misunderstanding. When at 9T, 501f. Smaragdus remarks inueniuntur et in quatum deducere gradum, ut dormio dormitorio dormisco dormito, he refers to verbs which have a full complement of formae and does not mean to imply that dormitorio and dormisco are frequentative forms.

10 Notices et extraits de divers manuscrits latins pour servir à l’histoire des doctrines grammaticales au Moyen Âge, Paris 1869, repr. 1964. This theme was developed by J. Leclercq, Smaragde et la grammaire chrétienne, in: Revue du Moyen Âge latin, 4 (1948), 15-22.


14 E.g. in the copy of the Declinationes nominum in Paris, B.N. lat. 13025, f. 41va, the declension of cogitatio is set out as follows: haec cogitatio oni onem tio. tione A pi. nes. onum onib; /nes. nes. bus.

15 Smaragdus’s preference for a formal rather than a psychological basis for the ordering of the formae verborum (9T, 415-26) is another symptom of the same inclination (cf. p. XLI).


If there is anyone qualified to write a book on the tradition of the ‘Topics’ in the Middle Ages, it is certainly Dr. Niels J. Green-Pedersen (Copenhagen) (henceforth: G.-P.). G.-P. has written a number of articles and made several texteditions, in which he has given evidence of his vast knowledge of this tradition. In 1984 he published the above mentioned book which presents a comprehensive view of the way in which the Medieval philosophers interpret and elaborate Aristotle’s Topica, Boethius’ De differentiis Topicis and In Ciceronis Topica, and conceive the foundations of the science contained in these books.

In part I G.-P. explains what Aristotle’s Topics is concerned with, at least from the viewpoint of the Medieval tradition. The Topics present a discipline (called dialectic) which has the task to test commonly held opinions in a dispute. It is difficult to interpret Aristotle’s conception of the ‘topos’ or ‘locus’. Its function can be seen either as an ‘instruction’ by which someone is directed to a ‘place’ where he can find an argument, e.g. from the genus (this is the interpretation given by E. Stump), or as a ‘reason’, a logical law, expressed in a metalanguage, e.g. ‘when something is predicated of a genus, it is also predicated of a species’ (this is the interpretation given by W. A. de Pater). G.-P. thinks there are good reasons for both views. The important thing for his exposition is that Aristotle left to his successors a book containing lists of loci which consist of these two different elements.

However this may be, in Boethius’ commentaries Aristotle’s instructions have been developed into sentences which are called ‘maxims’ (maximae propositiones), e.g. ‘that to which the definition of the genus does not belong, is not a species of the genus defined’. The number of maxims is unlimited, but they can be taken together by the ‘difference of the maxim’ (differentia maximae) that can be determined on the basis of
the terms used in the maxims. For the maxim given above, the differentia is: a differentia (‘from the definition’).

In part II G.-P. sketches the Medieval approach to the sources. He characterizes the way in which the Medievals commented on the classical texts, deals with questions concerning whether or not there was a ‘standard’ Commentator on the Topics (just as e.g. Averroes was for many other works of Aristotle (by the way, G.-P. can not give a definite candidate)), how the Medievals saw a structure in Aristotle’s and Boethius’ work, how they read Aristotle through Boethius’ eyes, and discusses the important distinction between the five predicables and the four predicate-types etc.

The largest part of the book (part III) is on the doctrine of the Topics in the Middle Ages. Here G.-P. sketches the development from about 1000 up to the 15th century. In this section he discusses quite a number of Medieval texts on three questions, viz. how to conceive of a locus, how a locus functions in arguments, and in what classes the loci can be divided. In the first place, G.-P. has studied the commentaries on the works by Aristotle and Boethius, whereas the textbooks (Summulae, Compendia, Introduciones) are used as supplements.

G.-P. not only discusses the texts of well known Medieval authors such as Abelard, Peter of Spain, and Radulphus Brito i.e. philosophers, of whom most works are edited, but also rather unknown and anonymous authors, of whom the tracts are sometimes only available in manuscript form. In the Appendices G.-P. gives fragments of a selection of these hitherto unprinted texts and a list of Commentaries on Aristotle’s and Boethius’ Topics.

In my view G.-P. has written a fascinating and excellent book. One might wonder how a book on the interpretations of a small part of Aristotle’s logic can be interesting, especially if one remembers Sir David Ross’s opinion on Aristotle’s Topics: ‘the discussion belongs to a by-gone mode of thought’ (Aristotle, 1964 (1923): 59). G.-P. has shown, however, that a study of the Topics, or of a philosopher’s interpretation of a locus and its function, brings to light a specific part of Medieval culture (their thoughts about a dispute), and that such a study provides an excellent perspective on important philosophical problems. In the text, the cover of the book, G.-P. mentions some: problems about dialectic, the theory of argumentation, axiomatics, formalism, universals, modal logic and the theory of consequences as well as the distinctions between object- and meta-language, inventio ( = Aristotle’s Topics) and indicium ( = Aristotle’s Analytica Posteriora), and first and second intentions. To this list I add that a study of commentaries on the Topics also shed light on an author’s conception of proof, definition, plausibility and truth, signification (and supposition) as well as on the way the Medievals interpret their auctoritates, and on the distinction between various philosophical genres.

G.-P. has done a fine job: he is extremely cautious in his statements: he often qualifies them until a bare minimum is reached. His analyses of the texts are very good. Unfortunately, with G.-P.’s book the puzzling remarks by William of Ockham on plausibility are not yet solved (p. 304). The style of the book is clear, the summaries added to the parts in which the book is divided, and the conclusion to the whole book, are very helpful. The work is well documented and therefore historical in a strict sense. It is up to date as to secondary literature (O. Bird, E. Stump, etc.). The chapter on the Topics and the Theory of Consequences (part III, E), in which G.-P. discusses how the Topics is an important part of the background for the development of the theory of consequences, is especially interesting.

Use of the indexes gives good results.

Leiden

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