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The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe, ed. Conal Condren, Stephen Gaukroger, and Ian Hunter. Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. vii + 275. \$85.00 (cloth).

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Condren, Gaukroger, and Hunter have put together a very impressive collection of essays that focus on the conception of *persona*—specifically that of *philosopher*—as it evolved during the early modern period. Contributors are: Jacqueline Broad, Conal Condren, John Cottingham, Catherine Curtis, Robert Von Friedeburg, Stephen Gaukroger, Karen Green, Peter Harrison, Ian Hunter, David Saunders, R. W. Serjeantson, and Richard Yeo.

Overall, the essays offer a great deal in the way of history. However, in many cases, historical details are so densely packed that the philosophical point the author is attempting to make, assuming there is one, is lost. In other cases, there really is no *philosophical* point, the essay instead being a piece of historical scholarship, plain and simple. Nothing wrong with this, of course, if what one is looking for is historical scholarship. In the book's introduction the editors claim, "The history of philosophy is always philosophy" (p. 4). Perhaps. But, many in the field of history of philosophy would contend that the history of philosophy is not philosophy, if what one focuses on is *solely* the historical. That philosopher A said this or that, which seems to have changed philosopher B's position on this or that, though admittedly a bit of historical scholarship, does not obviously have any *philosophical* import. Sometimes the history of philosophy is not philosophy, for the very same reason that the history of chemistry is not chemistry.

The collection of essays focuses on the historical conception of *persona*, primarily as it is found at work in the early modern period, and in this regard the authors do an excellent job at ferreting out a much neglected topic of interest. Even so, I think that the editors overestimate what such a study yields. For example, they claim that focusing study on the development of *persona* shows, in the early modern period, that "disputes over philosophical problems quickly become disputes over what is to count as philosophy and what it is to be a philosopher" (p. 8). But, certainly there are a plethora of disputes over philosophical problems that never become disputes simply over what counts as philosophy or what it is to be a philosopher—the sustained dispute over innate ideas is just one example.

The book's first page of print casts the exploration in similar terms:

In this groundbreaking collection of essays the history of philosophy appears in a new light, not as reason's progressive discovery of its universal conditions, but as a series of unreconciled disputes over the proper way to conduct oneself as a philosopher. (p. i)

I am unconvinced that all of the philosophical disputes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are reducible in the end to being *really* disputes over the proper way to conduct oneself as a philosopher. To be sure, there are disputes about proper conduct, and the role of philosopher, but not every philosophical dispute is reducible to this, and my guess would be that

the great majority of issues disputed among early modern philosophers are not reducible to this.

The good news is that for those whose research focuses on issues stemming from an intersection of psychology and political philosophy, specifically as they intersect in the early modern period, the book will be very helpful. Here are some additional highlights. Gaukroger's essay (chapter 1), for example, would be an excellent essay for advanced undergraduates majoring in philosophy, and first year graduate students, for he lays out an excellent historical account of the role of philosophy. Curtis's essay (chapter 4) looks carefully at the historical development of the role of philosopher *as satirist*. This is an excellent historical study. Green and Broad's essay (chapter 10) explores the *persona* of women philosophers in the period, approaching the study from a (scholarly) feminist perspective. So, there is much in this collection for the serious reader.