

Paul Vincent Spade (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Contemporary analytic philosophers have always been among the most enthusiastic audiences for the volumes in the *Cambridge Companion* series. And of all the great philosophers of the Middle Ages, perhaps none has appealed more to their sensibilities than William Ockham. It is fitting, therefore, that after the publication of the *Companion to Aquinas*—the first volume in the series devoted to a medieval philosopher—there should appear a *Companion to Ockham*.

The fifteen chapters comprising this volume survey the entire range of Ockham's thought and may conveniently be divided into four main parts. The first part (chaps. 2-7) deals with Ockham's most enduring legacy: his contribution to issues falling within the domain of logic, philosophy of language, and metaphysics. The second part (chaps. 8-9) is devoted to issues in epistemology and philosophy of mind/cognition. The third part (chaps. 10-13) focuses on Ockham's views in ethics, action theory, and political philosophy. And the fourth part (chaps. 14-15) considers aspects of his philosophical theology. In addition, there is also an historical chapter (chap. 1), placing Ockham's life and works in their late-medieval intellectual context, and a brief editor's introduction, including a very useful list of all Ockham's writings, together with the best (sometimes, the only) Latin editions and English translations available.

The volume is well organized and beautifully conceived. Some chapters are quite difficult, and in places contain material that is likely to be unfamiliar even to specialists in medieval philosophy. But the way in which they have been organized maximizes their usefulness and accessibility to specialists and non-specialists alike. The earlier parts of the volume lay the foundation for later ones, and the individual chapters within each of the four parts are arranged so as to build on and compliment one another. This is perhaps most evident in the five chapters comprising the first part. Calvin Normore's presentation of Ockham's logic (in chap. 2) nicely

prepares the reader for Claude Panaccio's discussion (in chap. 3) of Ockham's theory of mental language. Panaccio's chapter, in turn, provides the framework for David Chalmer's analysis (in chap. 4) of the debate over whether Ockham's mental language permits synonymous expressions. Again, these three chapters taken together provide important background for Paul Spade's treatment (in chap. 5) of Ockham's views in metaphysics, which are closely related to his logic and philosophy of language. Finally, Gyula Klima's discussion (in chap. 6) of how Ockham's views in semantics and ontology differ from those of his predecessors, and André Goddu's discussion (in chap. 7) of Ockham's philosophy of nature, can be fully appreciated only against the background of the preceding chapters.

What is perhaps most impressive about the volume, however, is the extent to which it succeeds at providing a systematic introduction to Ockham's philosophical achievement. All the chapters are, to some extent, concerned with matters of textual analysis and interpretation. But most of them involve much more than a mere survey of Ockham's texts. For example, in each of the four main parts, there is at least one chapter that attempts to locate Ockham's views in relation to those of his predecessors or contemporaries (such as Aquinas and Scotus), with the result that we get a sense of Ockham's place in the major medieval debates to which he contributed. At the same time, the volume introduces us to some of the most lively current debates in Ockham scholarship. It does this, not merely by summarizing them, but by actually carrying them out over the course of its chapters. For example, Eleonore Stump provides a sophisticated defense (in chap. 8) of what has become a standard interpretation of Ockham's theory of intuitive and abstractive cognition. In the following chapter, however, Elizabeth Karger rejects the standard interpretation on the basis of a re-reading of certain key texts. Again, in the first part of the volume there is a running debate over the precise extent of Ockham's ontological commitment. Normore suggests (in chap. 2) that, in addition to certain qualities and theological relations, Ockham is committed only to presently existing individuals; Panaccio argues (in chap. 3) that his

commitment also extends to past, future, and merely possible individuals; and Spade goes so far as to claim (in chap. 5) that it extends even to certain properties or non-objectual entities having the peculiarity that they can't be named or signified (much like Frege's concepts). While Panaccio's and Spade's arguments do not strike me as altogether convincing, they force us to reexamine the sobriety of Ockham's nominalism.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the volume succeeds in many places at bringing Ockham's texts into dialogue with recent work in mainstream Anglo-American philosophy. Particularly worth mentioning in this regard are the chapters by Normore, Panaccio, and Stump, as well as Alfred Freddoso's chapter on faith and reason. The inclusion of the chapter by a well-known contemporary philosopher of mind, David Chalmers, also provides a nice flourish, giving further evidence for the value of reflecting from a contemporary point of view on the best medieval thought.

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