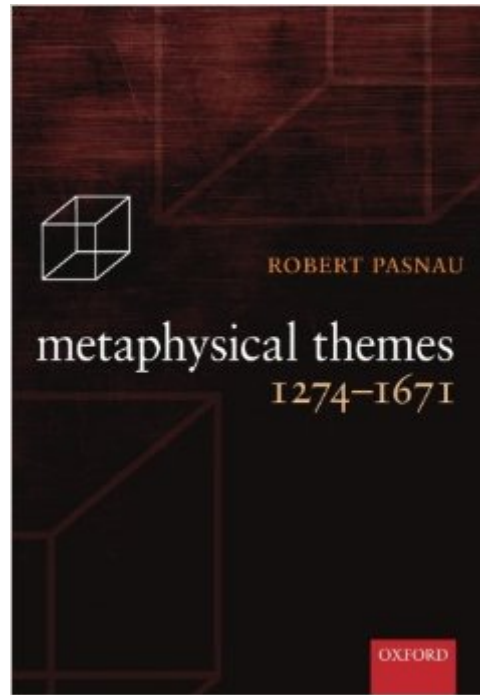


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Metaphysical Themes 1274-1671



Synopsis

Robert Pasnau traces the developments of metaphysical thinking through four rich but for the most part neglected centuries of philosophy, running from the thirteenth century through to the seventeenth. At no period in the history of philosophy, other than perhaps our own, have metaphysical problems received the sort of sustained attention they received during the later Middle Ages, and never has a whole philosophical tradition come crashing down as quickly and completely as did scholastic philosophy in the seventeenth century. The thirty chapters work through various fundamental metaphysical issues, sometimes focusing more on scholastic thought, sometimes on the seventeenth century. Pasnau begins with the first challenges to the classical scholasticism of Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, runs through prominent figures like John Duns Scotus and William Ockham, and ends in the seventeenth century, with the end of the first stage of developments in post-scholastic philosophy: on the continent, with Descartes and Gassendi, and in England, with Boyle and Locke.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For a long time I've been trying to find a good, accessible introduction to medieval philosophy. This is the only such book I've come across (albeit it only covers Scholastic metaphysics, rather than all of medieval philosophy). Note that while this is purportedly a book about late Scholastic metaphysics it actually discusses a lot of early Scholastic metaphysics as well (e.g. Aquinas, Scotus). Pasnau does a great job explaining various metaphysical positions Scholastic philosophers

held. The book is well-organized (the various topics are clearly set off from each other) and Pasnau writes in a highly readable, conversational style. A couple of minor quibbles: at certain points it felt like the thread got a bit mired in detailed Scholastic arguments. Granted, it can be rewarding figuring out such arguments, but they also can interrupt the flow. Perhaps the issue here is at certain times the book reads like a survey and at other times it gets a bit scholarly, and can't figure out exactly what it wants to be. Another quibble is that Pasnau sometimes uses words like "exist" and "being" when describing people's views and you're not sure what exactly he means by them. Perhaps Pasnau intentionally avoided this issue because it's a difficult one, but some acknowledgement of the difficulty with these words would've been nice (maybe there could've been a small section about these words somewhere in the beginning.) Anyways, this is the only book that I feel has really helped me learn a lot about medieval philosophy, so if you're into the topic I'd suggest giving it a shot. (I also should note that I have a background in philosophy. If you do not have any background I wouldn't try to start with this!)

excellent text

You should read this text, but do not buy this book. I went to the bookstore when it came out to get a copy, they only had a softcover with a shoddy binding so i splurged and ordered the hardback thinking that for 100\$ the pages would be sewn in and might last a while. i was wrong. the binding in my book might be even worse than the softcover. oxford press?! what is going on here! Sad to see a magisterial book in such cheap clothes.

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