THE ARABO-LATIN ARISTOTLE

Charles Burnett

Summary

This article examines the evidence we have of a corpus of translations of Aristotle’s *Libri naturales* made entirely from Arabic—a ‘Corpus Arabo-Latinum’ that is distinct from the well-known *Corpus vetustius* and *Corpus recentius*. This corpus is represented by two manuscripts which reflect the aims Gerard of Cremona and his pupils, working in Toledo in the mid to late twelfth century.

In the impressive *Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus* volume concerning Nicholas of Damascus’s *De plantis*, published in 1989, Hendrik Joan Drossaart Lulofs summarised the distinction between the *Corpus vetustius* and the *Corpus recentius* of Aristotelian natural philosophy, these being the basic categories used to differentiate the manuscripts described in *Aristoteles Latinus codices*. But he went on to propose that ‘It is important to note that the Aosta MS (A) and Trivultianus (B) both testify to the existence of yet another corpus which is rare and nameless: it consists of nothing but Arabo-Latin translations.’¹ In honour of Drossaart Lulofs and the whole *Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus* project, I shall re-examine this ‘nameless corpus’ and see what justification there is in regarding it as a corpus and as something distinct from the well-known *Corpus vetustius* and *Corpus recentius*. By ‘nameless’ Drossaart Lulofs meant that it is not referred to in medieval sources by any designation, unlike the ‘corpus vetustius’ to which we do find references (‘omnes sunt de veteri translatione’). But I shall dare to give it a name: the Corpus Arabo-Latinum.

What was Drossaart Lulofs referring to? If we look at the late twelfth/early thirteenth century manuscript Aosta, Biblioteca del Seminario, 71, we discover that it consists of the following works: *Physics*, *De causis*, *De plantis*, *De celo*, and *Meteora* (the manuscript breaks off soon after the

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beginning of the third book of the *Meteora* so we have no way of knowing what might have followed).\(^2\) The Trivultianus (MS Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, 764) starts not with the *Physics* but with the *De celo*, and inserts *De proprietatibus elementorum* between this work and *De generatione et corruptione*; the *Meteora* is completed by *De mineralibus* and the manuscript ends with *De plantis*, and was written in the thirteenth century.\(^3\) A hand of the fourteenth or fifteenth century has written on the verso of the first flyleaf: ‘*In hoc volumine sunt isti libri Arystotelis secundum translationem Girardi Cremonensis*’ (*‘In this book are these books of Aristotle, according to the translation of Gerard of Cremona’*). All these translations (except for the last book of the *Meteora*) were made from Arabic: the *Physics*, *De proprietatibus* and the first three books of the *Meteora* were made by Gerard of Cremona (1114–87), and Alfred of Shareshill (fl. 1197–1220) translated the *De mineralibus* and the *De plantis*, additions to the Aristotelian corpus, respectively from Avicenna and Nicholas of Damascus, but both considered as works of Aristotle.\(^4\)

The list of translations (*Commemoratio librorum*) drawn up by Gerard's pupils (*socii*) after his death, include Aristotle's *Physics*, *De celo*, *De generatione et corruptione* and the first three books of the *Meteora*, in this order.\(^5\) But they add before the *Physics* ‘*De expositione bonitatis pure*’—i.e. the *De causis*, which comes after the *Physics* in the Aosta MS, and they insert between the *De celo* and *De generatione et corruptione* the *De proprietatibus elementorum*, as does the Trivulziana manuscript. All these texts are attributed to Aristotle. Moreover, in the first section of their list—that on ‘*dialectica*’—the first text is Gerard's translation of the *Posterior Analytics*. So, this is Gerard of Cremona’s Aristoteles Arabo-Latinus.

The order in which the texts are listed conforms to that of another text listed among Gerard's philosophical translations in the *Commemoratio*:

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\(^2\) *Aristoteles Latinus*, codices, II, p. 881 (no. 1269).
\(^3\) Ibid., II, pp. 997–8 (no. 1462).