

Institution: King's College London		
Unit of Assessment: 30 Philosophy		
Title of case study: The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Peter Adamson	Professor of Philosophy	From 2000
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 – July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

Peter Adamson's research has changed both the public understanding of the history of philosophy and the way it is taught. Its main impacts have been its contributions to:

1. Expanding public understanding of philosophy by foregrounding and making accessible undervalued philosophical traditions, particularly the philosophy of the Islamic world.
2. Changing public perceptions of the contribution to the history of philosophy of under-represented groups, especially women.
3. Diversifying the philosophy curriculum at school and higher education level in the UK, Europe, North America and Australia.
4. Helping meet the pedagogical challenges caused by COVID-19.
5. Enhancing the intellectual, cultural and personal development of individuals.

These impacts have been delivered principally through the History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps podcast, started by Adamson in 2010, which is one of the world's most successful public outreach projects in philosophy, with over 21 million downloads during the assessment period. Its content is accessible and extraordinarily wide-ranging, while maintaining outstanding scholarly standards.

2. Underpinning research

Professor Adamson's world-leading research showcases and extends the depth and breadth of philosophical scholarship and traditions. It is focused on thinkers and contexts well beyond the classic Western philosophical canon with the aim of presenting a history of philosophy that incorporates, and sheds light on, the contributions of under-represented philosophical groups and figures. The research underpinning the impact reflects, and grew out of, Adamson's unique breadth of expertise and the department's longstanding support for a radically wide conception of the history of philosophy. Adamson's research has spanned some 1,700 years and frequently explores cross-cutting influences from one period or philosopher to another, seeking to deepen appreciation of ways in which different philosophical cultures interact.

Adamson's research has paid particular attention to philosophy in the Islamic world and more recently has also engaged with the contributions of women to philosophy, helping make a reality of his goal of presenting a history of philosophy without any gaps. In 2020, Adamson was awarded the Schelling Prize from the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities in recognition of the quality and impact of his research on multiculturalism in a historical perspective.

Philosophy in the Islamic world

Adamson's research examines the philosophy of the Islamic world from late antiquity [3] to the 12th century [1] and beyond, and its interaction with other philosophical cultures. Adamson's study of the foremost philosopher of the Islamic tradition, Avicenna, and his famous proof of the existence of god, is an exploration of a previously unnoticed question: why, according to Avicenna, the 'Necessary Existent' is to be specifically identified with the creator God worshipped in Islam [2]. This approach deepens philosophical understanding of the proof by placing it in its specific cultural context. Adamson is the lead investigator on a six-year DFG-funded project, Heirs of Avicenna: Philosophy in the Islamic East from the 12th to the 13th Century (EUR1,098,214) which takes up the reception of Avicenna, expanding understanding of a largely uncharted period of

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philosophy. Adamson has also analysed developments in the concepts of place and time in the work of al-Rāzī, a figure who has been little known outside highly specialised circles [4]. In addition, Adamson currently leads a five-year European Research Council project, Animals in Philosophy of the Islamic World (EUR2,343,661), through which he further explores under-appreciated aspects of philosophy in the Islamic world.

Cross-cutting influences and Medieval philosophy

Complementing his work in the Islamic context, Adamson's research identifies cross-cutting influences between diverse philosophical cultures. He has, for example, examined how Medieval Islamic readings of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* shed light on the dissemination of a major Greek work in the Islamic world [1]. He has also recently authored a study that throws up unexpected connections, traceable to the influence of Aristotle, between natural philosophy and the political thought of the Latin Medieval philosopher Giles of Rome [5].

Women in philosophy

The place of women thinkers in the history of philosophy has long been side-lined or left out of the philosophical canon altogether. Adamson has sought to rectify this and has made, among other contributions, a pioneering case for the significance of the presence of a woman thinker – Aspasia – in an important work of Greek philosophy, Plato's *Menexenus* [6].

3. References to the research

1. Adamson, P. (2010). Yahyā Ibn 'Adī and Averroes on *Metaphysics* Alpha Elatton. *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale*, 21, 343–374. Leading peer-reviewed journal on the philosophical thought of Latin Antiquity and the Middle Ages.
2. Adamson, P. (Ed.) (2013). *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, with Adamson's own chapter, From the Necessary Existent to God (pp.170–189). QI: Review in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* deemed the volume “altogether excellent”.
3. Adamson, P. (2014). *Studies on Plotinus and al-Kindī*. Aldershot: Variorum; and Adamson, P. (2015). *Studies on Early Arabic Philosophy*. Aldershot: Variorum. Two-volume collection of research articles in the prestigious Variorum series. QI: Review in *Journal of Islamic Studies* called Adamson “one of our ablest commentators on the question of just how deep the influence reaches of the late antique philosophers upon early Arabic philosophy.”
4. Adamson, P. (2017). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on place. *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 27, 205–236. doi:10.1017/S0957423917000029; and Adamson, P. (2018). The Existence of Time in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Maṭālib al-‘āliya. In D. Hasse and A. Bertolacci (Eds.), *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Physics and Cosmology* (pp.65–99). Berlin: De Gruyter. Pair of articles in a leading peer-reviewed journal and a major scholarly collection.
5. Adamson, P. (2019). *Interroga virtutes naturales*: Nature in Giles of Rome's *On Ecclesiastical Power*. *Vivarium*, 57, 22–50. doi:10.1163/15685349-12341367. *Vivarium* is one of the world's top peer-reviewed journals for Medieval philosophy.
6. Adamson, P. (2020). Why is Aspasia a Woman: Reflections on Plato's *Menexenus*. In A. Höfele and B. Kellner (Eds.), *Natur – Geschlecht – Politik* (pp.69–79). Paderborn: W. Fink. doi:10.30965/9783846765333_005. Part of a major scholarly collection on the role of gender in the history of thought.

4. Details of the impact

The depth and range of Adamson's research, together with the collaboration of a wide international network of specialist scholars, including multiple members of the King's College London Department of Philosophy, has enabled him to conceive and construct the History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps podcast, one of the world's most successful public-facing undertakings in the field of philosophy in general, and perhaps the most successful project ever to bring knowledge about history of philosophy to a public audience. The podcast has been recommended by *BBC Culture* (digital circulation: 2.8 million monthly visitors) and women's online magazine *Bustle* (digital circulation: 26 million monthly visitors). In a recent article in *The Guardian* (circulation: 110,438), the podcast was recommended as a source for “anyone wanting ... a systematic, chronological exposition of different intellectual traditions” [A]. With an increasing emphasis on foregrounding diversity and undervalued philosophical traditions, the number of podcast episodes

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has expanded from 139 at the start of the REF assessment period to over 470 as of 31 July 2020, with total downloads up more than six-fold. During the assessment period, the podcast has been downloaded more than 21 million times [B].

1. Expanding public understanding of philosophical traditions:

“Historians of philosophy by and large seem content to make small additions or revisions in their field. By contrast, Peter Adamson’s Philosophy in the Islamic World marks a revolution.” [C.1]

“This podcast has changed my image of history, philosophy and the development of knowledge altogether ... this original perspective is just extremely valuable.” [D.1]

Public understanding of philosophy in Western societies has largely focused on the tradition stemming from ancient Greece and Rome. Adamson’s research has contributed to an expansion of understanding beyond this tradition, filling gaps in the public profile of philosophy by including and recognising philosophical thinkers and thought from a broad range of cultures.

The podcast that draws on Adamson’s research and that of his collaborators has been a pioneer in the breadth of its approach to the dissemination of philosophical traditions outside the Western canon, with major series so far on the Islamic world (over 2.5 million downloads as at 31 July 2020), classical India (over 1.5 million downloads) and Africana philosophy (over 500,000 downloads; series still ongoing), with a series to begin in 2021 on classical China [B]. For the latter topics, Adamson has joined forces with world-leading experts in the relevant fields: Jonardon Ganeri, Chike Jeffers and Karyn Lai. Adamson’s research into the history of philosophy underpins the conception of each series and episode. The series on the Islamic world, for instance, dedicated episodes to major figures in his research. The episode ‘Back to Basics: Averroes on Reason and Religion’ (10 November 2013) draws on Adamson’s work on the reception of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* in the Islamic world [1], while his research on the existence of time in al-Rāzī [4] informed the episode ‘For the Sake of Argument: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’ (27 April 2014). In the episode ‘By All Means Necessary: Avicenna on God’ (4 August 2013), Adamson engaged listeners in his study of why Avicenna’s ‘Necessary Existent’ is identified with the creator God worshipped in Islam [2]. As one listener commented: *“Peter, you have certainly convinced me that Avicenna was a philosopher of the highest order”* [D.2]. More recently, Adamson drew on his research on Giles of Rome’s *On Ecclesiastical Power* [5] to discuss Giles and Dante on the rival claims of church and secular rulers in ‘Our Power is Real: The Clash of Church and State’ (15 January 2017).

The originality and influence of Adamson’s research led Oxford University Press to commission a series of books for a non-specialist readership based on the podcast scripts, with five volumes published thus far (the most recent, on Indian philosophy, co-authored with Jonardon Ganeri, in 2020). Described on the OUP website as *“ideal for beginners and anyone who wants to read philosophy for pleasure”* [C.3], the books have sold thousands of copies, reaching wide audiences beyond academia. Adamson’s third OUP volume of podcast scripts, *Philosophy in the Islamic World* (2016), received praise in publications such as national newspaper *The Scotsman* (circulation: 14,417) and leading literary review journal the *LA Review of Books*, where the reviewer speaks of Adamson’s *“tearing down a wide range of unhelpful yet tenacious barriers — cultural, geographic, intellectual, religious, and chronological. His account of philosophy in the Islamic world and the larger project of which it is a part establish a new paradigm for telling the story of philosophy”* [C.1].

2. Changing public perception of the contribution to philosophy of under-represented groups:

“Your coverage of unconventional philosophers ... from the dubiously identified authors of the Romance of the Rose to Christine de Pizan, has vastly altered the way I think about who can philosophize or at least, engage in a project with philosophical elements.” [E.1]

As part of his work to make the philosophical canon truly inclusive, Adamson has highlighted the contribution of under-recognised groups, in particular women, to the formation of philosophy. Women philosophers have featured in the History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps podcast series, and OUP volumes, on philosophy in the Islamic world, on Medieval philosophy, and on Indian philosophy, in the podcast series on Renaissance philosophy and – cross-cutting with the inclusion of diverse traditions – also in the series on Africana philosophy. The podcast’s topical impact in this regard was underlined when the series on Africana philosophy was cited as informing Feminist

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History of Philosophy's series of blogposts, in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, on the role of women thinkers in the Africana tradition [E].

This focus on enhancing the recognition of women in the development of philosophy led Adamson to create a 10-episode series of videos, available on iTunes and YouTube [E], devoted to women thinkers in antiquity and the Middle Ages. The video lecture series drew on Adamson's research on women thinkers and Plato for his pioneering article on Aspasia [6] as well as on forthcoming work on Macrina. Comments evidencing the impact of the series on YouTube viewers included: *"I am so glad, that I have learned about Margarete Porete. I will go into this a bit more now"* [E.3] and *"I now have discovered Julian of Norwich for myself. Thanks to these lectures"* [E.4]. Adamson further disseminated this research to non-specialist audiences in a 2019 article in the *New Statesman* (circulation: 35,637) [E].

3. Diversifying the philosophy curriculum both at school and higher education level:

A significant measure of impact has been the podcast's influence worldwide on teaching in both universities and schools, and in adult education [F.1]. Episodes of the podcast appear on university syllabuses in philosophy at, among other institutions, the University of Texas, University of Michigan, McGill University, University of British Columbia, KU Leuven and Yale University. It is included as a philosophy resource on the University of Oxford's Department for Continuing Education website, and is mentioned as a resource for schools by the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Association and on the Routledge Philosophy for A-level website. The OUP volumes on Islamic philosophy and on Indian philosophy are listed as learning resources on the University of the Third Age website.

Comments from individual teachers of philosophy have corroborated this impact, describing how the podcast led to the incorporation of more diverse philosophical traditions into syllabi and courses [F]. A college professor in New York reports that the podcast has *"broadened my mind about what counts as philosophy or what sorts of texts we can profitably understand in philosophical terms. It's encouraged me to include more non-Western philosophers on my syllabi."* A teacher in the Philippines writes, regarding his philosophy of religion class, that *"a personal goal of mine was to make that class more 'ecumenical' and so I included texts from different religious traditions. Your discussion of Ibn Sina's proofs really contributed in attaining that goal."* A philosophy professor in Tennessee reports that he uses the podcast *"to get ideas for teaching some of my regular courses and for reminding myself about things I haven't read in a long time – for example, I recently incorporated more Africana philosophy into several courses."*

4. Helping meet the pedagogical challenges caused by COVID-19:

Adamson's research, thanks to its distillation into an online format via the podcast, has helped facilitate changes to pedagogy caused by the COVID-19 crisis. One university teacher in Ireland writes of his course on Medieval philosophy that, because of the crisis, *"I have to do online teaching and your podcasts have been such a great help. They really make my job easier and the students are very appreciative"* [G.1] The Course Director of the Crito Project, a charitable organisation that runs philosophy classes in UK prisons, who describes himself as *"a big admirer of your [Adamson's] podcasts and books"*, is addressing the lack of face-to-face prison teaching during the crisis by uploading podcast episodes as a teaching resource to the prison intranet [G.2].

5. Enhancing the intellectual, cultural and personal development of individuals:

Hundreds of listeners from around the world have contacted Adamson via email, through comments on the website and iTunes, or on social media, to testify to the podcast's enriching effect on the way that they live, work and learn. Here is a small sample from the podcast's website and Facebook pages [H]:

- *"I discovered your podcast a few years ago ... I have gained a lot from learning certain stoic and Buddhist ideas that resonate with me ... I travel a lot for work to Asia so learning about Hindu and Buddhist ideas has been very useful to better understand the people I work with and the places I visit."* (November 2019)
- *"This podcast was the catalyst that got me reading philosophy again and now also studying it in the university."* (September 2019)
- *"Your titanic philosophical podcast is one of the things that consoles and sustains me here in New York City as we face an indeterminate period of 'social distancing'."* (March 2020)

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- “The ‘without any gaps’ commitment is very ambitious and, for me, the most wonderful part of it all. It helps us appreciate the great contributions by the non-western thinkers, and how they are a part of our collective intellectual history.” (November 2014)

From providing sustenance during the COVID-19 crisis to helping listeners better understand global regions through their philosophies, the History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps podcast has had a far-reaching impact on the intellectual, cultural and personal development of its listeners.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

A. Selected media coverage of podcast: A.1 The 25 culture podcasts that will blow your mind, *BBC Culture*, 7 August 2017; A.2 18 Calming Podcasts To Listen To If You’re Not Into Meditating, *Bustle*, 23 March 2020; A.3 How the World Thinks review – a global history of philosophy, *The Guardian*, 5 October 2018.

B. Podcast page views, download and streaming statistics: B.1 Page views, podcast website, <https://historyofphilosophy.net/>; B.2 Download statistics, podcast PodBean feed, <https://hopwag.podbean.com/>; B.3 Download statistics, History of Indian and Africana Philosophy podcast series PodBean feed, <https://hopwag2.podbean.com/>.

C. Sources pertaining to Oxford University Press series: C.1 Review in *LA Review of Books*, Deprovincializing Philosophy, 29 July 2017; C.2 Review in *The Scotsman*, Book review: Philosophy in the Islamic World, 24 July 2016; C.3 Medieval Philosophy: A History of Philosophy without any Gaps, Oxford University Press webpage.

D. Listener comments demonstrating how Adamson’s research has expanded public understanding of philosophical traditions: D.1 Sample listener comments on podcast Facebook page, @histphilosophy; D.2 Sample listener comments on podcast website; D.3 Sample listener comments on podcast Apple Podcasts page.

E. Sources demonstrating how Adamson’s research has changed public perception of the contribution to philosophy of under-represented groups: E.1 Listener email to Adamson, 1 November 2018; E.2 Africana Women Philosophers, Feminist History of Philosophy website, 8 June 2020; E.3 Viewer comment, Women Thinkers in Antiquity and the Middle Ages Lecture 7, YouTube, 10 July 2018; E.4 Viewer comment, Women Thinkers in Antiquity and the Middle Ages Lecture 9, YouTube, 12 July 2018; E.5 Where are all the women in ancient philosophy?, *New Statesman*, 1 July 2019.

F. Sources that corroborate the podcast’s pedagogical impact in diversifying the philosophy curriculum: F.1 Sample of teaching resources that mention the podcast; F.2 Links between the podcast and King’s College London’s Philosophy Department; F.3 Comments on podcast Facebook page, @histphilosophy; F.4 Testimonial email from instructor in the Philosophy Department, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines; F.5 Testimonial email from Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Georgetown University; F.6 Testimonial email from Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore.

G. Sources testifying to value of podcast in helping meet pedagogical challenges caused by COVID-19: G.1 Testimonial email from Professor of Medieval Philosophy, Maynooth University; G.2 Testimonial email from Course Director, The Crito Project; G.3 Our Thanks to ‘The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps’, The Crito Project website, 5 June 2020.

H. Listener comments illustrating how the podcast has enhanced the intellectual, cultural and personal development of individuals: H.1 Sample listener comments on podcast Facebook page, @histphilosophy; H.2 Sample listener comments, Comments Page, The History of Philosophy without any Gaps website; H.3 Sample listener comments, Blog Page, The History of Philosophy without any Gaps website, 1 November 2019; H.4 Sample listener comments on podcast Apple Podcasts page.