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# Monstrosities and Twitterings: A Note on the Early Reception of the *Posterior Analytics*

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*Posterior Analytics* I.22, 83a32-34,[1] plays an important role in the early reception of the treatise in the Latin West. Around the middle of the 12th century, the texts of the entire Organon were relatively well-known — except for the *Posterior Analytics*, which did not gain real ground until the 13th century. At present, it is the general view that John of Salisbury is the first, and only, Latin scholar of the 12th century to show real knowledge of the text.[2] His views on the topic of demonstration, and the *Posterior Analytics*, are voiced in the *Metalogicon*.[3] Thus, he is claimed to have used James of Venice's translation, probably made around 1130, and also to have known a second one made by a mysterious translator by the name of "John". This view rests (1) partly on John's summary of the treatise and its contents, (2) partly on the direct quotations from the treatise, of which the above-mentioned passage is by far the most important one. The evidence is not, however, as strong as would appear at first glance. In this note, I intend to focus solely on the above-mentioned passage. I shall treat the remaining problems involved in both 1 and 2 more generally in a forthcoming monograph.

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A table containing James of Venice's and "John" the translator's renditions of the relevant passage as well as John of Salisbury's version, stripped of his own comments, looks as follows:

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[1] Arist., APo. I.22, 83a32-34: τὰ γὰρ εἴδη χαιρέτω· τερετίσματά τε γάρ ἐστι, καὶ εἰ ἔστιν, οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν λόγον ἐστίν.

[2] See, in particular, Dod (1970), which is the only substantial treatment of the 12th-century reception of the text.

[3] Edition: Hall (1991).

| Aristotle (James of Venice) | Aristotle ("John" the Translator) | John of Salisbury[4] |
|---|---|---|
| Species enim gaudeant. Monstra enim sunt, et si sint, nihil ad rationem sunt. | Etenim species dimittantur. Cicadationes enim sunt, et si sunt, nihil ad hanc rationem est. | Gaudeant species. Monstra enim sunt, aut si sunt, nihil ad rationem. |

There are no important variant readings registered in Ross' edition of the Greek Aristotle, in Minio-Paluello & Dod's editions of the Latin translations or in Hall's edition of *Metalogicon*.[5]

Despite the fact that all modern scholars have accepted this passage in John's *Metalogicon* as a quotation taken directly from the *Posterior Analytics*, it seems clear to me that it is not:

(1)  John has reversed the order of *gaudeant* and *species*

(2)  The *enim* has been omitted

(3)  John has *aut si* for *et si*

(4)  John has *sunt* for *sint*

(5)  John omits the final *sunt*

This is not a quotation from a (very short) text that John had in front of him: it is a paraphrase. But he gives every appearance of quoting Aristotle directly. Either he is, then, quoting from memory, or he is simply quoting a different text.

*A priori* the first is a plausible explanation, and it seems to be further supported by the fact that John knows a variant reading for the translation of τερετίσματα (*monstra* James of Venice, *cicadationes* "John" the Translator). Certainly, this strongly indicates that John

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[4]  *Metalog.* II.20, p. 96: "'Gaudeant,' inquit Aristoteles, 'species. Monstra enim sunt,' vel secundum novam translationem cicadationes {enim sunt *del. Hall*}, 'aut si sunt, nihil ad rationem.'"

[5]  Ross (1949); Minio-Paluello & Dod (1968); Hall (1991).

had direct knowledge of this particular passage of the *Posterior Analytics*. Also, it is to be noted that John explicitly mentions two *translations*. However, knowledge of a single, short passage does not prove that he knew the textual surroundings. Neither does the fact that he is aware of the existence of translations. In fact, there is evidence that he did *not* know what preceded in the *Posterior Analytics*. For he immediately adds a note of caution:

> Quod et si de Platonicis ideis possit intelligi, …[6]

I take his hesitant tone to mean that John is not in fact quite sure what Aristotle is referring to, and that is very odd if he was actually sitting with the *Posterior Analytics* in front of him. This particular chapter (*APo.* I.22) is concerned with different kinds of predicates, and it certainly makes for difficult reading. However, it seems that there is not a single commentator who did not realise that Aristotle is referring to Plato's forms. Furthermore, John had studied with well-known "Platonists" like William of Conches and Thierry of Chartres, and *Metalogicon* II.20 is a sustained treatment of the nature of universals, including Platonist views, a topic about which John will also have learned much from Abelard.[7] And finally, there are many passages on Platonist forms in the works of John's hero: Cicero,[8] and other ancient authors as well. Thus, John knew enough to have seen from the preceding and the following part of the *Posterior Analytics*, if it had been in front of him, that Platonist forms were the target.

In the *De Naturis Rerum* (probably from the last quarter of the 12th century),[9] Alexander Neckham, who was not as well informed about "Platonism" as John was and made many errors of interpretation,[10] understood this particular part of the passage correctly as a criticism of Plato's form.[11] Neckham did not cull the passage from

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[6] *Metalog.* II.20, p. 96.

[7] McGarry (1948) 665 rightly states that *Metalogicon* II.20 is John's conscious rejection of the Platonist forms. See also *Metalog.* IV.16, IV.36, pp. 153-54, 175-76.

[8] See the analysis of Cicero's conception of Plato in Long (1995) and, e.g., Cic., *Orat.* I.2.7-I.3.10; Cic., *Acad.* I.8.30.

[9] Edition: Wright (1863).

[10] See Dod (1970) 66-67.

[11] *De Naturis Rerum* 173, p. 291.

the *Metalogicon*; for, apparently, he did not know the variant reading *cicadationes* for *monstra*, and in any case his version differs from John's. Neckham quotes, or paraphrases, it as follows:

> Gaudeant genera et species; monstra enim sunt, et si sunt, nihil ad rationem sunt.[12]

Two formal features catch the eye: the position of *gaudeant* and the insertion of *genera*. The latter certainly shows interpretative efforts, either by Neckham or by his source. As regards the former, we find once again an alleged quotation of the passage that deviates in word-order from both James' and "John's" translations, but is in accordance with John of Salisbury's.

However, the really striking thing is that this brief "quotation" is found independently in both authors, neither of whom cites the *Posterior Analytics* often. It seems plausible that this particular Aristotelian phrase had been extracted and used in a context independent of the *Posterior Analytics*. No less importantly, the *Auctoritates Aristotelis* has the following entry:

> Gaudeant genera et species Platonis quoniam si sunt, monstra sunt et si non sunt nihil ad rationem vel demonstrationem prosunt; demonstrationes enim de his.[13]

The text is more than 100 years later than John and at least 70-80 years later than Neckham, but this only makes it more interesting. For the *Auctoritates* may well be based on material and similar collections that were originally much older, and, as is evident, the text shares with John and Neckham some of the features not found in the translations.

Dod suggests that the Aristotelian passage had by Neckham's time become a *locus classicus* "detached from its context".[14] On the basis of major mistakes in the *De Naturis Rerum*, Dod furthermore points out that Neckham's knowledge of the *Posterior Analytics* in

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[12] *De Naturis Rerum* 173, p. 291.

[13] *Auctoritates Aristotelis (super primum librum Posteriorum Aristotelis)* no. 77 (ed. Hamesse), p. 317.

[14] Dod (1970) 69.

general may well have been second-hand.[15] I think that Dod is absolutely right, but he does not notice that identical problems are found in John of Salisbury's case, nor does he refer to the passage from the *Auctoritates*.

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The above argument helps to clear the ground for a slightly different suggestion that I will substantiate further elsewhere. Since John did not cite the passage from a complete text of the *Posterior Analytics*, and did not simply quote it from memory, I would suggest that he used some sort of compendium concerned with demonstration. The fact that Neckham uses the exact same passage, with *gaudeant* in the same position, also suggests a common, or at least similar, source. It is possible to say something about what such a compendium will have looked like. Not only do we know that the 12th century, and not least John, relied heavily on compendia and florilegia, but we have in fact a very interesting, anonymous treatise, translated from Arabic at an unknown date, on logical demonstration entitled *Liber Introductorius in Artem Logicae Demonstrationis*.[16] This is not *the* treatise that John or Neckham used. But there are many views and arguments in it that would explain similar ones found in the *Metalogicon*, and the form of the *Liber Introductorius* would account for John's somewhat puzzling treatment of demonstration in *Metalogicon* IV.8: relatively unstructured treatments of different aspects of the theory found in the *Posterior Analytics*, including a number of semi-quotations.[17] Alternatively, and perhaps equally plausibly, it might be suggested that John possessed a text similar to the *Auctoritates*. In that case, it must, however, have contained somewhat more elaborate extracts than the *Auctoritates*; for it would have to furnish John with the right amount of knowledge about demonstration, and it seems that the *Auctoritates* is not substantial enough to do this. A third source that could have influenced John is the Greek tradition. Unfortunately, we cannot prove or disprove this possibility, since there is nothing in Themistius or Philoponus to provide John with

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[15] Dod (1970) 66-69.
[16] Edition: Nagy (1897) 41-64.
[17] I treat the *Liber Introductorius* in my forthcoming monograph.

the relevant data concerning this particular passage. I suggest, then, that it is very possible that John had a compendium much like the *Liber Introductorius*, perhaps stemming from the Greek tradition, or a florilegium similar to the *Auctoritates*, and even though he would have had the opportunity to see the *Posterior Analytics*, probably already in his schooldays, it was not the text he used for demonstrative science when he wrote the *Metalogicon*.

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