

OPPY, Graham and TRAKAKIS, N.N. (eds.), *Medieval Philosophy of Religion*, (The History of Western Philosophy of Religion, vol. 2) Routledge, London and New York 2014, 304 pp.; ISBN 9781844656820.

This volume is the second in a five volume work titled *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion* under the general editorship of Graham Oppy. This agglomerative work comprises 19 authors overarching the thought of Boethius to Erasmus in a manner that is neither analogous in content nor eclectic in theme. Rather, this book is a powerful analysis of the relationship between early Christian presuppositions and the crescendo of philosophical thought in Western Europe. Although it is a work on the philosophy of religion, it correspondingly functions as a tour of historical thought, both in its treatment of religious thought and its analysis of philosophic scope. Sometimes defending the faith from the new influential inheritance of ancient Greek philosophers, at other times embracing sophisticated philosophical arguments from the scholastic and monastic schools of the medieval West, this book presents interesting reading both to the novice in the subject and also to the experienced in the field. The chapters include developments on Boethius, Johannes Scottus Eriugena, Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Anselm of Canterbury, Al-Ghazali, Peter Abelard, Bernard of Clairvaux, Averroes, Moses Maimonides, Roger Bacon, Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, William Ockham, Gersonides, John Wyclif, Nicholas of Cusa, and Erasmus of Rotterdam.

The anthology begins with a chapter of introduction written by G.R. Evans, professor of medieval theology and intellectual history at the University of Cambridge. This chapter connects the worlds the ancient thinkers with that of the newly developing world of religious thought. Evans explains how the beginning of the sixteenth century saw several significant transitions in the way students of philosophy and religion understood the relationship between the two. Whether it be Greek-speaking Christians or Latin-speaking Christians, Evans shows how ‘rules for living’ and a ‘framework of belief’ were thought through in relationship to the adoption of Greek ideas. Nestorian and Jacobite Christians who spoke Syriac and Arabic, were influenced by Jewish scholars and soon the main energy of Western medieval thought went into the study of philosophical and theological method and the underlying questions of the nature of logic and language. This change towards a new welcoming of logic and ancient philosophy produced a new syllabus in the developing schools of the West. The standards of the *trivium* and the *quadrivium* give way to an avalanche of Aristotelian re-ordering where philosophy and theology soon trade places. Evans ends the chapter by explaining

how medieval pedagogy was now disposed to consider theories of a higher kind of study than merely practical disciplines of rules.

The following chapter is written by John Marenbon, editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy* (2012), on Boethius' contribution to philosophy. Boethius' final work, *De consolazione philosophiae* (*Consolation of philosophy*) is treated by Marenbon to introduce the «problem of prescience», a logical dilemma stipulated by the concurrence of the foreknowledge of God with the apparent freedom of human will. Marenbon easily develops the theme of «modes of cognition principle» and the underlining reasoning so that the reader understands both the theological implication as well as the philosophical mechanisms that underscore Boethius' solution. Although each chapter of the book is written by a different scholar, this first chapter is exemplary in the mode that each medieval philosopher is presented. The authors generally present a short biographical and historical setting of their particular philosopher, then a summary of their works, and finally a precocious commentary on the significance of their thought. Although this is the general pattern throughout the book, a pronounced example of this format would be Tamar Rudavsky's chapter on Levi ben Gershom (known as Gersonides) of the twelfth century. While maintaining the general scheme, Rudavsky's contextualization of Jewish theology and Christian traditionalism enhance the readers perception of the persuasive argument within Gersonide's thought.

A characteristic of this book is the full amplitude of content spanning from the sixth century to the sixteenth century. The chapter on John Wyclif, for example, written by Stephen E. Lahey, of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, shows how Wyclif's influence over the Protestant Reformation had its roots in a solid foundation of scholastic tradition. Wyclif's scholastic (and reactionary) conservatism, led him to reject Eucharistic theology on the bases that logic must be used to approach God in such things as the doctrine of transubstantiation. Preceding Lahey's chapter on John Wyclif is Gyula Klima's chapter on William of Ockham. Klima, of Fordham University in New York, presents Ockham's nominalism which denied the existence of mind-independent universals. Even though each scholar writes independently of each other, the systematic presentation of relevant themes produce a pleasant roadmap to follow. In this case, the progression from St. Thomas to Ockham and then to Wyclif. Although this book is not necessarily a history, it's depth in presenting the historic theological issues with their application of philosophy in order to reach solutions brings the reader to the front seat of the grand theater of thought.

The Medieval Philosophy of Religion is also a very useful reference tool.

The main chapter index found at the beginning of the book presents the philosophers in somewhat historical order allowing to find a chapter easily, either in reference to historical sequence or to the author himself. Each chapter is easily navigable since the format of biography and context preceded by works and then finally commentary is generally kept throughout the book. There are two indexes at the end of the book. The first is a six page chronology. It is rather complete in not only the placement of philosophical events but also in regards to events in general world history. This makes the chronology useful when comparing other literary studies to philosophy. The second index is a subject index that offers nine pages of detailed subjects and their reference within the book for quick consultation. This index not only lists themes but also the names of those quoted throughout the entire volume. This makes the index even more useful when studying a topic not necessarily connected to Medieval Philosophy. The entire scaffolding of the book is appropriate for research and as whole, a valuable resource to all those interested in the medieval philosophy of religion.

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