

BIENIAK, Magdalena, *The Soul-Body Problem at Paris ca. 1200-1250. Hugo of St-Cher and his Contemporaries*, transl. R. Roncarati, (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy – Series 1, vol. 42) Leuven University Press, Leuven 2010; 245 pp.; ISBN 9789058678027.

The starting-point of Magdalena Bieniak's book is a collection of *quaestiones disputatae* contained in Codex 434 of the Bibliothèque Municipale of Douai, *quaestiones* which provide testimony to the debates surrounding the soul and anthropology conducted within a Parisian milieu during the first decades of the thirteenth century. These debates were necessarily concerned, on the one hand, with the reception of Aristotle's *Libri naturales* and *Metaphysica*, accompanied as these were by Arabic and Hebrew sources, and, on the other, with theological doctrines concerning the relevant issues. As well as offering an analysis of this intellectual landscape, Bieniak's book edits for the first time five of these disputed questions: one by Hugh of St-Cher (incomplete, although it may be supplemented by a reading of Philip the Chancellor's *Summa de bono*); one by Peter of Bar (incomplete and corrupt); and three which remain anonymous. Included also is an edition of Hugh of St-Cher's *Commentary on the Sentences*, a text based on part of the tradition (i.e. two manuscripts).

The first chapter of Part One of Bieniak's study is devoted to reconstructing Hugh of St-Cher's anthropology and the theory of *unibilitas substantialis*, viewed and assessed here in broader context in order to detect its sources and its contribution to the field. This doctrine is compared first of all with the influential theory of the «double consideration» of the soul emanating from Avicenna. Despite the importance of the Avicennian perspective during the relevant period, Bieniak demonstrates that the direct source of Hugh of St-Cher's

disputed questions was not the thought of Avicenna, but rather the influential *Summa de bono* by Philip the Chancellor, as well as the *Summa aurea* by William of Auxerre. Despite his great familiarity with Aristotle, Philip the Chancellor in fact preferred to use as his sources authors holding an Augustinian view. Philip, nevertheless, like Avicenna, did not consider the union to be decisive as regards the essence of the human soul. The other principal source of Hugh's thought, namely, William of Auxerre's *Summa aurea*, was highly influential upon thirteenth-century theology. This work itself has many sources, although it seems that the influence thereon from both Avicenna and Averroes is limited. The part wherein William discusses the soul is complex, and we find two redactions thereof, each showing significant differences from the other. Both, however, claim that the rational faculty cannot constitute the specific difference between soul and angel—the first redaction going on to proclaim that «the sensible language» (or language as informed by the senses) constitutes the substantial distinction, while the second redaction, on the other hand, affirms that the substantial distinction consists in the soul's ability to sustain the body. It was through this text, namely, the *Summa aurea*, that such substantial difference, based on the body-soul connection, was assimilated by Hugh of St-Cher. According to him, the orientation towards the body does not constitute an accident, but is instead intrinsic: it is a *unibilitas substantialis*, an expression probably inspired by the *Summa de bono*, where Philip uses the expression «unitable». Bieniak reveals the *fortuna* of Hugh's formula, namely, *unibilitas substantialis*, going on to appear as it did, though slightly modified, in the writings of John of La Rochelle, Albertus Magnus and Bonaventure. The *unibilitas substantialis* theory—which denies the accidental status of the union between soul and body, as was held by some of the most influential authors (e.g. Avicenna, Philip the Chancellor and William of Auvergne)—represented a novel contribution, in fact, despite its proximity to traditional anthropological dualism, and played an important role in the second half of the thirteenth century. In order to define the intellectual framework of Hugh's contribution, Bieniak analyses some of the theories espoused by Hugh's contemporaries, theories which were very close to the *unibilitas* doctrine and, likewise, to Hugh of St-Cher's milieu. Thus Roland of Cremona belonged to this very intellectual milieu, and Bieniak in fact postulates an identical direct influence upon him by the *Summa aurea*. Admittedly, his doctrine does seem highly similar to the *unibilitas substantialis* theory, although it also contains evident differences. Within this same milieu, William of Auvergne, in his *De anima*, speaks about the *virtus essentialis* that the soul possesses in order to sustain the body, but his view expresses a relation that is more operational and functional than essential. In its turn, and despite its being an Avicennian text, the *Summa de anima* by John of La Rochelle, probably reflects a direct influence of Hugh's *unibilitas* theory. In fact, the list of names influenced by Hugh's theory does not stop here, although this influence has not been sufficiently emphasised by scholars, with the exception, as

Bieniak asserts, of its presence in Bonaventure's thought. Likewise, Albert the Great, who addressed this problem in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, as well as in the *Summa de homine*, uses the word «*unibilitas*» and speaks of the «*dependentia unibilitatis*» of the soul as constituting the specific difference between the rational soul and the angel, a difference which remains even after death. Thomas Aquinas, in turn, refers to *unibilitas* and to the *aptitudo naturalis*, although he doesn't assign the same, fundamental role thereto in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, wherein he argues that the specific difference between soul and angel is related to the degree of possibility (*gradus possibilitatis*), and wherein *unibilitas* is conceived as the most important consequence of that specific difference. Nevertheless, in his *Summa* and in *The Questions on the Soul* he says that the soul and the angel are not different as regards their essence, because the soul, without the body, does not belong to any given species. According to Bieniak, in saying so, he lends *unibilitas* an important role to play in his definition as this features within his anthropology. In Part One, Chapter Two, Bieniak analyses what she conceives as being the antecedent of the *unibilitas substantialis* formulation by Hugh of St-Cher, namely, the discussion of the soul and the concept of person. This origins of this discussion, in fact, lay in Gilbert of Poitiers' commentary on Boethius' *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium*, a text in which Gilbert focused on the distinction between the terms «individual» and «singular». Although his approach was logical, his statements were in fact given new metaphysical dimensions, as Bieniak demonstrates. Inspired by Gilbert's *Commentary*, Alan of Lille added thereto the fact that soul has a *natura communicabilis*, i.e. a natural tendency to be united to form a human being, as a part of the human individual. In doing so, he forged a connection with older doctrines from Christian theology. Alan, in turn, influenced Stephen Langton, who asserted that a person itself must be *incommunicabilis*, since it is unable to form a composite with anything else. Again, in his turn, Langton's own doctrine influenced the *Summa aurea* of William of Auxerre, who stated that an individual substance must have singularity, incommunicability and dignity. It seems that Hugh of St-Cher was familiar with Langton's question *On the person*, a work that influenced his view regarding this issue much more than did the *Summa de bono*, as Bieniak points out. According to Hugh, being a part pertains to the soul's nature. The soul was not created to subsist separately but to form a composite, namely, man. The body is, in fact, the proper place of the soul, so they will be reunited after man's death. The soul's capacity to be united, or *unibilitas*, produces its natural desire to enter into union with a body. This view is shared by Alexander of Hales in his *Glossa* on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, and by Philip the Chancellor in his question *De incarnatione*.

Closely connected in medieval psychology to the concept of *unibilitas* is the theory of the soul's rational powers, and to this question Magdalena Bieniak devotes the second part of her book. This issue is discussed by almost all the theologians active in Paris at

the beginning of the thirteenth century. Within it two traditions can be detected, namely, the Avicennian one, which defended the non-identity of the soul with its powers, and the Augustinian (and pseudo-Augustinian) one, which proclaimed the soul as the image of the Trinity and the identity between the soul and its rational powers. William of Auxerre, in the second book of his influential *Summa aurea*, though relying on Augustine's *De Trinitate*, did not himself subscribe to the «identity thesis». William's viewpoint was adopted by most thinkers, though not by all. A single anonymous question in MS Douai, 434, in contrast, affirms the identity thesis. Phillip the Chancellor, in turn, holds the identity thesis by introducing the distinction conceived by Alexander of Hales between essence and substance. According to Philip, the rational powers are not identical to their essence, though form the same substance. Peter of Bar also follows the distinction by Alexander of Hales and seems to take up ideas found in Philip the Chancellor. Hugh of St-Cher supported the identity thesis also, although, in fact, the identity and *unibilitas* theories are not compatible, as Bieniak correctly points out: *unibilitas* would be accidental in relation to the soul if the soul's essence were exhausted by the rational faculty, as Hugh had asserted. In Part Two, Chapter Two, Bieniak deals with the debate concerning the sensitive and the vegetative powers. Strongly influential, the doctrine of Philip the Chancellor conceives of *materiales dispositiones* between body and soul, and a plurality of substances. This theory presupposes a dualist conception of man and an accidental union of two substances, and had as its most direct influence Avicenna's *Fons vitae*, rather than the Avicennian *De anima*, as Bieniak clearly shows. Related to this problem is the fact that Avicenna's position was unambiguous and highly problematic for Christian theology insofar as, for him, the sensitive faculties, which include memory, cannot survive. In his *De anima*, despite following Avicenna closely, Gundissalinus mentions that these faculties survive *in potential*. Alexander of Hales also proposes two arguments—one Avicennian and one (the stronger) theological—in favour of their immortality, as does John of La Rochelle in his *Summa de anima*. In his *quaestio*, Peter of Bar endeavours to follow Avicenna, though also states that all the faculties will be present in the afterlife. William of Auvergne, for his part, presents an extremely interesting perspective, supported by philosophical arguments, to the effect that the soul is the active subject while the body plays a passive role. Hence, the presence of corporeal organs is not necessary to the permanence of the soul's faculties because their abilities are present even in the absence of their instrument. In turn, according to Hugh of St-Cher, man cannot be rational without being animal, and the mediation of the vegetative and sensitive powers must be defined as a *mediatio coniunctionis*. His solution, however, created difficulties as regards the coherence of the *unibilitas* doctrine. In her final chapter, Bieniak, specifically addresses the question of memory, a problem which led to significant debate between the years 1220 to 1230. The Augustinian view, namely, of the rational soul as God's image, was incorporated into Peter Lombard's *Sentences*,

hence its importance. Views on memory, however, became complicated by a conception which had its roots in the thought of Aristotle and Avicenna, a conception profoundly influential upon Latin psychology, and one which conceived of it as a sensitive and mortal faculty. As Bieniak points out, a general distinction will be made between sensitive and intellectual memory, as was in fact proposed by Philip the Chancellor in his *Summa de bono*. This distinction was adopted by almost all theologians, though not without certain marked variations.

As can be appreciated from the summary provided, Madalena Bieniak's book supplies a detailed and well-documented study not only concerning the theory of *unibilitas substantialis* put forward by Hugh of St-Cher, a theory which appears to have been no less influential than that of Avicenna, but also concerning its ideological context—a broad framework which serves to connect important areas of medieval psychology such as the concept of person, the ontological status of the faculties and the relation between soul and body. *Unibilitas* enabled Hugh and others to emphasise the unity of the human being while ensuring that the immortality of the rational soul was not endangered. As Bieniak shows via this intellectual route map, the concept of *unibilitas substantialis* is, therefore, the complex result of attempting to overcome certain theological problems within the framework of Christianity by means of philosophy, while nevertheless preserving the unity of man (and, consequently, of the Incarnation and Resurrection) as well as the immortality of the soul. Thanks to studies such as this by Magdalena Bieniak, this strand of philosophy is finally receiving the attention it richly deserves. In addition to including an Appendix in which editions of the various texts are given, this volume is completed by a bibliography of primary and secondary sources, as well as by two indices, one onomastic and the other detailing all the manuscripts cited.

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