

# The Aldine Edition of Aristotle's *De Sensu*

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## I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The four year-period 1495-1498 will probably have a familiar ring to most Aristotelian scholars. In this period appeared the first printed edition ever of the complete Greek Aristotle, and the man responsible for this enormous project was, not surprisingly, Aldus Manutius, the great publisher of ancient Greek texts.<sup>1</sup> The present article examines a single text of the Aldine Aristotle, that is, the text of the *De sensu*.<sup>2</sup> In this examination I will emphasise (1) the relationships between the Aldine edition and the manuscript tradition (section II),<sup>3</sup> and (2) the general quality of Aldus' text (section III). I make no attempt to explain or elucidate the cultural and scholarly circumstances surrounding the edition.

## II. THE STEMMATIC RELATIONSHIPS

Among the early editions of Aristotle, the Aldine edition, being the first printed Greek text of Aristotle, is particularly interesting to compare with the manuscript tradition, and it is in fact possible to establish its place in a stemma with some degree of accuracy. Thus, it almost always agrees

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<sup>1</sup> For scholarship on Aldus Manutius, cf. e.g. Ferrigni (1925); Sicherl (1976); Lowry (1979); Fletcher III (1988); Davies (1995); Tortzen (1995); Sicherl (1997); Zeidberg (1998).

<sup>2</sup> I have used a copy possessed by the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen. The *De sensu* is found in the third of five volumes (Venice 1497) on the pages 247a-259b (with typographical errors in the pagination: 547 for 247 and 238 for 248).

<sup>3</sup> I have established the stemmatic relationships of the Greek manuscripts in Bloch (forthcoming). My collations of the Greek manuscripts and the Aldine edition have been published in Bloch (2004). Both articles provide the sigla used also in the present article.

with the readings of the Vaticanus graecus 253 (L),<sup>4</sup> and the agreements include not only correct readings but also some blatantly false readings against the rest of the tradition:<sup>5</sup>

437b20] ἐν cett. : om. L Ald. || 437b24] δ' cett. : om. L Ald. || 439a24]  
ἐν τοῖς plerique codd. : om. L Ald. || 442a9] τὴν cett. : om. L Ald. ||  
445a3] ἔχει cett. : ἔχου L Ald. || 447a12] ἔστι cett. : ἔτι L Ald. || 449a4]  
ἦ cett. : om. L Ald.

In addition to these instances, there is a number of passages in which the Aldine agree exclusively with the entire family of manuscripts to which Vat. gr. 253 belongs,<sup>6</sup> but, as shown by the passages cited above, Vat. gr. 253 is the closer relative.

This affiliation is very interesting. The Vat. gr. 253 is one of the best manuscript witnesses for the text of the *De sensu*,<sup>7</sup> and therefore it is important to establish whether the Aldine preserves independent material from a lost ancestor, or whether it descends directly from the *Vaticanus*. If the Aldine edition did contain readings from a manuscript that did not stem from Vat. gr. 253, it would be a valuable textual witness.

Unfortunately, it can be established beyond any doubt that the Aldine edition is, in fact, directly descended from Vat. gr. 253, and therefore it is

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<sup>4</sup> For descriptions and discussions of this manuscript in Aristotelian contexts, cf. e.g. Siwek (1961) 29-30, 36-46; Harlfinger (1971) 159-66; Escobar (1990) 137-140; Bloch (forthcoming).

<sup>5</sup> The similarities between Vat. gr. 253 and the Aldine edition for the *De sensu* have also been noticed by Siwek (1963) XX, but he does not discuss exactly *how* they are related to each other. He further states that the similarities are found only in the text of the *De sensu*, not in the rest of the *Parva naturalia*. Apparently, Sicherl (1997) has not noticed the close similarities between Vat. gr. 253 and the Aldine edition for the *De sensu*.

<sup>6</sup> The other manuscripts of this family (ρ) are: Ambr. gr. 435, H 50 sup (X); Marc. gr. Z 214 (H<sup>a</sup>); Par. gr. 2034 (y). To list only examples from the first part of the *De sensu*, this family agrees with the Aldine edition in 436b12, 436b14, 437a4, 437a5, 437a6, 437a9, 437a24, 437b21, 438a7, 438a23, 438b9, 439a3, 439a12, 439b8, 439b23, 440a2, 440a6, 440a20, 440a28, 440b21.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Biehl (1898) XII-XIII; Siwek (1963) XX; Bloch (2006) 8-13, 16-17.

of no use to the editor of Aristotle. This can be determined on the basis of the stemmatic relationship between Vat. gr. 253 and Marc. gr. Z 214. These two manuscripts are also closely related, and it is generally agreed that they have both been copied from the same source.<sup>8</sup> My own investigations of the texts of both the *De sensu* and the *De memoria* support this conclusion.<sup>9</sup>

This being the case, the blatant errors found in Vat. gr. 253, but not present in Marc. gr. Z 214, must have originated in the Vatican manuscript (excluding the possibility of direct contamination in the *Marcianus*, of which it shows no trace, and which would in any case have been unlikely given the kind of errors). Therefore, the Aldine edition (or its exemplar) must either have made all these errors independently of Vat. gr. 253, which is highly unlikely given their number and character, or it is directly descended from the *Vaticanus*. I believe the latter to be the only plausible solution; and considering the number of obvious errors that remain unemended in the Aldine edition I am convinced that the editor used either Vat. gr. 253 itself (assisted by variant readings from other manuscripts, see section III) or a copy made directly from the *Vaticanus*. Several intermediate manuscripts between Vat. gr. 253 and the Aldine edition seem implausible.

### III. THE QUALITY OF THE ALDINE EDITION

The text of the Aldine edition of the *De sensu* is not of high quality. As shown above, the editor has simply reproduced the most blatant errors of Vat. gr. 253, and he generally seems content merely to transcribe his manuscript exemplar. Only in a few passages does he print a text which differs from Vat. gr. 253. The following are some characteristic examples:

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Harlfinger (1971) 159-173, 392; M. C. Nussbaum (1978) 15-16; Escobar (1990) 137-40, 205.

<sup>9</sup> I have presented a detailed argument in Bloch (forthcoming). See also Bloch (2006) 8-9.

436a8] καὶ<sub>2</sub> *plerique codd. et Ald. : om. LXH<sup>a</sup>y* || 436a10] γὰρ *plerique codd. et Ald. : om. LXH<sup>a</sup>y* || 436a18] οὔτε<sub>1</sub> *cett. et Ald. : οὐ L* || 436b16] περὶ *cett. et Ald. : παρὰ L* || 438a1] λεπτήσιν <τ> ὁθόνησι] *Diels : λεπτήσιν ὁθόνησι plerique codd. : λεπτήσι χθονήσι α Ald. : λεπτήσιν ὁθόνοισι X : λεπτήσιν γ' ὁθόνησι V<sup>2</sup> : λεπτήσι χοανήσιν P* || λοχεύσατο] *Förster : λοχάζετο α Ald. : ἐχείατο LH<sup>a</sup> : ἐχεύατο plerique codd.* || 438b9] ἦ *cett. : om. L* : καὶ *Ald.* || 438b21] ἐνεργεία *cett. et Ald. : om. L* || 439a23] κοινὴ *cett. et Ald. : καινὴ L* || 440a14] πρὸς *cett. et Ald. : om. L* || 440b15] τοῦ *cett. et Ald. : τοῦτο L* || 442b8-9] ἀπατῶνται *cett. et Ald. (bis) : ἀπαιτῶνται L (bis)* || 448b15] ὀρᾷ-ἀδιαίρετον *cett. et Ald. : om. L.*

Of course, we may think that the Aldine editor is responsible for the most obvious emendations, but considering the errors that he has left unemended in the text, it is equally plausible that variant readings had been introduced in the manuscript tradition. Certainly, passages such as 436a10, 438b21 and 440a14 indicate this, and the reading in 438a1 and the omission in Vat. gr. 253 in 448b15 prove beyond doubt that the Aldine editor or an intermediate manuscript used another textual witness at least for these passages.

On the other hand, 436a8 and 438b9 are among the few passages, which may show signs of editorial activity. The first, an insertion of καί, cannot be considered strong evidence. The second is similar, yet more interesting. Vat. gr. 253 omits ἦ, found in all other manuscripts, and the reading of the Aldine edition (καὶ) can be explained in two ways: (1) as an emendation (and thus similar to the former example), or (2) as a mistake on the part of the editor, thinking that the ἦ was the abbreviation for καὶ. In the first case, we must give the editor credit for the fact that he has noticed the need for a conjunction; in the second case we may assume that the right reading had been introduced in the intermediate copy, but was misread by the editor. I tend towards the latter view, but this cannot be determined with certainty. These corrections really are minimum requirements of an editor.

There is also a number of readings found in the Aldine edition but in no extant manuscript of early date. Ignoring the most obvious typographical errors, which are unfortunately very numerous,<sup>10</sup> we have the following readings:

437b20] ἔδει *codd.* : εἶδει Ald. || 438a11. αὐτῶ] *codd.* : αὐτῶν Ald. || 438a22] τοῦτο τοῦ] *plerique codd.* : τοῦτο οὐ Ald. || 439a10. δέ] *plerique codd.* : δή Ald. || 440a16] ὁρᾶσθαι] *codd.* : ὁρᾶται Ald. || 444a4-5. ἡ (l. 4)-ζῶων (l. 5)] *om.* Ald. || 444b32. καρῆβαροῦσι] *plerique codd.* : καρῆβαροῦσι Ald. || 445b10] λευκὸν μὲν ὁρᾶν] *plerique codd.* : λευκὸν μὲν ὁρᾷ Ald. || 447b9. τοῖν] *codd.* : τοῦ Ald. || 447b29] ἑαυταῖς] *codd.* : ἑαυτῇ Ald. || 449b1. περὶ] *codd.* : ἐπὶ Ald.

Some of these readings may also plausibly be classified as misprints (437b20, 444b32 and, perhaps, 438a11), but most of the variants seem to be the result of the editor trivialising a transmitted reading (447b9, 447b29) or simply misreading or misunderstanding the text in his manuscript (438a22, 439a10, 449b1). A particularly strange mistake is the change of an infinitive into a conjugated form of the verb against manuscript authority in places where the infinitive seems a much more plausible reading (440a16, 445b10).

Only in a single passage do I believe that the Aldine edition may have found the right reading against all the extant manuscripts:

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<sup>10</sup> 440a25] ὑποκειμένου] *plerique codd.* : ὑποκείμενου Ald. || 441a24] ἐπεκτείνεται] *codd.* : ἐπεκτείνεται Ald. || 441b19] παρασκευάζει] *codd.* : παρασκεάζει Ald. || 441b21] ἐνέργειαν] *codd.* : ἀνέργειαν Ald. || 442a23] φοινικοῦν] *codd.* : φονικοῦν Ald. || 442b10. ταῦτα] *plerique codd.* : ταῦτα Ald. || 444b29] δυσωδῶν] *plerique codd.* : δυσωδῶς L : δυσσοδῶν Ald. || 447a16] ἀκούοντες] *codd.* : ἀκούοντες Ald. || 447b28] ἐκείνης] *plerique codd.* : ἐκίνης Ald.

445a1-2. τῆς καθ' αὐτὴν] Ald. : καθ' αὐτὴν τῆς α : τῆς καθ' αὐτὸ **L** *et plerique*: τῆς καθ' αὐτὰ **XP** : τῆς καθ' αὐτὸ τῆς **m<sup>a</sup>**(τῆς<sub>2</sub> *s.l.*) : καθ' αὐτὴν τῆς **m<sup>b</sup>** (τῆς καθ' αὐτὰ *s.l.*).<sup>11</sup>

As is easily seen, the manuscripts disagree completely in this passage. Of the two major branches of the textual tradition (sigla: α and β), the α-manuscripts agree in reading καθ' αὐτὴν τῆς while most β-manuscripts, including **L**, read τῆς καθ' αὐτὸ. The α-reading was preferred in the critical editions of Förster, Mugnier, Ross and Siwek, producing the familiar αὐτῆς ... καθ' αὐτὴν (τῆς δυσωδίας οὐδὲν φροντίζουσιν) in the passage. But it seems to me that the familiarity of the αὐτῆς ... καθ' αὐτὴν may well be the reason why some early editor or scribe transposed the article, placing it after rather than before καθ' αὐτὴν.

However, this does not mean that the Aldine editor should be credited with a brilliant conjecture. Since **L** and a number of the other β-manuscripts have the same word order as the Aldine edition, and differ only in reading αὐτὸ instead of αὐτὴν, the correction is a very small one. Some might even consider it simply a trivialisation of the more difficult τῆς καθ' αὐτὸ.

So, to sum up, although the Aldine *De sensu* does contain a single good reading against the entire manuscript tradition, the editorial effort in general is far from satisfying, even if one gives the editor credit for having produced the editio princeps of the text.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Later editions of Aristotle used the Aldine edition (or an edition that had been based on it) as the basis of their text, and thus Aldus' text became a

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<sup>11</sup> Sigla: α = seven mss. constituting the α-branch (α in Ross' edition) of the tradition; X = Ambr. 435, H 50 Sup.; P = Vat. gr. 1339; m<sup>a</sup> = Par. gr. 1921 (first version); m<sup>b</sup> = Par. gr. 1921 (second version). The two *De sensu* texts found in Par. gr. 1921 have been copied from the same source. However, both contain numerous variant readings from different parts of the tradition.

kind of archetypus for the editions of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, e.g. those of Erasmus of Rotterdam, F. Sylburg and I. Casaubon.<sup>12</sup> Given the rather poor quality of the Aldine *De sensu*, these editors had to use all their philological skills when constituting the text. The result in Erasmus' edition is not very fortunate, but Sylburg, in particular, did well, using both conjectural criticism and variant readings, and Casaubon relied to some extent on his edition.<sup>13</sup> Still, a truly critical *De sensu* text, based on a solid foundation of manuscripts, was not produced until I. Bekker's monumental edition, so renaissance humanists as well as a number of early modern philologists and philosophers had to use inferior editions, ultimately based on the *Aldina*.

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<sup>12</sup> These editions have not been much studied, but see Glucker (1964). Buhle (1791) 210-67 contains extensive comments on earlier editions of Aristotle.

<sup>13</sup> I believe that the editions of both Sylburg and Casaubon contain a number of readings that are correct, even though they are not found in any extant Greek manuscript. E.g. 440a9] ἐπαλείφοντες] Sylburg : ἐπαλείφουσιν *codd.*; 443b11] τὰ σαπρὰ] Casaubon (*varia lectio*) : τὰς σαπρὰς *codd.*

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