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Jacket design by Jeffrey J. Faville
Printed in the United Kingdom

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CAMBRIDGE
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ISBN 978-0-521-86672-9

PASNAU

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CAMBRIDGE

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VOLUME I

EDITED BY
ROBERT PASNAU
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
CHRISTINA VAN DYKE

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Volume I

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo,
Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521866729

First published 2009

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
The Cambridge history of medieval philosophy / Robert Pasnau, editor ; Christina Van Dyke,
associate editor.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-521-76216-8 (v. 1 : hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-86672-9 (set : hardback) 1. Philosophy,
Medieval–History. I. Pasnau, Robert. II. Dyke, Christina van, 1972– III. Title.
B721.C355 2009
189 – dc22 2009032501

Volume I ISBN 978-0-521-76216-8
Available only as a set: ISBN 978-0-521-86672-9 hardback

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PREFACE

The present pair of volumes succeeds, without superseding, *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy,* published in 1982 by Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, Jan Pinborg, and Eleonore Stump. It is a considerable privilege to edit the successor to Kretzmann *et alii*, for that volume distils the work of a brilliant generation of scholars without whom our own scholarly careers would be almost inconceivable. These volumes are entirely new, but we expect their predecessor will remain valuable for many years to come, especially for its detailed treatment of medieval theories of logic and the philosophy of language.

The present volumes differ most notably from their predecessor in three ways: first, their scope extends not just to Christian but also to Islamic and Jewish thought; second, they cover not only the later Middle Ages but also earlier centuries; third, they addresse in some detail the entire spectrum of medieval thought, including philosophical theology.

Each chapter in these volumes stands on its own, but there are numerous points of contact between chapters, and we have liberally supplied cross-references. One could thus in principle begin reading anywhere and eventually, by following these links, make one's way through the whole. Readers will also want to consult the biographies of medieval authors, in Appendix C, for extensive information on the lives and work of the figures discussed in the chapters.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the challenge posed by editing this disparate material, and we are all too conscious of our limitations in this regard. Our primary debt of gratitude is, of course, to our international team of contributors, who generously set aside their own projects to work on this collaborative venture, submitted their chapters in an unusually timely fashion, and then responded graciously to the complex process of editing. We are also grateful to Hilary Gaskin at Cambridge University Press for her support of this venture. Christina Van Dyke's work on these volumes was underwritten in part by a

year-long sabbatical from Calvin College, and by further support from the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Colorado. Special thanks goes to Peter Adamson and Dimitri Gutas for their extensive advice regarding Arabic material, and to Matthew Campono, an undergraduate at the University of Colorado at Boulder, who volunteered a great deal of his time to help with the biographical and bibliographical material.

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VOLUME II

INTRODUCTION

ROBERT PASNAU

Medieval philosophy emerges after the decline of ancient Greece and Rome, when new cultures begin to produce works of philosophy that are at once inspired by that ancient legacy and yet responsive to new cultural and religious circumstances. There is now some consensus on when and where to place the beginnings of medieval philosophy, understood as a project of independent philosophical inquiry: it begins in Baghdad, in the middle of the eighth century, and in France, in the itinerant court of Charlemagne, in the last quarter of the eighth century.[1] It is less easy to say when medieval philosophy ends, because the methods and doctrines that are characteristic of the medieval period endure, and indeed remain dominant, into what is conventionally called the Renaissance. It is not until the seventeenth century, in Europe, that an indisputably new kind of philosophy becomes dominant.

The present volumes give an overview of the people and ideas that shape philosophy through these Middle Ages, from the eighth through the fourteenth century and beyond. One of the most compelling and challenging features of this era is its global reach. Whereas the study of ancient and modern philosophy confines itself mainly to work done within a homogeneous cultural sphere of at most a few hundred miles, the world of medieval philosophy runs from Oxford to Nishapur and from Fez to Prague, through Islamic, Jewish, and Christian thought, and correspondingly through Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek texts (to mention only the most prominent languages). It is the ambition of these volumes to provide a broad, integrated account of this material.

More than just the modern fancy for multiculturalism impels this holistic treatment of the field. Despite the vast distances and linguistic barriers, the

[1] For further discussion of the origins of medieval philosophy, see Chapters 1–2. Traditionally, Augustine (354–430) and Boethius (*ca.* 475–526) have been included in the medieval curriculum, but they are manifestly a part of the ancient world. This tradition stems in part from the former tendency of classicists to neglect late antiquity, and in part from the former tendency of medievalists to assimilate medieval philosophy with Christian philosophy. The philosophy of late antiquity is the subject of a forthcoming *Cambridge History*, edited by Lloyd Gerson.

various traditions surveyed in these volumes constitute a continuous and coherent body of thought, such that to study one without the others is liable to distort it.[2] The philosophical foundations of Thomas Aquinas's theology – to take the most prominent example – are inseparable from the thought of Avicenna and Averroes, while his understanding of God is deeply indebted to Moses Maimonides. Maimonides in turn is writing in Arabic, in the midst of the Islamic culture of North Africa, and his ideas are thoroughly grounded in that philosophical tradition. And while Arabic philosophy is foundational for these other traditions, its influence on the others is so pronounced and immediate that it can hardly be understood as a separate movement. Averroes's great commentaries on Aristotle – again to take just the most prominent example – would be translated into Latin and take their place at the core of the university curriculum at Paris and elsewhere within around fifty years of being written in 1180–90. The only justification for treating these traditions separately is that it is in truth desperately difficult for any one scholar to master so much disparate material.

Although written with an eye toward the future, the chapters that follow are necessarily constrained by the boundaries of our present knowledge. These boundaries, it must be said, do not extend very far. Indeed, another of the most compelling and challenging features of the medieval era is our remarkably poor understanding of it. Like soldiers making a stand against an onrushing enemy (to borrow a famous image from Aristotle), medievalists have banded together around a few authors and texts, leaving vast territory practically deserted. An immense amount of work has been done in the quarter century since the last *Cambridge History*. Yet even in these concentrated clusters of research, a great deal remains untouched. Much of the work of Thomas Aquinas – by far the most studied medieval author – still awaits a critical edition, or a translation into English, and sophisticated philosophical work has been done only on certain aspects of his thought. For other authors, even well-known Latin ones, the situation is vastly worse, and in Arabic it is worse still, given the many important texts that remain available only in manuscript. It is, moreover, not even clear that Aquinas deserves his status as the most important figure in the field. Our knowledge of other contenders for that title – such as Avicenna, Maimonides, Peter Abaelard, John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, and John Buridan – remains too limited to judge the case fairly. With so much exploration still to be done, the medieval era stands as the Wild West of philosophy's history, suited for those who prefer the rugged frontier to a well-cultivated garden.[3]

[2] On the same principles, the volumes do not extend to contemporaneous but disconnected philosophical traditions such as that on the Indian subcontinent.

[3] A vivid sense of the field's lacunae, as well as its many recent achievements, can be acquired by reading through some of the biographies of medieval authors (Appendix C), with its long lists

In an attempt to conceive more clearly the ways in which medieval scholarship might develop in the twenty-first century, I invited five contributors representing a range of interests and perspectives to join me in composing a list of desiderata for research in the century to come. One immediately obvious feature of the lists is how very different they are. They differ with respect to periods and authors, focusing variously on Latin and Arabic texts, and earlier and later centuries. They also differ widely with respect to topics: some raise questions of metaphysics, others of language or ethics, while still others focus on the boundaries of philosophy's intersection with politics, medicine, and law. A still further difference is between those items focused on philosophical problems, as when Dominik Perler poses the question of why radical skepticism was not a medieval concern, and those focused on historical scholarship, as when Martin Stone presses the need for more critical editions. It should go without saying that these last two kinds of desiderata go hand in hand. The most important development for medieval philosophical scholarship in the last twenty-five years has been the Ockham critical edition, which precipitated much of the most sophisticated philosophical work of recent years. There is every reason to expect that further philological work in the editing and translating of texts will lead directly to still more progress of a philosophical sort. Here again, however, we see another challenging feature of the era: the importance of the sort of bedrock historical and philological research that in other historical periods has long since been brought to a very high standard. This is a challenge, but also a compelling feature of the period, because here one can make the sorts of fundamental historical contributions that in ancient philosophy, for instance, were made by famed scholars of previous centuries. It is crucial to the future of medieval philosophy that the broader philosophical community be brought to recognize the importance of such scholarly initiatives, even when they lack the sort of immediate philosophical payoff that the profession has now come to expect in other areas.

THIRTY DESIDERATA FOR RESEARCH ON MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

PETER ADAMSON

1. What impact did ideas and problems from Islamic speculative theology (*kalām*) have on the tradition of Greek-inspired philosophy (*falsafa*) in Arabic, for instance on thinkers such as Avicenna?

of works that remain both unedited and untranslated, alongside the many works that have been published since 1982.

2. What were the distinctive achievements of the Arabic logical tradition, especially in modal logic? What impact did these advances have on other areas of philosophy?
3. Many medieval philosophers did important work in the physical sciences, especially medicine. To what extent did their philosophical thought inform their scientific writing and vice versa?
4. Was the eleventh to the fourteenth century the "golden age of Arabic philosophy"?
5. In what way was practical (political and ethical) philosophy in Arabic – and in other traditions as well – dependent on theoretical philosophy (metaphysics, psychology, and epistemology)?

JOHN MARENBON

1. The Byzantine tradition of Aristotelian commentary.
2. The Avicennian tradition of philosophy in Islam, from *ca.* 1300 onwards.
3. Philosophy in the Latin West, 1200–1500, outside the universities.
4. The logico-theological schools of Paris in the period *ca.* 1150 – *ca.* 1200.
5. The scholastic tradition outside the Iberian peninsula, 1500–1700.

DOMINIK PERLER

1. Some ancient texts were available in translation (Plato's *Meno*, Sextus Empiricus's *Outlines of Skepticism*) but did not attract interest. Why?
2. Some intellectual centers and schools had extensive interchanges, whereas others had none. (For instance, William of Ockham and Meister Eckhart were contemporaries, but they do not seem to have been interested in each other.) Why?
3. All medieval philosophers agreed that we can have doubts about this or that example of knowledge, but never about the possibility of knowledge in general. Why?
4. Medieval philosophers had endless debates about the function of intellect and will or about the relationship between sensory and intellectual faculties, but they basically agreed that there are such things as faculties of the soul. Why did they not question the existence of faculties, as so many early modern philosophers did?
5. Was there any medieval philosopher who held that colors are not to be found in material objects but only in our mind? If not, why? Is this principle the decisive difference between medieval and early modern philosophy?

IRÈNE ROSIER-CATACH

1. The relationship between law and philosophy of language: for example, theories of lies, of falsity, and the semantics of interpretations. Also, interrelations between moral philosophy and law: for instance, the problem of intention.

2. Was there a political aspect, purpose, or background to philosophical controversies? Did philosophical and theological theories have political influence, were they themselves influenced by political problems, or were they totally speculative?
3. The development of speculative grammars in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the various forms of opposition to it. Very little is know about this. Texts should be edited, especially commentaries on Michel of Marbais and Thomas of Erfurt.
4. What was the relevance of the way in which university curricula and the faculties were organized on the development of philosophical doctrines?
5. Methodological reflections on the production of knowledge in the Middle Ages: especially how is one to read a *text*, knowing that very often we have it preserved in many versions, slightly or highly different from each other, sometimes in interpolated versions containing different strata of doctrines. In which way can we then talk of *the* position of an author? How are we to handle the anonymous production of texts that is so important in the arts faculty?

M.W. F. STONE

1. The full and synoptic study of medieval moral thought, which incorporates not just the obvious sources of medieval 'moral philosophy,' but also those areas of canon law, pastoral thought, and confessional writings where matters of ethical interest are discussed.
2. The systematic study of the fifteenth-century schools and the pluralism of late medieval philosophy. This will facilitate an improved understanding of the putative transition of 'medieval' to 'modern' philosophy, and the continuation of the scholastic tradition in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
3. The completion of the *Opera omnia* of Henry of Ghent and Giles of Rome, and the start of new critical editions of Durand of Saint-Pourçain and Peter Auriol. Within twenty years Henry, Giles, Durand, and Auriol will become a part of the canon.
4. Integration of so-called 'philological' and 'philosophical' methods of interpretation, whereby philological/contextualist approaches are appropriated and then improved by means of firm and assured philosophical analysis.
5. A communal appreciation of the importance and intellectual worth of critical editions. A greater encouragement of younger scholars, especially in North America and the UK, to acquire the skills necessary to complete good editions of texts, and for members of the 'philosophical' community to see that such scholarly endeavors are indispensable to the good order of the subject of medieval philosophy.

ROBERT PASNAU

1. A clearer appreciation of the respects in which Thomas Aquinas is dependent on earlier Latin and Arabic thought, so that we can have a clearer appreciation of the respects in which he is original.

2. An intensive scholarly effort to grasp the brilliant philosophers of the mid-fourteenth century, especially John Buridan and Nicole Oresme.
3. A comprehensive dictionary of Latin philosophical terms.
4. The integration of research into Latin and Arabic sources, so that a continuous story can be told about what is, very nearly, a continuous philosophical tradition across three faiths.
5. A narrative for medieval philosophy that can be taught to undergraduates in a single term, and that would give the field a core curriculum of texts and philosophical problems analogous to those of the early modern era.

The wide range of suggestions for future research reveals still another challenging feature of medieval philosophy: the absence of any settled canon of texts and problems – especially in the English-speaking world. One hundred years ago, medieval scholarship rallied largely around the great theological *summae* of Thomas Aquinas and others. Within the last half century, considerable attention has been paid to scholastic logical texts, and to natural philosophy. Even within this limited domain there is little sense of a core curriculum, and moreover that domain is far too limited to do justice to the field. Each desiderata list makes its own suggestions about fruitful areas for further investigation. John Marenbon mentions, among other things, the severely neglected field of Byzantine philosophy. Peter Adamson wonders about Arabic logic. Irène Rosier-Catach asks about the relation between legal theory and the philosophy of language. As the field broadens in these and other directions, however, it will face the countervailing challenge of articulating a concise, compelling narrative for the period. Both the ancient and early modern periods have long since embraced such narratives, and the resulting clusters of texts and problems now form a part of what any philosopher must know. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that there is nothing from the medieval period, except perhaps Anselm's ontological argument and Aquinas's Five Ways, that has achieved this sort of canonical status. This is not because medieval philosophy is less worthy of study, but because scholars in the field have not yet found a unifying narrative that would engage the attention of a broader philosophical audience.

Whether the period deserves such attention depends entirely on the quality of its philosophical thought. One can hardly study the history of philosophy without being responsive to this concern. For as much as any historian should value historical scholarship for its own sake, as intrinsically worthwhile, the study of philosophy's history has special value because philosophical understanding is valuable, and is often best achieved by setting to one side the assumptions of one's own era and immersing oneself in the most brilliant work of earlier centuries. There is no point in simply insisting that medieval philosophy is worthwhile

in this regard; one must show that it is, case by case. The chapters to come do just this across a wide range of areas. Most familiar is medieval work in philosophical theology, and in the development of an Aristotelian metaphysics and ethics. Even here, scholars have barely begun to convey the richness of the extant material. Yet as many of the following chapters show, medieval philosophy goes well beyond these relatively familiar areas, into logic and language, natural philosophy, cognitive theory and epistemology, moral psychology, and much more.

Ultimately, the status among today's philosophers of this or any historical period can be expressed as a function of two factors: the worth we place on the philosophical ideas of that period, as measured against the worth we place on our own contemporary ideas. In view of the second factor, this is not a good time for historical scholarship in any area of philosophy. We live in an era that – for reasons that are unclear – regards with great self-satisfaction its own philosophical accomplishments, to such a degree that it has little time for the ideas of previous generations. Still, to the extent there is room in the profession for historical inquiry at all, it is a good time to study the medieval era. Whereas fifty years ago one could hardly express interest in the topic without risking marginalization, the intervening years have seen a dramatic shift in the field's reputation. Although few philosophers know very much about medieval philosophy, it is now widely recognized as fertile ground for historical inquiry. There is, then, no longer any need for special pleading regarding the merits of medieval philosophy; that case has been made by the labors of prior generations. All that remains for us is to go out and do the work.