

JACOBUS VENETICUS ON THE POSTERIOR ANALYTICS  
AND SOME EARLY 13TH CENTURY OXFORD MASTERS ON THE ELENCHI

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I. A FRAGMENT OF JACOBUS' COMMENTARY ON *APo*.

According to the mid 12th century chronicler Robert of Torigny, Jacobus, a cleric of Venice, translated and commented upon certain parts of the Aristotelian *Organon*, viz. the *Topics*, the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics* and the *Elenchi*. Jacobus' activity falls in the years round 1130. Fragments of his commentary on the *Elenchi* are recoverable from various sources and so are, to a greater extent, fragments of his translations of Greek commentaries on the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Elenchi*. For further information and bibliography on the subject I must refer to my *Anonymus Aurelianensis II, Aristotle, Alexander, Porphyry and Boethius. Ancient Scholasticism and 12th century Western Europe* = Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Age grec et latin 16, Copenhagen 1976.

I am now in a position to modify what I wrote *op. cit.* p. 9: "There is not a single trace of a commentary on the *APr*. whether written or translated by Iacobus, nor of any independent commentary of his on the *APo*." There does exist a trace of his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*. It is found in an early 13th century anonymous commentary on the *Sophistici Elenchi* parts of which are preserved in MS. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud.misc. 368, ff.2-7v & 220-221v.

My attention was drawn to the *Anonymus Laudianus*, as I style the author, because his work contains a number of references to the Greek commentary by "Alexander" on the *Elenchi* which Jacobus translated. A

gloss on *Sophistici Elenchi* c. 11 171b16-17 shows that *Anonymus Laudianus* was acquainted with another of Jacobus' products, too, viz. his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*.

In the section of the *Elenchi* concerned Aristotle argues that not any wrong proof is eristic. For instance, such as proceed by means of wrongly constructed geometrical figures but according to the principles of geometry, are not eristic, though wrong. Instances in case are the attempts of Hippocrates and others to square the circle. On the other hand, Aristotle says, Bryson's method of squaring the circle is sophistical because it relies on non-geometrical principles, and in this connection it is irrelevant whether the circle actually is squared or not.

The central passage, for our present purpose, is 171b16-18 ἀλλ' ὡς Βρύσων ἐτετραγώνιζε τὸν κύκλον, εἰ καὶ τετραγωνίζεται ὁ κύκλος, ἀλλ' ὅτι οὐ κατὰ τὸ πρᾶγμα, διὰ τοῦτο σοφιστικὸς. In Boethius' Latin translation: "Sed ut Brisso quadravit circulum, nam et si quadratur circulus, tamen quia non secundum rem, ideo sophisticus." Does the εἰ clause mean (1) "even though the circle is, in fact, squared by Bryson's method", or (2) "even though it is in fact possible to square the circle", or (3) "if, in fact, it is possible to square the circle"? I incline to accept (3) and think that it is a parenthetical remark intended to prevent the readers from interpreting ὡς ὁ Βρύσων ἐτετραγώνιζε as if Aristotle believed firmly in the possibility of squaring the circle, and even believed that Bryson was successful in his attempt to do so.

What *Anonymus Laudianus* tells us is that Jacobus accepted interpretation (1). Having given one exposition on the passage, he proceeds, on f. 6vA, as follows:

Vel aliter: *nam et si quadratur*: id est: licet sic vere probavit circulum quadrari, quod videtur hic affirmare Aristoteles et affirmat Iacobus in commento super Posteriora Analytica, *tamen quia non secundum rem*, ut prius expositum est, *ideo sophisticè*.

Now, of course many a scholar wore the name of Jacobus, but the fact that *Anonymus Laudianus* does not qualify him in any way seems to indicate that some unusually authoritative Jacobus is meant. Further, as I have already noted, *Anonymus Laudianus* knew another of Jacobus' works, viz. his translation of "Alexander's" commentary on the *Elenchi*, which is cited on ff. 2vA, 2vB, 6rA, 6vB, 221rB, 221vA, 221vB. To be sure, he does not name his source "Alexander", he says 'Commentator' but that is a common

enough way of referring to "Alexander" and the Greek background of some of the references, at least, is indubitable. Hence it is virtually certain that 'Commentator' means "Alexander". The only alternative that possesses any probability at all, is that it means "Iacobus", for his commentary included many items extracted from Greek scholia (presumably in all cases from "Alexander's" work which he had himself translated). So any way, Anonymus Laudianus *was* acquainted with another of Jacobus Veneticus' works besides the commentary on the *Posteriora*. It may, of course, be questioned whether he had a first hand acquaintance with the sources he cites. One citation of the 'Commentator' on the *Elenchi* (f. 221rB-vA) almost certainly presupposes firsthand knowledge; further, in view of the possibility (to be discussed in section II of this paper) that he was a pupil of Robert Grosseteste, it deserves mention that the information about Jacobus is *not* to be found in Grosseteste's commentary on the *Posteriora* (the relevant passages would be the scholia on 75b37sqq. and 77b9 both of which I have checked in MS Oxford, Merton College 280, ff. 110v & 112v).

I have little doubt, then, that the 'Iacobus' whose commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* is cited must be Jacobus Veneticus. Even if this is granted it might, however, be asked if the reference could not be to the commentary that Jacobus translated from the Greek rather than to a work of his own. I find this improbable for two reasons: (1) It would be an extraordinary way of referring to say 'Iacobus in commento' when the sense should be 'Alexander in commento quod transtulit Iacobus' (in the West the author of the Greek commentary was thought to be Alexander of Aphrodisias); (2) "Alexander's" commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* seems to be none other than Philoponus' which is still extant in Greek. (The arguments for this point are found in my 1976 study [CIMAGL 16] referred to above). Now, in Philoponus' commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* we find a long discussion of Bryson's squaring of the circle on pp. 111-115 (*ad* 75b37sqq) of the Berlin edition (CAG 13.3) and a shorter entry concerning it on p. 149 (*ad* 77b9sqq), but in none of the two passages does it seem possible to press Philoponus' words so as to make him state that Bryson "vere probavit circulum quadrari".

So I conclude that the reference to Jacobus' commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* is indeed a reference to the lost work by Jacobus Veneticus himself.

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II. ANONYMUS LAUDIANUS AND THE STUDY OF ARISTOTLE'S SOPHISTICI ELENCHI  
IN EARLY 13TH CENTURY OXFORD.

The study of logic in 13th century England is a subject about which comparatively little is known, though there has been of lately an increasing interest in it. The first half of the century is particularly difficult to deal with, even a rudimentary chronological framework lacking. In the present section of my paper I shall present some intriguing data concerning work on the *Elenchi* done in that period. The data raise several questions of importance for the understanding of the Oxford tradition in logic, and I can only regret that I shall not be able to produce any definitive answers to them. All I can do is to state the problems and indicate some possible solutions.

According to Roger Bacon, *Compendium Studii Theologiae* p.34 Rashdall (*Fratris Rogeri Bacon Compendium studii theologiae* ed. H.Rashdall, Aberconiae 1911) "Etiam logicalia fuerunt tarde recepta et lecta [sc. in the West]. Nam Beatus Edmundus Cantuariensis Archiepiscopus [= Edmund of Abingdon] primus legit Oxonie librum Elencorum temporibus meis, et vidi magistrum Hugonem qui primo legit librum Posteriorum". On the strength of Bacon's claim that the "reading" of the *Elenchi* occurred in his time (temporibus meis) Th. Crowley (*Roger Bacon, the Problem of the Soul in his Philosophical Commentaries*, Louvain-Dublin 1950, p.21) argues that the only period of Edmund's life in which this could possibly have happened is 1228-1234, though, on other grounds, one might expect Edmund's activity as a teacher of logic to pertain to an earlier time.

The earliest preserved and complete commentary on the *Elenchi* by an Englishman is Robert Grosseteste's (sole manuscript: Oxford, Merton College 280, ff.3-37v). It is a literal commentary, but one that pays little attention to the explanation of textual details; instead it contains broad surveys and rather extensive discussions of the philosophical problems raised by Aristotle's work.

Unfortunately the early career of Robert Grosseteste is not very well attested, and so it is extremely difficult to date his *Elenchi* commentary. General considerations of his career point to the first decade of the 13th century as the period at which he wrote the commentaries on the *Elenchi* and the *Posterior Analytics*, that is to a time at which he

was magister artium and not yet magister theologiae. This early date has been proposed by D.A. Callus (*Robert Grosseteste as Scholar*, in *Robert Grosseteste, Scholar and Bishop*, ed. D.A. Callus, Oxford at the Clarendon Press 1953, p.12), and A.C. Crombie (*Robert Grosseteste and the Origins of Experimental Science*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press 1953, pp.46-47) tends to take the same view though he will not exclude that the commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* may have to be dated as late as the second or third decade of the century. In this connection I should like to point out that the commentary on the *Elenchi* is remarkably free of any display of its author's knowledge of Greek; this observation speaks in favour of a comparatively early date of composition (cf. Callus, *op.cit.* p.13 for a similar argument concerning the date of the commentary on *APo.*). It is also worth noticing that, as far as I have been able to ascertain, Grosseteste neither cites nor used "Alexander's" commentary on the *Elenchi*. To be sure, we may detect some echoes of it in Robert's work, but such faint echoes only prove that he was acquainted with the Latin literature on the subject: already by the middle of the 12th century several items derived from "Alexander's" commentary had become part and parcel of the Latin tradition.

Now, if Edmund of Abingdon was the first to give a course on the *Elenchi* at Oxford and that was no earlier than 1228, and if Grosseteste composed his commentary for a similar course, which is not directly attested but certainly very likely, we must put that course no earlier than ca. 1230 (he is known to have been in Oxford at that date: see Callus *op.cit.* p.10). But this again may mean that we shall have to date Anonymus Laudianus to the 1230s or later.

As mentioned above, his *Elenchi* commentary is only preserved in a very fragmentary state. What we have got are four *bifolia* that once formed a quire of a manuscript long since lost, it seems. Nowadays the eight folia occur as folia 4, 220, 3, 2, 7, 6, 221, 5 (I list the folia in their original order) of MS Oxf. Bodl. Laud. Misc. 368. The preserved part of the work covers Arist. *SE* 169a36-172b25. This means that in its complete state the commentary can scarcely have occupied less than 40 folia. The loss of four or more quires of the original codex must have occurred rather early, as some 14th century librarian's notes on f. 7v indicate that the preserved quire had already been reduced to the state of fly-

leaves. The notes read as follows: (a) Upper left mg.: Steph(an)us. (b) Right mg.: liber Sancti Cuthberti et Ricardi (?) Bell (?) prioris Dunelm(ensis ?). (c) Below (b): Petrus Blesensis de amicitia cum multis aliis 2<sup>o</sup> fo vel a sua. (d) Below (c): Iste liber assignatur novo armariolo in claustro ecclesie Dunelm(ensis ?). p. venerabilem patrem magistrum Iohannem Aukland priorem eiusdem ecclesie. I cannot explain (a), but (b) and (d) show that the manuscript was in Durham while (c) demonstrates that the fragment of the *Elenchi* commentary was already then, as now, bound together with Peter of Blois' *De amicitia* and *De caritate dei*, and the occurrence of (b)-(d) on fol. 7v can only mean that it was no more than a fly-leaf when they were written.

The original size of some forty folia with the text written in two columns of approximately 55 lines each is that of a very thorough commentary. Its length must have been at least comparable to that of Grosseteste's (35 folia in the Merton manuscript, but less densely written). But it was a very different kind of commentary, paying much more attention to the word by word exposition of Aristotle's text than to broader philosophical disquisitions. As mentioned above, the author also differs from Grosseteste in having consulted "Alexander's" scholia. Nevertheless there seems to be a connection to Robert. In one passage *Anonymus Laudianus* informs us that his first teacher was Robert of Lincoln, and in another he refers to a certain Roger[ius] of Lincoln (?). The texts are these:

(I) 220vA:

*et secundum reliqua <c.8 170a19>*: quasi diceret: sicut est in his quod non fit simpliciter syllogismus sed ad respondentem, et hoc si adinterrogetur aliud, similiter est et in paralogismis qui fiunt secundum reliqua, i.e. secundum reliquas fallacias. Videtur autem quod dicit sophisticum elenchum non esse simpliciter syllogismum obloqui prioribus, dixerat enim superius: <c.8 169b21-23> *dico autem [quod] sophisticum elenchum et syllogismum non solum eum qui videtur et non est, sed qui est, non conveniens autem rei*. Item et contrarium est hoc sequentibus et ei quod dicitur in octavo Topicorum <Top. I (!) c.1 100b23sq. >; cum enim ibi distinguat duas species litigiosorum syllogismorum et dicit quod primus est syllogismus. Ad quod dicunt quod non est dictum superius quod sit syllogismus quia simpliciter syllogismus sed syllogismus ad aliquem, similiter et in octavo dicitur quod est syllogismus ad aliquem, non autem simpliciter. Sed his obviat quod dicturus est in libro secundo <c.18 176b31 sq. > quoniam est simpliciter syllogismus quidam sophisticus. Propter hoc dicebat primus magister noster *Robertus Lincolnensis* quod aliud est aliquam orationem dici syllogismum simpliciter, aliud autem aliquam simpliciter dici syllogismum; simpliciter enim dicitur

sylogismus de quo sine omni adiumento potest dici quod sit syllogismus, tales autem sunt quidam sophistici; sed dicitur simpliciter syllogismus qui nec habet peccatum in materia nec in forma, quales sunt soli demonstrativi et dialectici qui sunt ex probabilissimis et non alii, tales ergo non sunt aliqui sophistici et secundum hoc dicit hic non esse [dicit] simpliciter syllogismos qui sunt sophistici. Haec quidem sententia alta est et subtilis, sed tamen ut sequamur voluntatem Aristotelis dicemus quod ...

(II) 7v:

*Nam temptativa dialectica quaedam est <c.11 171b4-5>* Superius dixit ipsam esse partem dialecticae, propter quod dicunt multi dialecticam tum communius tum minus communiter accipi, cum communius cum dicitur secunda liberalium artium et secundum hoc quattuor habet partes: demonstrativam, dialecticam, temptativam et sophisticam; dicitur item communiter, licet strictius quam prius, dialectica secundum quod dicuntur duae partes secundae liberalium artium apodictica et dialectica, et secundum utramque istarum <acceptionum> dicunt temptativam partem dialecticae quia speciem, item et quandam dialecticam; mos enim est Aristotelis ut dicat speciem alicuius generis esse 'illud quoddam', ut hominem 'animal quoddam'; itaque dicunt temptativam 'dialecticam quandam' secundum communem acceptionem vocabuli; sed restricto nomine ut dicatur dialectica quae est ex simpliciter probabilibus dicunt haec duo opponi sibi invicem, dialecticam et temptativam, quia est temptativa, ut ipsi volunt, tantum ex probabilibus alicui et ex propriis disciplinae et assignant tantum materiam temptativae, ut praediximus, propria sed falsa, ut sit iuxta quamlibet demonstrativam specialem specialis temptativa ut iuxta geometriam falsigraphia; et dicunt similiter se habere temptator ad demonstrativam quemadmodum sophistica ad dialecticam, quid tamen super his sentiendum sibi praedemonstravit nobis doctrina magistri Roger[i]i Lincolnien[s]is [122f, 368], est enim et per propria temptare et per communia quae sequuntur ad propria quoniam iuxta quaelibet propria sunt quaedam communia quae comitantur propria et quae impossibile est ignorari arte scita et ipsis propriis quae artis sunt, non tamen si sciuntur et ars; in istis autem si deprehenditur ignorans multo magis et circa propria; sed cum possit ex his sumi experimentum et hoc artificiosius quandoque minus artificiose possit fieri, non dubitetur quin ex his communibus sit ars quaedam et alia quam dialectica, non enim sunt simpliciter probabilia, sed (?) alicui ignorantem artem quam profiteretur se scire; et haec utilia sunt ad temptandum, non potest enim artem scire qui talia non cognoscit. Utitur ergo communibus principiis temptativa sicut et dialectica, et secundum eosdem locos quibus utitur dialectica...

(I) is the more important of the two texts because it is stated in an unequivocal way that the author's first teacher was Robert of Lincoln.

(II) is more problematic, but it is tempting, at least, to consider 'Rogerii' a scribal error for 'Roberti' and solve the abbreviated adjective indicating his origin as 'Lincolniensis'.

Now, where and when did *Anonymus Laudianus* follow a course given

by Robert of Lincoln? As for the 'where' the obvious answer is England: the teacher was an Englishman and his pupil, Anonymus Laudianus, almost certainly was so too: his work has been preserved in a manuscript the script of which indicates that it was executed in England and which was ecclesiastical property in Durham before the close of the Middle Ages. Supposing, then, that Robert of Lincoln taught in England, we may ask in which town. It is hard not to think of Oxford, though there is no direct evidence to that effect.

But when did Robert teach? Text (I) leaves one with the impression that the date lies more than a couple of years before the composition of the pupil's commentary as the pupil (Anonymus Laudianus) refers to what his "first teacher used to say", implying that after that time he had had occasion to attend the lessons of other masters and presumably to finish his studies to become himself a teacher. On paleographical grounds I disincline to date the fragmentary codex of Anonymus Laudianus' work later than the first quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the contents (terminology etc.) also seem to me to indicate a date early in the century, if not in the late 12th century. On the other hand, literal commentaries of the type in case tend to be always very conservative and very difficult to date. Paleographical arguments must always be handled with caution. If we accept an early dating (1210 or earlier) for the composition of the commentary, then Robert of Lincoln is very likely not to be Robert Grosseteste. He might, for instance, be Robert Blund, a master who was attached to the see of Lincoln in the 1170s and 1180s (see L.M. De Rijk, *Logica Modernorum* II.1, Assen 1967, p.256). If, on the other hand, we are willing to date the commentary somewhat later, the name of Grosseteste imposes itself. If we disregard Bacon's claim that none read the *Elenchi* at Oxford before Edmund, then almost any date between 1200 and 1235 could be assigned to a course given by him at Oxford - and the whole of Grosseteste's English academical career seems to be an Oxford career. But if we do not disregard Bacon, then the course attended by Anonymus Laudianus cannot be earlier than ca. 1230 (this subject to the condition that Crowley's dating of Edmund's activity to the period 1228-1234 is correct). Allowing then Anonymus Laudianus some years to finish his studies with other teachers, his commentary on the *Elenchi* must be dated no earlier than the late 1230s. A weak support of that date is furnished by the epithet



'Lincolniensis' bestowed on Robert in text (I) as Grosseteste became bishop of Lincoln in 1235. Yet, his connection with the see was old; actually, the first appearance of his name is in a charter of Hugh, bishop of Lincoln (Callus *op.cit.* p.3) in which 'Magister Robertus Grosteste' occurs in the list of the witnesses. The charter is from between 1186 and 1190 (Callus *l.c.*). If the 'Roger[i]us' of text (II) is also Grosseteste the simple title of 'magister', not 'bishop' or anything like it, might speak in favour of a date before 1235.

I am afraid there is not at present any means of reaching an incontestable decision about the date of Anonymus Laudianus, and things do not become any less complex if we try to verify the references to Robert's and Roger's doctrines in Grosseteste's commentary on the *Elenchi*. Text (I) indicates that we should look at his comments on 170a19, 169b21 and 176b31 (?). Text (II) points to a comment on 171b4. I have looked up the relevant passages in Grosseteste's commentary (MS Oxford, Merton College 280, ff. 16v, 15v, 27v, 18r) and found nothing of interest to the present purpose. This must mean that if Anonymus Laudianus refers to Grosseteste, he refers to an oral teaching which was not just a recitation of the preserved commentary. Unfortunately, the impossibility of verifying the citations do not prove that Robertus Lincolniensis is *not* Grosseteste, for as far as I can see there is nothing in his commentary to exclude that he could have held the views ascribed by Anonymus Laudianus to his teacher.

Leaving the solution of the problems discussed in this part of the present paper to future researches, I must end by acknowledging my debt to Prof. L.Minio-Paluello who first informed me of the existence of the Anonymus Laudianus fragment and of the correct order of the folia; to Dr. W.D. Hunt of Oxford who supplied me with photographs of the fragment; and to Prof. J. Pinborg who drew my attention to Bacon's statement about the reading of the *Elenchi* at Oxford.