

*Democrates Secundus / Zweiter Demokrates.* Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda.

Ed. and trans. Christian Schäfer. *Politische Philosophie und Rechtstheorie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit: Texte und Untersuchungen 11.* Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2018. lxxiv + 266 pp. €168.

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Three notes describe the intellectual profile of Sepúlveda: he was a very good translator of Aristotle, he was a chronicler of political and ecclesiastical facts, and, above all, he was a theoretician of the legitimacy of war. He applied his theories about war to the concrete case of the inhabitants of the New World. First, he did it in the *Democrates Primus* (1535), where he defends the compatibility of war with Christianity. In 1545 he took up the same subject in the *Democrates Secundus*, which he presented in 1550–51 as a manuscript in the Junta de Valladolid, in opposition to the theses of Bartolomé de las Casas. Because of the extremely conservative nature of the text, its publication was rejected and its circulation was banned in Spain. In a way, it was a forbidden book, which had to wait until 1892, when it was published by the scholar Menéndez Pelayo.

Written in the form of a dialogue with a fictitious German pacifist interlocutor, the *Democrates Secundus* begins with a synthesis of the arguments already presented in the *Democrates Primus* in defense of just war. This requires (1) a legitimate authority to proclaim it; (2) a right intention in those who promote it; (3) rectitude in its development; and (4) the existence of three just causes: revenge against an injustice, recovery of unjustly stolen property, and a punishment for those who committed injustice. However, it is proven that the Indians have not exercised injustices that must be repaired, that they have not stolen, that there are no assets that have to be recovered, and that there is no punishment to apply to the Indians. Even more, the Indians have lived thousands of years in their territories, now invaded by the Spaniards. How, then, Sepúlveda asks, is war justified against them?

Precisely the goal of *Democrates Secundus* is to find new reasons to justify war. These reasons number four: (1) the most important has its starting point in the Aristotelian binomial *servus natura–dominus natura*, and maintains that, with respect to Spaniards, the Indians are like barbarians, since they are in a situation of natural inferiority equivalent to a natural servitude that justifies submission, even with weapons; (2) the bestiality of the Indians is shown because they sin against nature: human sacrifices, cannibalism, idolatry, and sodomy (in this case, Sepúlveda identifies the natural law with the positive divine law, thus enabling the pope to grant the Christian princes the right to war against the Indians to correct them); (3) the Spanish must defend the victims of these practices contrary to natural law; (4) as a consequence of the foregoing arguments, the Christian has the obligation to redirect the Indians to the right path and announce the Gospel, even through force and violence.

But all this does not mean that the justification of the war against the Indians resides in their infidelity, because already before Christ there was dominium—in a certain way legitimate and with a certain natural character—among the pagans. But that dominium among the Indians, says Sepúlveda, was of more intelligent servants over less intelligent servants. And this is not enough, because that dominium was not yet Christian; for this reason, it is legitimate that the pope fills that void by entrusting the task to Spain. In his reasoning Sepúlveda uses biblical, classical, and medieval sources; he wants to show that they were already used by renowned philosophers (Aristotle, Augustine, and Thomas) and jurists (Ulpianus and Gerson). In my opinion, the content of its arguments does not coincide with the medieval arguments, although the way of arguing is nourished by them to apply to the new reality of the recently discovered world.

This impeccable edition, prepared by Christian Schäfer, consists of an introduction to the historical-doctrinal context of the *Democrates Secundus*, the Latin text and its German translation, and appendixes that include, among others, a rich apparatus of notes to the text, a complete bibliography of sources and comments, and lists of terms, places, and persons. The volume is very useful for those interested in the thought of the second Scholastic, the natural law, and the Spanish philosophical-juridical tradition.

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*Steno and the Philosophers*. Raphaële Andraut and Mogens Lærke, eds.  
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This erudite collection of essays fills a lacuna in studies of early modern natural philosophy and Nicolas Steno (1638–86). Most recent work has focused on Steno's anatomical discoveries or his conversion to Roman Catholicism and tenure as bishop of Titiopolis and vicar apostolic of Northern Europe. Because of his anti-Cartesian stance, Steno was characterized as “an object of derision,” trying to “prove Descartes wrong by slicing up brains” (2). Due to Steno's fideist letter to his former friend Spinoza, and uncharitable remarks about him by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Bishop Steno had also been “described as a spectacular scientific talent gone completely to waste” (2).

This book well rehabilitates Steno's reputation and reconstructs his place in late seventeenth-century natural philosophy. Stemming from a conference at the Institut des études avancées de Paris, the volume analyzes Steno's journey from natural philosophy to Catholicism; his anatomy set in the context of Cartesianism; his famous work in stratigraphy, paleontology, and natural history; and, finally, his place at the Medici court of Duke Ferdinando II. There are some particularly revelatory findings. Steno disagreed with Descartes's posited structure of the brain, particularly the description of the pineal gland and its function. Nonetheless, as Vasiliki Grigoropoulou's essay shows,