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Qu'est-ce que la philosophie au Moyen Âge?
What is Philosophy in the Middle Ages?

Akten des X. Internationalen Kongresses für
mittelalterliche Philosophie der Société Internationale
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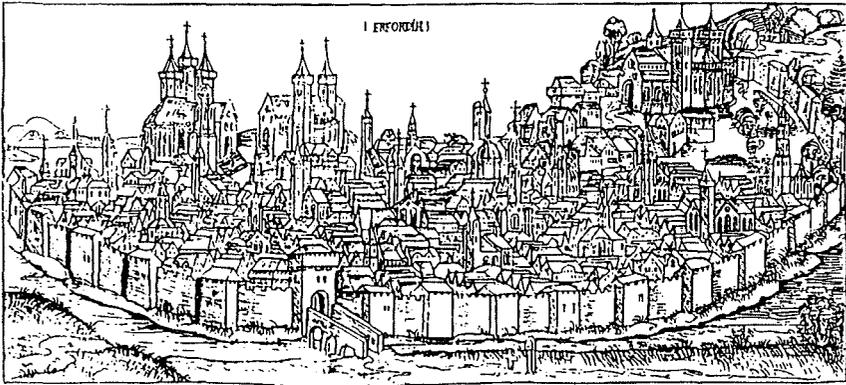
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Stadtansicht des mittelalterlichen Erfurt nach der Schedelschen Weltchronik von 1493.

Aristotle versus Progress:
The Decline of Avicenna's „De anima“ as a Model for
Philosophical Psychology in the Latin West

DAG NIKOLAUS HASSE (London)¹

Avicenna's *De anima* (the *Kitāb an-nafs* from *al-Šifā'*) was translated from Arabic into Latin between 1152 and 1166. It experienced massive success among medieval readers in the first half of the thirteenth century, and one can say that it dominated the structure and much of the content of psychological writings between John Blund and Petrus Hispanus. But in the second half of the century interest declined remarkably, which is obvious for example from the decreasing number of quotations and adaptations². That authors such as Thomas Aquinas departed from Avicenna's psychology, is a fact known since the studies of Étienne Gilson in the 1920s³, but the phenomenon has remained somewhat of a mystery. I should like to show that its explanation has some bearing on the question of what medieval philosophy is.

It is sometimes maintained, for instance by Daniel Callus⁴, that the influence of Avicenna's *De anima* declined because Averroes' *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima* was a better and more helpful commentary on Aristotle's work on the soul. This assumption can be challenged: Avicenna's *De anima* was neither written nor read as a commentary on Aristotle's

¹ I am grateful to Charles Burnett for his advice.

² This is not to deny that the influence of Avicenna's *De anima* stretches well beyond the thirteenth century. Much Avicennian material was transported in books as popular as Albert von Orlamünde's *Philosophia pauperum* and Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum naturale*. Around 1500, the psychology of handbooks still owes very much to Avicenna, and many Avicennian theories appear in the works of Averroist and Albertist philosophers (see K. Park, *Albert's Influence on Late Medieval Psychology*, in: J. Weisheipl (ed.), *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences*, Toronto 1980, 510–535; ead., *The Organic Soul, The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge 1988, 464–484; E. P. Mahoney, *Albert the Great and the Studio Patavino in the Late 15th and Early 16th Centuries*, in: *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences*, 537–563). But as a model for philosophical psychology, Avicenna's *De anima* saw a remarkable decline after 1250.

³ E. Gilson, *Pourquoi saint Thomas a critiqué saint Augustin*, in: *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 1 (1926–1927), 111–127.

⁴ D. A. Callus, *Introduction of Aristotelian Learning to Oxford*, in: *Proceedings of the British Academy* 29 (1943), 229–281. A similar opinion is held by F. Van Steenberghen, *Die Philosophie im 13. Jahrhundert*, Munich–Paderborn–Vienna 1977, 180.

De anima⁵, and therefore one cannot simply say that his book was replaced by that of Averroes. To point to a number of arguments: among the thousands of quotations from Avicenna's book there are hardly any which refer to it as a *commentum* or to Avicenna as a *commentator*⁶. Also, Avicenna's De anima never appears together with Aristotle's book on the soul in the same manuscript, as did many of Averroes' commentaries⁷. Finally, there is no Latin commentary on Aristotle's work on the soul extant before 1240⁸; the vogue of commenting upon Aristotle is a late development in the history of Latin Aristotelianism. It is true that Averroes played a role in the decline of Avicennian psychology, as shall be pointed out below, but it did not consist in replacing Avicenna as a commentator.

A stronger explanation was proposed in 1934 by Roland de Vaux and again recently and more explicitly by René Antoine Gauthier. The explanation is that the Latins realized that Avicenna's doctrine, and in particular his doctrine of the intellect, was contrary to Christian faith⁹. This can be backed up by several pieces of evidence. One of them comes from Giles of Rome and his De erroribus philosophorum, written a few years before the condemnation of 1277. Giles lists a number of errors from Avicenna's Metaphysics and goes on to say:

He also erred in that he identified the active intellect with the ultimate or tenth intelligence ... and he maintains that our bliss consists in that our intellect is joined with this intelligence or contemplating it¹⁰.

⁵ In the prologue to the section on natural philosophy of aš-Šifā', Avicenna declares that he will write „in the manner established by our opinion and arrived at by our theoretical investigation. The arrangement on this occasion will correspond to that followed in Peripatetic philosophy“; see D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, Leiden 1988, 295. For a demonstration that Avicenna's De anima was not read as a commentary by its Western readers, see D. N. Hasse, *Avicenna's De anima in the Latin West* (Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts, London, forthcoming).

⁶ Exceptions are in John Blund, *Tractatus de anima*, ed. D. A. Callus and R. W. Hunt, London 1970, 19, 24, 32, 39, 51, 63, 66, 68, 69, 92.

⁷ Cf. M.-T. d'Alverny, *Avicenna Latinus: Codices*, Louvain-la-Neuve–Leiden, 1994.

⁸ To present knowledge, the earliest commentary extant is Petrus Hispanus' *Quaestiones libri de anima*, edited by M. A. Alonso as *Commentum in librum de anima*, in: *Pedro Hispano Obras Filosóficas*, vol. II, Madrid 1944. See R. A. Gauthier, *Les commentaires de la Vetus*, in: *Thomas Aquinas, Sentencia libri de Anima*, ed. R. A. Gauthier (*Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, tomus XLV,1), Rome–Paris 1984, 239*–242*.

⁹ R. de Vaux, *Notes et textes sur l'avicennisme latin aux confins des XII^e–XIII^e siècles*, Paris 1934, esp. 5–6; R. A. Gauthier, *Le Traité De anima et de potentiis eius d'un maître ès arts* (vers 1225), in: *Revue des Sciences philos. et théol.* 66 (1982), 25: „L'aristotélisme le plus opposé à la foi, c'est aristotélisme avicennien“. De Vaux and Gauthier differ in that according to the former Avicennism was absorbed by the equally heterodox Averroism (de Vaux, *ibid.*, 15) whereas according to the latter there was a fight between the Avicennian and the early Averroist interpretation of Aristotle, which ended in about 1240 with the defeat of Avicennian Aristotelianism (Gauthier, *loc.cit.*).

¹⁰ Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum*, ed. J. Koch, Engl. transl. J. O. Riedl, Milwaukee 1944, 34: „*Ulterius erravit ponendo intellectum agentem intelligentiam ultimam vel decimam ... et ponit felicitatem nostram in hoc consistere quod intellectus noster sibi coniungitur, sive ipsum speculatur.*“

Another indication is that Avicenna's theory of the separate active intellect is included among the very theses condemned in 1277, though Avicenna's name is not mentioned:

That the active intellect is some separate substance which is superior to the potential intellect ...¹¹

Avicenna's theory of the separate active intellect is one of his most famous. He had maintained that there is one intellect in our soul which is immortal¹², and that there is the active intellect outside of our soul¹³, which he identifies (in other works than the *De anima*) with the last of the incorporeal intelligences of the universe¹⁴. Now, when Giles of Rome says that Avicenna erred with his thesis that our bliss consists of being joined with the active intellect, he refers to passages like the following, which is in Avicenna's *De anima* V,6:

When the soul will be freed from the body and from the accidents of the body <after death>, then it can be joined with the active intelligence and will find in it intelligible beauty and everlasting pleasure¹⁵.

Obviously, Giles is convinced that this theory of a union with a tenth-sphere-*intelligentia* would rival the Christian theory of paradise and bliss in the afterlife. 40 years before Giles, William of Auvergne has already seen the danger of the theory, but still attributes it to the Peripatetics in general:

... Aristotle and his followers, namely Alfarabi, Algazel and Avicenna ... called <this separate intelligence> active intelligence and said that it was perfecting all souls and that the perfect union of our souls with it ... is beauty and glory. From all this evidently follows that this intelligence has to be worshiped by all human souls and praised with the highest praise of honour and that men should conceive of it as their true God¹⁶.

¹¹ R. Hissette, *Enquête sur les 219 articles condamnés à Paris le 7 Mars 1277*, Louvain – Paris 1977, 193: „*Quod intellectus agens est quaedam substantia separata superior ad intellectum possibilem ...*“.

¹² Avicenna, aš-Šifā', Ṭabī'iyāt, Kitāb an-nafs (*De anima*), ed. F. Rahman, London 1959, p.V c.4, 227, line 13.

¹³ Avicenna, op. cit., p.V c.5, 234, line 17.

¹⁴ Avicenna, aš-Šifā', Ilāhīyāt (*Metaphysics*), ed. G. C. Anawati and S. Zayed, Cairo 1960, p.IX c.4, 407, line 4; id., Nağāt, Cairo 21357/1938, 278, line 2.

¹⁵ Avicenna, *Liber De Anima seu Sextus De Naturalibus*, ed. S. Van Riet, 2 vols., Louvain–Leiden 1968/1972, p. 5 c.6, vol.II, 150: „*Cum autem anima liberabitur a corpore et ab accidentibus corporis, tunc poterit coniungi intelligentiae agentis, et tunc inveniet in ea pulchritudinem intelligibilem et delectationem perennem.*“

¹⁶ William of Auvergne, *De anima*, in: *Opera omnia*, 2 vols, ed. F. Hotot, with Supplementum, ed. B. Le Feron, Orléans–Paris 1674 (repr.: Frankfurt a. M. 1963), vol.II, c.5 p. 2, 112b: „*<Aristoteles, et sequaces eius, videlicet Alpharalius, Algazel, et Avicenna> vocaverunt eam intelligentiam agentem, et dixerunt eam esse creatricem et perfectricem omnium animarum humanarum, et quoniam perfecta communicatio animarum nostrarum ad ipsam est eis voluntas perfectionis, et hoc est dicere beatitudo et gloria. Ex quibus omnibus consequens est evidenter ipsam adorandam animabus humanis, atque colendam cultu supremo honoris, et habendum Deum verum ab hominibus.*“

William then attacks the active intellect directly as being a rival of the Christian God in its function of creator and *perfector* of all souls and as the cause for complete bliss. In the course, however, of the thirteenth century, the scholastics get to know Aristotle better and better and with the help of Averroes' commentary they arrive at a true picture of Aristotle's theory. Eventually, Avicenna's doctrine is dismissed as being in conflict with Christian faith.

This is the theory of Gauthier and de Vaux, and I would like you to believe that it is not correct. The main argument against it is that William of Auvergne, Giles of Rome and the condemnation of 1277 are not at all typical for the scholastics' treatment of Avicenna's psychology. Apart from the few passages mentioned¹⁷, there are others which criticize Avicenna's theory of prophecy¹⁸, but this is all. The remaining 1600 quotations from *De anima* that are known to me do not raise the topic of Avicenna's compatibility with Christian faith at all.

Another argument against the thesis is that the success of Avicenna's *De anima* in the first half of the thirteenth century is mainly due to the reception of its elaborate system of the vegetative faculties and the external and internal senses. It replaced older accounts of the twelfth century and determined the structure of psychological treatises for many decades. Avicenna's theory of the intellect, on the other hand, met with an indigenous Christian tradition too strong to be pushed aside. To enumerate its main recipients: Dominicus Gundissalinus and Petrus Hispanus are the only authors who accept Avicenna's theory that the active intellect is separate without identifying it with God and without accepting an additional active intellect in the soul. Roger Bacon, John Pecham, Roger Marston and Vital du Four adhere to the doctrine of Avicennized Augustinianism by teaching – on the authority of Augustine and Avicenna (or Aristotle) – that the active intellect is identical with God. The anonymous author of the *Liber de causis primis et secundis* is a forerunner to this group since he implies that Avicenna's theory of the separate active intellect can be expressed in Augustinian terms. Jean de la Rochelle and the *Summa fratris Alexandri* attribute an active intellect to the soul in one respect but identify it with God in another respect, namely in regard to eternal truths (they therefore partially adhere to the theory of Avicennized Augustinianism). Many authors reject the theory of a separate active intellect (e. g. Bonaventure and Albertus Magnus), whereas others are influenced by Avicenna in many ways, but do not quote or adopt him on the intellect (e. g. Michael Scot and Roland of Cremona). In sum, Avicenna's theory of the intellect was transformed rather than accepted¹⁹.

¹⁷ To these should be added Thomas Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, d.17 q.2 a.1 Resp..

¹⁸ Giles of Rome, *op. cit.*, 30–34.

¹⁹ For a full demonstration of this argument see D. N. Hasse, *Avicenna's De anima in the Latin West* (as in note 5), chapter II.6.

De Vaux and Gauthier, like many others who have written on the role of Avicenna in Western scholasticism, are influenced by Gilson's brilliantly written, but speculative and often misunderstood articles on Avicennized Augustinianism²⁰. The core of these articles is the thesis that Thomas Aquinas' criticism of Augustine's theory of intellection should be understood as a reaction against Avicennized Augustinianism, a doctrinal current which combined Avicennian and Augustinian theories about illumination. In contrast to de Vaux and Gauthier, Gilson conceived of this reaction against Avicenna as philosophically motivated and not dependent upon whether the theory was dangerous to Christian faith or not²¹. But Gilson's heritage was that subsequent scholars linked the fate of Avicenna's psychology with the success of his theories of the intellect. Just as de Vaux and Gauthier, Gilson can be criticized for not having adequately understood the story of Avicenna's influence in the West. The term „Avicennized Augustinianism“ is useful only if it is meant to signify a specific doctrine and not an entire school of thought. This doctrine – the identification of the separate active intellect with God on the authority of Augustine and Avicenna – is held by a number of theologians, whom I have named above. But Avicenna's own theory of the intellect, with its four-level system of intellection, its combination of theories of abstraction and emanation, and its doctrine of intuition was not accepted as such in the Latin West. Thus, Gilson's theory, with its very limited focus on the transformation of a special part of Avicenna's intellect theory, cannot account for either the success or the decline of Avicenna's psychology as a whole.

It seems more likely that the mystery of the decline of Avicenna's influence can be solved by looking at the more successful parts of his psychological theory, namely the vegetative and animal faculties. If one browses through the many quotations from *De anima*, especially those from the middle of the thirteenth century, when the turn against Avicenna took place, one will find that only a few Avicennian theories were openly refuted. Most of them simply disappeared by not occurring anymore. There is, however, one author who is an excellent witness to this development because of his vast knowledge of the Avicennian corpus: Albertus Magnus.

To take the example of the faculty of smell²². Up to the time when Albertus wrote his psychological works, many writers quoted the Avicennian defi-

²⁰ E. Gilson, *Pourquoi Saint Thomas ...* (as in note 3); id., *Les sources gréco-arabes de l'augustinisme avicennisant*, in: *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 4 (1929), 5–149; id., Roger Marston: *un cas d'augustinisme avicennisant*, in: *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 8 (1933), 37–42.

²¹ E. Gilson, *Pourquoi Saint Thomas ...* (as in note 3), 122–127.

²² For Albertus' theory of the senses see A. Schneider, *Die Psychologie Alberts des Großen*, in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Band 4, Heft 5, Münster 1903, 88–131. For further literature on Albertus Magnus see G. Krieger, *Albertus Magnus. Veröffentlichungen in den Jahren 1973–1988*, in: G. Fløistad (ed.), *Contemporary Philosophy. A New Survey*. Vol. 6: *Philosophy and Science in the Middle Ages. Part 1*, Dordrecht 1990, 241–259.

dition for the faculty of smell: e. g. Gundissalinus, John Blund, Michael Scot, Jean de la Rochelle, Petrus Hispanus and Vincent of Beauvais. According to Avicenna

〈the faculty〉 perceives what the inhaled air conveys to it, and this is either the odour in the vapour which is mixed with the air or the odour imprinted in the 〈faculty〉 through the change 〈in the air〉 which the odorous body produces²³.

This definition deserves attention because it is in conflict with Aristotle. Avicenna mentions two alternative and possible theories: the first says that the air is mixed with particles issued by the odorous body like a vapour (*evaporatio*), the second says that the air is changed by the odorous body. Aristotle, on the other hand, had explicitly rejected the vapour theory²⁴. Instead of saying that the medium is changed materially or that it transports little particles, Aristotle seems to maintain that the air is simply moved, in a way similar to what happens in vision²⁵.

Albertus Magnus is the first scholastic author to notice this disagreement in doctrine. In his early *De homine*, dating from about 1243, he claims *secundum Avicennam* that the medium in the process of smelling is either mixed with vapour from the odorous body or changed by that body²⁶. It is clear that Albertus does not yet see a disaccordance between Avicenna and Aristotle, whom he makes a partisan of the theory of evaporation²⁷. Albertus knows the passage in which Aristotle rejects the vapour theory, but interprets it as being directed against the claim that there is no odour in water²⁸.

In about 1253–1257, when Albertus writes his second major psychological work, the *De anima*, he has a different understanding of Aristotle's opinion on the subject and turns against Avicenna: he explicitly says that Avicenna and Aristotle contradict each other on the question of the medium and that Avicenna's theory is wrong.

And therefore only the quality of odour is diffused in the medium without any material of the odorous thing²⁹.

This passage is clearly influenced by Averroes. Albertus adopts Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle as an opponent of the vapour theory and his argu-

²³ Avicenna, op. cit., p. 1 c.5, 84: „... ad apprehendendum id quod offert ei aer attractus de odore qui est in vapore permixto cum aere, aut de odore impresso in illo ex permutatione quae fit ex corpore odorifero.“

²⁴ Aristotle, *De sensu et sensato*, c.5, 443a21–443b2.

²⁵ On Aristotle's theory of the medium of smell see D. Ross, *Aristotle: Parva Naturalia. A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*, Oxford 1955, 214–215.

²⁶ Albertus, *De homine* (*Summa de creaturis, secunda pars*), in: Albertus, *Opera omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet, 38 vols, Paris, 1896, vol.35, q.30, 270b.

²⁷ Albertus, op. cit., q.29, 262b („dicit autem Aristoteles in primo de Sensu et sensato, quod odor est fumalis evaporatio“), and q.30, 269a. The reference is to Aristotle, *De sensu et sensato*, c.2, 438b25.

²⁸ Albertus, op. cit., q.30, 270a.

²⁹ Albertus, *De anima*, ed. C. Stroick (Ed. Colon. T. VII,1), Münster 1968, 1.2 tr.3. c.25, 135: „Et ideo sine omni materia rei odorabilis diffunditur in medio sola qualitas odoris.“

mentation in favour of immaterial transmission of odours³⁰. The main argument is traditional: it is well known that vultures fly to distant places for prey, e. g. to a battlefield in a different country, but it is impossible that particles travel over such distances. Avicenna had countered this argument by saying that vultures probably do not smell but see the prey³¹. But Albertus' turn against Avicenna is not only due to a new reading of Aristotle, it is also a decision in favour of a philosophical and immaterialistic explanation of smell and against Avicenna's materialistic explanation. Albertus' theory is the result of the application of a philosophical principle to all senses, namely that the sensible form does not exist materially in the medium³².

Incidentally, someone who believes in scientific progress will find that Albertus was rather unfortunate in his choice. According to our modern theories molecules travel from the odorous body to the percipient, and Aristotle was wrong. Moreover, vultures do not smell but see their prey (or see other birds circling). I shall come back to this later.

To take a second example, the faculty of taste. Again, Avicenna's influential short-hand definition contains a theory in conflict with Aristotle. The main problem in this case is that Aristotle did not yet know about the nerves. They were discovered in the third century BC by Herophilus and Erasistratus of Alexandria, who carried out dissections and probably also vivisections of human subjects³³. Thus, for Aristotle, who believes that the heart was the centre of sensation, the proper organ of taste is close to the heart and there is no external medium³⁴. In contrast, for Avicenna the organ is the nerves in the tongue and the medium is the saliva.

Albertus knows about this disaccordance, and in *De homine* tries to find a compromise by saying that both the heart and the nerves are the organs of taste, but in different respects. However, regarding the medium, he takes the side of Avicenna: the medium is not the tongue, but the saliva³⁵. Again, Albertus turns against Avicenna ten years later in his *De anima*, this time, however, without mentioning the Arabic philosopher. He maintains that there is no extrinsic medium, but only an internal medium which is the surface of the tongue (*extremitas linguae*). The function of the saliva is to facilitate the contact between tongue and the objects of taste. This theory is close to Aristotle's, but with regard to the organ of taste Albertus follows Avicenna:

³⁰ Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, ed. F. S. Crawford, Cambridge/Mass. 1953, I.2 c.97, 276–278.

³¹ Avicenna, *op. cit.*, p. 2 c.4, 152–154.

³² This principle is stated in Albertus, *op. cit.*, I.2 tr.3 c.6, 105b–106a and 107b.

³³ See F. Solmsen, *Greek Philosophy and the Discovery of the Nerves*, in: *Museum Helveticum* 18 (1961), 184–192; H. Von Staden, *Herophilus: The art of medicine in early Alexandria*, Cambridge 1989, 159–160 and 250–259.

³⁴ Aristotle, *De anima*, I.2 c.10, 422a8–16; *id.*, *De sensu et sensato*, c.2, 439a2–3. The implication seems to be that the tongue is the internal medium of the faculty of taste.

³⁵ Albertus, *De homine*, q.32 a.3 and 4, 278b–280b.

the organ is the *nervus gustativus*³⁶. About one year later, in Albertus' *De sensu et sensato*, the nerves are not mentioned any more; in a rather forced argument he explains that both the heart and the tongue are the organs of taste, but in different respects³⁷.

I do not want to suggest that Albertus' *De anima* is an anti-Avicennian piece. This would be far from true. In fact, the treatise is heavily indebted to Avicenna in that it silently takes over many important non-Aristotelian theories of the Arabic philosopher, such as those on the faculty of estimation, on vision, on dreams etc. But it is worth pointing out that Albertus' attitude towards Aristotle has changed. Whereas in *De homine* he makes every effort to reduce the differences between the two and to find a compromise, he now castigates Avicenna for his disobedience to Aristotle. To quote Albertus on a third sense, namely on touch:

... Avicenna and others despised following the statement of Aristotle and said that the nervous flesh is the organ of touch ... and they said that touch does not have any medium ... But we, wishing both to save the truth and to give reverence to the father of the philosophers, Aristotle, we say that flesh is the medium of touch ...³⁸.

The language chosen is rather harsh: *sententiam Aristotelis imitari contempserunt*. If one has a closer look at this passage, one will find that Albertus briefly afterwards reintroduces the nerves through the back-door. He is too much of a natural philosopher and an admirer of Avicenna to break completely with the Peripatetic tradition that Avicenna represents.

But others do. In the commentaries by Adam of Buckfield and Pseudo-Petrus Hispanus the faculty of touch is discussed without any reference to the nerves³⁹. The same applies to Thomas Aquinas' commentary⁴⁰. In fact, the only nerves Thomas mentions in his whole corpus are the motor and optical nerves. The other sensory nerves have disappeared⁴¹. I am convinced that this was a conscious decision: the sensory nerves belong to common medical knowledge, they appear in many theological and philosophical writ-

³⁶ Albertus, *De anima*, l.2 tr.3 q.27, 138, lines 45–50, and q.28, 140, lines 13–20.

³⁷ Albertus, *De sensu et sensato*, in: Albertus, *Opera omnia* (as in note 26), vol.9, tr.1 c.15, 37.

³⁸ Albertus, *De anima*, l.2 tr.3 c.34, 147: „... *Et ideo Avicenna et multi alii hanc sententiam Aristotelis imitari contempserunt et dixerunt carnem nervosam esse organum tactus ... et ... dicunt tactum non habere medium aliquod ... Nos autem et veritatem salvare cupientes et reverentiam exhibere patri philosophorum Aristoteli dicamus carnem esse medium tactus ...*“.

³⁹ Adam of Buckfield, *Sententia de anima*, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canon misc. 322, fols 40rb–42ra; Pseudo-Petrus Hispanus, *Expositio libri de anima*, in: M. A. Alonso (ed.), *Pedro Hispano Obras Filosóficas*, vol. III, Madrid 1952, 225–240.

⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri de anima*, l.2 c.22, 159–162.

⁴¹ The sole exception known to me is Thomas, *De veritate*, in: *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, tomi XXII, 1–3, Rome–Paris, 1970–1976, q.29 a.4, 858, line 143, where he speaks about the theory (which he attributes to the physicians) that the sensory and motor nerves originate in the brain. For Thomas' medical knowledge see M. D. Jordan, 'Medicine and Natural Philosophy in Aquinas', in: A. Zimmermann (ed.), *Thomas von Aquin*, Berlin–New York 1988, 233–246 (*Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 19).

ings of the thirteenth century, including books as widely read as Vincent of Beauvais' encyclopedia and Averroes' commentaries⁴².

If for a moment we accept the standpoint of someone who believes in scientific progress, we will find the attitude of Thomas Aquinas and his colleagues unacceptable. They turned their back on about 1500 years of research between Aristotle and their time. This attitude would have been called progressive, if they had given up these theories because of new findings. But to take up theories again like the one that the heart is the centre of sensation, which is nonsense, cannot be called anything but reactionary.

To return to the historical perspective: One could argue that the attitude towards the authority of Aristotle is due to the format of the commentary, which becomes very popular in the mid-thirteenth century. But this can only be an external reason. Nobody is forced to write a commentary that slavishly adheres to the Aristotelian text, especially not theologians such as Thomas and Albertus. Before these two writers there is a well-established tradition of theological treatises on the division of the faculties of the soul. Examples are Roland of Cremona, Jean de la Rochelle, the *Summa fratris Alexandri* and the *De homine* by Albertus himself. The latter work is in some way the culmination of this tradition, in which Peripatetic teaching is blended with the medical tradition known to the Latins since the twelfth century. At this point in the history of psychology, the two principal possibilities for Albertus and his readers seem to be: either to develop Peripatetic psychology in a new, post-Avicennian direction (as happened in the Arabic world) or to return to the founder of this tradition and take a deeper understanding of Aristotle's book as the starting-point for writing the philosophy of the soul. Albertus himself and almost everybody else – apart from Petrus Hispanus in his *Scientia libri de anima* – choses the latter path.

What is behind the decline of Avicenna's *De anima* is a changing attitude towards philosophy. Firstly, in the course of the thirteenth century the authority of Aristotle grows to such an extent that even independent thinkers would not find a way to emancipate themselves philosophically from the Greek role-model. This development is reinforced by the distribution of Averroes' account of the Peripatetic tradition in which Avicenna is the one who has deserted Aristotle and in which only Aristotle could validate the truth⁴³. Secondly, the scientific side of philosophy – such as physiology in

⁴² See Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum naturale*, Douai 1624 (repr. Graz 1964–1965), l.24 c.56, 1753, and l.25 c.24, 1790; Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in de anima*, l.2 c.108, 298, and l.2 c.116, 312.

⁴³ Cf. Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in de anima*, l.3 c.30, 470: „*Sed illud quod fecit illum hominem errare, et nos etiam longo tempore, est quia Moderni dimittunt libros Aristotelis et considerant libros expositorum, et maxime in anima, credendo quod iste liber impossibile est ut intelligatur. Et hoc est propter Avicennam, qui non imitatus est Aristotelem nisi in Dialectica, sed in aliis erravit, et maxime in Metaphysica; et hoc quia incepit quasi a se.*“ For Averroes' attitude towards Aristotle see H. Gätje, Averroes als Aristoteleskommentator, in: *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 114 (1964), 59–65.

the theory of the soul – loses its appeal, which it still had for earlier theologians such as Roland of Cremona. Therefore, if one praises the improved knowledge of the Aristotelian corpus and the metaphysical awakening of the second half of the thirteenth century, one should bear in mind that the dark side of it sometimes is a setback for the progress of science, that is, a setback for the development of a very vital part of medieval philosophy.