PART TWO

METHODOLOGIES
While medieval logicians were well aware of the temporal distance between Aristotle and themselves, they seldom considered the problems of historical interpretation when discussing Aristotle’s logic. In this respect their approach to Aristotle is somewhat similar to those contemporary logical studies in which formal modelling is offered of historical texts, whether in terms of modern predicate logic, set theory, or the logic of relations. The similarities notwithstanding, historical awareness plays a much more central role in our times that in the Middle Ages; even the studies employing contemporary formal tools often include notes on historicity and anachronism. My aim is to make some remarks on these issues. In the first part, I shall discuss some examples of what could be regarded as the non-historical medieval approach to Aristotle’s logic. It seems that the authors assumed that logic is what it is and were inclined to argue that, when they believed they understood the logical question Aristotle dealt with, this was what Aristotle said or meant to say. It was not usual to characterise one’s interpretation as a hypothetical exposition of what Aristotle wrote, notwithstanding various competitive interpretations. In the fourteenth century, there were some more contextual readings of Aristotle, even though the historical constructions were pretty speculative. In the second part, I comment on some contemporary interpretations of medieval modal logic which are much more aware of interpretational conditions. After some examples of how to see the relationship between historical texts and interpretative terms, I discuss the difference between the rational reconstruction of what historical authors did say and the formal construction of what they might or should have said.

**Medieval Examples of What Aristotle Said or Meant**

In his longer commentary on Aristotle’s *De interpretatione*, Peter Abelard describes Aristotle’s view as follows: