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BOOK REVIEW

Review of Peter Adamson, *Medieval Philosophy*, History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps, volume 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), xxii+637pp.
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To say that one is going to cover all of the history of philosophy without any gaps is a pretty serious claim to make, but Peter Adamson has been making good on his promise to do so for a number of years now. In this volume, we reach one of the heights of philosophical development: The Middle Ages!

Wait, what?! I hear you think. *Isn't that the *whispers* Dark Ages? When people lived in intellectual stultification? This must be the slimmest volume of the entire set!*

Adamson is here to tell you, definitely not—at 600+ pages and 78 chapters, volume 4 in the series is the largest yet. Even if he *does* use the now-widely-deprecated description 'Dark Ages' in the introduction (the first place which caused me to squawk in horror while reading), he pulls no punches when it comes to laying out the central importance of medieval philosophy both in the development of modern philosophy—the story of how it is that we got to where we are now—and in its own right: Even if the modern tradition was wholly divorced and independent from the medieval developments, they are still of intellectual value.

The book is written in an enjoyable, chatty style (littered with bad puns, such as 'there's no place like Rome' p. 43; 'lest, like an emperor ordering a bust, I get ahead of myself' p. 102; 'suppose I were to plunge a baseball into a pitcher of water – after all, what good is a baseball without a pitcher?' p. 166), reflective of a conversation with a witty and educated friend. This conversational style isn't surprising given that the chapters are adapted from scripts for the *History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* podcast series. The result is a volume that—despite its weight and heft—one could easily give to a non-philosopher as a first introduction to the field. For even the most obscure authors (such as that most prolific of medieval philosophers, Anon) and the most arcane of topics comes to life under Adamson's magic touch.

But what is most impressive about the book is its sheer scope of knowledge. While it may have once been the case that one could read quite literally everything available on a given topic, that certainly is no longer the case, which makes it all the more an accomplishment that Adamson reads as much and knows as much as he does. When some of the discussions get more superficial than I might have wanted or when I felt like only the surface was being scratched, it was good to remind myself of the fact that however little he might say on any given topic, he still knows far more than the rest of us! (Casting the first stone, and all that). More importantly, even the topics that were treated more cursorily were treated sophisticatedly enough that one comes away with a sense of what the problem was and who the people who tried to solve it were—which is all one needs in order to go and do further research on one's own. Adamson even makes it so that one needn't do the research without guidance: The 'further reading' section, arranged by topic, at the end of the book provides starting points for all the major topics covered in the book.

Naturally, there are things I would have done differently, if I had written this book (first off: I most likely would not have even attempted to write this book! So any criticism I level should be read against a foundation of enthusiastic support)—for instance, the focus on William of Sherwood in the chapter covering supposition theory in logic (Chapter 22) gives the impression that his idiosyncratic approach to supposition was in fact mainstream in the 13th century, whereas focusing on, e.g. Lambert of Auxerre's approach would have given the reader a more typical taste. Similarly, while the developments in 14th century logic (Chapter 62) are presented as if they represent a distinct turn away from 13th-century logic, much of what Adamson offers as evidence for this was in fact routine material for logicians from the previous century. Another gap that bothered me was that three chapters were devoted to Ockham (on politics/ethics, nominalism, and mental language) but none of them discussed his logic. Seeing as this is where we find one of the clearest and most explicit statements of DeMorgan's laws, it seems rather gappy to not even mention this at all. But both these are criticisms of a specialist, and one thing this book is not is a specialist book.

In fact, if there is a pattern to my responses to the chapters, I think it is this: Those that dealt with topics near and dear to my heart and own research I tended to be more disappointed by; those that brought me to vistas never before seen I found fascinating and delightful. This provides me with the foundation for my recommended audience: People who are not specialists. If you want a good, light-touch, yet still not glossing over the difficulties, introduction to medieval philosophy, this is the book for you. If you want a reference full of details, quotes, and arguments, pursuing every nuance and leaving no stone unturned, this book will probably irritate you.

In the end, I only squawked out loud in outrage twice—once, mentioned above, when in the introduction he calls the period 'the Dark Ages', and the other in the discussion of Anselm—and raised my eyebrows once (when in the nursery rhyme it says 'roses are red', I disagree that this is a claim that *all* roses are red, as opposed to a claim that roses are *characteristically* red or red *by default*). More often than not I was laughing ('It would be unfair simply to say that Burley thinks that Ockham is entirely wrongheaded when it comes to metaphysics; he thinks that Ockham is wrong about lots of other things too', p. 419), and checking my own ignorance, which turned out to be surprisingly deep and wide.

While reading this book, in addition to taking notes for this review, I also kept up a running commentary (and giraffe count!) on twitter, resulting in a review that spans almost 5 months and more than 200 tweets. If you wish to know more about individual chapters in the book, the start of the thread is here: https://twitter.com/SaraLUckelman/status/1180098313145769984. For those who don't want to read twitter, you'll be pleased to know the final giraffe count was 35 (+3 if you count the cameleopards in Chapters 22 and 44—in fact, chapter 22 was full of both giraffes and cameleopards); sadly, there was a dearth of giraffes towards the end of the book. What's funny is that if you catalog giraffe sightings on twitter, people keep thinking that they are symbolic/metaphorical for something. Nope, that's *actual references to giraffes* (albeit not always references not actual giraffes).

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