Luis Xavier López-Farjeat and Jörg Alejandro Tellkamp (eds.)


The volume focuses on philosophical psychology in Avicenna (d. 1037) and Averroes (d. 1198), as well as in several thirteenth-century philosophers—Albert the Great, Roger Bacon and Aquinas—who were influenced by Latin translations of their work. So it is fittingly introduced by Alexander Fidora’s essay on Dominicus Gundissalinus, who is best known for his work as a translator of Arabic texts into Latin. In “From Arabic into Latin into Hebrew: Aristotelian psychology and its contribution to the rationalisation of theological traditions,” Fidora reveals Gundissalinus to advocate the use of Graeco-Arabic Aristotelian psychology to develop a rational theology in both the prologue to his and Ibn Daūd’s translation of Avicenna’s *De anima* and his own *Tractatus de anima*. Traces of the latter work are found in discussions of the substantiality of the soul by Albert the Great and Hillel of Verona.

Several essays address aspects of Avicenna’s innovative work on intellect and cognition, and its impact in the Latin West. In “New light on Avicenna: optics and its role in Avicennian theories of vision, cognition and emanation,” Jon McGinnis first shows how Avicenna’s accounts of light and vision differ from Aristotle’s; he then shows how Avicenna’s understanding of light and vision inform his interpretation of Aristotle’s claim that the role played by active intellect in making the potentially intelligible actually intelligible is akin to that of light in making what is potentially coloured to be actually coloured. This is a valuable addition to our understanding of a key Avicennian doctrine. In “Rational imagination: Avicenna on the cogitative power,” Deborah Black argues persuasively that Avicenna’s cogitative power is not a self-standing faculty with its own operation or object; rather, “cogitative power” is the label given to the composite imagination when it serves and is controlled by intellect. She thereby clarifies an important part of Avicenna’s theory of the internal senses, which is among his most original and fruitful contributions to Aristotelian psychology, and improves our understanding of Avicenna’s account of human thinking, especially his position on the contributions of the brain-based composite imagination to rational thought. Luis Xavier López-Farjeat in “Avicenna on musical perception” provides a pioneering study of the relationship between Avicenna’s account of meaningful sound, musical perception and his theory of the internal senses.

Three essays attend to Avicenna’s influence in the Latin West. In “Avicenna’s metaphysics and Duns Scotus’ *Quaestiones super secundum et tertium De anima*,” Thérèse-Anne Druart examines Duns Scotus’ reception of Avicenna’s theory
of primary concepts and its role in his defense of the univocity of being. In “Albert the Great on perception and non-conceptual content,” Jörg Alejandro Tellkamp examines Albert’s theory of the internal senses and his use of the concept of *intentio*, both derived from Avicenna, in his account of animal perception. Tellkamp helpfully employs twenty-first-century accounts of non-conceptual content to elucidate Albert’s view. In “Roger Bacon on animal and human knowledge in the *Perspectiva: (Opus Maius*, part five),” Jeremiah Hackett examines Bacon’s account of animal knowledge and its differences from human knowledge. While Bacon emphasizes his debt to Avicenna’s “clear and perfect” account of the internal senses, other influences, including Alhazen’s optical theory and Augustine’s doctrine of the primacy of vision over the other senses, were also important. Tellkamp and Hackett together show that animal knowledge was highly esteemed by medieval authors. Their essays help correct an emphasis on intellect in scholarship on medieval philosophical psychology.

While Averroes receives less attention than Avicenna, two essays address his account of intellect. In “Acquisition de la pensée et acquisition de l’acta chez Averroès: une lecture croisée du *Grand Commentaire au De anima* et du *Kitāb al-Kašf ’an manāhiǧ al-adilla*,” Jean-Baptiste Brenet argues that Averroes’ notion of the acquisition of thought in the *Long Commentary on the De anima* is illuminated by his notion of acquisition (*kasb* or *iktisāb*) in the *Kitāb al-Kašf ’an manāhiǧ al-adilla*. In “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’: Aquinas’s first critical encounter with the doctrines of Avicenna and Averroes on the Intellect, in *Sent.* d. 17, q. 2, a. 1,” Richard C. Taylor reveals the many ways in which Aquinas’ account of the possible intellect borrows from those of his Arabic Aristotelian predecessors, despite his famous antipathy for Averroes’ unicity doctrine. Taylor also provides a valuable account of some of the ways in which Aquinas mistook Averroes in his *Sentences* commentary. Several of Aquinas’ objections to the unicity doctrine—including that Averroes is unable to explain how understanding can belong to individual human beings, and that the essential intelligence of the human being requires that possible intellect be multiplied—derive in part from misunderstandings of Averroes’ position. Taylor’s English translation of the relevant portion of Aquinas’ *Sentences* commentary appears as an appendix to the volume. Aquinas’ account of the human nature is also the subject of Bernardo Carlos Bazan’s “A body for the human soul,” which examines tensions within Aquinas’ account of the unity of the human being.

The volume is essential reading for scholars working on philosophical psychology in Avicenna, Averroes or in thirteenth-century Latin Aristotelians. The essays are of good quality across the board. Several of them make