TRANSMISSION OF ARISTOTLE'S WORKS TO THE WEST

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the College Department of St. Meinrad Seminary in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The transmission of the works of Aristotle to the West is one of the most important events in the history of philosophy in the Latin-speaking countries of the Middle Ages. The process whereby these works were made available to the West is a fascinating and interesting study.

In this thesis I will trace, as far as is possible, this transferal from the death of Aristotle to the reception of his works in the West. This is a difficult and sometimes obscure process because of conflicting accounts and lack of manuscripts. Not all the experts agree on the dates of transmission, translations, and the like. Yet it is possible to trace the works of Aristotle in a general way, although there is much more to be uncovered in understanding the process of transmission. It would be possible to write a thesis on the trasferal of any single work of Aristotle or to make an exhaustive study of the translators or translations, but that is not the purpose of this study.

Medieval thought and the transmission and reception of Aristotle's works first came to be studied intensively about eighty years ago. Some of the pioneers in this field were De Wulf and Ehrle. Then came such scholars as Mandonnet and Haskins. More recently, we have such men as Gilson, Knowles,

Van Steenberghen, and Grabmann. Many new discoveries have been made during the last two or three decades, but there are still many more problems to be solved.

It was impossible to use first-hand sources for this thesis, because this would entail the study of medieval manuscripts, which are not available here.

II. BACKGROUND

WORKS

Aristotle's writings were of two types. The more popular instruction was through the dialogue. Almost all of Aristotle's dialogues were destroyed, probably when the library of Alexandria was burnt by the Saracens. The second type of writings, what are now known as the works of Aristotle, consist mainly of notes made by his pupils, especially Theophrastus.[1] Aristotle did not publish nor even put into literary form any of the books we now possess. His disciples spent their time in repeating his lectures with such modifications of language or doctrine as they considered necessary or advisable, and what we have are mainly notes of Aristotle's lectures. We cannot assert with certainty that we have ever received a treatise in the exact words of Aristotle, though we may be rather certain that we have a fair representation of his thought.

EARLY HISTORY (B.C.)

Very little is known of the fate of Aristotle's works during the two centuries following his death, but as Shute says in his book, History of the Aristotelian Writings:

> Far too much is made of the silence as to Aristotle in the two centuries immediately succeeding

> his death. As a matter of fact, almost all the books in which he would be at all likely to be mentioned are lost. The silence is not that of authors who pass over Aristotle, but the absolute silence of a vast desert of thought.[2]

So we can see that there is not much certain information of the period immediately after Aristotle's death.

The following story has come down to us. On the death of Aristotle, the school of the Lyceum, with the library of Aristotle, remained for more than thirty-four years under the control of Theophrastus. Theophrastus, on his death about 287 B.C., left his own library with that of Aristotle to his pupil Neleus, who removed it to his home at Skepsis in the Troad. A few years later the town was conquered by the Attalid dynasty, who began a library at Pergamon about 230 B.C. to compete with that at Alexandria. To protect the works of Aristotle from them, the heirs of Neleus concealed the manuscripts in a cellar at Skepsis. The story goes on to say that they were left in this damp cellar where they remained forgotten for over a century. Finally, they were discovered and bought by Apellicon of Teos (ca. 100 B.C.), who pieced them together, repaired the damage done by damp and worms, and restored them to Athens. After the capture of Athens by Sulla in 86 B.C., they were transported to Rome, where Tyrannion and Andronicus tried to prune away the more obvious repetitions caused by the clumsy patching of Apellicon. The above story is told by Tyrannion's

pupil Strabo.[3]

It is necessary to briefly examine this story and make a few pertinent observations. In the first part of his statement, Strabo talks not of the works of Aristotle and Theophrastus, but of their libraries, i.e., apparently, their collections of the books of other people. In the second part of his story, we are told that the descendants of Neleus sold the "books" of Aristotle to Apellicon. The remainder of the story assumes that these "books" were the writings of Aristotle.[4]

Apellicon probably tried to remedy the raids of worms and damp by piecing the newly acquired treasures with the best of the notes which were to be found in the Lyceum library. Shute says that this piecing seems to have been performed on the principle of parsimony, inserting from the supposed less trustworthy source only what seemed necessary to fill in a gap in the Skepsis manuscripts. Apparently when a manuscript had been so pieced as to make sense, it was recopied, and the original either destroyed or neglected. When this edition was accepted as the Textus Receptus of the Peripatetic school, all the other versions were doomed to oblivion.[5]

There is another story which should be mentioned. Athenaeus speaks of a Roman Laurentius appointed by Marcus Antoninus and how he collected books, "those of Aristotle and of Neleus who preserved Aristotle's books, from whom our king Ptolemy Philadelphus, having bought them all, put them together

with those which he had bought from Athens and Rhodes and brought them to fair Alexandria.[6] Ptolemy Philadelphus is said to have possessed more than a thousand rolls of Aristotelian works. Shute points out that he could not have bought all the books of Aristotle from Neleus. Some were certainly copies.[7]

That the Alexandrian libraries were full of real or spurious Aristotelian works is certain. The Egyptian kings were anxious to fill their libraries. The libraries of Alexandria were teeming with works attributed to Aristotle, of which only a small proportion was genuine.

Neither of these two stories is conclusive. Both may be true, and then again, neither may be true. We can say that at the time immediately preceding the find of the Aristotelian library at Skepsis, there was probably also a large collection of notes at Athens, a certain number of works attributed to Aristotle in circulation, and a large number of works attributed to Aristotle in the libraries of Alexandria.[8] It is reported that in the year 640 A.D., what remained of the Alexandrian library, after its destruction in 392 by Christians, was burned by Amur, the general under Caliph Omar, as a means of raising the Koran to a position of exclusive authority.[9]

A brief mention of Cicero's knowledge of Aristotle is in place. Cicero probably had access to the Rhetoric, Topics,

and the Parva Naturalia, but Cicero's merit is that he pointed out a great storehouse of scientific knowledge to his fellow-Romans. From this time on, Rome was the center of Aristotelian culture. Aristotle became the Doctor of the Latins. Even when the knowledge of Greek had vanished from them, they kept up a faint knowledge of him through the later sixth century versions and commentaries of Boethius. Aristotle moved eastward into Greece only when the seat of the Roman empire was transferred.[10]

III. WORKS OF ARISTOTLE AMONG THE SYRIANS AND ARABIANS

Although some of the Aristotelian writings reached the West directly from Byzantium or from Byzantine circles in Sicily, the majority came by way of Spain, and the story of their transmission is long and extraordinary.

AMONG THE SYRIANS

Throughout the Eastern Empire, and especially at Constantinople, the ancients were reverently copied and recopied, and so preserved. Greek philosophy and medical science had been received in the fourth century and adopted by the flourishing Christians, Syrian in race, who occupied Mesopotamia. There, the schools of Edessa, opened by Ephrem in 363, were famous.[11] The Syrians had received Greek thought at first hand due to the Greek traditions in their country resulting from the expeditions of Alexander the Great.

Nestorianism struck up an open alliance with the philosophy of Aristotle. A center of Nestorianism and of Aristotelian philosophy was the school of Edessa. When Nestorianism was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431, many of the Aristotelians left Edessa, which was in the Roman Empire, and emigrated to neighboring Persia. Most of them appear to have remained in Nisibis, just across the border.[12] When in 489, the schools were closed by the Emperor Zeno as tainted by

Nestorianism, the rest of the professors carried their philosophy and science with them into Persia.

After Justinian closed the schools of philosophy at Athens in 529, a series of schools grew up at Kinnesrin, Resaina, and Gandisapora where the philosophy of Aristotle was taught. King Chosröes of Persia took a lively interest in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, and he invited Syrian scholars to his court.[13]

Certain works of Aristotle, chiefly the Organon, were translated from the Greek into Syriac and commented on by savants of the Nestorian schools in the fifth century. They translated the Categories and De Interpretatione. It is also probable that the Prior Analytics was translated in the fifth century.[14] Much of the translation was carried on in the monasteries. This work of translation was continued in the sixth century by the Monophysites of Resaina and Chalcis.[15] The foremost of these was Sergius (d. ca. 536) who translated the Categories. James of Edessa (fl. 651-719), educated at Kinnesrin, translated the Categories, which is still extant. In the eighth and ninth centuries all studies were on the decline in the Orient; yet the tradition of them was preserved.[16]

Thus the schools and monasteries of the Nestorian Christians in Syria formed the shelter in which the philosophical and scientific writings of Aristotle were preserved and passed

on.

TRANSFER TO THE ARABIANS

In the sixth century, Islam conquered the whole of Persia and Syria, and the caliphs of Bagdad made use of the services of these Syrians who thus passed Aristotle's works on to the Arabs. Although Greek thought had also spread into Persia, Syria was the source for its transmission to the Arab world. The Saracens with no native philosophy and science of their own quickly absorbed whatever they found in Western Asia.

The contact of the Arabs with Greek thought may be said to have begun in 750 when the Abbasid caliphs invited Syrian scholars to Bagdad. Most of the chief works of Greek philosophy had by this time been translated into Syriac, and the new arrivals began to make Arabic versions from the Syriac texts.[17] The period, 750-900, was the great age of the translators, mainly Syrian Christians, who turned Aristotle into Arabic, sometimes directly from the Greek, more often from Syriac translations of the original. Unfortunately for later philosophers, a certain number of non-Aristotelian writings passed into Arabic under the name of the Philosopher, e.g., Theologia Aristotelis and the Liber de Causis.[18]

This work of translation began under the caliph Al-Mansur (753-774), but the real concentrated work of translation began when Harun ar-Rashid became caliph in 786. He was influenced by his Barmakid minister to give active support to the scho-

lars who studied and translated the Greek scientific works, and he sent out agents to purchase Greek manuscripts. O'Leary in his book, How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs, states that at first the Aristotelian material was confined to the logical treatises and that it was not until some time after the death of Harun ar-Rashid, which occurred in 808, that a serious and direct examination of Aristotelian philosophy was undertaken by Arab scholars. The corpus of Aristotelian logic included the Categories, De Interpretatione, the Prior and Posterior Analytics, Topics, Sophistica, Rhetoric, and the Politics, these last two classified with the logical treatises by the Arabs.[19]

The Caliph Al-Ma'mun (813-833) founded an academy which he called the "House of Wisdom" (ca. 825) to translate works of the Greek scientists. Aristotle was translated under the direction of Ibn al Batrik. The great Syriac and Arabic translator, the Nestorian Honein Ibn Ishak (d. 876) presided over the school of translators at Bagdad. O'Leary says, "From that time forwards the work of translation went on steadily, and before long Arab students found themselves equipped with the greater part of the works of Galen, Hippocrates, and Aristotle."[20] The work of translation was twofold; versions were made in Arabic and also in Syriac, the latter to replace the defective translations in use. The task of making new translations was carried into the tenth century. As Turner says in

his History of Philosophy, "It is therefore beyond dispute that the Arabians owe their knowledge of Greek philosophy to the Syrian Christians."[21]

AMONG THE ARABIANS

Aristotelian thought flourished among the Arabians. It is appropriate to mention the chief Arabian interpreters of Aristotle, because Arabian thought had a profound influence on the acceptance of Aristotle in the West. The Arabians were not mere agents in the process of transmitting Aristotelian thought. Knowles says: "The system of Aristotle underwent a change at their hands."[22] The century of translators was followed by an epoch of notable thinkers; men such as Alkindi, Alfarabi, and Gabirol need to be mentioned.

One of the greatest Arabian philosophers to interpret Aristotle was Avicenna or Ibn Sina (980-1037). Parts of his exposition largely amount to a re-expostion of the logic of Aristotle, e.g. the doctrine of the syllogism. Like that of Aristotle, the physics of Avicenna is dominated by the notion of quality, not quantity.[23] His psychology is very Aristotelian, e.g. sensus communis, three degrees of abstraction, etc. In several important points of logic and metaphysics he drew out the suggestions and implications of the Philosopher, but he also added his own interpretation. It was he who first gave technical expression to the ~~the~~ two Aristotelian perceptions of reality: the "first intention" and the "second intention".[24]

His personal interpretations of Aristotle's thought were to become the focus of much lively discussion in the West. A good example is this: Aristotle had said that the component forms of a compound substance remain in potency. Avicenna interprets Aristotle's position as meaning that the substantial forms remain unchanged in the compound; this implied the doctrine of the plurality of substantial forms. Gilson says in his History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages:

> Avicenna's interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine was so personal on many points that it can be considered as the source of a distinct doctrinal stream. By his religious inspiration and his mystical tendencies, Avicenna was destined to remain for the Christian theologians of the middle ages, both a great help and a perilous temptation. His whole system was a striking example of the possibility of a natural and philosophical explanation of the world.[25]

Averroes or Ibn Rochd (1126-1198) wrote such extensive commentaries on Aristotle that he was given the name "the Commentator." Taken in itself, the work of Averroes was a conscious effort to restore in its purity the philosophy of Aristotle and of his successors. It retains a good deal of the Platonism which Alexander of Aphrodisias, among others, had injected into the authentic doctrine of Aristotle. It was Averroes' firm and absolute conviction that philosophical truth and the philosophy of Aristotle were synonymous. He said:

> Aristotelis doctrina est summa veritas, quoniam eius intellectus fuit finis humani intellectus. Quare bene dicitur, quod fuit creatus et datus nobis divina providentia, ut sciremus quidquid potest sciri.

The sound advice given us by an Oriental historian of philosophy should be kept in mind: Do not take literally the hyperbole of oriental praise. We can say that Averroes was a keen and faithful interpreter of authentic Aristotelianism.[26] Yet, his interpretation will be the source of much disagreement and of ecclesiastical condemnations in the West during the thirteenth century.

Knowles, in his book Evolution of Medieval Thought, gives a good summary of the influence of the Arabians on Aristotelianism:

> Seen as a whole, the achievement of three centuries of Arabian thought was to present and interpret, and in some important respects to develop, the whole body of Aristotelian teaching, and in so doing to eliminate many, though not all, of the Platonic and Neoplatonic doctrines that had been combined with it.[27]

IV. FIRST PERIOD OF TRANSMISSION

THE WEST BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF ARISTOTLE

What works of Aristotle were known in the West during the early Middle Ages? This question should be answered now, because it must be known to understand the actual transference of Aristotle's works to the West and the impact it made.

The ignorance of the Greek language, very general in the West after the fall of the Roman Empire, resulted in a severance of the Latins from the source of Greek thought. From the fourth century on, the role of the translators became extremely important. Boethius (475-525) was an important figure in the Middle Ages because of his translations. When he was quite young he was sent to Athens where he came into contact with Aristotelianism. His initial intention was to translate all the writings of Plato and Aristotle into Latin. He fell far short of achieving this immense project, but most historians agree that he translated the whole Organon around 510 A.D. with commentaries. This means that he translated the Categories, De Interpretatione, the Topics, Prior Analytics, Posterior Analytics, and the Sophistical Arguments. The latter four remained unknown up to the middle of the twelfth century when they will be called the logica nova; the Categories and De Interpretatione will remain in circulation and consti-

tute the logica vetus.

Throughout the early Middle Ages and for more than a century after the revival of learning in the schools of Italy and France, the masters of logic and philosophy had at their disposal only that fragment of ancient thought represented by the "old logic" of Aristotle and the commentaries and treatises connected with it and composed for the most part by Boethius. During this period which came to an end between 1140 and 1170, Boethius was the most influential master.

The lack of knowledge of Aristotle's work caused a profound void in the intellectual activities of the period preceding the early part of the twelfth century. Peter Abelard (1079-1142) did not know the most important parts of Aristotle's Organon (the new logic), and he was in complete ignorance of the Physics, Metaphysics, and the De Anima which would have been priceless to him. In the eleventh century, philosophy proper was reduced to Aristotle's dialectic. No physics, no metaphysics, no purely rational ethics were known to the men of that period. They had practically no other strictly philosophical problem to discuss than that of universals. As Gilson points out, not one of these logicians was able to reconstruct the psychologies and the metaphysics of the Greeks which fully justified their epistemological conclusions.[28] This is why John of Salisbury could denounce the striking sterility of these purely dialectical discussions.

BACKGROUND TO THE TRANSFER

The history of the entry of Aristotle's writings into the West is divided into two periods, the first from the sixth century to the middle of the twelfth century; the second, the end of the twelfth century and the thirteenth century.

Towards the middle of the twelfth century a great change began, and an epoch opened which was to last for more than a hundred years; ancient Greek and more recent Arabic thought and science became available to the West in larger and larger doses. The system of Aristotle was revealed piece by piece until all was visible, and Aristotle became "the Philosopher." Though many details of this process are obscure, the main outlines are fairly clear. Two circumstances are responsible for this change, according to Knowles: On the one hand, the outward thrust of the northern people into South Italy, the East, and especially into Spain, brought them into contact with centers of civilization which contained treasures from the past; on the other hand, this very expansion was part of a new energy and capability of the same people which was manifested by a new curiosity and ability to use any new aid to knowledge and thought that might be discovered.[29]

There were, in the early part of the twelfth century, at least four centers of exchange where Western scholars might make discoveries. There was, in the first place, Syria shortly after the first crusade. A few scholars followed in

the wake of the first crusade and settled in Eastern cities such as Antioch. Next, there was Constantinople. Moses of Bergamo collected Greek manuscripts (which he lost by fire) and made translations which have not survived. Why didn't Constantinople, where pure Greek culture had flourished without a break, become the center for all Western scholars? The answer is complex and illustrates the larger question of the rift between East and West that existed all through the Middle Ages, that age-long and bitter misunderstanding between Greeks and Latins which made close social and intellectual relationship impossible. Also, the lack of a definite program among Western scholars, who were by no means agreed that they were searching principally for works of philosophy, and a lack of contemporary Greek interest in philosophy as a principle mental pursuit were reasons that Constantinople was not a center of transfer.[30]

A third theater of exchange was Sicily under its Norman rulers. Here four races and tongues met, Latin, Greek, Arabic, and Hebrew. Several prolific translators, among them Henry Aristippus, worked here. Nevertheless, despite the importance of the Sicilian translators, who had the advantage of Greek texts for translation, the Arabs of Spain were the principal source of the new learning for Western Europe. In Spain Aristotle had been an object of intense interest to the Arabs and the Jews for a long time. In Spain there was an

atmosphere of eager activity among the rulers and bishops of the recent reconquest. The conquest and Christianizing of northern Spain had gone fitfully forward between 1034, when the caliphate of Cordova ceased to exist, and 1085 when the Christians reconquered Toledo, and it brought the Latin-speaking nations into contact with the Arabs and Jews and into possession of many of their libraries. Except for Gerbert of Aurillac, few northeners had gone to Spain in search of learning before 1100, but from 1100 on there were many northern scholars who went to Spain seeking manuscripts to be translated.[31]

TRANSFER OF THE ORGANON

As their primary interest was in logic, the translators naturally turned first to logical works, and these in turn influenced the thought and methods of the schools. The middle decades of the twelfth century were marked by the arrival of the "new logic." The Analytics and Topics were unknown to Sigebert of Gembloux who died in 1112. The Prior Analytics were discussed by Adam du Petit-Pont in 1132.[32] Haskins, in his Studies in the History of Medieval Science, says that the "new logic" was received between 1121 and 1158. When Abelard wrote his Dialectic, the Latin world knew none of the new logic. Otto of Freising, a student at Paris ca. 1130 (d. 1158) became acquainted with the whole new logic. His master,

Thierry of Chartres, who died ca. 1155 but taught at Paris for some years before 1141, reproduced the whole Organon except the Posterior Analytics and the second book of the Priora, while the Posteriora, cited in Sicily in the same period, came to its own in the North in the analysis of John of Salisbury in 1159.[33] Haskins goes on to say:

> The later emergence of the Posterior Analytics does not indicate a reception distinct from the allied works, but is rather to be explained by its difficulty and the corruption of the Latin text, and it is altogether likely that the arrival of the "new logic" is to be placed in the earlier, rather than in the later years of the period with which we are dealing.[34]

In the chronicle of Robert of Torigni, abbot of Mont-Saint-Michel and a man well-informed on literary matters in Italy, under the year 1128 we read: "Jacobus clericus de Venecia transtulit de greco in latinum quosdam libros Aristotilis et commentatus est, scilicet Topica, Analyticos Priores et Posteriores, et Elencos, quamvis antiquior translatio super eosdem libros haberetur." There is much controversy as to the significance of this entry, and I will try to give a brief summary of this controversy. In general, most of the experts in this area feel that James of Venice did translate these works. Haskins says that James of Venice can be singled out as the first scholar of the twelfth century who brought the "new logic" of Aristotle afresh to the attention of Latin Europe. He holds that these "older translations" were proba-

bly by Boethius.[35] For an answer to the question why these translations of Boethius were neglected until the twelfth century, we have only guesses, such as that they were too advanced or incomplete and corrupt. Haskins says:

> Boethius tells us specifically that he translated both Analytics. These, however, pass out of use in the early Middle Ages....Then comes the revival of the New Logic in the second quarter of the twelfth century, and at once men begin to ascribe its Latin form to Boethius. Until some definite evidence is is produced to the contrary, we are justified in regarding the current medieval version as the works of Boethius.[36]

Minio-Paluello gives rather conclusive evidence that the "vulgate" of the Posterior Analytics was James' translation and was used for about ten generations.[37] Yet Haskins offers this solution based on a thirteenth century manuscript preserved in the library at Toledo: James' translation of the Posterior Analytics reached the centers of learning in France, but because it was so difficult, the masters made no public use of it. The older version is ascribed to Boethius, but it was incomplete, and the text was corrupt.[38] Gerard of Cremona (d. 1187) translated the Posteriora from the Arabic into Latin. By the close of the twelfth century there were at least four Latin versions of the Posteriora, the work respectively of Boethius, James of Venice, an anonymous translator of a Toledo manuscript, and Gerard of Cremona.[39]

Often a particular work of Aristotle was "received" in

the schools considerably later than it was translated. It is generally agreed that translations of the new logic were available from 1130 or 1140 on, but some of these were not used until later, particularly the Posterior Analytics. There is very little conclusive evidence concerning the translators and the exact dates of translations in the twelfth century, but the fact of greatest importance is the transmission of these logical works to the West during this period.

V. SECOND PERIOD OF TRANSMISSION

There was somewhat of an interval between the arrival of the new logic of Aristotle and the reception of his major philosophical works. As Knowles says, the interval is more apparent than real, because the leading translators were at work all the time, but whereas the logical treatises were of immediate and vital interest to each and every master, the philosophical and scientific works were of no direct interest either to logicians or theologians. Their first appeal was to curious scholars only.[40]

TRANSLATORS

The Spanish city of Toledo was one of the most important centers of diffusion of Greco-Arabian philosophy in the twelfth century. Raymond of Sauvetât, bishop of Toledo (1126-1151), promoted the translation into Latin of works of Aristotle, Euclid, Hippocrates, Alfarabi, Avicenna, and others. Some confusion still exists concerning the names of the translators.

James of Venice, according to Minio-Paluello, was probably the first to translate into Latin Aristotle's Physics, De Anima, Metaphysics, and parts of the Parva Naturalia.[41] The fourth book of the De Meteoris and the De generatione were translated from the Greek by Henry Aristippus (d. 1162).

Appearing at Toledo as early as 1217, Michael Scot there distinguished himself by translating Aristotle's De animalibus, as well as the De caelo and the De Anima with Arabian commentaries. Of these, his translation was the first of the De animalibus. Part of the Metaphysics existed in Latin (Books I-IVch.4), and this fragment has been given the name Metaphysica vetustissima. Finally, there existed in the twelfth century a partial translation of the Nicomachean Ethics (Books II and III), which is also anonymous, and will later be called the Ethica vetus.[42]

Gerard of Cremona (1114-1187) was one of the most outstanding translators of the Toledo school. He learned Arabic at Toledo for the sole purpose of translating, and he is known to have translated at least seventy works, among them some of Aristotle. He translated the Posterior Analytics, the Physics, the De caelo et mundo, the De generatione et corruptione, and the first three books of the Meteors. Other translations were made by the Englishman Alfred of Sereshel and Daniel of Morley.[43]

The translators of the twelfth century seem to have known little or no Arabic before coming to Spain, and they worked through interpreters, usually converted Jews. Often they translated from Arabic into the current Spanish idiom, which the Christian translator then turned into Latin. This fact helps to explain the inaccuracy of many of the versions,

although in general they are slavishly literal, even to carrying over the Arabic article.[44]

SECOND PERIOD: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

It was at the end of the twelfth century that Aristotle began to exert great influence on the West by his works on natural science and his Metaphysics. This second entry of Aristotle goes to Moerbeke's translation of the Economics in 1267. By 1200 the Organon, Metaphysics, Libri Naturales of the Physics, De generatione, De caelo, part of the De meteoris, the De Anima, and Books II and III of the Nicomachean Ethics were available to the West.

METAPHYSICS

We do not know the history of the transmission of the Metaphysics. The complete Metaphysics, translated from the Greek, can be found in a manuscript in a library at Padua, classified as twelfth century. William of Breton, in his Gesta Philippi Augusti, writes: "In diebus illis (circa 1210) legebantur Parisiis libelli quidam ab Aristotele, ut dicebatur, compositi qui docebant metaphysicam, delati de novo a Constantinople, et a greco in latinum translati."[45] Humbert of Gendrey mentions the Metaphysics in 1191 and Pierre de Poitiers (d. 1205) mentions it also. Albert the Great says that David of Dinant had appealed to the Physics and Metaphysics before his condemnation in 1210. Also, the prohibition of the Meta-

physics in 1210 is irrational unless it was available.[46]

According to Copleston, the Metaphysics available at Paris by 1210 was the Metaphysica vetus, in distinction to the translation of Gerard of Cremona or Michael Scot, which was known in the first half of the thirteenth century as the Metaphysica nova (Books K,M,N, missing). In the second half of the century the title Translatio nova was given to the translation by William of Moerbeke (after 1260).[47]

We can say that the greatest part of the Metaphysics reached Paris at the beginning of the thirteenth century, but we know nothing definite of the channels by which it arrived. Haskins says that the whole trend of recent studies points to an early date for the translations and reception of the Metaphysics and physical works, very possibly before 1200.[48]

WORKS ON NATURAL SCIENCE

Alfred of Sereshel, in the last part of the twelfth century, cites the De Anima, the Meteors, eight books of the Physics, and parts of the Parva Naturalia. As regards the Physics, Haskins says an incomplete copy in the Vatican, which cannot be later than the very beginning of the thirteenth century, establishes the existence of a version of the De physico auditu made from the Greek, and there are traces of some acquaintance with its contents in the twelfth century. There is also evidence that the Meteorologica and the De caelo were

known soon after 1165. Haskins goes on to say that evidence is given in Baeumker's study that early translations of the De Anima and the Parva Naturalia existed.[49] There is little information as to the dates of reception of Aristolte's works of natural science.

OTHER WORKS

While Aristotle's works on natural science and his Metaphysics were received about 1200, the Rhetoric, Ethics, and Politics made their appearance in the course of the next two generations.

The history of the Ethics is particularly complicated. The oldest translation, of Books II and III only, was made from the Greek early in the thirteenth century, and was known as the Ethica vetus, and a second followed soon after. About 1244 Hermann the German produced a compendium of Books I to IX from the Arabic, but the first complete translation from the Greek was that of Robert Grosseteste, and it dates from between 1240 and 1249. Grabmann holds that the Ethica nova (Book I) was already in existence in 1210. Various fragments of the Nicomachean Ethics were circulating in the first half of the thirteenth century.[50] Although some hold that Grosseteste did not translate the Nicomachean Ethics, it seems likely that he at least caused it to be translated, since his name is on the manuscript.

Hermann the German translated Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Rhetoric, and Poetics between 1240 and 1256 at Toledo. But one of the greatest translators of Aristotle was William of Moerbeke (1215-1286) who was the first to translate the Politics (1260) and the Economics (1267).[51] Some historians say that he was not the first to translate these works but simply revised already existing translations of the Politics, Economics, and Rhetoric (1281).[52] In addition, he retranslated most of the existing translations of Aristotle's works from the Greek. Around 1260, Bartholomew of Messine translated the Magna Moralia and several pseudo-Aristotelian works.[53] Finally, it should be mentioned that only the seventh book of the Eudemian Ethics was known in the thirteenth century.[54]

LANGUAGE

A point which should be mentioned here is that of the language from which the translations were made. In nearly every instance, translations are found both from the Greek and from the Arabic, so for most of Aristotle's works there were two or more parallel Latin versions. Copleston holds that translations from the Greek generally preceded translations from the Arabic and that the Arabic-Latin versions soon gave way to a new and better translation from the Greek,[55] while De Wulf holds that the Arabic translations were the first to appear.[56]

Rashdall says that the eight books of the Physics, the nineteen books of the Historia Animalium, the De caelo, and the Meteorologica became known in Europe through Latin translations from the Arabic. The De Anima became known in a Greco-Latin translation before the Arabic-Latin version of Michael Scot reached the schools of Paris. The Rhetoric, Parva Naturalia, part of the Metaphysics, the first three books of the Nicomachean Ethics, and the Politics were known from the first in translations from the original Greek; though the earliest complete version of the Ethics was Arabic-Latin.[57] Sandys concurs in Rashdall's opinion and points out that these works were known from the first in translations from the original, but the earliest complete versions of the Ethics and Metaphysics, with those of the Physics, Historia Animalium, etc., were known from the Arabic.[58] Concerning the De generatione, Copleston says that a translation from the Greek preceded the translation from the Arabic by Gerard of Cremona.[59] About all that we can say is that some works were first known in the Arabic-Latin translations, and some in the Greco-Latin versions.

The story that the medieval Aristotle was only a Latin parody of an Arabic version of a Syrian translation of a Greek original is little more than a fable. It is true that the Arabians were first introduced to Aristotle by Syrians, but long before there was extensive Moslem influence on the Latins,

many direct translations from the Greek into Arabic had been made (cf. pp. 10-11). After the Crusaders captured Constantinople in 1204, the treasures of ancient Greek literature were available to the West. Translations from the Greek relieved the Latins from undue dependence on the Arabs and the importance of this cannot be stressed too much.[60]

FELLOW RIDERS

In the history of this transfer there remains one phase that needs to be considered. Copleston says:

> The Arabian philosophy was one of the principal channels whereby the complete Aristotle was introduced to the West, but the Arabian philosophers were more than mere transmitters or even commentators; they changed and developed the philosophy of Aristotle, more or less according to the spirit of Neoplatonism, and several of them interpreted Aristotle in a sense which was incompatible with Christian theology and faith.[61]

Aristotle came borne upon, or rather half-submerged by a great wave of Aristotelian scholarship. A considerable quantity of pure Neoplatonic doctrine came as a rider upon Aristotle. Two treatises, essentially Neoplatonic in character, were ascribed to him at a very early date. These were the Theology of Aristotle from Plotinus' Enneads and the Liber de Causis from the Elementatio theologica of Proclus.[62]

As Gilson points out, it is a fact of considerable importance for the history of medieval philosophy that Avicenna and

Averroes had already done a great deal of study on the works of Aristotle for almost two centuries before the West received these works.[63] Avicenna and Averroes both wrote commentaries on most of Aristotle's works, and usually these commentaries were translated along with the text. Half-way through the long process of transfer, the great commentary of Averroes appeared, and later came a new and more accurate translation of Aristotle. This had a profound effect on the thirteenth century scholars at Paris and Oxford. Averroes and his followers became the representatives of philosophy qua pure philosophy.[64]

Knowles has a good point when he says:

> In the past the whole movement has too often been labelled 'the introduction of Aristotle'. The whole of Aristotle did indeed arrive, and this was in the long run the significant fact, but the manner of its arrival, and the vehicles by which it was conveyed, had a great share in determining the quality and the extent of its influence.[65]

VI. ACCEPTANCE OF ARISTOTLE'S WORKS AND EFFECTS

It remains to show the reception given to the works of Aristotle in the West and the effects of the transferal. The Universities of Paris and Oxford were the most outstanding schools of learning in the thirteenth century, Paris being the foremost. The works of Aristotle were not taught in the schools as soon as they were translated, but a little later. It was at Paris, after 1200, that translations of the scientific treatises of Aristotle and his commentators made their first appearnace, not in the world of scholars, but in the classrooms. The best proof that these treatises were used by some Parisian masters of the Faculty of Arts is that, as early as 1210, their teaching was interdicted.[66]

As has been shown, the introduction of Aristotle to the West was a process continuing over a hundred years. The first wave, that of the logical works, was absorbed easily and avidly, for it prolonged and perfected a discipline which was already committed to Aristotelianism. The second wave, that of the difficult and profound philosophical works, gave more trouble and was less easily absorbed, though its effects were epoch making.[67]

The earliest university statutes, those of Paris in 1215, require the whole of Aristotle's logical works, and throughout the Middle Ages these remain the backbone of the arts course.

No other writer appealed so strongly as Aristotle to the medieval habit of formal thought.[68]

INTERDICTS

As early as 1210, the provincial Council of Paris, under the presidency of Peter of Corbeil, Archbishop of Sens, forbade under penalty of excommunication, the public or private teaching of Aristotle's writings on natural philosophy or their commentaries in Paris. In the statutes of the University of Paris (1215) sanctioned by Robert of Courçon, legate of Innocent III, the study of Aristotle's logic was still authorized, but the books on physics and natural science and the Metaphysics with whatever expositions that could be made of them were forbidden together with David of Dinant and Amaury of Bene. This text confounded Aristotle's cause with that of two suspicious philosophers. In part, the prohibition read:

> Et quod legant libros Aristotelis de dialectica tam de veteri quam de nova in scolis ordinarie et non ad cursum....Non legantur libri Aristotelis de metaphysica et de naturali philosophia nec summe de eisdem.[69]

In the prohibition, the word legantur has the technical sense of "use as texts for teaching". The private reading (in our sense of the word) of Aristotle was not forbidden. An additional observation to be made is that this prohibition applied

only to the University of Paris.

As early as April 13, 1231, Pope Gregory IX renewed the interdiction against teaching Aristotle in terms which reveal that an evolution had taken place in the interval. It was still forbidden to teach Aristotle's libri naturales, but only until they had been submitted to censorship. The Pope did not say that they would be purged of errors, but of every suspicion of error which anyone might have of them. Ten days later, April 23, the Pope appointed a commission of three members for this task of revision. There is no evidence that the theologians charged with this task brought about any positive results. From 1231 on, however, Aristotle's writings on physics and metaphysics permeated everywhere and did not cease to gain ground.[70]

Why were the works of Aristotle banned by the Church? Gilson says that the attitude of the Church was on the plane of theological prudence and rectitude, not philosophical speculation. Faced with a mass of new conceptions, and in order to give itself time to discriminate, it began by prohibiting.[71] The Church could have condemned all philosophical speculation as opposed to Christian faith, but she didn't. The interdicts were a result of the conflict between Christian theology and pagan philosophy. Van Steenberghen says that the prohibitions were a protective measure, provoked by the way in which David of Dinant, and perhaps others, had made an improper use of the

writings. He also points out that the theological school at Paris showed extremely conservative tendencies, adopting a suspicious attitude towards profane studies.[72] Then too, Innocent III's preoccupation was to safeguard the faith, and his pontificate was one long struggle against heresy. As Turner points out, the prohibitions were directed against the Arabian translations and especially against the Arabian commentaries.[73]

EFFECTS OF THE INTERDICTS

These interdicts had their effects. In the Faculty of Arts at Paris, they slowed down the study of the philosophy of Aristotle until about the year 1240. The works never ceased to be privately read, but their interdiction prevented them from being taught. The teaching of logic went on uninterruptedly from the last years of the twelfth century up to 1250, but there is no written evidence of any philosophical activity in the natural sciences or metaphysics at Paris prior to 1240. A Barcelona manuscript written between 1230 and 1240, discovered by Grabmann in 1927, clearly indicates that the Metaphysics and libri naturales were not expounded in the Faculty of Arts at Paris at this time. Their existence was mentioned, but they were not used as textbooks. This explains the total absence of Parisian commentaries on these works before 1240. Roger Bacon implicitly states that he was one of the first to

comment on natural philosophy at Paris. Van Steenberghen says that we can fix the period when Bacon was teaching at Paris at about 1245.[74]

In the Faculty of Theology the influence of the interdicts was very great. The gist of the interdictions was that theology should be taught such as it had always been, without any admixture of worldly wisdom. On July 27, 1228, Gregory IX invited the masters to teach "theology in its purity". On April 13, 1231 he invited the same masters not to pretend to be philosophers. As a result, the theologians were very reluctant to accept the natural and metaphysical works of Aristotle.[75]

The repeated interdictions certainly exercised a delaying influence on the spread of the new philosophical learning, but another cause contributed to the delay. Professors of logic were plentiful, whereas there were no masters prepared to teach biology, physics, astronomy, psychology, or metaphysics. In these domains there was no school tradition. Bacon made remarks later about efforts of a "few" and often discouraged masters to teach these difficult texts.[76]

The prohibition which was upheld in 1231 became a dead letter at Paris after the death of Gregory IX (August 22, 1241), and the libri naturales began to be taught during the troubled period between the death of Gregory and the election of Innocent IV (June 25, 1243). There was little hope of

preventing masters, who were permitted to teach half of Aristotle's philosophy, from taking an active interest in the other half. How could the logic of Aristotle be right and all its applications be wrong? How could the logic of Aristotle be separated from his psychology? Besides, if it was forbidden to teach error, it was not forbidden to oppose it, and to oppose it, it was necessary to know it. Even though the books were not taught, they were read. The works of Aristotle and the Arabians were so superior to anything the West had that the masters could not stay away from them. The reception of Aristotle was easily made because Paris was at that time entirely favorable towards the Philosopher. Roger Bacon came from Oxford where the complete works of Aristotle had been commented on for a long time. He could point out that Paris was in a state of inferiority to Oxford; that the condemnation was unreasonable and unjust; and that there was no serious foundation for mistrust of the Philosopher. The Faculty of Arts was receptive to such suggestions.[77]

In 1245, Innocent IV extended the prohibition to Toulouse, but it had little effect. The tide was now flowing in favor of Aristotle. In 1252 the De Anima was presented as an examination subject at Paris by the English "nation". (There were four "nations" or corporate groups of masters and students at the University of Paris.) This was the first official transgression of the ecclesiastical prohibitions. On

March 19, 1255 an act was promulgated by the whole faculty putting all known works of the Stagirite on the curriculum. This date marks the final step towards the complete acceptance of Aristotle by the Arts Faculty.[78] It is therefore surprising that on January 19, 1263, Urban IV confirmed the bull Parens scientiarum of Gregory IX and reproduced in full its prohibition of "those books on nature which were prohibited at Sens in 1210." Van Steenberghen proposes the following explanation:

> The pope gave directions for the bull to be reissued, and the Chancery copied it out in full, the clerk perhaps not even realizing that Aristotle (who was not mentioned by name) was stigmatized by Gregory IX. Certainly by 1250-1260 the Philosopher was being treated in many quarters as a kind of precursor of Christ, an intellectual Baptist, and Roger Bacon could say that he was now called 'the Philosopher', just as Saint Paul 'the Apostle'..[79]

OXFORD

Briefly, let us consider what was happening at Oxford at this time. There we find that Aristotle's libri naturales and Metaphysics had been commented on by the masters since the beginning of the thirteenth century. Aristotelian studies were not affected by the prohibitions. The natural philosophy and metaphysics of Aristotle first appear to have come to their own in England in the writings of Alfred of Sereshel (ca. 1176). In an early work he cited the De Anima and De

generatione. In a subsequent work he referred to the Metaphysics, Physics, and Nicomachean Ethics. This work cannot be later than 1217, and it may go back to the middle of the twelfth century.

According to Roger Bacon, Saint Edmund of Abingdon was the first to "read" the Sophistici Elenchi at Oxford, between 1202 and 1209. Since the logica nova was not introduced earlier, it is unlikely that the libri naturales were taught at Oxford much earlier. By about 1240, the teaching of Aristotle there had reached its full maturity. The writings of John Blund and Adam of Buckfield are indications of this.[80] Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253), bishop of Lincoln and first chancellor of Oxford, wrote commentaries on Aristotle, and, as mentioned earlier, he was the first to give Europe a complete translation of the Ethics from the Greek. Although Oxford had a considerable start over Paris in Aristotelian studies, Paris was still the great center of learning in the thirteenth century.

EFFECTS OF THE TRANSMISSION

Finally, what effects did the arrival of the whole Aristotelian corpus have on the West? As Knowles says, the whole course of medieval intellectual life was changed and greatly enriched by the arrival of Aristotle, accompanied by other works and commentaries.[81] As a consequence of this, men of

learning were occupied for almost a century, first in absorbing and explaining Aristotle, next in examining and partially rejecting the Arabian, Jewish, and Neoplatonic thought that arrived along with the works of the Philosopher. If the works of Aristotle had been rediscovered in a completely pure state, their influence would have been much greater, but they reached the West in a sporadic process and a fragmentary state. Besides this, they were heavily contaminated by additions from other sources which were thought to be Aristotelian and accompanied by commentaries, which, although very helpful, were frequently misleading. If Aristotle had remained the only philosopher known, there might have been a complete acceptance of his thought, but there were such factors as the re-entry of Neoplatonism, the re-examination of Augustine, and the doctrines of the Arabians which prevented total acceptance of his works.

On December 10, 1270, the Bishop of Paris, Etienne Tempier, condemned thirteen philosophical propositions, all of which can be traced to the doctrine of the Stagirite as interpreted by Averroes. On March 7, 1277 Tempier condemned 219 propositions. It may seem that the Philosopher's bid to conquer Christianity had ended in defeat, but the defeat was only temporary.[82]

In a letter of May 20, 1346 to the masters and students of Paris, Clement VI blamed some of them for "disregarding and

despising the time-honored writings of the Philosopher...whose text they should follow so far as it does not contradict the faith." In 1366, Urban V's legates made it compulsory for the candidate for the degree in arts to have studied the very treatises of Aristotle which the Church had, a little over a century before, forbidden.[83]

Gilson says:

> The second half of the thirteenth century can be called the classical period in the development of medieval scholasticism. It corresponds to the moment when, fully conscious of the nature of the task that lay ahead of them, and provided with the material required to perform it, some theologians succeeded in building up complete theological syntheses, e.g., Saints Bonaventure and Saint Thomas Aquinas.[84]

Anyone who has read or studied Saint Thomas Aquinas realizes that he used Aristotle profusely.

The reception of Aristotle's works has been called the most significant event of the Middle Ages; it had a revolutionary and profound effect on the medieval mind. Gilson says, "Such is the significance of the truly dramatic movement... whose historical importance is such that even today we continue to feel its repercussions."[85]

Finis

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