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Juhana Toivanen

Perception and the Internal Senses. Peter of John Olivi on the Cognitive Functions of the Sensitive Soul (Investigating Medieval Philosophy, 5). Leiden/Boston: Brill 2013. xiv + 374 pp. ISBN 9789004250895.

Since the mid-1990s, the philosophical psychology of the Franciscan thinker Peter of John Olivi (1248-1298) has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars in the English-speaking world. But despite the growing interest in Olivi's direct-realist theory of perception and his critique of traditional 'species theories' of cognition, monographs concentrating on Olivi's philosophical thought have remained rare. Efrem Bettoni's *Le dottrine filosofiche di Pier di Giovanni Olivi* (1959) was the last book-length systematic exploration here. This situation has now changed with Juhana Toivanen's *Perception and the Internal Senses*. In this study, Toivanen offers a detailed discussion of the cognitive psychology of the sensitive soul, with a special eye to the similarities between perceptual cognition in human and non-human animals. On the basis of a study of Olivi's metaphysics of the soul (Part I), his theory of sensory perception (Part II) and Olivi's account of the inner senses (Part III), Toivanen argues that for Olivi, contrary to early-modern thinkers such as Descartes, there was a fundamental similarity between human and animal perceptual cognition (346-7). The result of his discussion arguably is the best analysis of Olivi's views on sensory cognition available in any language.

Methodologically, Toivanen aims at a "philosophical reconstruction of Olivi's views concerning the cognitive psychology of the sensitive soul" (345). This means that detailed reconstruction of Olivi's arguments and ideas will sometimes go at the expense of extensive contextualization. In light of our poor understanding of Olivi's often intriguing and original ideas, this is certainly a legitimate choice. Moreover, Toivanen is careful not to insulate Olivi's thought: to make clear just how Olivi's ideas were original, Toivanen provides brief discussions of relevant contemporaries wherever needed.

In Part I of the book, Toivanen offers a discussion of Olivi's metaphysics of the soul. Generally, the way in which a thinker sees the relation between soul and body will shape his views on cognition, and this seems to be particularly clear in Olivi. Olivi maximizes the difference between human soul and body, and points out that extended objects can in no way affect the immaterial soul. Consequently, perception must be analysed as an active process in which the soul outwardly projects its attention rather than as a mere taking in of information from without. But the souls of non-human animals, Olivi believes, are 'corporeal forms', which are produced "from the matter of the body by natural causes" (78). At first sight, then, given that Olivi's views on perception are

shaped by his metaphysics of the soul, and given that the human soul is importantly different from that of other animals, it seems likely that perception in humans and non-human animals will work in substantially different ways too. Yet, as Toivanen convincingly argues, the metaphysical difference between humans and other animals does not translate into a psychological difference (82). This is so, because both the souls of human and non-human animals alike are 'simple', and therefore above the influence of bodily objects. Unfortunately, the notion of simplicity that is at work here remains hard to understand, but Toivanen's general claim is clear enough: despite the differences between animal and human souls, perception is an active process for the animal soul no less than it is for the human soul.

The nature of this activity is further explored in Part 11. There, Toivanen shows how Olivi articulates the activity of human perception in terms of the attention that the soul pays to its environment. According to Toivanen, Olivi's conclusions about human perception should be extrapolated to perception in other animals, and he concludes that "the differences between the perceptual process in non-human animals and in human beings are minor" (222). This extrapolation is not entirely without its problems, however. For in arguing for the active nature of human perception, one of Olivi's principal motivations is to safeguard human freedom. According to Olivi, the idea that our senses are determined by external impulses can easily lead to the more general conclusion that all our cognitive powers are determined by external stimuli, and this, in its turn, will nourish the erroneous belief that even our will is a passive power. As such passivity sits uneasily with freedom, Olivi thinks the activity of human perception needs to be safeguarded to establish the freedom of the human will. It is no surprise, then, that some of Olivi's most detailed and extensive discussions of human perception are found in questions that primarily regard human freedom.¹ But since, according to Olivi, free will is precisely what distinguishes men from other animals (351), it is not obvious that, even though Olivi thinks all animal souls are simple and therefore above matter, his conclusions in these questions can unproblematically be applied to perception in non-human animals too.

The textual basis for the comparison between human and non-human animal cognition is clearer in Part 111, which deals with the internal senses. According to Olivi, it is crucial for both humans and other animals that they are aware of themselves as living and embodied creatures. To account for this kind of self-awareness, he assigns a crucial role to the *sensus communis*.

1 See questions 58 and 59 in Olivi's *Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum*, ed. B. Jansen (Florence, 1922-26), vol. ii, 394-568.

In Olivi, all traditional inner senses (such as memory, imagination, estimation) are reduced to functions of a unique inner sense: the *sensus communis*, which appears to function much like the central processing unit of the entire cognitive apparatus. It is by attending to the external senses, Olivi believes, that the common sense enables them to act in the first place, and once the external senses do act, it is the way in which the common sense monitors their activity that accounts for awareness of their acts in humans and non-human animals alike (277, 280). Also, although the common sense, unlike the intellect, is unable to reflect on its own essence or its acts, Olivi does grant that it can reflectively turn to its own organ (290-1). Despite the differences between the immaterial intellect and the common sense, then, Olivi denies that self-reflexivity is entirely a prerogative of immaterial thought.

The way in which Olivi emphasizes the extent to which (human and non-human) animals are aware of themselves as embodied and living beings sometimes leads him to say things that are a bit puzzling. Thus, his claim that the primary objects of the sense of touch are the states its own organ is in (288) raises the question of how this qualifies his direct-realist commitments elsewhere. Also, Olivi's claim that the common sense is capable of reflecting on its own organ but not on its acts raises questions about just how this kind of 'organic' reflexivity contributes to self-awareness. But if the details of Olivi's account of sensory reflection raise some questions, Toivanen's discussion makes it clear enough how far Olivi is removed from philosophers who limit reflexivity and self-awareness to immaterial intellects exclusively.

Taken together, the three Parts of the book provide convincing evidence for the book's central claim, namely, that for Olivi, perceptual cognition in human and non-human animals is interestingly similar in many respects (346-7). Toivanen shows how Olivi's ideas in this field were importantly different from both those of his contemporaries and those of early-modern thinkers such as Descartes. Thus, this study will be of interest to anyone interested in the history of animal cognition. Also, its careful investigation of Olivi's views on attention, perception and the common sense, and self-awareness will make it a highly valuable source for all students of late-medieval cognitive psychology.

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