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Robert Kilwardby: Notule libri Priorum, critical edition and translation by Paul Thom and John Scott (Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi 23) [Book review]

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2017-08-29

Silva , J F 2017 , ' Robert Kilwardby: Notule libri Priorum, critical edition and translation by Paul Thom and John Scott (Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi 23) [Book review] ' , History and Philosophy of Logic , pp. 1-3 . <https://doi.org/10.1080/01445340.2017.1362760>

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/307432>

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01445340.2017.1362760>

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Robert Kilwardby *Notule libri Priorum*, critical edition and translation by Paul Thom and John Scott. Oxford: Published for The British Academy by Oxford University Press (Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi 23), 2015. cxi + 1629 (two volumes). ISBN 9780197265932.

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The critical edition of Robert Kilwardby's *Notule libri Priorum* by Thom and Scott is a great scholarly achievement. The edition of the thirteenth-century Dominican's commentary to Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* is accompanied by a lengthy introduction and a facing translation. The result is a two-volume tome, running to a massive 1629 pages (including indices). One may assume that the driving force behind this new publishing model is to make the text useful for classroom use, allowing the proficient teacher to make some remarks on the original Latin terminology. But it brings with it the downside of making the volumes cumbersome for the specialist, which could well do without the facing translation; or the average student, who would certainly do well without the original Latin text. Taking into consideration that the decision for the edition with a facing translation is probably not Thom and Scott's own, as it follows the principle adopted by other recent volumes in the series, I now turn to what is their responsibility.

The critical edition is made directly from many of the sixteen remaining manuscripts, but with a focus on a manuscript found in the Central National Library in Florence (MS Conv. Soppr. J.10.48). The editors have also compared this best manuscript witness with the early printed edition of the work, which has been attributed to Giles of Rome and published for the first time in 1499 (the work knew several subsequent reeditions in the sixteenth century), but whose authorship is now safely attributed to Kilwardby. It is safe to assume that the work was written in Paris sometime in the forties of the thirteenth century in the form of a question-commentary that follows the original Aristotelian text closely. The work is extensive, running to some 300,000 words, and constituted by a prologue plus seventy-six *lectiones* or lectures. It includes a large number of *dubitationes*, that is, doubts occasioned by certain passages in the text, which often run several pages long and constitute a major interest of this commentary. Kilwardby, contrary to the frequent incorrect assessment of his philosophical alignment, is a careful reader of Aristotle and aims at clarifying and defending the thought of the ancient philosopher, even when Aristotle seems to fall prey to apparent contradiction. Like in many of his other works, Kilwardby often provides ingenious solutions for these apparent contradictions (see below on the issue of truth, or the issue of Aristotle's modal syllogistic extensively researched by Thom himself in several books and Henrik Lagerlund, in his *Modal Syllogistics in the Middle Ages*, Brill 2000).

The volume starts with a brief introduction on the historical Robert Kilwardby. This is very brief (one page) and oddly overlooks major recent work on Kilwardby, dangerously misleading incautious readers, especially because it contrasts with the scholarly attention the Dominican has received in recent decades. The failure to provide a more up-to-date examination of the state of the art is particularly strange in a volume with clear pedagogical intentions and that would serve to motivate the reader in the study of this great medieval thinker.

Two further notes about the introduction: first, it is widely accepted now that the events in Oxford in 1277 should be referred to as 'Prohibitions' rather than 'Condemnations,' due to their philosophical rather than their theological undertone; second, despite acknowledging the work of Patrick Osmund Lewry, a pioneer of Kilwardby's studies on logic, the editors list no reference in

notes to any of his works (and there are many). Again, this would have been particularly important for younger readers less acquainted with Kilwardby and his scholarship. The shortcomings of the introduction can however be easily overcome, if accompanied by recent scholarship on this author, in particular by Thom's book *Logic and Ontology in the Syllogistic of Robert Kilwardby* (Brill 2007), Thom's and Lagerlund's *A Companion to the Philosophy of Robert Kilwardby* (Brill 2013), and if I may, by this reviewer's book *Robert Kilwardby on the Human Soul. Plurality of Forms and Censorship in the Thirteenth Century* (Brill 2012) or even the long *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on 'Robert Kilwardby'.

Turning now to the substance of the work itself, it is well-known that the motivation behind the *Prior Analytics* is to present modes of predication with a focus on the structure of demonstrative reasoning, rather than on the content of the argument; that is to say, the aim is to provide the rules governing inferential form regardless of the things to which the terms of propositions refer. Kilwardby respects this original motivation, showed in his use of 'transcendental terms' (A, B, C; Prologue, p. 36), and builds on it the first comprehensive model of reception for the medieval period.

I cannot discuss here the finer details of Kilwardby's logical theory, if for no other reason than one of this volume's editors, Paul Thom, has already done so in several works. Instead, I will focus on the novelty this edition provides as compared with the, until now, only available early-modern printed edition.

One such discussion, of great importance, is on the nature of truth that we find in Book I, Lection 18 (pp. 384-95 in T&S edition and found in 20rb-va in the 1499 edition). Here, Kilwardby examines what is required for the satisfaction of the truth conditions of a proposition; that is, the existence of the things signified by the subject and the predicate terms. But the real issue concerns what is to be understood here by being or existence: whether actual being is necessary or whether habitual being suffices. Kilwardby presents contrasting views of Aristotle on the matter, from the *Metaphysics* (truth and falsity exist in the composing or separating mind only) and in the *Categories*, where truth is defined as the adequacy of thoughts and things, thus requiring the existence of what is asserted in the extra-mental world. Kilwardby finds a way to explain away the apparent contradiction – the details of which need not concern us here – in a way that speaks for Kilwardby's understanding of the Aristotelian sources he comments upon.

The entire solution (pp. 390-93 in T&S edition) is new to this edition, being found nowhere in the early printed edition. The relevance of Kilwardby's understanding of truth, the transcendental nature of demonstration, and his methodological approach to the Aristotelian corpus clearly comes into view in these lines. Readers have been deprived of this by relying on the early printed edition, which they need not do any longer, due to Thom & Scott. As such, this is an extremely important addition to the existing scholarship, especially in face of the fact that this is the surviving first complete commentary to the *Prior Analytics* of Aristotle in the Latin West by a known author. It will allow a better understanding of the relation between Kilwardby and his contemporaries, for instance his fellow Dominicans, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. It has long been persuasively argued of the influence that Kilwardby exerted on Albert concerning logical matters. Now that this edition is available, a comparison with Albert's commentary can be done in a more systematic way. Certainly, such a comparison will further benefit from the publication of both Kilwardby's and Albert's commentaries on the old logic, which is long overdue; but the critical edition of Kilwardby's *Notule* allows scholars to have a better grasp of the relationship between these thinkers and the overall influence of Kilwardby in medieval philosophy (in particular, in the field of logic).

There are minor issues with the translation, for instance the decision to translate ‘oratio’ as ‘locution’, instead of the most commonly used ‘speech’; or to translate the accidents or accidental dispositions inhering in a particular by means of which it is known to a knower with ‘under the incidental dispositions’ (‘sub accidentalibus dispositionibus’, vol. 1, pp. 744-45). Now, whereas some of these are a matter of taste, others are not: the translation of ‘subtiliter’ with ‘exactly’ (p. 807) is awkward because in the passage Kilwardby wants to show that one is able to reach the principles proper to a particular field of inquiry not with exactitude or precision, but rather with difficulty as these are hard to come by and therefore require ‘subtlety’. A more serious lapse is found in the discussion on truth in Lesson 18 of Book I, where the Latin text reads (p. 392): ‘Vel dicendum quod ueritas complexa conuertitur cum ente’, which the translation renders as ‘Or, it should be said that incomplex truth is convertible with being’; the whole point of the paragraph is to contrast the truth of terms which is convertible with actual being and the truth of propositions that does not – instead, being of reason suffices (I avoid on purpose ‘conceptual being’ as used by the editors), as the continuation of the text shows.

Finally, there is also the question of some references to Aristotle’s text provided in the footnotes that makes it uncertain, whether Kilwardby is quoting directly from the Aristotelian text (for instance from the *Physics* II.2: ‘art imitates matter’/‘ars imitatur naturam’, pp. 66-7), or rather from a florilegia type of work, such as the *Auctoritates Aristotelis* – the latter being the most likely option, in which case the reference in the footnote is misleading.

The minor issues raised in this review should not obscure the importance of Thom & Scott’s achievement with this volume. Their effort and willingness to provide students and scholars alike with an easy to read translation accompanying the critical edition of the original commentary by Kilwardby cannot be overestimated and will certainly be celebrated for years to come.