

Chapter II.

The Philosophical Renaissance of the Thirteenth Century.

THE sudden and widespread outburst of philosophical speculation which lights up the opening years of the thirteenth century, is traceable to three main causes: (1) the introduction of the Western intellectual world to a rich and hitherto unknown philosophical literature; (2) the creation of the Universities, especially of Paris and Oxford; (3) the rise of the mendicant orders in the church. To those extrinsic causes we may add an internal factor: the vital force developed in philosophical speculation by the preparatory labours of the preceding period (195).

§ 1. THE NEW PHILOSOPHICAL REVIVAL IN THE WEST.

226. History and Chronology of the New Latin Translations. -- For the second, or even the third time, the West discovered a portion of the philosophical treasures of ancient Greece. At the same time it came into contact with the genius and the works of a strange race. All these treasures reached the Western philosophers in Latin translations. These we may divide into three groups: --

I. Translations of Greek Works. -- Here we must carefully distinguish those made directly from the Greek, from those that came through the Arabic.

(1) The *Greek-Latin* versions are the best. During the twelfth century, French scholars visited Greece, Sicily and the East. Then the capture of Constantinople in 1204 brought East and West into relations of closer intercourse. Yet the translations made directly from the Greek were less numerous and less known than those made through the Arabic. Prominent among the translators from the Greek is Robert Grossetête (1175-1253), professor at Paris and Oxford, and afterwards Bishop of Lincoln. He is the author of a *Breve Compendium in VIII Libros Physicorum*,^{11} a commentary on the *Analytica Posteriora* and an original treatise, *Summa Philosophiae*,^{2} often confounded with the *De Divisione Philosophiae* of Gundissalinus. According to Herman the German, he wrote a commentary on the *Nichomachean Ethics*, with possibly a translation, which, however, if it existed, has never been discovered.^{3} JOHN BASINGSTOCK and THOMAS OF CANTIMPRÉ have left fragmentary translations from the Greek. Albert the Great used Latin versions of the *Phaedo* and the *Meno*. An unknown writer of the second half of the thirteenth century made a little-used version of the *Hypotyposes Pyrrhonienses* of Sextus Empiricus:^{4} of whom we notice a like ephemeral appearance in the philosophy of the Byzantine, Cabasilas, early in the fourteenth century (see Third Period).

Special mention must be given to the Dominican, WILLIAM OF MOERBEKE, who undertook, at the request of St. Thomas, the task of translating all Aristotle,^{5} or revising existing translations of certain portions. The great doctor -- to the credit of his critical exactness be it said -- would have nothing to do with translations made from the Arabic: in his eyes they had no sufficient warrant of fidelity.^{6} William of Moerbeke, born about 1215, orientalist and philosopher, Archbishop of Corinth from 1278 to his death in 1286, was one of the most distinguished literary men of the second half of the thirteenth century. He translated all the works of Aristotle, notably the *Politics*, of which he was the first translator. His versions of the *Liber de Causis* and of the *Elementa Theologica* of Proclus became the main sources from which the thirteenth-century Neo-Platonists drew their inspiration. William's versions are literal; though wanting in

elegance, they are careful and accurate and may still be consulted with profit.^{7}

BARTHOLOMEW OF MESSINA, who lived at the court of Manfred, king of Sicily, has left a version of the *Magnorum Moraliū*; also^{8} of the *Problemata*, the *Liber de Principiis*, the *De Mirabilibus Auditionibus*, the *Physionomia*, the *De Signis*, informing us that these translations were made at the king's order.

NICHOLAS OF SICILY, who translated the *Liber de Mundo*, and DURANDUS OF AUVERGNE are of less importance. Certain Italian manuscripts contain, besides, anonymous versions of the *Physics*, the *De Anima* and the *De Coelo et Mundo*.^{9}

The scholastics of the thirteenth century were also acquainted with certain Byzantine works. For instance, Albert the Great and St. Bonaventure had the treatise of EUSTRATIUS (211) on the Ethics of Aristotle, in the version of some unknown translator. Conversely, the Byzantines, on coming into contact with the West, translated some Latin works into Greek. The first of these Byzantine translators was MAXIMUS PLANUDES (1260-1310) whom Andronicus II. sent on a scientific mission to Venice, 1296. He translated the works of Cicero, Macrobius and Boëthius. His version of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* is still used in teaching the elementary humanities.

(2) *Arabic-Latin* versions of Greek works. -- Ancient Greek philosophy found its way to the West mainly through Arabian channels: translations through the Arabic to Latin were earlier known and used than translations directly from the original Greek. When we remember that the thought of Aristotle had to pass from its original embodiment in Greek, through Syriac, Arabic, Hebrew -- and sometimes a vernacular in addition^{10} -- before it came to be expressed in Latin, we need not be surprised at the preference shown by the scholastics for versions directly from the Greek, in comparison with the older versions through the Arabic. For these latter all conformed strictly to this stereotyped canon of translation: "The Latin word to cover the Arabic word as the piece covers its place on the chessboard".^{11}

(a) *Works translated*. -- These were, above all, the works of Aristotle, more especially the *Physics*, the *Metaphysics*^{12} and the *De Anima*. Next come a number of scientific treatises, notably on mathematics, with the works of Ptolemy and Galen. These, lending themselves readily to practical uses, were translated into Latin before the works on philosophy proper. It was at second hand and mainly through the Arabians that the scholastics knew the Greek *commentators* on Aristotle; but St. Thomas had access to a version of the commentary of Themistius on the *De Anima*.

It is certain that Aristotle's treatises did not all become known at the same time in the West: they found their way gradually, one after another, into circulation, during the closing years of the twelfth, and the opening years of the thirteenth century. University records attest that the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* were known from 1213. Radulfus de Longo Campo, in his commentary on Alan of Lille, dating from about 1216, does not mention those treatises, for the reading of them had just been forbidden, but he does mention the *De Anima*, the *De Somno* and *De Vigilia*, along with various writings of Averroës and Avicenna. William of Auvergne, who taught in 1228, was more familiar with the philosophy of Aristotle in its fulness, and Albert the Great wrote commentaries on the whole collection of the works of Aristotle.

(b) *Principal workers and centres of translation*. -- The Arabic-Latin translations of the twelfth century (by Constantine the African, Adelard of Bath, Herman the Dalmatian) were, and remained, isolated phenomena. It needed an organized, collective enterprise in translation to familiarize the West with the works of Aristotle: of this enterprise Toledo was the centre.

The archbishop of that city, RAYMOND (1126-1151), established a college of translators which became famous on account of the inestimable services it rendered to Western culture and learning. Best known among its members are the names of DOMINICUS GUNDISSALINUS or GUNDISALVI; JOHANNES DAVID, a Jew (otherwise known as JOHANNES HISPANUS and JOHN AVENDEATH); DAVID and JEHUDA BEN

TIBBON, also Jews; the Englishman, ALFRED OF MORLAY (translated the first three books of the *Meteors* and the *De Vegetalibus*) and GERARD OF CREMONA. Somewhat later the same school produced two other well-known translators, MICHAEL SCOT and HERMAN THE GERMAN.

II. Translations of Jewish and Arabian Works. -- Here we have (1) Arabic-Latin, and (2) Arabic-Hebrew versions.

(1) *Arabic-Latin Versions.* It was through the Toledo translators, especially JOHANNES HISPANUS,^{13} D. GUNDISSALINUS and GERARD OF CREMONA,^{14} that the Western scholastics, about the end of the twelfth century, came to know the works of Alkindi, Alfarabi, Gazali, Avicenna and Averroës. The commentaries of the great Arabian philosophers on the work of Aristotle were translated simultaneously with the text of Aristotle itself. For instance, Gundissalinus added the commentaries of Averroës to the translations of the *De Anima*, the four books of the *Physics* and the ten books of the *Metaphysics*. Herman the German -- not to be confounded with Herman the Dalmatian -- "translated, in 1240, the middle commentary of Averroës on the *Nicomachean Ethics*; in 1244, an Alexandrian compendium of the *Ethics*; about 1250, a work of Averroës on *Rhetoric*, after having translated the opening glosses of Alfarabi on that work, to which translations he subsequently added an original treatise on *Rhetoric*; and, finally, in 1256, the commentary on the *Poetics*."^{15} There is no ground for the supposition that he lived in Sicily. He spent his life in Spain, probably as Bishop of Astorga, from 1266 to his death in 1271. Michael Scot translated Averroës' commentaries on the *De Coelo et Mundo* and the *De Anima*:^{16} and these commentaries were known in the West at the commencement of the thirteenth century.

The court of Sicily, under Frederick II. and his son Manfred, was another centre of Arabian culture: and of Grecian culture as well, for it produced some Greek-Latin versions in addition to Arabic-Latin ones. We meet here Michael Scot and Bartholomew of Messina.^{17} Frederick II. set great store on the commentaries of Averroës and did much to popularize them: by the middle of the thirteenth century Paris was in possession of all the writings of Averroës except his commentaries on the *Organon* and his *Destructio Destructionis*.

These scholars were moreover no mere interpreters of Arabian scientific thought: their knowledge embraced the works of the Patristic and early medieval Christian periods. Many of them also found, in the rich material they were dealing with, ample inspiration for quite original philosophical treatises. Michael Scot, for instance, composed a *Divisio Philosophiae*; but it was inspired by the similar treatise of Gundissalinus. The latter indeed merits a special place as a philosophical writer. He will be dealt with later on.^{18}

(2) *Arabic-Hebrew Versions.* -- In the thirteenth century many works were translated from Arabic into Hebrew. "When the Jewish civilization was driven northward from Mussulman Spain into Provence and the regions around the Pyrenees, Arabic, which had been the vernacular of the Jews, was gradually abandoned by them in their new surroundings, and they began to feel the need of translating all their important works on science and philosophy from Arabic into their own Hebrew."^{19} This task was carried on mainly by the members of one family, the Tibbonides, established at Lunel. It was confined almost exclusively to the works of Averroës, especially his commentaries on Aristotle, and to the text of Aristotle itself. Some of these commentaries are extant in a number of distinct Hebrew versions.

III. Some Apocryphal Works, translated from the Arabic and mostly attributed to Aristotle, all tinged with Neo-Platonism. Among these the principal are: --

(1) The *Secretum Secretorum*, a compendium of scientific lore, translated by a cleric of Tripoli.

(2) The *Theology of Aristotle*, also known as the *De Secretion Aegyptiorum Philosophia* (215).

(3) A pseudo-Aristotelian treatise, *De Anima*.

(4) The *Liber de Causis*, quoted under various titles by the scholastics, translated by Johannes Hispanus or Gerard of Cremona between 1167 and 1187; annotated by Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas, who refer it to Proclus; attributed subsequently to Aristotle and included in his works. The maxims gathered from this small treatise attest to its widespread popularity in the thirteenth century and afterwards. It is in reality an extract from the **Stoicheiôsis Theologikê** of Proclus. Guttman attributes it to Johannes Hispanus. It has been edited by Bardenhewer after an Arabian manuscript of the year 1197.^{20} Like the works of Pseudo-Denis and the hermetic writings, the *Liber de Causis* lends itself to different interpretations and was quoted in support of conflicting theses. Indeed it seems to have been utilized not so much for any new doctrines it might yield as for the purpose of defending old ones.^{21}

(5) In addition to these Pseudo-Aristotelian works, we find also an *Elementa Theologiae*, wrongly attributed to Proclus, and other treatises wrongly attributed to Empedocles (on the five elements) and Pythagoras, going the rounds of the medieval schools.

{1} Printed in Venice, 1498-1500; and in Paris, 1538.

{2} This treatise is of considerable historical importance: various English versions of it are extant. It was noticed and identified by BAUR, *D. Gundissalinus de Divisione Naturae*, p. 153 (242).

{3} "Et postmodo reverendus pater magister Robertus Grossi capitis, sed subtilis intellectus, Linkolnensis episcopus, ex primo fonte unde emanaverat, greco videlicet, ipsum est completius interpretatus et grecorum commentis praecipuas annexens notulas commentatus" (Prologue to Herman's version of the *Ethics*). Cf. MARCHESI, *L'Etica Nicomachea nella tradizione latina mediaevale*, 1904, p. 57. HAURÉAU attributes to Robert certain commentaries on the mystical theology of Pseudo-Denis (*Hist. Phil. scol.*, ii., 182).

{4} JOURDAIN, *Excurs. hist.*, etc. (1888), p. 191; BAEUMKER, *Arch. f. Gesch. Philos.*, iv., p. 574 (1891).

{5} William of Tocco says in his life of St. Thomas: "Scripsit etiam super moralem et super metaphysicam, quorum librorum procuravit ut fieret *nova translatia* quae sententiae Aristotelis contineret clarius veritatem" (*Acta Sanctorum*, 1643, Mensis Martii, i., 665).

{6} According to a hypothesis of MARCHESI, *op. cit.*, p. 60, St. Thomas approached two Hellenists of his order, William of Moerbeke and Henry of Brabant, suggesting a division of the enormous task, in order to make sure of its achievement. The claim in behalf of Henry is established by Aventinus (*Anno Christi 1271, Henricus Brabantinus, dominicanus, rogatu D. Thomae e greco in latinam linguam, de verbo ad verbum, transfert omnes libros Aristotelis*, *Annalium Boiorum*, Lipsiae, 1710, I, vii., 9, p. 673); not so solidly, however as in the case of William. On the latter's behalf we have the contemporary testimonies of Roger Bacon, dating from 1272, and of one Bernard Guidon (*Fr. Wilhelmus Brabantinus, Corinthiensis, transtulit omnes libros naturalis et moralis philosophiae de greco in latinum ad instantiam fratris Thome*, *Arch. Litt. u. Kirchengesch. Mitt.*, 226). See other sources, MARCHESI, p. 61. Henry of Brabant is certainly the translator of a portion of the Book on *Meteors*, and Marchesi also connects his name as translator with the *Liber Ethicorum* which St. Thomas used as basis for his commentaries on the moral teaching of Aristotle. Marchesi, without indicating proofs, identifies Henry of Brabant with the Henry Kosbien mentioned by Echard, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum*, i., 469. But he proves clearly his contention that the Nichomachean Ethics form a group, distinct from the other writings of Aristotle, and separately known to the scholastics of the end of the thirteenth century through the following five sources: (1) Greek-Latin versions: (a) the *Ethica Vetus* (2nd and 3rd books), anonymous, but possibly coming from Boëthius; (b) the *Ethica Nova* (1st book), which appeared early in the thirteenth century; (c) the *Liber Ethicorum*, referred to above, containing all the books and not earlier than St. Thomas' time. (2) Arabic-Latin versions: (a) the middle commentary of Averroës on the *Ethics*, translated by Herman the German in 1240 (*Liber Minorum*

Moralium, Liber Nichomachiae); (b) a popular compendium, by the same, translated into Tuscan by Taddeo in the second half of the thirteenth century and used by Brunetto Latini for his *Theaesaurus*. MARCHESI, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

{7} SUSEMIHL, who has published a critical edition of Aristotle's *Politics*, has annexed to it the version of William of Moerbeke.

{8} In a Paduan codex of the fourteenth century, described by MARCHESI, p. 9.

{9} MARCHESI, pp. 11, 55.

{10} "The method of the medieval translators is well known. A converted Jew or Mahometan, Arabian translated into the vernacular -- Spanish, for example -- the Arabic version of the Greek text, and it was this vernacular version that was translated into Latin by the final 'translator' to whom the Latin version was attributed." -- LUCQUET, *Hermann le Dalmate* (Rev. Hist. Relig., t. 44, p. 415).

{11} JOURDAIN, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

{12} Aristotle's *Metaphysics* the earlier Grecian physicists were known. In the *De Unitate Intellectus*, St. Thomas informs us that the last books of the *Metaphysics*, dealing with separated substances, were not at that time translated.

{13} Translated Avicenna's *Logic*. See bibliogr. Beits. z. Gesch. d. Philos., I., i., p. 32.

{14} He made known Arabian scientific works especially, translating over 200.

{15} LUCQUET, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

{16} Also, adds Renan, the other commentaries usually found with these in the manuscripts, on *De Generatione et Conceptione*, on *Meteors*, on the *Parva Naturalia*, and the version of the *De Substantia Orbis* (RENAN, *op. cit.*, pp. 206, 207. Cf. HAURÉAU, *Hist. Phil. scol.*, ii., pp. 127 *sqq.*).

{17} LUCQUET has corrected a commonly received, though erroneous, interpretation of an oft-quoted passage from Roger Bacon: "infinita quasi converterunt in latinum . . . Gerardus Cremonensis, Michael Scotus, Alvredus Anglicus, Hermannus Alemannus et translator Meinfridi nuper a domino rege Carolo devicti" (*Opus tertium*, ed. Brewer, p. 9). *Translator* does not refer to Herman, who, on the supposition that it did, was thought to reside at the court of Manfred; it refers to some other noted translator residing at that court, very probably Bartholomew or Messina.

{18} The Westerns also became acquainted with the religion of the Arabians. As early as the twelfth century, Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, had the religious books of the Saracens translated into Latin and opened a polemic against Islamism (V. MANDONNET, *Pierre le Vénérable et son activité littéraire contre L'Islam*, R. Thomiste, 1894).

{19} RENAN, *op. cit.*, p. 585.

{20} BARDENHEWER, *op. cit.*, 229; GUTTMANN, *Die Scholastik d. xiii. Jahrh.*, etc., p. 54.

{21} Daniel of Morlay, a pupil of Gerard of Cremona, attributes to Aristotle a "Liber de assignanda ratione unde orte sunt scientiae," which is in reality the *De Divisione Philosophiae* of Gundissalinus (ROSE, *Hermes*, viii., 332, A.).

