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Editors

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY OF MIND 8

Psychology and Philosophy

*Inquiries into the Soul from
Late Scholasticism to
Contemporary Thought*



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PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Volume 8

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PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

INQUIRIES INTO THE SOUL FROM LATE SCHOLASTICISM TO CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

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Sara Heinämaa and Martina Reuter

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Introduction

Sara Heinämaa and Martina Reuter

Aristotle's *On the Soul* (*De anima*) is often presented as the first embryonic form of modern psychology. We are taught and trained to think that the Aristotelian concept of the soul covers the basic functions that today form the core areas of psychological research: perception, emotion, memory and intellect. On the other hand, some contemporary commentators are ready to argue that although Aristotle was interested in the directedness and reflexivity of perception and thought, his discourse on the soul does not conceptualize or systematize these structures as is done in modern philosophy of mind.¹ Thus, it may seem that Aristotle's *On the Soul* belongs more intimately to the history of psychology than to the history of the philosophy of mind.

It is less well known, and seldom emphasized, that Aristotle's *On the Soul* was used as a textbook in European universities well into the seventeenth century. For almost two thousand years Aristotelian psychology was considered an essential part of the curriculum of natural philosophy. Moreover, psychology, in parallel with physics and mathematics, was often studied as an example of the Aristotelian science of nature. So when Descartes' presented his account of scientific knowledge founded on the *ego cogitatio*, he addressed an audience well trained in classical Aristotelian psychology and its understanding of the principles and faculties of souls.

The idea that our knowledge of the soul is highly accurate and important was already present in Aristotle's *On the Soul*. The work starts with the following statement:

We regard all knowledge as beautiful and valuable, but one kind more so than another, either in virtue of its accuracy, or because it relates to higher and more wonderful things. On both these counts it is reasonable to regard the inquiry concerning the soul as of the first importance.²

¹ For such arguments and alternative viewpoints, see Sara Heinämaa, Vili Lähteenmäki and Pauliina Remes, "Introduction," in Sara Heinämaa, Vili Lähteenmäki and Pauliina Remes (eds.), *Consciousness: From Perception to Reflection* (Dordrecht: Springer), 1–26.

² Aristoteles, *On the Soul*, 402a1–5, trans. W.S. Hett, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957). A more literal translation of Aristotle's text is provided by J.A. Smith: "Holding as we do that, while knowledge of any kind is a thing to be honoured and prized, one kind of it may, either by reason of its greater exactness or of a higher dignity and greater wonderfulness in its objects, be more honourable and precious than another, on both accounts we

As is well known, Descartes' meditations gave the soul, or mind, a new foundational role, both methodologically and metaphysically. Descartes grounded the whole system of the sciences on the mind's capacity to know itself as a thinking thing (*res cogitans*). The British empiricists problematized Descartes' deductive approach and argued that all knowledge, also all knowledge about the mind and its capacities, stems from experience and proceeds by association and abstraction. These thinkers developed subtle distinctions between different kinds of mental contents in order to defend this view, such as the distinctions between inner and outer sense, complex and simple ideas, ideas and impressions, and ideas of primary and secondary qualities. In 1780s Kant's transcendental turn radically changed the setting. Whereas Descartes still considered the mind to be a real thing, a substance, and thus knowable on the same metaphysical grounds as material substance, Kant strictly separated transcendental knowledge, including knowledge of cognitive capacities, from empirical knowledge of the world. This deeply reformed the epistemological question about our ability to know our own minds and proposed a whole new set of methodological and ontological problems.

Today, empirical psychology constitutes its own autonomous discipline; and conceptual studies of the nature of the mind, or consciousness, belong to subfields of the philosophical discipline: epistemology, philosophy of mind, history of philosophy and the theoretical parts of cognitive science. Psychology and philosophy are conceived and practiced as two distinct forms of knowledge, one empirical and one conceptual or transcendental.

The present volume investigates the Western tradition of philosophical psychology and its relation to scientific psychology from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the present. The aim is to question some deep-seated convictions about the nature of these two sciences and their objects of study. Our interest in the history of thought is twofold: We turn back in order to learn from our ancestors and in order to question our own habitual notions about the mind, the soul and the psyche, and their mutual relations. Instead of simply buttressing the received view of one unified line of development – having its starting point in Aristotle and two major turning points in Descartes and Kant – the articles of the book present several parallel developments and a series of incremental changes. This does not mean that the profound impact of Descartes and Kant is overlooked, quite the contrary. The aim is to deepen our understanding of their influence by unveiling less well known lines of development, such as the post-Kantian Aristotelianism of the nineteenth century. We find in these developments new inventive accounts of the unity of the soul as well as the unificatory and differentiating aspects of perception.

In the first chapter, Gary Hatfield studies the origin of contemporary psychology and philosophy of mind from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the twentieth century. He examines the early modern conception of “the place of the

should naturally be led to place in the front rank the study of the soul,” trans. J.A. Smith, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

mind in nature,” challenging two recurring notions about Descartes’ understanding of the mind: the notion that Descartes’s dualism located mind outside nature and the assumption that his mind–body dualism equates a division between the psychological and the non-psychological. Hatfield argues that Descartes’s attempt to explain sensory phenomena required reference both to mind and to matter. Moreover, he uses his close reading of Descartes as a basis for the rehabilitation of the two most problematic aspects of modern psychology: introspection and behaviorist modes of explanation. Hatfield distinguishes between the different tasks attributed to introspection and argues that introspection can serve as a valuable tool for psychological knowledge if its function is restricted to the reporting of mental occurrences, without any commitment to the transparency of the mind to itself. In an analogous way, Hatfield shows that behaviorism is problematic as a general methodology but valuable as a restricted strategy for the explanation of specific cases of psychological phenomena.

Chapters 2 and 3 turn back to investigate the Aristotelian heritage. They show how Aristoteles’ works were received, interpreted and developed in the Renaissance and early modern thinking. In Chapter 2, Pekka Kärkkäinen and Henrik Lagerlund examine the contents and methods of philosophical psychology as it was taught in the sixteenth century at the universities of Erfurt, Padua and Bologna. Contrary to the received notion of the Renaissance, Kärkkäinen and Lagerlund argue that philosophical psychology of the sixteenth century was tightly bound to the Aristotelian tradition. The chapter also discloses historical differences between the Erfurt school and the North-Italian centres of learning. Philosophical psychology in Erfurt had a strong connection to the Buridianian tradition, which coloured discussions of the metaphysical nature of the soul as well as disputes about universal realism versus nominalism. In Padua and Bologna, on the other hand, metaphysical debates on the nature of the soul culminated in a dispute about the limits of natural reason. Pietro Pomponazzi argued that the immortality of the human soul cannot be proven by natural reason. He defended the position that the question must be left open: the soul can neither be proved mortal nor immortal.

In Chapter 3, Tuomo Aho studies the status of psychological knowledge as it was understood by the leading scholastic philosophers of the sixteenth century. Aho focuses his discussion on the very beginning of Aristotle’s *On the Soul*, the first sections of the first chapter, which consists of some important methodological remarks. He examines a number of scholastic Aristotle-commentaries, in particular two great Jesuit works, the so-called Coimbra-commentary and Francisco Suárez’s more original *De anima*. Aho’s inquiry demonstrates that most sixteenth-century commentators had a clear position on the question concerning the status of psychology as a science. The chapter also suggests that in the context of this “second scholasticism,” the Aristotelian theory on the soul was studied and used as an exemplary science. In these discussions, we can already find insights that later became systematized in Descartes’ discourse on the mind.

Together these two chapters give us a new perspective on sixteenth-century centres of learning by illuminating the richness and versatility of Aristotelian psychology. What we find is not one unitary theory but a flexible approach which

included several disparate conceptions of the soul, its nature and functions, and its relations to other natural and supra-natural phenomena. Thus, we come to see that Aristotelian psychology is not in any simple oppositional relation to the modern disciplines of psychology, epistemology, and philosophy of mind. With regard to the science of the soul, we cannot conclude, as is often done, that modern science was born out of the breakdown of Aristotelianism. On the contrary, it originated and developed in an Aristotelian environment.

In Chapter 4, Mikko Yrjönsuuri continues the investigation of Cartesianism by asking what it would mean to talk about psychology in Descartes' terms. Yrjönsuuri argues that the possibility of Cartesian psychology depends as much on Descartes' concepts of science and human knowledge as on his concepts of the soul and the thinking self. In his interpretation, Descartes' epistemological framework does not allow to formulate psychological questions in the Aristotelian way, because the Cartesian distinction between the psychic and the physical differs from the Aristotelian one. Neither does Cartesianism include questions of the type that we encounter in contemporary psychology or philosophy of mind. Yrjönsuuri agrees with Hatfield in arguing that Descartes formulates psychological problems both in terms of thinking (mind) and in terms of extension (matter), but he argues that Descartes' concept of the intellectual soul cannot be naturalized in the same way as his concepts of the sensing soul and the perceiving soul.

Chapter 5 studies Descartes' rationalist successor and critic, Benedict Spinoza. Theo Verbeek clarifies the relation between three modes of thought that are central to Spinoza's account of our knowledge and understanding of the human mind: the concepts of intellect, imagination and reason. For Spinoza, the highest form of cognition is the intuitive understanding achieved by the intellect. Reason-based knowledge remains secondary in relation to intuitive knowledge and provides general and abstract ideas, which do not denote any real existing entities but merely have an instrumental role in the explanation of the relations between such entities. Verbeek shows that in his final analysis, Spinoza conceives these general ideas as *entia imaginationis*, products of imagination, and he concludes that Spinoza's notion of reason is closer to the notion of imagination than to that of the intellect.

Early modern reconceptions of the soul also had far-reaching consequences in the areas of moral and political philosophy. Resting on the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, the British empiricists elaborated and developed the idea that human action is grounded on beliefs and motivated by desires. In Chapter 6, Thomas Pink shows how this new focus on motives and desires related to traditional scholastic explanations, which were informed by the Aristotelian conception of practical reason. Pink illuminates the emergence of the so-called belief-desire model of the soul and shows how it affected conceptions of moral responsibility. He contrasts the theories of Samuel Pufendorf and John Locke, claiming that the former remains close to the scholastic theory of moral obligation adopted and developed by Suárez, whereas the latter breaks with this tradition and introduces a new conception of agency based on beliefs and desires.

Enlightenment philosophy witnessed the first wave of a strictly empirical philosophy of mind with inductive methods. Riku Juti examines the strengths and weak-

nesses of inductivism in Thomas Reid's attempt to develop a scientific philosophy of the mind. He argues that Reid's concept of induction is Newtonian and should be understood as a means of discovery rather than as a means of justification. Moreover, Juti suggests that Reid's distinction between things "in the mind" and things "external to the mind" is not ontological but relational or intentional. The chapter ends with an analysis of Reid's famous principles of common sense. Juti argues that Reid's principles come close to the general propositions postulated by medieval philosophers and that Reid can be correctly understood only if one remembers that he was a pre-Kantian philosopher.

The eighth chapter discusses the Kantian turn in the philosophy of consciousness and experience. Camilla Serck-Hanssen explicates Kant's concepts of apperception and inner sense, and studies them in relation to his sceptical attitude towards the idea that psychology could be regarded as an empirical science. In Kant's terminology, inner sense is the consciousness of the events that take place within the mind whereas apperception is the reflexive consciousness of one's own spontaneous acts. These two concepts generate two different questions concerning the relation between consciousness and nature. On the one hand, there is the question of how inner nature or mental nature is related to physical nature; on the other hand, there is the question of how spontaneity is related to the whole of nature – inner nature as well as outer nature. Serck-Hanssen argues that Kant's answer to the first question is closely related to his pessimism regarding the status of psychology as an empirical science. The latter question is more far-reaching and it also has significance for Kant's moral philosophy and aesthetics.

Kantian philosophy introduced new criteria for scientific knowledge and philosophical thinking. In Chapter 9, Martina Reuter studies how the physiognomic theory of Johann Caspar Lavater exemplifies the modern division between science and pseudo-science. Lavater's aim was to identify human character traits and dispositions by making observations on a person's physical appearance. Reuter argues that Kant's distinction between science and art helps to understand and explicate the pseudo-scientific nature of Lavater's theory. The chapter concludes by showing that Mary Wollstonecraft adapted some of Lavater's ideas. Wollstonecraft was an early feminist interested in the cultivation of human character. She shared Lavater's assumption that there is a correspondence between bodily constitution and character, but she remained true to the Enlightenment spirit by emphasizing the role of education and by questioning Lavater's preference for natural necessity over human freedom.

Nineteenth-century romanticism and idealism witnessed a revival of the Aristotelian tradition. The Aristotelianism of the nineteenth-century Aristotelians, such as Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg and Franz Brentano, was profoundly informed by Kant's conception of knowledge. Since the beginning of the century, Kant's distinction between critical philosophy and positive science had guided inquiries into mind and consciousness. In Chapter 10, Eduardo Fugali argues that Trendelenburg and Brentano returned to Aristotle's concepts in order to develop a philosophy of mind which would not depend on empirical psychology but would secure its legitimacy by