Roger Bacon has been interpreted as a significant representative of science and philosophy in the middle ages—a kind of fore-runner of the Philosophical Chancellor. Writing in the nineteenth century, William Whewell saw Bacon as a medieval version of a modern scientist and thought that any correspondence between Roger Bacon and Aristotle was more a sympathy of spirit than direct dependence of writing. In the course of the twentieth century, interpreters of medieval philosophy such as Theodore Crowley and James A. Weisheipl concluded that Bacon never fully understood Aristotle. They believed that he interpreted Aristotle in a very eclectic manner often influenced by Avicenna, Averroes and Neo-Platonic works such as the Liber de causis. This does not mean, however, that Roger Bacon was not concerned with the Corpus Aristotelicum as it came into use in the Medieval Universities especially between 1225 and 1280. By 1255, the study of Aristotelian philosophy was an established juridical fact in the statutes of the English Nation at the University of Paris. And Roger Bacon had, in the period c. 1237-47, been one of the early philosophical commentators on the texts of Aristotle and his Islamic interpreters, Avicenna and Averroes, at Paris. Hence, one would expect that Bacon would have had a knowledge of Aristotle’s philosophy as understood in that context.

Further, in the course of the 1260s and 1270s, one notices that the one-time Master of Arts (the Professor of Philosophy, who, it would seem, taught longer in the Arts than any other Master), once more enters the realm of public discourse. This time, he enters the lists in order to argue for the importance of both Aristotle and Science in the context of Parisian debates about the role and place of philosophy and science in a Christian education. Indeed, we witness a philosopher who is severely critical of the younger generation of philosophers in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris. And we see a philosopher who has acquired a new interest in the uses of languages and sciences in theology. This, older Roger Bacon is very critical of the younger generation of theologians.
and canon lawyers, who in his view, ignore the “new” Aristotle and the “new” sciences.

The great effort to interpret Aristotle in the 13th-century universities in the Latin West laboured under a number of difficulties. First, there was the difficult state of the translations, some from Greek and some from Arabic. Second, there was the filtering of Aristotle’s philosophy through Jewish, Islamic and Christian thought. Third, there was the latent Neo-Platonism and elements of Stoicism in traditional Latin thought. All of this made any interpretation of the Greek Aristotle difficult. And as a result, it is easy to see why historians of philosophy have had reservations about the adequacy of Bacon’s understanding of Aristotle. The same charge could be levelled against his contemporaries.

Nevertheless, the philosophers of the 13th century made a great effort to understand the Stagirite. Among the younger generation after Grosseteste was Roger Bacon, who advocated a thorough philological as well as a philosophical study of the text of Aristotle after the manner of the Bishop of Lincoln. And as J. Bravais has noted, Bacon may have been correct in demanding a better philological understanding of Aristotle at Paris in the mid-1260’s when the text of the Moerbecke translation of the Meteorologias reached Paris. Indeed, the question naturally arises: Did Bacon have a more radical commitment to the paradigm of the Philosophus than his acclaimed hero Robert Grosseteste? It would seem that in some respects he did. This will become apparent in the papers below.

The materials for a study of the Aristotelianism of Roger Bacon have been available since the completion of Robert Steele’s edition of the Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi in 1940. This is especially the case for the largely unstudied period of Bacon’s thought, his time as a Master of Arts (Philosophy) at the University of Paris from c. 1237/8 to 1247/8. Furthermore, some of these volumes in Steele’s edition, when taken in conjunction with Brewer’s and Bridges’ editions of the works from the 1260s, provide ample evidence for a critical re-assessment of Bacon’s relation to the so-called “Latin-Averroism” of the 1240s and to the “Latin-Averroism” or “Radical Aristotelianism” of the young Professors of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts at Paris in the period 1260-77. Indeed, not only this; they also shed light on Bacon as a Critic not just of the young radicals in the Faculty of Arts but also as a Critic of the “New” theology of the young Masters from 1250 on such as Richard Rufus, Bonaventure, John Pecham, Thomas Aquinas and also, perhaps, Giles of Rome.

However, with the exception of Theodore Crowley and a few others,