosophy of history. In addition to discussing Bodin's theory of climates, these essays provide insight into the historical background and methodology of his natural and historical works. In this regard, they nicely complement the essays by McRae, Giese, and Kelley on the background and methodology of Bodin's social and political philosophy.

The stated goal of the Ashgate series in the *History of Social and Political Thought* is to bring together

and make accessible essays “that should be read by all scholars working” on major figures in the Western tradition. When measured by this standard, *Jean Bodin* is a terrific success. It is difficult to imagine any scholar doing serious work on Bodin, or even properly appreciating his various writings, without some acquaintance with most of these essays. I nonetheless must sound one dissonant note in this otherwise positive review. Three of the essays in this volume (by Giesey, Kelley, and Baxter) are reprinted from an earlier collection of essays on Bodin.^[1] Three chapters from Julian Franklin’s *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory* are also included.^[2] Two essays are likewise taken from Ann Blair’s *The Theater of Nature*, and Marion Kuntz’s essay is excerpted from the introduction to her translation of the *Colloquium heptaplomeres*.^[3] Since the excerpts from these and other books represent some of the best recent work on Bodin, it is certainly understandable that Franklin chose to include them in this collection. However, since most Bodin scholars will likely have access to the majority of these works and will in most cases want to read the complete text of these books, it is not entirely clear what is gained by excerpting them here.

Alas, we can perhaps find the answer to this question by looking to Bodin himself. Given the disciplinary pressures placed upon contemporary scholars, even the most interdisciplinary-minded Bodin scholars ultimately seem to find themselves focusing their studies on one aspect or another of his thinking (history of science, religion, political theory, etc.). Attempting to get an overview of Bodin’s thought can thus be a daunting task. The secondary literature on Bodin’s writings tends to be segregated into specialized studies that usually focus on only one or two of his works. Perhaps the greatest contribution of Franklin’s *Jean Bodin* is thus to bring together in a single volume a collection of essays conveying the encyclopedic scope of Bodin’s project, addressing his accomplishments and shortcomings, and discussing the controversies that continue to surround his ideas. In this respect, the volume is a very Bodinian book. Much like Bodin’s writings, it demonstrates the value of assembling in a single work essays on a multiplicity of different subjects from diverse perspectives.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Part I: Sovereignty

J. U. Lewis (1968), “Jean Bodin’s ‘Logic of Sovereignty’”

Julian H. Franklin (1991), “Sovereignty and the Mixed Constitution: Bodin and his Critics”

Julian H. Franklin (1973a), “Bodin’s Early Theory of Sovereignty” and “The Shift to Absolutism”

Kenneth D. McRae (1955), “Ramist Tendencies in the Thought of Jean Bodin”

Part II: Public Law

Ralph E. Giesey (1973), “Medieval Jurisprudence in Bodin’s Concept of Sovereignty”

Donald R. Kelley (1973), “The Development and Context of Bodin’s Method”

Julian H. Franklin (1973b), "Limitations on Absolute Authority"

Part III: Political Economy

Martin Wolfe (1968), "Jean Bodin on Taxes: The Sovereignty-Taxes Paradox"

Julian H. Franklin (1986), "Bodin and Locke on Consent to Taxation: A Brief Note and Observation"

Owen Ulph (1947), "Jean Bodin and the Estates-General of 1576"

Denis P. O'Brien (2000), "Bodin's Analysis of Inflation"

Part IV: Religion

Marion Leathers Daniels Kuntz (1975), "Introduction: Religious Views in His [Bodin's] Works" and
"The *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* and the Sixteenth Century"

Christopher R. Baxter (1973), "Jean Bodin's Daemon and his Conversion to Judaism"

Maryanne Cline Horowitz (1997), "Bodin and Judaism"

Paul Lawrence Rose (1980), "Introduction: The Enigma of Bodin's Religion"

Gary Remer (1994), "Dialogues of Toleration: Erasmus and Bodin."

Part V: Natural Philosophy and Method

Ann Blair (1997), "Humanist Methods in Natural Philosophy: The *Commonplace Book*"

Ann Blair (1997), "Introduction"

Part VI: Theories of History

John L. Brown (1939), "The Major Themes of the *Methodus*"

Marian J. Tooley (1963), "Bodin and the Medieval Theory of Climate"

NOTES

[1] Horst Denzer, ed., *Jean Bodin: Proceedings of the International Conference on Bodin in Munich* (Munich: Beck, 1973).

[2] Julian H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

[3] Ann Blair, *The Theater of Nature: Jean Bodin and Renaissance Science* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997). Jean Bodin, *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime: Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis*. Ed. and trans. Marion Leathers Daniels Kuntz (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975).

Daniel Engster The University of Texas at San Antonio daniel.engster@utsa.edu

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