

Richard Rufus of Cornwall. *Sententia cum quaestionibus in libros De anima Aristotelis*. Edited by Jennifer Ottman, Rega Wood, Neil Lewis, and Christopher J. Martin. Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 768 p. ISBN: 9780197266489. Hardback: £ 130

Reviewed by DOMINIC DOLD
Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (Berlin)
ddold@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de

With this edition of the *Sententia cum quaestionibus in libros De anima Aristotelis*, the scholarly community has finally been given access to the entirety of the earliest extant Scholastic commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*. Parts of the text already appeared previously in a 'seriously flawed' (p. 1) edition by Manuel Alonso, who also mistakenly attributed the text to Peter of Spain. However, as the editors show very carefully (pp. 63–132), 'the preponderance of evidence' (p. 132) supports the attribution to Richard Rufus of Cornwall, a Franciscan friar, theologian, and philosopher teaching at Paris and Oxford from the 1230s to the 1250s. The commentary itself dates before 1244, and probably before 1238.

From the first page of the extensive introduction (194 pages in total), the commentary is convincingly presented as providing a fascinating perspective on a wide range of topics debated in the 13th century, among them the plurality of forms, the spiritual character of apprehension, the metaphysics of light, and human movement. This meticulous edition meets very high philological standards and will enable specialists to work on these and further lines of Rufus's thought, aided, no doubt, by the three other editions of his commentaries that have so far appeared as part of the series *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi* (Oxford University Press).

Additionally, the commentary could bear fruit for philosophy more widely – outside of the disciplinary bounds of the history of medieval philosophy – as a guide to Aristotle's text and so as a touchpoint for reflections on Aristotelian psychology and broader themes of Aristotelian philosophy. Indeed, the first thing readers of the introduction will notice is how much care is taken to establish Rufus as a competent and interesting interpreter of Aristotle's *De anima*, as a 'very close reader of Aristotle' who 'noticed even things that some modern scholars have neglected' (p. 6). Needless to say, this does not mean that Rufus approached the text in the same way we would today. He did, for example, not have access to the Greek and was less concerned about the originality of his interpretation, which allowed him to borrow heavily from Averroes. While acknowledging this, the editors still suggest to the reader that 'if you find a passage in *De anima* puzzling, you will often find it useful to consult this commentary' (p. 7). I take it that this recommendation is addressed not only to specialists in medieval philosophy, but also to any philosopher (with sufficient knowledge of Latin) interested in and working on the philosophical problems broached in *De anima*. But we might ask whether this is not too ambitious a goal: can philosophers who are not medievalists plausibly benefit from the commentary?

I believe they can, not least on account of this edition's many useful features. Apart from the obvious guideposts – Bekker numbering and modern chapter numbers of *De anima* in the text, structuring elements like subheadings, and multiple indices in the back – allowing for quick navigation within the text and the identification of relevant passages, the edition contains extensive and extremely detailed footnotes (394 in total). Thus, not only is the text enriched by helpful references to passages in the Aristotelian corpus Rufus quotes or refers to (directly or indirectly), but the footnotes also contain a remarkable number of parallel passages in his own writings and in other medieval sources. Even the non-specialist reader will, therefore, be in a position to contextualise Rufus's interpretation. Moreover, at times, the footnotes even clarify the underlying structure of the argument by referring the reader to the argumentative technique used. For instance, commenting on how Aristotle justifies the inclusion of 'organic' in the definition of the soul (*De anima* 2.1 412a28), Rufus states that Aristotle argues here *quasi a minori* (p. 294, line 143). The footnote readily clarifies this expression by giving a reference to Boethius's *De differentiis topicis*, thus marking it as a technical term of topical argumentation (*a locus ab eo quod minus est*): even bodies animated by a vegetative soul have organs, hence *multo fortius* (line 145) every animated body. More remarkable still is that one can even find help with the Latin: those who might stumble over Rufus's *ut lapis movet aera* (p. 234, line 869), expecting the accusative *aerem*, are reminded of alternative accusative forms with a quote from Abbo of Fleury's *Quaestiones grammaticales*: 'Accusativus Graecus tertiae declinationis frequenter desinit in a: aera' (p. 234, footnote 139).

These and other elements make the Latin text of the commentary accessible to a wider readership, but the editors provide more still. In the introduction, they give an extended example of how the commentary can be used as a guide to Aristotle's *De anima* and as a tool to think through Aristotelian themes. The example takes its starting point in a debate from the beginning of this century between Richard Sorabji and Miles Burnyeat turning on the question of whether, for Aristotle, perception is characterised by material change or a 'spiritual' one. Sorabji comes down on the former view claiming that there is a sense in which the eye, for instance, really becomes red when a red object is perceived. Burnyeat, on the other hand, identifies perception with sensory awareness, which he describes as 'spiritual', borrowing the term from Thomas Aquinas; on this account, any material change in the eye is merely antecedent to or concomitant with perception. In light of this debate, Rufus's view is interesting because he, like Burnyeat (and unlike some other medieval philosophers), maintains that perception is spiritual, yet he understands 'spirituality' quite differently and also holds that not only one, but various spiritual changes are involved. The account given in section 4 of the introduction (pp. 133–176) is rich and interesting, as it demonstrates how this problem of Aristotelian philosophy is tackled by someone whose 'understanding of the natural world is likely to differ almost as much from Aristotle's as it does from ours' (pp. 175–176). Going through such an analysis of Rufus's thought with one eye on Aristotle's text and another on modern scholarship is certainly a valuable activity and the commentary contains other topics worthy of this (such as the question of the plurality of forms, for example).

But I believe the example of spirituality shows something else too. The editors conclude the section by applying Burnyeat's words, originally meant for Aquinas, to Rufus: 'Here is a thoroughly Aristotelian mind at work, even though the world he lives in and its cultural assumptions are entirely different from those of the fourth century BC.' (p. 176) Aquinas's writings have been used fruitfully as guides to philosophical problems and topics raised by Aristotle, and his influence is still felt strongly in some forms of contemporary Aristotelianism. The introduction to the edition promises that in Rufus, we might find a 13th-century thinker of a similar calibre, whose voice might play an important role in the Aristotelian philosophy of the future. Whether it will remain to be seen, but editions like this one make it more likely.