

Soul & Mind. Ancient and Medieval Perspectives on the De anima, The De Wulf-Mansion Centre – Centre De Wulf-Mansion, Leuven – Louvain-La-Neuve 14-17 February 2007.

The year 2006 saw the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the oldest research centre created within the Institute of Philosophy of the Catholic University of Leuven: the De Wulf-Mansion Centre. Founded in 1956 by professors Giele, Van Breda, Van Steenberghe, and Verbeke, it was dedicated to two eminent figures of the Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte / Institut supérieur de philosophie of the Catholic University of Leuven: Maurice De Wulf, a renowned scholar in medieval philosophy, and Augustin Mansion, an outstanding expert in Aristotle's thought.

In 1969, as a result of the division of the University of Leuven into two separate institutions, the De Wulf-Mansion Centre too was split in two bodies: the De Wulf-Mansioncentrum of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (at Leuven) and the Centre De Wulf-Mansion of the Université Catholique de Louvain (at Louvain-la-Neuve). The fiftieth anniversary of the De Wulf-Mansion Centre gave these two research centres the occasion to foster and organize a joint symposium devoted to Aristotle's *De anima* and to the influences exerted by this text up to the Early Modern Period.

Thanks to the support of FWO-Vlaanderen, FNRS, Van de Wiele Fonds, Cornelia de Vogel Stichting, Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), the Leuven-Nijmegen Covenant, and to the sponsorship of the publishers Brepols, Brill, Leuven University Press, and Peeters, from Wednesday 14th to Saturday 17th of February 2007 many scholars gathered together at the Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte of KUL and at the Faculté des sciences philosophiques of the UCL in order to present – under the common title *Soul and Mind. Ancient and Medieval Perspectives on the “De anima”* – Aristotle's theses on that issue, their interpretation as well as their ancient and medieval consequences and developments.

After the opening speeches by Jacqueline Hamesse and Carlos Steel, which were devoted to the history of the Centre – particularly to the conceptions of the nature of the inquiry into the history of ancient and medieval philosophy current when the Centre was created and to the subsequent growing awareness of the historiographical purposes of the Centre – the first two days of the symposium were devoted to the doctrines of ancient authors. In this section of the meeting the following speakers presented the results of their researches: Enrico Berti (Università di Padova), “*De anima*” III 10: *la cause du mouvement dans les êtres vivants*; Patrick MacFarlane – Ron Polansky (Duquesne University), *God, the Divine, and “Nous” in Relation to the “De anima”*; Annick Stevens (Université de Liège), *L'apparition de la conscience dans le “De anima” et d'autres œuvres d'Aristote*; Jennifer Whiting (University of Toronto), *Self and Self-Consciousness in Aristotle*; Joel Yurdin (University of California), *Aristotle on Imagination in Behavior and in Thought*; Victor Caston (University of Michigan), *Aristotle on Perceptual Content*; Nathanael Stein (University of Oxford), *After Literalism and Spiritualism: The Plasticity of Aristotelian Perception*; Jean-Louis Labarrière (CNRS / Maison Française d'Oxford), «*The Soul never Thinks without an Image*», *once again*; Marco Zingano (Universidade de São Paulo), *Considérations sur l'argumentation d'Aristote dans “De anima” III 4*; Klaus Corcilius (Humboldt Universität Berlin), *How Are Episodes of Thinking Initiated according to Aristotle?*; Robert Sharples (University College London), *The Hellenistic Period: What Happened to Hylomorphism?*; Frans de Haas (Universiteit Leiden), *Modes of Consciousness in Late Antiquity*; David Sedley (University of Cambridge), *Platonic Immortality*.

A report on the above lectures will appear in issue 49 of the *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale*. As a medievalist, I allow myself to dwell upon those lectures that concern the history of medieval philosophy.

The medieval section of the Congress opened with a lecture given by Richard C. Taylor (Marquette University, Milwaukee) entitled *Averroes's Critical Encounter with Themistius in Interpreting Aristotle's “De Anima”*.

According to Taylor, Averroes made use of an Arabic version of Themistius's *Paraphrase of the De Anima* for all three of his *Commentaries* on the *De Anima*, apparently rereading and rethinking its doctrines anew while writing each of his three commentaries. Themistius had argued that every

human being has a potential and an actual intellect and that this combination refers to a separate and unique agent intellect.

In the *Short and Middle Commentaries*, Averroes advocates a somewhat materialistic interpretation of Themistius's view by claiming that a potential intellect, inasmuch as it is material, cannot be a separate substance. In the *Long Commentary*, however, he embraces another position. In his attempt to determine the nature of the intelligibles that the potential intellect receives, Averroes considers, following Themistius, that these intelligibles are generated in the potential intellect by the wills of the human beings and that they are in act precisely in this potential intellect as well. This brings Averroes to the conclusion that the potential intellect too is a unique separate substance and inspires him to develop his well-known theories concerning the nature of the potential intellect and how it joins to particular human beings.

Taylor's lecture proves effectively the proof of the complexity of the topic. For this reasons, it seems to me that it would be useful if the final version of his contribution were to include a recapitulation of Themistius's position and Averroes's diverse theses concerning the natures of the different intellects and their relations with individual human beings.

Pasquale Porro (Università degli Studi di Bari) gave a lecture titled *The (Im)passibility of the Soul: Theological Paradoxes at the End of the Thirteenth Century*. He recalled that biblical tales concerning the punishment of the souls of the damned by means of hellfire – particularly before the resurrection of their bodies – had prompted extensive debate since the Patristic Age. Augustine tends to conceive of hellfire metaphorically, but Gregory the Great contends that hellfire must be understood as real and corporeal. Consequently, the problem arose of how a sensible element could affect a purely spiritual entity. Peter Lombard reports two opinions: first, the disembodied soul does not entirely lack sensibility; and second, hellfire afflicts the soul only insofar as it somehow constrains the soul. Bonaventure sides with the first opinion, while Thomas Aquinas follows the second.

In 1270 and 1277 Etienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris, condemned the thesis that the disembodied soul cannot suffer from fire. Consequently, some Franciscan masters asserted that, due to God's intervention, hellfire can effectively burn the soul. According to Giles of Rome, fire is unable to receive such a power; nevertheless, he argues that pain is a perception of the soul, whereas the physical lesion of the sense-organs is merely a *conditio sine qua non* in the natural order: a *conditio* God can take the place of. The (Neo)Platonic assumptions behind this position are apparent: the disembodied soul is not lacking in sensitivity, which is properly a spiritual activity, it merely lacks the capacity to exercise its sensitivity. Far less Augustinian-oriented, Henry of Ghent maintains that a physical lesion is a *propter quid* cause of pain; hence, he simply suggests that God can supernaturally deprive the soul of its impassibility.

Martin Pickavé (University of Toronto), in his paper *Aristotle's Theory of Animal Motion and its Reception in Medieval Debates over the Nature of the Will*, focused on various medieval readings of a passage in *De anima* III.10 where Aristotle refers to the appetitive faculty of the animal as something that is both moved and yet is a mover.

According to Thomas Aquinas, the will is a passive power with respect to its object, but it is active in regard to the exercise of its acts. There is an exception: in the case of the will's first act, an external mover is required. Insofar as this theory makes the will dependent on external movers, it might appear to endanger the freedom of the will. For this very reason Henry of Ghent states that the will moves itself and that its object is only a *sine qua non* cause of its motion. Against this position, Giles of Rome and Godfrey of Fontaines stress that the will can be determined only by the intellect and that a self-moved mover is generally impossible. Henry too concedes the universal validity of the principle "*omne quod movetur ab alio movetur*", but distinguishes the will understood as a mover from the will taken as moved, instituting an "intentional" distinction between the two.

Bernd Goehring (University of Notre Dame) spoke on *Henry of Ghent's Use of Aristotle's "De anima" in Developing his Theory of Cognition: The Case of "Quodlibet IV"*. In his paper, Goehring addressed Henry of Ghent's theory on the nature of the cognitive process. This theory has two main

tenets. First: the intellective power is immaterial; thus, it cannot be altered by a material entity (such as a species inhering in the imaginative power); consequently, the impression of a species in the intellect cannot account for intellective cognition. Second: what is grasped by a cognitive power (both material and spiritual) is present to this power as something that is inside a knower and present to him.

These considerations enable Henry to make two further points. First of all, the intellect is brought into actuality simply by the objectively intelligible, which can be present to the intellect either in itself through its essence, or in its *quod quid est* (through the phantasms). Second, an object of sight, and of the imagination, and of the intellect is one-and-the-same object in number; yet, it is an object of sight insofar as it is a particular present in an external thing, it is an object of the imaginative power insofar as it is a particular that is absent, and it is an object of the intellect under the aspect of being something universal.

I would like to point out that Goehring used the word “intention” and its derivatives in order to explicate Henry of Ghent’s notion of “an objectively present something”. In my opinion, this usage seems questionable. In the works of late medieval authors, the vocabulary of the “intention” theory and the “objective / intellectual being” theory on the cognitive process are often intermixed, nevertheless the two theories are not equivalent. Therefore, a deeper inquiry into the Doctor Solennis’s vocabulary and views might be worthwhile. Moreover, it seems to me that Henry’s rejection of impressed species does not entail that he expunge any real (i.e. intrinsic, ontological) activity of the intellect from the process of abstraction. Hence, this facet of his thought should be further inspected as well.

In his lecture *Univocity of Being in Scotus’s “Quaestiones De anima”*, Tobias Hoffmann (Catholic University of America) dealt with the emergence of Scotus’s doctrine on the univocity of being as it appears in the newly edited *Quaestiones super secundum et tertium De anima* of the Subtle Doctor. Because Scotus had espoused the analogy of being in the prior *Quaestiones super praedicamenta Aristotelis*, we can be certain that his position on the univocity of being dates back to the early 1290s, namely, to the period when the *Quaestiones De anima* were composed.

The text in the new edition of Scotus’s *Quaestiones De anima* confirms the importance traditionally granted to Question 21 of this work. In his *Quaestiones super praedicamenta* Scotus still argues that being cannot be univocal because, if it were, it could not be included in the differences that contract it, which is not the case. In *In De anima*, q. 21, the Subtle Doctor surmounts this argument for the first time. When a difference contracts a genus, he argues, that difference and that genus are not formally the same, because the formal character (*ratio*) of the difference does not include the formal character of the genus; nonetheless, he adds, they are the same in reality, or by identity. Consequently, when a character (*ratio*) is joined to being as a difference is joined to a genus, that character is a being in reality, or by identity, but not formally, since – in that circumstance – it does not include being.

In *Met. I.2* Aristotle makes the well-known assertion that the most universal things are generally the hardest to know, for what is most universal is what is farthest from the senses. This statement can be considered the precursor for medieval debates on what the “first known” is. Wouter Goris (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), in *The Confused and the Distinct: Towards a Proper Starting Point of Human Knowledge in Aquinas and Scotus*, examined the disagreements between Aquinas and Scotus on this topic, namely – Goris explained – on the starting point of knowledge, on the proper object of the human intellect, and on the subject of metaphysics.

Thomas Aquinas argues that the human intellect knows what is confused prior to what is distinct; but what is more universal is more confused than what is less universal; hence, the human intellect knows what is more universal before what is less universal. Against this line of reasoning, Goris remarked, John Duns Scotus distinguishes between the knowledge of something that is confused and the confused knowledge of something. On this basis, Scotus argues that it is true that confused knowledge precedes distinct knowledge, but it is false that what is confused is necessarily known before what is distinct. This clarification, Goris said, led to significant consequences in the concep-

tions of metaphysics developed by Scotus and some of his followers, such as Francis of Marchia and Nicolas Bonet.

In particular, Goris asserted that the distinction introduced by Scotus between knowing *confuse* and knowing a *confusum* affected Scotus's and Scotists' understanding of the starting point of knowledge, of the proper object of the human intellect, and of the subject of metaphysics. Nevertheless, it seems to me that this claim calls for further inquiries. For most medieval authors, and for Scotus in particular, the first known in the order of acquisition, the first known in the order of adequateness, and the "first" that is the subject of metaphysics are three different concepts. Thus, the possible effects of the aforementioned distinction on Scotus's – and Scotists' – understanding of these concepts should be exhibited case by case.

The paper *Le "De anima" dans l'"Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem" de Maître Eckhart : une révolution aristotélicienne dans la noétique eckhartienne ?*, presented by Julie Casteigt (Université de Toulouse II - Le Mirail), analyzed the presence of several theses derived from Aristotle's *De anima* in Eckhart's *Expositio*. Casteigt pointed out that in this work Eckhart seeks philosophically grounded accounts of some of his theological tenets. He finds accounts in two well-known passages of the *De anima*. The first passage states that the actuality of the sensible object and the actuality of the sensitive faculty are the same, in spite of the difference in their being. The second passage claims that the intellect is, before it thinks, actually none of those things that are.

Eckhart interprets the first statement through Averroes, who maintains that the unity of a cognizing intellect and a cognized intelligible is stronger than the unity of matter and form. The German Master uses this statement to philosophically illuminate the unity of the Father and the Son. The second statement is invoked in order to support, from a philosophical point of view, the conviction that whoever wants to adhere to God must divest himself of everything.

Sander de Boer (Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen) in *Methodological Considerations in the Later "Scientia de anima"* addressed the efforts of some medieval authors to cope with the apparent inconsistency between two of Aristotle's statements in *De anima* I.1. In this chapter, Aristotle maintains both that the science of the soul is the first science on account of its exactness (*akribeia*), and that to acquire any knowledge of the soul is one of the most difficult tasks. But the 12th and 13th century medieval translators rendered "*akribeia*" as "*certitudo*" and in doing so set up the question: how can a science be at once the most certain and the most difficult?

Medieval and Renaissance authors provided several solutions to the riddle. According to Thomas Aquinas, for instance, what is difficult is to know the substance of the soul, whereas what is certain is what we know through experiencing ourselves. According to Radulphus Brito, the science of the soul is difficult insofar as it proceeds from the subject – which we cannot perceive through the senses – to its operations, whereas it is certain and easy as far as it proceeds in the reverse direction. According to John Buridan, this science is difficult as far as it deals with the intellectual soul, while it is certain and easy when it studies the sensible parts of the soul. The 15th-century translation of the *De anima* by Argiropulo, who accurately translated "*akribeia*" with "*exactus*", ultimately eliminated the debate.

Jan A. Aertsen (Thomas-Institut der Universität zu Köln), in his paper *The Human Intellect: "All Things" or "Nothing"? Medieval Readings of "De Anima"*, concentrated on the different perspectives according to which Aquinas and Eckhart developed a metaphysics of the intellect and of the transcendentals from their readings of the third book of *De anima*. Aquinas draws inspiration from Aristotle's notion that the soul is, in some way, all things. This idea enables Aquinas to maintain both that in a certain manner the soul is receptive to all things, and that it is, in a certain way, like God. Eckhart, in his second Parisian question, follows Aquinas's position concerning the openness of the soul to all things, but he refers rather to Aristotle's thesis that the intellect is, before it thinks, actually none of those things that are. This allows Eckhart to assert that the intellect understood as a power is a being, but understood as intellect, it is nothing.

The difference in perspective between the two Dominicans also affects their respective theories on the transcendentals. According to Aquinas, being is in reality, whereas the true and the good refer to the soul. In contrast, Eckhart claimed that both being and good belong to the realm of nature, whereas the transcendental that belongs to the realm of the intelligible is the understanding, i.e. the nothing. Unsurprisingly, Eckhart wavered about the location of the transcendental “true”.

Dominik Perler (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) dealt with the well-known topic concerning *How Many Souls Do I Have? Late Aristotelian Debates on the Plurality of Faculties*. There are good reasons for seeing firm links between the two aspects indicated by the title of Perler’s paper – namely, the problem concerning the plurality of souls and the problem concerning the plurality of the faculties. For Thomas Aquinas, every human being has only one soul, but many faculties. The human soul engages in vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual activities, but each of these faculties is really distinct both from one another and from the soul itself, although all of them proceed from the soul as its proper accidents. On the other hand, according to William of Ockham faculties are nothing but the soul’s causal powers, so that they are neither really distinct from each other, nor from the soul; but, on Ockham’s view, the soul embraces three distinct souls, namely a vegetative, a sensitive, and an intellectual soul. Interestingly enough, Jacopo Zabarella rejects both Thomas’s and Ockham’s positions: against the first, he maintains that the faculties are not proper accidents of the soul, but natural aptitudes built into it; against the second, he claims that every human being has only one soul.

Paul J.J.M. Bakker (Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen) gave a paper titled *Natural Philosophy, Metaphysics, or Something in Between? Agostino Nifo, Pietro Pomponazzi, and Marcantonio Genua on the Nature and Place of the “scientia de anima”*. Bakker introduced the topic by remarking that in the early 16th century the new translations of Aristotle’s *On the Parts of Animals* and of some works by his Greek commentators, especially Pseudo-Simplicius’s commentary on *De anima*, revived the question of the nature and object of the *scientia de anima*. In particular, a combined reading of a passage from *Part. An.* and of a passage from Pseudo-Simplicius’s commentary triggered a vast interest in questions concerning the epistemological “position” and the unity of the science of the soul.

Bakker expounded the doctrines of three Paduan authors: Agostino Nifo (1469/70 - 1538), Pietro Pomponazzi (1462 - 1525), and Marcantonio Genua (1490/91 - 1563). The first and the third, although from different points of departure and with different biases, advocate that the soul should be studied as a whole and by an autonomous science located between physics and metaphysics. The second assumes no position, ultimately. One can easily conjecture the historical reason for Pomponazzi’s decision to refrain from holding a view on the issue. Bakker noted: because, for Pomponazzi, the soul is material in a certain respect, he cannot assign the study of the soul to metaphysics; nevertheless, assigning the study of the soul to physics would have endangered the soul’s immateriality and immortality.

Although Bakker’s paper is not the first to deal with the Renaissance origin of the expression “*scientia animastica*”,¹ or with this same topic,² the attention it devotes to them is highly valuable. If I can express my feelings, I would wish that Bakker, for the sake of scholarship, treats in a more expanded way some details he touched upon in his paper.

Bakker claims that the passage from Aristotle’s *Par. An.*, which he cited, was neglected by medieval authors. This assertion calls for further consideration. At least from Henry of Ghent onwards, medieval authors distinguish between the subject in which a science takes place (i.e., for instance, the human intellect) and the subject which a science studies; and they say that if we considered the

¹ Cfr. A. PALADINI, *La scienza animastica di Marco Antonio Genua*, (Testi e saggi, 38), Galatina: Congedo, 2006.

² E.P. MAHONEY, *Agostino Nifo (ca. 1470-1538) on the Scientia de Anima as a “Mathematical” or “Middle” Science*, in *Knowledge and the Sciences in Medieval Philosophy. Proceedings of the Eight International Congress of Medieval Philosophy (S.I.E.P.M.), Helsinki 24-29 August 1987*, ed. by M. Asztalos - St. Ebbesen - D. Føllesdal - S. Knuutila - A. Inkeri Lehtinen - J.E. Murdoch - I. Niinluoto - R. Työrinoja, (Acta philosophica Fennica, 48), 3 voll., Helsinki, 1990, vol. 3, pp. 629-636.

sciences from the point of view of the “in which” subject, there would be only one science. Certainly, this argument does not repeat exactly Aristotle’s argument as quoted by Bakker, however it is closer to the meaning of this argument than the Renaissance authors’ reflections pointed out by Bakker.

Moreover, one can notice that the (Neo)Platonic background to Nifo’s theory is apparent; hence, suggestions concerning the sources of this theory would be valuable. Finally, the Genua’s reference to John of Jandun that is underscored by Bakker is undoubtedly relevant. Despite the fact that it could suggest an Averroistic bias in Genua’s doctrine, the passage of Genua’s *Lectiones* Bakker quoted conveys no more of an Averroistic than an Alexandrist conception of both the agent and the passive intellect. Thus, a deeper inquiry into Genua’s interpretation of Jandun’s doctrine on the nature of the two intellects could noticeably improve our comprehension of the thought of this ancient Paduan professor.

The aim of Christopher Shields’s lecture (University of Oxford) on *Suárez on the Unity of the Soul* was to explore Suárez’s doctrine on the relation between the soul and its powers. Shields explained that in discussing the topic Suárez rejects three theories: the nominalist view, according to which the soul and its powers are really identical; the Scotist thesis, according to which the soul and its powers are formally distinct; and the Bonaventurian position, according to which the vegetative soul and its powers are really identical, whereas the intellective soul and its powers are not. Thereafter, Suárez puts forward a somewhat nominalistic version – I would say – of Thomas’s position: the powers of the soul are really distinct from the soul, they proceed from it, but insofar as they are in act, they are really identical to their operations. Over the course of his treatment, Suárez tackles some difficult issues. Shields pointed out two themes in particular. The first, on the nature of the “flowing” of the powers from the soul. The second, on the problem of whether the soul and its powers, as really distinct, have really distinct efficient causes and existences.

As the reader can see, the problem tackled by Shields’s contribution involves several different and difficult matters. For this reason, it seems to me that the final version of Shields’s contribution could benefit from including some supplementary information. For instance, the end section of Shields’s lecture clearly showed that Suárez’s treatment of the distinction between the soul and its faculties presupposes the Suarezian doctrine of distinctions. Hence, an introductory synopsis of this doctrine would help the reader in following the arguments of the Jesuit author.

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