

James Hankins and Ada Palmer. *The Recovery of Ancient Philosophy in the Renaissance: A Brief Guide*.

Quaderni di Rinascimento 44. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2008. 94 pp. index. bibl. €15. ISBN: 978-88-222-5769-7.

This slim book is an orphan from the *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy* (reviewed in *RQ*, 61.3: 912–14). In the introduction to the present volume, the authors state that it “was originally intended to stand as an appendix” to the earlier work, but it “grew far too large to be included” (3). Happily, it has found a home as the most recent member of the series *Quaderni di Rinascimento*. This volume is a useful reference work that carefully assesses the availability of ancient philosophical texts in the Renaissance. It begins with an introduction that

describes the Renaissance period as a time in which the authority of Aristotle in all fields of philosophy was gradually undermined, a result largely secured by the reappearance of non-Aristotelian ancient philosophical texts. This guide helps the scholar determine quickly and accurately when the works of each significant ancient philosopher became available during the Renaissance.

As a reference volume, this book is unlikely to be read from cover to cover by most readers. Rather, it will be used as a practical guide to be consulted for answering such questions as, When did Marsilio Ficino publish his Latin translation of Plato? Which was printed in Latin first: Pseudo-Plutarch's *On the Teachings of the Philosophers* or Diogenes Laertius's *On the Lives of Eminent Philosophers*? What texts of Apuleius could Giovanni Pico della Mirandola have read? Did the editio princeps of Plotinus contain Porphyry's *Vita Plotini*? How frequently were Thomas Aquinas's medieval commentaries on Aristotle printed in the incunabular period? Did Xenophon's *Apologia* circulate widely in manuscript prior to its first printing? What is the date of the Renaissance edition of Plato from which the Stephanus numbers originate? Prior to the appearance of this volume, scholars could find answers to some of these questions by consulting the unfinished multivolume *Catalogus Translationem et Commentariorum*, or by looking at specialized works for each author, or by examining general surveys such as Anthony Grafton's "The Availability of Ancient Works" in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*. (It is an oddity that Grafton's piece is not mentioned or given a separate entry in the bibliography of the present volume.) This book allows for a unified and handy place where such questions can be answered quickly.

Each section dealing with an ancient philosopher gives key information about the availability of the philosopher's work. Entries usually begin with a brief biographical statement followed by a discussion of the availability of works in manuscript in the medieval and Renaissance periods. The first printings of works in classical languages are identified, with comments about translators, editors, and publishers when relevant, and major reprintings are noted. Vernacular language editions are also identified, and often there is some assessment of the circulation and influence of the various editions. Some of the entries in the book concern later figures: Boethius and Pseudo-Dionysius are not always considered to be ancient philosophers but they each receive substantive entries. There also are entries for ancient philosophers whose philosophical texts were widely known prior to the Renaissance editions (e.g., Aristotle, Proclus, Cicero). The last entry of the book is a helpful discussion of texts comprising the Kabbalah.

In reviewing a book of this kind, it may be helpful to identify what is not covered. The introduction notes that due to limitations of space, Greek and Latin church fathers are not treated, even though their transmission of fragments and testimonies is of great value in preserving ancient philosophical thought. Presocratics are briefly treated collectively rather than individually. There are no entries for some figures who straddle the border or exist entirely outside of the discipline of philosophy conceived from our present-day discipline taxonomies, even though in antiquity the boundary around philosophy may have been conceived more broadly;

thus, one finds no entries for Euclid, Pliny the Elder, Longinus, Hippocrates, or Ptolemy, even though the last two are referenced in other discussions. Isidore of Seville's absence suggests he was judged too late to fall under the considerations of the present volume. This book is well organized, clearly written, and full of valuable information that will be of great utility for the student of the Renaissance.

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