

*Medieval Philosophy Redefined: plea for a fourth and revised edition*

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What follows is predominantly a brief description of the structure of a book written by John Deely and published for the second time by St. Augustine's Press in 2020 (the first time was 2016), under the title *Medieval philosophy redefined as the Latin age: the development of cenoscopic science, AD 354 to 1644 (from the birth of Augustine to the death of Poinsot)*, henceforth simply: *MPhR*. The first edition was published in 2010 by the University of Scranton Press. Now that, over a decade, three editions have been issued, the whole world can testify to the readership's growing awareness of medieval philosophy, Deely's work, and most notably the volume devoted by the author to the memory of Etienne Gilson, who passed away in 1978, more than thirty years before such a volume, *MPhR*, first came to light.

Quite odd that the opening section is preceded by another one, to wit "Re-Drawing the Standard Picture and Why," a title that Marty Klaif has set (as is true of all titles) at the very top of page vi, preceding an entire army of about fifty textual rows. John is unwilling to waste time and announces forthwith where he stands and for what purpose. Needless to say, an exam on the implications to be drawn from this fact will not be found here. After all, it seems that the official journey has not yet begun. Still, it is worth noticing that there are words in *MPhR* prior to the "First Word to the Reader." It is worth, all the same, not to ignore that such a succinct text is made up entirely of words meant not to the reader. Then, for whom? It seems a plausible hypothesis that these words are inscribed for hearing, and surely the title that first crossed John's mind, but which was not chosen, is "First Word to the Listener." Barely over a page long, this piece of writing alone should be given careful review.

Three pages leading to the summarized index offer a first look at what John holds out to be a historiographical lab for future inquiry. It is not poorly suited that the author offers *MPhR* readers his first word under the guise of a ceremonious address, for the text heralds a promise:

that of a unique account of the history of science. To be more precisely put, Deely assures our global research community that a vast and meaningful share of the history of scientific understanding has been missing from the history of science, and this is an attempt to overcome this deficit. John takes science to denote “critically controlled objectification” (p. x). Of notice is also the fact that the author remarks that, down the ages, the evolution of science has turned out to be far more nuanced and insightful than its more traditional interpretations would suggest. Revealing the blind spot in the history of critically controlled objectification, called by Deely the “Latin age,” may facilitate, in the author’s judgment, reaching a new equilibrium in the community of inquiry, still undermined today by virtue of the discarding, by the modern mindset, of 1290 years of scholarship (from the birth of Augustine of Hippo to the death of John of St. Thomas). These lengthy centuries were marked by the development of rigorous scholarly practices led by a disciplined transnational community that brought forth a documental body of Latin-language findings the likes of which had never yet been witnessed in human history, a body of research that remains neglected in the present age, a fact repeatedly borne out by John.

An eleven-page apparatus is to follow, one page for “Contents at a Glance,” one for a “List of Diagrams” as well as a “List of Dating Abbreviations,” another eight for the “Contents in Detail,” and the last page for a “Schematic Representation of the Latin Age as a Historical Whole.” Ahead, the preamble plus twelve chapters only preceded by one set of eight epigrams or passages and followed by i) John’s last remarks, ii.a) an explanatory note concerning the abbreviations used throughout the bibliographical references section and concerning the principle of “historical layering,” used by John on the grounds of the belief that “No one writes after they die” (a fact whose implications, as the author argues, ought to be taken into account for the purposes of shaping scholarly references (p. 402)), and in compliance with the instructions laid down in the “Semiotic Society of America Style Sheet” (prepared by John himself in conjunction with several other people for a 1986 issue of the *American Journal of Semiotics*), ii.b) the section of bibliographical references, iii) the onomastic and term index, forewent solely by a brief paragraph on issues concerning alphabetization, where Deely also lists eight keywords for a systematic treatment of what the author thought to constitute the overarching course of *MPhR* (see p. 475), and iv) a “Timetable of Latin Age Figures.”

This edition suffers from a technical oversight: in the “Contents in Detail,” Roman numerals indicate a paging a couple of digits prior to the correct numbering, which is why the preamble, for instance, reads only from page xxiii onwards, as rightly indicated in the “Contents at a Glance.” The discovery of this inaccuracy in the “Contents in Detail” brings us not the novelty of the necessity for a re-edition. The innovative nature of such a humble finding is that it suggests that a re-edition of *MPhR* is to be accompanied by careful revision, to guaran-

tee that the new product comes more in line with perfection than the third edition. The first and most agreeable rationale for the fourth edition of *MPhR* would be that there is a win-win horizon at the crossroads between the interests of the publisher, given that the copies printed will sell out expediently, and those of a global community of English-speaking scholarly readers capable of granting access by means of payment.

The courage to solicit an open access release is lacking, for presumably the North-American mindset still misses the point about the pressing need to implement new policies when it comes to the marketplace of understanding, perhaps more so for the arts and the humanities. However, perhaps it is not too much to ask that we move forward once and for all to publish this work in digital format, in order to facilitate additional sales and encounters between John's opus and those eager to peruse the work in which John narrates the unfolding in time of what he saw as the second age of philosophical evolution in the West.

## References

Deely, J. (2010). *Medieval Philosophy Redefined: The Development of Cenoscopic Science, AD354 to 1644 (From the Birth of Augustine to the Death of Poinsot)*. Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press.