In recent years, French academic publishers have produced several bulky dictionaries offering shorthand introductions of meta-juristic studies for lawyers. The Presses Universitaires de France took the lead by publishing, in the space of a few years, the *Dictionnaire de la culture juridique* (D. Alland and S. Rials, eds., 2003, XXV + 1649 p.), the *Dictionnaire de la justice* (L. Cadiet, ed., 2004, XXII + 1362 p.), the *Dictionnaire historique des juristes français (XIIe-XXe siècle)* (P. Arabeyre, J.-L. Halpérin, J. Krynen, eds., 2007, XXXVI + 827 p.). These are works of reference of a high standard, which certainly bear comparison with some of their prestigious counterparts abroad. They can be very useful to legal historians, both in France and elsewhere. The market is apparently not saturated yet, for Dalloz has joined the fray with yet another voluminous publication, combining current legal studies, history of law and social sciences. Although the title suggests that the emphasis is on major works, the vast majority of the 93 entries are alphabetically arranged by author. Admittedly, for most authors, a specific work is mentioned as a sub-entry, and in many cases that sub-entry refers to an emblematic and influential work, but not always (the entries on Bartolus and Leibniz, for example, refer to those authors’ *opera omnia*, and similarly, Occam’s entry to his *opera philosophica et theologica*, Pothier’s to his *œuvres*). In any case, for many entries, the contributors have not just focused on a particular work, but they have fortunately dealt with that work in context, discussing also the author’s thoughts and contribution in general, and sometimes the wider currents in which their work originated.

Inevitably, one may quibble about the selection – who’s in, and who’s been left out. There is not much point in addressing such individual choices in a review, although the fact that the editors settled their selection on 93 entries will probably prove too strong a temptation to many who may wonder whether, by adding seven more entries, some important works which did not make it to this pantheon might not have been included after all. One way of looking at the selection is to ask whether any of the works selected should not have been included. Considering that the authors had a very broad spectrum in mind – encompassing all times and all civilizations, and including both legal works in the strict conventional sense, but also philosophical works and works from the social and political sciences, and even some major compilations which reflect rather a whole legal-cultural tradition than a single particular work –, it should be clear that not all the works figuring in this dictionary reflect comparable achievements. Yet, I would certainly not insist on excluding any of those which have been included – which of course does not mean, as with anyone who might try the same exercise, that they would all appear in my personal selection of the 100 most important works. Legal historians will be quick to point out that, because within that small number of entries, works of several centuries ago have been included and, via indirect entries of works on (e.g.) Hindu law (Loiseleur-Deslongchamps on *Manu’s Laws*), Chinese law (Escarra’s book of 1936), some contemporary and, unusually for this type of reference tools, living authors (at the time when the book under review was published: Dworkin, Habermas, Legendre, Troper; and the entries also included recently deceased authors, e.g. Bourdieu, Carbonnier, Derrida), not every entry has the same weight when considered in the law’s *longue durée* history.

The editors have clearly anticipated and eschewed the criticism of being too strongly biased on French authors, or even on Western authors. The latter are certainly overwhelmingly represented, but a valiant effort has been made also to include entries opening the dictionary up to some Asian and Islamic legal traditions. One caveat that should be borne in mind is that the editors have here understood ‘grandes œuvres’ to
mean works of scholarship, or works expressing a critical reflection on law. That choice entailed that written compilations of customs, case law or statute law have not been considered: except therefore the written Torah (but we have an entry on Maimonides), the Corpus iuris civilis (but Ulpian’s Libri ad edictum have been smuggled in, and, for later periods, several civil law writers), the Qur’an (but Al-Shāfiʿi’s Al-Risāla in a way represents the Islamic legal tradition), the written versions of customary law (but Beau- manoir’s work on the customs of Clermont does receive an entry), the official collections of canon law decretals (but Gratian’s Concordia is included, as are some commentators on the Corpus iuris canonici’s parts), the Code civil (but Demolombe, Aubry et Rau, Marcadé have entries) … . Within the Western traditions, a balance has been sought between lawyers and non-lawyers, between French and non-French authors (including several English and North American writers), and between works on private and public law. Most contributors are French, but some excellent foreign scholars have also been invited to write entries on topics of their expertise. If, nevertheless, a structural bias would have to be pointed out, and possibly a very French bias, it is what one may call an intellectualist-doctrinal preference. Most, if not all, the works included are supposed to have contributed to legal theory. Practical works, or works associated with legal practice, by and large, do not seem to have made it to the level of ‘major legal works’. That means that some of the arguably most influential works in legal history have not made it, and, more importantly in my view, whole genres of legal literature, have been disregarded. As I said, there is no need to quibble about any particular author or work, but it should be pointed out that however oecumenical the editors may have tried to be, their dictionary reflects a very discriminatory approach to the typology of legal literature. The civil law glossators seem to be represented here by Azo (for his Summa), but Accursius’ standard gloss apparatus, which for centuries, any civil law student in Western Christendom would have had to learn, and which was probably one of the most copied and, later, printed legal works, taken into account by many generations of teachers and commentators, has not been included. No one will query why Blackstone’s commentaries appear in this dictionary, but if an English common lawyer had to make a hard choice between that work and Sir Edward Coke’s Institutes, it takes a strong bias in favour of academic books to reject the latter. Would even Harvard lawyers easily admit that J. Story had to give precedence to C.C. Langdell? This, however, is a caveat to the potential reader and user of this dictionary, not a criticism: what have been the ‘major works’ in terms of wide, profound and long-term influence, both among scholars and practitioners, was not the criterion for this otherwise thoughtful selection of entries. Perhaps the (commercially less attractive) title Dictionnaire des grandes œuvres de la pensée juridique would have been nearer the mark. One critical suggestion I would make, for a future edition, would be to include more comprehensive and detailed bibliographical information regarding the (manuscript) and printed versions of the works referred to.

Ending on a more positive note, I would say that this dictionary is an essential working tool for anyone interested in law in a broader cultural and historical context. Perhaps the dictionary will not appeal at first sight to legal historians, but it builds a very accessible bridge – accessible to and from both sides – between legal science and social sciences. It is to be hoped that it will encourage scholars – or more generally, as a now obsolete phrase in French would have it: all esprits curieux – from either field to take into account the great corpus of legal and non-legal works to which these entries provide a very readable introduction.

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