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978-0-521-79795-5 - The Cambridge Translations of Medieval Philosophical Texts: Volume three:

Mind and Knowledge

Edited by Robert Pasnau

Excerpt

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

When the first volume of this series appeared thirteen years ago, the editors ruefully remarked on the scarcity of reliable editions and translations of medieval philosophical texts. Since then the situation has improved incrementally, but remains far from satisfactory. Without reliable texts, it is hard even for specialists to learn what medieval authors actually thought. Without translations, it is yet harder for nonspecialists to see why medieval scholarship is an enterprise worth supporting.

This volume attempts to convey some sense of later medieval work on the nature of mind and knowledge. In keeping with the principles of the series, the volume contains complete treatises or questions, except in two cases where the length was prohibitive. The selections are drawn entirely from Latin (hence Christian) works, and consequently the volume captures only at secondhand the fascinating intercontinental and interdenominational dimensions of medieval philosophy. But even given this constraint, the authors included here display an extremely wide range of styles and viewpoints. Moreover, the selections represent the full range of literary genres, from Aristotelian commentaries to Biblical commentaries, and from sermons to academic disputations. The selections focus on authors not widely available in translation. Indeed, for most of the authors included here, this marks the first time that *any* of their works have been published in English.

Not every medieval theologian and philosopher deserves to be translated. The twelve selections were chosen both for their significance within the medieval context, and for their relevance to contemporary philosophy. Often, the connections to modern discussions will be immediate and striking. But it would of course be foolish to force the medieval debate onto any kind of contemporary Procrustean bed: Very often these selections are interesting because of their differences from the terms of today's debate. Instead of the relationship between mind and body, for instance, the medievals focused on the relationship between soul and body. They debated whether the mind (or intellect) is a part of the soul, and if so

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whether sensory input to the mind is sufficient for knowledge without any kind of further illumination. And rather than attempting to analyze what distinguishes knowledge from true belief, the medievals were more interested in the mechanisms of cognition, and in the way the senses and intellect represent the external world.

The difficulty of these texts varies widely. Some are suitable for absolute beginners; others are as difficult as anything the scholastics ever wrote, which is to say they are very hard indeed. A rough ordering from easiest to hardest might go as follows: 3, 1, 6, 2, 11, 4, 5, 10, 9, 8, 7, 12.

The selections are arranged in rough chronological order, with a few adjustments for the sake of topical continuity. The first two selections are studies of the soul composed by unknown members of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris. The first, composed around 1225, is an attempt to synthesize earlier work on the soul and its powers. On its own terms, this is a rather mundane and unoriginal work, but it is nevertheless extremely interesting as a benchmark from which to assess the originality of later scholastic developments. The second of these treatises, a question-commentary on the *De anima*, is based on lectures from around 1270. Whereas Translation 1 signals the beginning of Averroes's influence on medieval philosophy, this second anonymous author is a devoted follower of Averroistic psychology, willing to follow the Commentator on even the most radical claims, regardless of their compatibility with Christianity.

The remaining ten selections are authored entirely by theologians, and this often makes for a difference, at least in the broader context of the views being presented. This is especially so in Translation 3, which shows Bonaventure delivering a sermon at the University of Paris, and arguing on Biblical and theological grounds for an Augustinian theory of divine illumination. Bonaventure is struggling against the rising Aristotelian tide that would completely dominate the universities well before the end of the thirteenth century. Translations 4 and 5, in turn, show divine illumination taking its last stand, in the work of Henry of Ghent, who attempts to find a place for the theory within a broadly Aristotelian theory of cognition. These two selections are notable not just for their defense of divine illumination, but for their serious and extended discussion of skepticism, an issue that would become more important in the fourteenth century.

The next four selections present theologians from the Franciscan order debating the nature of mental representation. Translation 6 shows the iconoclastic Peter John Olivi introducing a long philosophical excursion

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into the beginning of his commentary on the Gospel of John. Olivi was a critic of conventional Aristotelian accounts that postulated intervening representations in the processes of sensation and thought – so-called sensible and intelligible species. Olivi proposed in general that these species simply be eliminated, and here he extends this claim to the level of mental concepts, arguing that the so-called mental word is nothing over and above the act of thinking conceptually.

Another aspect of the medieval debate over cognition concerned the sense in which external things could be said to exist within the mind. It was common among later scholastics to speak of external objects having intentional existence or intelligible being within the mind. In Translation 7, William Alnwick exposes this view to a searching analysis, and concludes that such being within intellect is nothing other than the intelligible species or (if species do not exist) the act of thought.

Despite Alnwick's deflationary claims, others thought this sort of mental existence could do important work in explaining knowledge and cognition. Most influential in this regard was Peter Aureol, who placed such *apparent being* (as he called it) at the center of his philosophical psychology, even analyzing consciousness in its terms. In Translation 8, Aureol implicitly relies on this theory to explain the much discussed distinction between intuitive and abstractive cognition, arguing that intuitive cognition concerns an object that has a certain sort of presence – direct and actual – within the mind or senses. An important part of Aureol's argument concerns perceptual illusions, which Aureol argued should count as intuitive despite being nonveridical. In Translation 9, William Ockham attacks Aureol's arguments, after quoting from Aureol's own writings at length. Like Olivi before him, Ockham denies that cognition requires any kind of internal object, whether that object has real or merely apparent, intentional being. Meeting Aureol's challenge head on, Ockham takes up the hardest sorts of cases for his view, cases of sensory illusion, and argues for a direct realist theory of perception.

William Crathorn defends a more traditional theory of cognition in Translation 10, complete with sensible and intelligible species that are literally likenesses of external things. Crathorn's indirect realism leads him to a series of skeptical arguments showing that the senses alone are inadequate for certain knowledge unless supplemented by premises showing that God would not allow human beings to be systematically deceived about the external world. This discussion is one of the most vivid examples of the increasing later medieval interest in the problem of skepticism.

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The final two selections concern a question debated extensively in the fourteenth century, regarding the objects of intellectual knowledge. The two standard views were that we have knowledge of things, and that we have knowledge of propositions, where propositions were taken to be particular linguistic tokens, either mental, spoken, or written. In Translation 11, Robert Holcot defends a version of the second view, and argues that the former is unworkable. Writing at roughly the same time, Adam Wodeham proposes a novel third approach in Translation 12. Wodeham agrees with Holcot that knowledge concerns propositions rather than things, but he denies that propositions should be understood as particular linguistic tokens. Instead, Wodeham attempts to articulate the idea of a proposition-type, an abstract state of affairs signified by phrases such as *man's being an animal*. It is entities of this sort, Wodeham argues, that are true and false, believed and known.

All together, these translations display the tremendous growth of philosophy during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In 1225, it was considered progress for the anonymous author of Translation 1 to piece together from the work of others a flimsy outline of the soul and its powers. Only 100 years later, Latin philosophy had matured to an astonishing degree: Regardless of what the art historians may tell us, *this* was the true renaissance of Western thought. Whereas our anonymous arts master from circa 1225 is largely content to synthesize the work of Averroes and others, carefully attempting to reconcile all sides, our arts master from circa 1270 pushes hard on central philosophical questions, often proposing novel and controversial solutions. By the 1330s, theologians were expected to know not only the full Aristotelian corpus and the commentary tradition, but also the Church Fathers and the work of modern theologians like Aquinas, Scotus, Henry of Ghent, and Ockham. Attitudes toward authority changed dramatically over this time. In Translation 1, the work of many different authors is embraced gratefully, without any embarrassment or scruples about just how trustworthy these sources might be. By the 1330s, even the most venerable philosophical authorities were open to question. William Crathorn quotes Averroes at length, but then adds that “I invoke the Commentator not because his words move me very much, but because some take his words as the truth” (p. 257). Aristotle doesn't fare much better. Though again Crathorn invokes his authority repeatedly, he does so with a critical eye, remarking once that “because the Philosopher in this passage assumes many things that are neither known per se,

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nor demonstrated, nor appear true, there is no need to adhere to what he says there" (p. 272).

Translation is sometimes tedious, but that is as nothing compared to its worst feature, the inevitable frustration of encountering words and phrases for which there is simply no satisfactory translation. A few remarks on this score may prove helpful, or at least therapeutic.

The first and most obvious such problem is *anima*. There is no real frustration here, because there is no choice. The Latin *anima*, from the Greek ψυχή (*psuche*), must be translated into English as soul. The problem is that *anima* has very different connotations from the English term. For us, the soul is a spiritual, ghostlike entity; even philosophers find it hard to escape this sense of the term. But for these Latin authors, *anima* suggests something much more concrete, even scientific: It suggests the principle that animates all living things. Hence there was no real question among medieval authors over the existence of the soul, but there were serious questions over whether the soul could in fact be spiritual and immortal.

Another term for which there is no real choice is *scientia*. In most contexts, it would be profoundly misleading to translate this as anything other than *knowledge*. This is problematic, however, because medieval authors often give *scientia* a technical sense that barely overlaps with our modern notion of knowledge. Taking Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* as their guide, they thought of knowledge in the strict sense as the product of a demonstrative syllogism ultimately grounded in propositions that are self-evident (*nota per se*). But very often the term *scientia* is not used in this strict sense. Henry of Ghent begins both of the replies translated here (Translation 4, p. 97; Translation 5, p. 114) by setting out a broad sense of *scientia* that clearly does correspond to our term 'knowledge.' Other authors implicitly use the term in this broad sense. So there is no basis for departing from the conventional translation of *scientia* as *knowledge*, although in some contexts (especially Translation 7) it is useful to resort to the more specific phrase 'demonstrative knowledge,' even when the underlying Latin is simply *scientia*.

*Cognitio* is a term that proves frustrating only to translators that are overly concerned to avoid technical vocabulary. I myself have grown so accustomed to 'cognition' in English that it seems entirely unobjectionable, but I sense that others find it imposing and perhaps even obscure. Still, it is unquestionably the correct term for translating the ubiquitous

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*cognitio*. This is the most general Latin term for all kinds of sensory and intellectual states; it extends to any sort of belief or sensation about the world, true or false.

A word that is more seriously frustrating is the verb *intelligere*. Again, it is fairly clear what this word means: It refers to the activity of intellectual cognition. In other words, *intelligere* picks out whatever it is that the intellect does. Unfortunately, English has no such verb, and so a translator is left with two choices: either render the word awkwardly but literally, using some version of the phrase ‘cognize intellectually’ or render it gracefully but perhaps misleadingly, as *understand* or *think*. In most of these translations, I’ve decided that the literal but awkward option is unnecessary, and so I generally resort to the term ‘understand.’

What about ‘think’? The trouble here is that Latin has another term, *cogitare*, for which *think* is just the right translation. (Think of *Cogito ergo sum*.) Just as with the English ‘think,’ the Latin *cogitare* refers to the preliminary processes of considering and deliberating over a proposition. Although *intelligere* in a broad sense covers this kind of thinking, the term extends further to the grasping of a proposition, or the understanding of an object. Sometimes, when used narrowly, the term entails such success, in which case *understand* is just the right translation. Very often the term is used more broadly, however, in which case *understand* is misleading or even baffling as a translation. Hence it is sometimes important to choose something more literal but awkward.

Another frustrating term is *notitia*. As usual, it is clear enough what this term means: It is a very general term for all kinds of cognitive apprehension, with more of an implication of success than *cognitio* carries, and perhaps more of an implication of the intellectual. There are lots of English words that capture the meaning of *notitia* fairly well, including ‘apprehension,’ ‘cognition,’ ‘perception,’ ‘comprehension,’ and ‘grasp.’ But each of these except for the last needs to be used for its Latin cognate, and the last proves awkward in many instances.

Sometimes, *notitia* seems to match ‘knowledge’ in our broad modern sense. In fact, Henry of Ghent relies on *notitia* to define such a broad sense, proposing that “*scire* be taken broadly, for every certain *notitia* by which a thing is cognized as it is, without any mistake or deception” (Translation 4, p. 97). But this passage illustrates why the term can’t generally be translated as *knowledge*. First, it obviously won’t do to use the same English root to translate *scire* and *notitia* in this particular sentence. The definition would look hopelessly circular. Moreover, this is one of

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those clear cases, noted earlier, where *scire* simply must be rendered into English as *knowledge*. Further, Ghent makes it clear here that *notitia*, all by itself, does not mean *knowledge in the broad sense*. He stresses that knowledge in this sense extends only to those cases of *notitia* that are certain and mistake-free. Evidently, then, *notitia* picks out a broader class of cognition even than ‘knowledge’ in the broad sense.

Still, in Translation 10, where *scire* hardly occurs, I’ve concluded that it makes good sense to render *notitia* as *knowledge*. But in the other texts where *notitia* regularly occurs (Translations 4, 5, 8, 12), I’ve been able to find no better translation than *cognition*, even though *cognitio* also appears regularly in these texts and is translated by the same word. To me, this is immensely aggravating, but I hope it is fairly harmless to the reader. The terms, as used by these authors, do appear to be almost exactly synonymous.

All of the translations are based on modern editions, or at least modern transcriptions from the best available manuscript:

- 1 “Le traité de anima et de potenciis eius d’un maître ès arts (vers 1225),” ed. R. A. Gauthier, *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 66 (1982) pp. 27–55.
- 2 “Un Commentaire Averroïste sur les Livres I et II du Traité De l’Ame,” ed. M. Giele, in *Trois Commentaires Anonymes sur le Traité de l’Ame d’Aristote* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1971), pp. 21–95.
- 3 *Bonaventure, La Metodologia del Sapere nel Sermone di S. Bonaventura Unus est Magister Vester Christus*, ed. R. Russo (Grottaferrata: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1982), pp. 100–14.
- 4 Henry of Ghent, *Summa quaestionum ordinariarum*, ms. Paris Bibl. Nat. 15355, ff. 2r–3v, as transcribed by G. Wilson for his forthcoming critical edition.
- 5 Henry of Ghent, *Summa quaestionum ordinariarum*, ms. Paris Bibl. Nat. 15355, ff. 3v–7r, as transcribed by G. Wilson for his forthcoming critical edition.
- 6 Peter John Olivi, “Petri Iohannis Olivi Tractatus de Verbo,” ed. R. Pasnau, *Franciscan Studies* 53 (1993) pp. 134–48.
- 7 William Alnwick, *Quaestiones disputatae de esse intelligibili (Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica 10)*, ed. A. Ledoux (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1937), Q1, pp. 1–29.
- 8 Peter Aureol, *Scriptum super primum Sententiarum*, ed. E. M. Buytaert (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1952), Vol. I, pp. 177–217.
- 9 William Ockham, *Opera Theologica* vol.4, ed. G. Etzkorn and F. Kelley (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1979), pp. 228–64.
- 10 William Crathorn, *Quästionen zum ersten Sentenzenbuch*, ed. F. Hoffmann, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters*, NF29 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1988), pp. 67–151.
- 11 Robert Holcot, “A Revised Text of Robert Holcot’s Quodlibetal Dispute on Whether

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God is Able to Know More than He Knows,” ed. W. Courtenay, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 53 (1971) pp. 3–21.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda in librum primum Sententiarum*, ed. R. Wood (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 1990) vol. I, pp. 180–208.

The pagination of the Latin text is supplied within brackets – e.g., {53}.

Translations 2 and 12 are based on faulty manuscripts that demand frequent emendation, and I have made some suggestions beyond those of the original editors. Translations 3, 7, 8, 10, and 11 are based on extremely unreliable editions. In these cases I was forced virtually to reconstruct the text by working through and reassessing all the textual apparatus. Rather than bury this work within my translations, I have gathered it as endnotes, so that scholars working with the original texts can more easily consult my suggestions. Places where I have emended the text are marked within the translation by a degree sign: °.



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## I

### ANONYMOUS (ARTS MASTER C. 1225) *THE SOUL AND ITS POWERS*

#### Introduction

This short treatise was written around 1225, apparently by a professor of philosophy (“master of arts”) at the University of Paris. It is not an original work, in that almost all the author’s claims are taken from other sources. But the way these claims are compiled and assimilated is itself interesting, and would be highly influential on later authors. Moreover, this work vividly captures the state of the art of scholastic philosophy in the early thirteenth century, and puts in context the achievements of later and better known figures.

Our author’s principal source is Aristotle, as interpreted by Avicenna and Averroes. Although Avicenna is mentioned more often, this work is notable for marking the beginning of Averroes’s influence on the Latin West. Averroes’s extended commentary on the *De anima*, composed around 1190, was translated into Latin by Michael Scot around 1220. In just a few years, then, the Commentator’s reputation was becoming established at the University of Paris.

Most significant in this regard is the discussion of the rational power (sec. III.C). Though our author scrambles some of the terminology, he closely follows Averroes’s account of a “passive intellect,” inseparable from the body, and of a distinct “possible intellect” (equivalent to Averroes’s “material intellect”). The treatise explicitly rejects Avicenna’s treatment of agent intellect as separate from the soul, and seems to lean on Averroes in arguing that the agent intellect is “joined to the soul as its power.” This makes an ironic debut for Averroes in light of how he would later be understood (see Translation 2).

The fact that its authorship is unknown should not be taken to imply that this work was obscure. It has survived in three manuscripts, more than can be said for most of the works translated in this volume. There are, moreover, definite allusions to the work in a great many later authors, including Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. Though not an “author-

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*Anonymous* (Arts Master c. 1225)

ity,” and hence not worthy of explicit quotation, it is clear that this work was widely read during the middle years of the thirteenth century. It formed an important part of the now-hidden intellectual foundations on which medieval theologians built.

This selection breaks with the volume’s general practice of supplying minimal notes on sources. René-Antoine Gauthier’s edition of the text supplies detailed information on our author’s sources, and it seemed important to supply some of this material, in translation, given that they are a large part of what makes the text interesting. By consulting these notes, readers will be able to see for themselves something of how the work was compiled.

For a discussion of this work’s influence on the later thirteenth century, see the introduction to Gauthier’s edition. For an overview of early thirteenth-century accounts of intellect, see CHLMP VIII.29, “The Potential and the Agent Intellect.”

## The Soul and Its Powers

### [I. The Soul]

*The soul is the first actuality of a physical body potentially having life.*<sup>1</sup> When it is called an *actuality*, the soul’s genus is stated. For it is a substance, and there are three kinds of substances: hypostasis, ousiosis, and ousia – or, in other words: matter, actuality (that is, substantial form), and the particular (*hoc aliquid*) (that is, the composite of {28} both).<sup>2</sup> So when it is said that the soul is *actuality*, it is differentiated from matter and the composite.

But there are two kinds of actuality, just as there are two kinds of form, substantial and accidental. Substantial form is defined in this way: “The substantial is what brings existence to the composition, from a certain composition.” Accidental form is defined in this way: “Form is contingent to the composition, depending on the simple and invariable essence.”<sup>3</sup> So

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *De anima* II 1, 412a27–28.

<sup>2</sup> Boethius, *Contra Eutychem* ch. 3 (p. 88): “So *ousia* is the same as essence, *ousiosis* the same as subsistence, *hypostasis* the same as substance.” Though this is our author’s remote source, he assigns quite different meanings to these Greek terms.

<sup>3</sup> *Liber sex principiorum* I 6, I 1.