Claude Panaccio, *Mental Language: From Plato to William of Ockham*. Translated by Joshua P. Hochschild and Meredith K. Ziebart. Series: Texts and Studies in Medieval Philosophy (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017)

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The editor of Fordham University's *Texts and Studies in Medieval Philosophy* praises Panaccio's 1999 monograph as "more actual than ever" and with a superb translation provides a proof of concept: "Mental Language" translates the original title ("*Discours Intérieur*") and expresses the same concept. In one sense, the work is actual because *The Language of Thought* (1975) by the late Jerry A. Fodor, whom Panaccio refers to by name over thirty times, was reformulated by Fodor into *LOT 2: The Language of Thought Revisited* (2008). Fodor's thesis is ahistorical, but Panaccio wants to show "striking" historical resemblances (2). In another sense, the translation is actual because "quite a lot of research" has been done in the history of the idea of a mental language since Panaccio's original work (229). The book's ten chapters are divided into three parts: "The Sources" (chs. 1-4), "Thirteenth-Century Controversies" (chs. 5-8), and "The *Via Moderna*" (chs. 9-10). Panaccio then responds to new research in a fresh thirty page postscript. I shall summarize and briefly assess these chapters along with Panaccio's postcript.

Chapter one begins "The Sources" and covers Plato and Aristotle. Panaccio cites passages from *Theaetetus* (190a), *Sophist* (264a), and the *Philebus* (38c-e) that state thinking is the *logos* one has with oneself and truth and falsity apply to this silent conversation. But the chapter overlooks Parmenides, Heraclitus, and the fifth century Greek meaning of *logos* as "account, agreement, opinion, thought, argument, reason, cause."[1] In this abbreviated context, Panaccio offers what he considers "the most plausible interpretation" that Plato transposes "a *linguistic* model for the characterization and comprehension of cognitive phenomena" (14, 19). Panaccio does not explain why Plato's pedagogical mode indicates a logical priority. Instead, Aristotle's idea of mental language is deemed a "radical" departure in which inner speech (*esô logos*) that is constrained by the formal logic of the *Organon* precedes external speech (20).

Chapter two covers Greek thought from the Stoics to John Damascene. Panaccio describes what he offers as "nothing more here than a review [*mise en ordre*] of a given number of texts, assembled by more than a century of

[1] Richard D. McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994), 133.

scholarship" (29). The Postcript extends this review. Sextus Empiricus and Porphyry discuss whether and how *logos* distinguishes human beings from animals. The *logos* at issue is that of internal speech (*logos endiathetos*) as opposed to external speech (*logos prophorikos*), which parrots have. Building off of C. Chiesa's scholarship, Panaccio maintains that there is no reason to think Stoics themselves originated the distinction. Rather, Philo of Alexandria first manifests this distinction with a *logos endiathetos* that parallels the *Logos* immanent in the universe, and John of Damascene transmits this Greek tradition to the first Latin scholastics.

Chapter three covers the Greek and Latin Church fathers. The Johannine teaching, "In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God" (Jn. 1:1), initiates a movement that took the *logos endiathetos* as an "ontological model" to explain the divinity of the *Logos* against the Gnostics and the Arians. Tertullian explains the *Logos* in the Trinity, for example, as both "interior to and distinct from that which produces it" (67). In line with Stoic, Christian, and Neoplatonic sources, Augustine applies Trinitarian theology to a "comprehensive and skillfully crafted spiritualist psychology" in which the word of the heart (*verbum cordis*) is generated by the mind (74). Chapter four covers Aristotelians from Porphyry to the Latin Avicenna. For Porphyry, "interior discourse is a quality of the soul" that can correspond to either "an act of *dianoia*" or to a "dispositional state" (83). For Boethius, interior discourse is composed of simple or complex concepts signified by external words. For Avicenna, reason cannot compose concepts without uttering imagined words to accompany them, and logic rectifies reason's interior locution.

Chapter five begins the second part of the book ("Thirteenth-Century Controversies") by proceeding from the eleventh century to the middle of the thirteenth. Panaccio shows how Anselm identifies Augustine's mental word with Aristotle's *similitudines* of the *Perihermeneias* (translated by Boethius) and how the Anselmian triad inspires many a thirteenth century author (Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure) to invoke three kinds of utterances: exterior speech composed of sensible signs, "the representation of these signs in the mind", and the mental word (105). Albert the Great reconciles this "whirlwind of triads" (114) by different authorities identifying, for example, Damascene's *logos endiathetos* with the *verbum imaginationis*, an interpretation that Thomas Aquinas accepts (*ST* 1.34.1) and that Panaccio challenges.

Chapter six discusses the views of Thomas, "the most influential theorist" in the thirteenth century of the "mental word" ("*verbe mentale*", 122). Panaccio summarizes six Thomistic theses on the nature of the inner word distinct from the intelligible species as 1) a likeness ("representation") of the known exterior thing, 2) the significate of the corresponding exterior word, 3) the terminus of an operation of the possible intellect, 4) a strictly intelligible being (*esse intelligible tantum*), 5) the "primary object of intellection" through which the external thing is known, 6) and equivalent to one of two intellectual products: a definition ("rational animal") or an enunciation (121-128). The third, fourth, and the fifth theses caused the most debate. Panaccio narrates the controversy started by Peter of Olivi over the putative worry that Thomas's mental word (similar to an "idol") does not confer "direct access to the known thing" (130) necessitating the conclusion by William of Ware that the mental word must be "identical with the act of intellection" (135).

Chapter seven extends the controversies of the previous chapter under the "celebrated" though problematic definition of sign given in Augustine's *De dialectica* and *De doctrina christiana*: "a thing which causes us to think of something beyond the impression the thing itself makes upon the senses" (142). Panaccio highlights William of Auvergne as someone who departs from Augustine and Aristotle by positing intelligible signs, that is, concepts in the mind of the thing it represents (143). William denies a thick sense of assimilation of the thing known, Panaccio explains, because "to think of heat does not really warm my mind" (144). Our author does not explain how someone (like Thomas) can hold to a thick view of assimilation of things in intellectual being without keeping properties of the thing's natural being (e.g. *DV* 2.15 ad 5).

Panaccio points to where Thomas states, "signification and manifestation belong more properly to the interior than to the exterior word" (*DV* 4.1 ad 7), but Panaccio thinks "these kinds of expressions are rare" (147). He rather consigns Thomas to a strict and loose sense of sign. In the strict sense (*sens stricte*), we use sensible signs because our discursive knowledge has its origin in sense-objects; in the loose sense (*sens relâchée*), as Thomas states, "we call anything a sign which being known, leads to the knowledge of something else" (*DV* 9.4 ad 4). But "*communiter*" here means generally (as it does in *DP* 9.4), not loosely. I suggest that it would be clearer to state that Thomas maintains Augustine's authority on signs considered *narrowly* (i.e. in reference to external words) as sensible but that he broadens the notion of sign considered *generally* as intelligible. We might add

that Poinsot interprets Thomas this way calling the latter a "formal sign."[2] The chapter continues with the solutions of Scotus and Ockham that the concept in the mind is the "first natural sign" of an exterior thing (152) and finishes with a rich excursion into angelic communication.

Chapter eight ("What is logic about?") completes the section on thirteenth century controversies with a return to unresolved issues from chapter one. Panaccio argues that the stated subject of the science of logic shifted from discourse (*sermo*) to second intentions, not simply because of Islamic influences, but through the exigency of founding a science on something universal and necessary. So logic primarily concerns "intellectual activity and its products" (161). Since mental propositions can be true or false, Panaccio argues, they must also "display a compositional structure similar to that of spoken sentences" (162). Aquinas only systematizes this structure "in principle"; Roger Bacon points to a deeper "order of interior discourse" that includes subject, predicate, and accidental parts (164); and Scotus treats the *enunciatio in mente* as composed of nouns and verbs. But, according to Panaccio, only William of Ockham ensures the independence of *oratio mentalis* from spoken language. This chapter ends with a dense synopsis of different positions about interior discourse as the object of logic: for Richard Campsall, "propositions are composed of imagined words"; for Walter Burley, "the mind in its judgments *intellectually* combines exterior things themselves rather than their representations" (171) thereby eliminating "any awkward intermediary" (175).

Chapter nine begins "*The Via Moderna*" with Ockham. Panaccio explains that Ockham's nominalist refusal to posit universals avoids two "pitfalls" (*écueils meurtriers*) of linguistic relativism and skepticism (181). It avoids the former through mental language and the latter through a systematically "fine-grained analysis of epistemic processes" such as supposition (183). According Panaccio, Ockham "switched allegiance regarding the ontological status of the concept" as *ficta* and *idolum* to primarily an *actus* of understanding when he became aware that the act of intellection could be seen as a sign and "play all desired semantic roles" (187). By being a sign, an act of understanding acquires the properties of signification and supposition. Conceptual thought "appears as a complex compositional system" (191) endowed with grammatical categories of noun and

[2] John Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis: The Semiotic of John Poinsot*, 1st ed., trans. and eds. John Deely and Ralph A. Powell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 2.1.225:16-25. On Thomas's mental word as formal sign, 2.2.249:12-21.

verb and logical categories of categorematic/syncategorematic and absolute/ connotative terms. Ockham's sophisticated theory of mental language thus seems to void any need for extramental universals.

The tenth and final chapter covers "Reactions" to Ockham's thought. At least one English Dominican named Hugh Lawton refused the notion of a mental language altogether. Another named William Crathorn considered mental language "an interiorization of spoken or written language" (200). For Robert Holcot, Crathorn's view implies there could not be a universal church: Greeks and Latins ignorant of each other's language would hold separate creeds. According to Panaccio, the Dominican controversy fizzled into a "victory for Ockhamism" (202). We learn that Franciscans such as Walter Chatton, Adam Wodeham, and Pseudo-Campsall, while also using the property of terms to analyze mental propositions, still raise many questions or objections. These concerns include the status of syncategorematic terms, participles, grammatical accidents, connotative terms, simple supposition, and the significates of mental propositions. The chapter ends with differing interpretations of some influential nominalists. Gregory of Rimini accepts that the mental proposition is an act of intellection but "stripped of internal composition structure" (209); John Buridan refines Ockham's theory with technical notions such as *appelatio rationis* that obliquely references the soul's speech act (e.g. "believes that").

In the Postscript (2014) to the English language edition, our author responds to recent scholarship. On the originality of the Stoics, Panaccio responds to A. Kamesar, M. Achard, and P.-H. Poirier. On Augustine and Boethius, Panaccio welcomes the findings of I. Koch, M. Sirridge, and T. Suto. On Abelard, Panaccio admits, "I have badly neglected the twelfth century as a whole" (236), welcoming the scholarship by L. Valenta, but disagreeing with P. King's estimate on Abelard (as holding the "first full-fledged theory of mental language") because the semantical properties of Abelard's complex concepts are not "a *function* of the semantical properties of their simpler parts" (238). On Aquinas, Panaccio reaffirms his own position in response to J. O'Callaghan, D. Perler, and H. Goris. The scholarship of C. Marmo convinces our author, however, that Giles of Rome's approach to mental language "might provide a bridge between the Thomistic conception and the Ockhamist one" (247). On Ockham, Panaccio rebuts E. Hagedorn's "well argued and challenging piece," which claims that—unlike Fodor's mental language—Ockham's mental language need not be complex. Panaccio

responds that Hagedorn's proof texts are early, comparatively brief, and open ended.

In all, Panaccio persuasively argues that Ockham's mental language is "quite comparable in spirit with Jerry Fodor's approach" (250). Panaccio draws a common thread of the "same problem" of composition skirted by Plato and Aristotle, developed by Aquinas and Scotus, and finally resolved through the compositional semantics of Ockham and Buridan. The problem as Panaccio states it is, "how are the logical and alethic properties of mental judgments dependent on the properties of certain smaller units?" (20). The proposed solution is through grammar, logic, and semantics.

The overriding claim is that mental language is independent of conventional language, but Panaccio does not respond to the peculiar objection: why does the grammar of mental language so much resemble Latin grammar?[3] Nor does Panaccio respond to one major direct criticism that comparing supposition to reference may mislead the uninformed reader, for there is arguably "no medieval theory concerning the determination of what terms stand for in a proposition."[4] Panaccio nevertheless presumes and baldly states that supposition is "nothing other than a theory of reference" (221). Finally, Panaccio's repeated reliance on (weak) representationalism as a way to describe ancient and medieval theories of knowing strikes the reader as anachronistic. For example, Thomas's discussions of intellectual identity (*In Meta*. 12.8.2539–2540; *In DA* 3.3; *SCG* 1.53) does not describe the intellect's relation to extramental objects but rather a metaphysics of intellection, that is, the kind of actualization needed for an intellect to produce acts of understanding.[5]

Panaccio could surely respond to these criticisms. Indeed, his scholarly hand navigates us through many objections about mental language on both textual and analytical grounds. Scholars can only be indebted to Panaccio for extending the original narrowly circumscribed intention of the book beyond the period leading up to William of Ockham into an indispensable and encyclopedic history of the

[3] Peter Geach, *Mental Acts: Their Content and Their Objects* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), 101-106.

[4] Catarina Dutilh Novaes, *Formalizing Medieval Logical Theories:* Suppositio, Consequentiae*, and* Obligationes (Leiden: Springer, 2007), 20-21.

[5] Therese Scarpelli Cory, "Knowing as Being? A Metaphysical Reading of the Identity of Intellect and Intelligibles in Aquinas," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 91 (2017): 333-351.

idea of mental language. I look forward to similar publications by Fordham University's Center for Medieval Studies.