

Kemp, Simon. Cognitive Psychology in the Middle Ages. (Contributions in Psychology, 33.) viii + 139 pp., illus., figs., bibl., index. Westport, Conn./London: Greenwood Press, 1996. \$52.95.

This short book attempts to give a summary of medieval contributions to cognitive psychology, beginning with the most important Greek antecedents and running up into the fourteenth century. Several parts of the book are worth reading.

Kemp is an academic psychologist who, as his bibliography indicates, has made published contributions to the field of cognitive psychology. He begins the book by apologizing for its weakness as a work of historical scholarship, and one quickly sees why. The impression the book conveys is that medieval psychology, for Kemp, is a kind of weekend hobby. This is not entirely a bad thing. As something of a nonspecialist, he writes for nonspecialists; as a thoroughly modern psychologist, he writes for a thoroughly modern audience. And it is not as if Kemp hasn't read widely. He draws on an impressive range of sources, Greek, Arab, and Latin, medical, philosophical, and theological. He prefers English translations, but seems to have found his way through quite a few Latin texts.

Kemp's subject is vast. There was, of course, no field of psychology in the Middle Ages — unless one wants to take `psychology' literally, as the study of the soul. The book takes `cognitive psychology' to cover theories of how the soul perceives, thinks, and remembers, a subject extending into medicine, philosophy, and theology. Kemp tries to cover it all, and the result is usually not good. Standardly, he looks for a consensus view that can be described as the medieval theory on subject x. (Will the points of consensus show us what is interesting about medieval theories of cognition?) Often, he resorts to desperate generalizations. ("Neoplatonic philosophy, as its name suggests, had its roots in the writings of Plato, whose works contain a number of psychological ideas" [p.13].) Time after time, he makes bad factual mistakes, as when he suggests that Augustine "may have read Aristotle, as well as known about some of his ideas" (bad enough!) and (worse yet!) implies that he may have done so thanks to the translations of Boethius (pp.25-6).

Kemp's subject matter is often hard to distinguish from the history of philosophy. This turns out to be unfortunate, because Kemp's knowledge of philosophy is at best uneven. He credits Aristotle with having "explicitly allowed for free will" (p.10); in fact it

is controversial whether Aristotle has a theory of will at all. He takes Ockham's nominalism to consist in the view that universals exist only in the intellect (p.70), unaware that this was in fact the standard medieval view. Without giving any references, he credits Augustine, Boethius, Avicenna, and Peter of Spain with having held a Platonic theory of recollection (p.76).

Still, several parts of the book are worth reading. Kemp presents the best discussion I have seen of Avicenna's hugely influential theory of the inner senses (ch.4). He perceptively notes that what would come to be called *the imagination* is, in Avicenna, simply an "image store" (p.53). Stored images are brought back to awareness when they appear again before the common sense. According to Kemp, it was the standard medieval view that the common sense is responsible for imagining images (as opposed to storing them). This is an important issue, and I think Kemp gets it right.

Kemp's discussions of memory and dreaming (ch.6) are also worth reading. But his references to other sources are generous enough to make clear how derivative these sections are.

Robert Pasnau