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**NICOLAUS BONETUS, Commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, *Praedicamenta*,
and *Physics***

In Latin, manuscript on paper

Italy, Emilia Romagna or the Marches?, c. 1400

100 ff., lacking likely a quire and 2 leaves at the beginning, single leaves after ff. 8 and 61 and leaves at the end, else complete (collation: i^s [of 10, lacking i-ii], ii^o [of 10, lacking i], iii-vi^{io}, vii^o [of 10, lacking v], viii-ix^{io}, x^{ia}), on paper (watermark close to Briquet, 11684, Montagnes: Fano, 1400), catchwords and alphabetical leaf signatures, ruled in plummet, text on two columns, written in a dark brown ink in a gothic cursive bookhand, on up to 63 lines (justification 263 x 168 mm), opening lines of each chapter in gothic script ornamented in red, capitals touched in red, paragraph-marks throughout in red, 2-line high initials throughout in red and blue, with penwork in red, sometimes very extensive, 7 LARGE DECORATED INITIALS, all 4- to 6-lines high, parti-colored red and blue with penwork in carmine and scarlet (ff. 48v, 52, 52v, 56, 61v and two on 60v), 13 other initials cut out leaving holes in the pages with some loss of text, some medieval sidenotes. Bound in modern half vellum, marbled boards (First and last pages stained, but most pages in good condition with exceptionally wide margins, some decorated initials cut out, with loss of text (ff. 16v, 22v, 25v, 30v, 46, 57v, 67, 74, 77v, 88v, 91v, 95v). Dimensions 427 x 288 mm.

Of unusually vast dimensions, this rare scientific and philosophical manuscript includes commentaries on three separate works of Aristotle by a Franciscan theologian. No modern critical edition of these texts exists. Nor is there is an accurate census of the extant manuscripts (rough estimates give 35 manuscripts of the *Metaphysics*, 12 of the *Physics*, and 15 of the *Praedicamenta*). DeRicci and Bond record no copies in North American collections, nor could we find a record of any copy of these commentaries, apart from the present manuscript, in the trade over the last century. Lacking also is a satisfactory list of Bonetus's works and a study of the importance of his writings, including the place of his commentaries in the evolution of Aristotelian thought in later Scholasticism.

PROVENANCE

1. Script and watermark, with a close match to Briquet 11694 (Fano, 1400), suggest an Italian origin for this manuscript. Fano is located between Rimini and Ancona.
2. Ex-collection André Rooryck, his MS. 29.

TEXT

ff. 1-46, Nicolaus Bonetus, *Commentarium in Aristotelis Metaphysicorum Lib. IX* [Commentary on the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle], ff. 1-16v, Book II, beginning imperfectly with in the middle of chapter 10 "[...] Exemplum sortes potest causare conceptum humilitatis [...]. Nunc de proprietatibus (chap. 11)..."; ff. 16v-22v, Book III; ff. 22v-25v, Book IV; ff. 25v-30v, Book V; ff. 30v-46, Book VI, explicit, "[...] Proponamus ergo [...] demonstratur et stabilitur [subiectum quod est ens in] quantum ens";

Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (literally, "of the things after physics") is probably the result of compilations of lecture notes and minor treatises, with the oldest extant manuscript dated early tenth century (Manuscript "E," Paris, BnF, gr. 1953). The *Commentarium in Aristotelis metaphysicam lib. IX* by Bonetus is most certainly authentic: it is often quoted and attributed to Nicolaus Bonetus by the scholastics and unanimously by the manuscript tradition [see Lohr (1972), p. 285, who records 35 manuscripts; Thorndike and Kibre (1963), col. 985; published twice, first in Barcelona, 1473 and in Venice, 1505, ff. 2-44)].

ff. 46-61v, Nicolaus Bonetus, *Commentaria in .X. libros priores praedicamentorum Aristotelis* [Commentary on the *Praedicamenta* of Aristotle]: incipit, "[Qu]oniam autem [sec]undum or[d]inem subiectorum..."; explicit, "[...] intencionibus si interiori [...]" (lacks ending);

Known to the Middle Ages as the *Praedicamenta*, this is a commentary on the *Categories* of Aristotle, which enumerates all the possible kinds of things that can be the subject or the predicate of a proposition. The *Categories* places every object of human apprehension under one of ten categories or *praedicamenta*. Bonetus's *Commentarium in X libros priores praedicamentorum Aristotelis* was printed with the commentaries on the *Metaphysics* (see above) and the *Physics* (see below) in Venice 1505 [see Lohr (1995), vol. III, p. 116; Lohr (1972), p. 285, recording 15 manuscripts; Thorndike and Kibre (1963), col. 1264; Barcelond (1925), pp. 648-649; published in the 1505 Venice edition of the *Expositio in Metaphysicam Aristotelis*, ff. 77-90v].

ff. 62-100v, Nicolaus Bonetus, *In libros physicorum Aristotelis commentaria seu philosophia naturalis lib. VIII* [Commentary on the *Physics* of Aristotle], ff. 62-67v, Book I, beginning imperfectly, "[...] dicti sit talis quoniam passiones..."; ff. 67v-74, Book II; ff. 74-77v, Book III; ff. 77v-83, Book IV; ff. 83-88v, Book V; ff. 88v-91v, Book VI; ff. 91v-95v, Book VII; ff. 95v-100v, Book VIII, explicit, "[...] Liber quintus continet 13 capitula [...] In .11^o proprietates primi motoris [...]" [lacks end of Book VIII].

This is a commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, which is preserved in a number of manuscripts, the oldest dated early tenth century. The work sets out the bases for the study of the world subject to change or movement with motion (or kinesis) as one of the chief topics of the treatise [On Bonetus' commentary, see Lohr (1972), p. 285, recording 12 manuscripts and Barcelone (1925), pp. 647-648, recording only 5 manuscripts; published in the Venice 1505 edition of the *Expositio in Metaphysicam Aristotelis*, ff. 45-76v].

Nicolaus Bonetus O.F.M or Nicolas Bonet (c. 1280?-1343?), was a Franciscan theologian, doctor of law in Paris and, later in life, bishop of Malta (1342-1343). A fourteenth-century manuscript in Erfurt (Erfurt, Bibl. Amplon., MS. 314) provides the following biographic information: "Fr. Nycolai Boneti ord. min. de provincia Turone et de conventu Turonensi." This convent is the Franciscan

convent of Tours. Bonetus became Master of theology in Paris in 1333 and took part in the *visio beatifica* discussion, organized by King Philip VI to examine the viewpoints of John XXII (1333). As royal chaplain, Bonetus traveled to China to visit Kublai Khan, as a member of the delegation from Benedict XII which left Avignon late in 1338 and arrived in Peking in 1342. He and his delegation remained four years in China and Mongolia, finally returning to France in 1354 (on this delegation, see Wadding, 1932, pp. 247-259). He was nicknamed "Doctor pacificus" (The Peaceful Doctor) or "Doctor proficuus" and was a disciple of Duns Scotus (the thirteenth-century theologian, philosopher, and logician, founder of Scotism) although not a "slavish" one, according to biographies (see O'Brian, DHGE, 1937, col. 849). He is considered an eclectic thinker, one of whose interests was in explaining Aristotle, and he was familiar with Averroes, whose thought he incorporated in his writings.

There is no complete critical study of Bonetus's works or even a satisfactory list of his writings. The only in-depth study on him was published in 1925 (Martin de Barcelone, pp. 638-657), but see also Lohr (1972, p. 284-285). There are, however, early editions of all three commentaries. The Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* exists in an incunable published in Barcelona, 1493: Bonetus, N. *Metaphysica. Acutissimi materiarum metaphicalium [sic] resolutoris domini boneti...*, [Barcinone (Barcelona), Petrus Michael, 1493] (see Hain, *Repertorium bibliographicum...*, no. 3580; Goff, B-975; Haebler, *Bibliografia iberica del siglo XV* (1903), no. 72). The three commentaries (on the *Metaphysics*, the *Praedicamenta* and the *Physics*) were first published together in Venice in 1505: Bonetus, Nicolaus. *Habes Metaphysicam, naturalem phylosophiam, praedicamenta, theologiam naturalem*, Venetiis, Expensis heredum O. Scoti, Per Bonetum Locatellum Bergomensem, 1505 (British Museum, *Short-title Catalogue of Books Printed in Italy...*, 1958, p. 119, BL, 8464. ff. 6). DeRicci and Bond list no manuscripts of his writings in North American collections, and, apart from the present manuscript, the more-accurate Schoenberg database of manuscript sales lists only one of his commentaries in any of the consulted catalogues, that one in 1952 (ID 46826). We can safely conclude, therefore, that the present manuscript is exceedingly rare.

In the later Middle Ages, Aristotle's work was rediscovered and enthusiastically embraced by medieval scholars. His followers called him *Ille Philosophus* (The Philosopher), or "the master of them that know," and many accepted every word of his writings, or at least every word that did not contradict the Bible, as eternal truth. Fused and reconciled with Christian doctrine into a philosophical system known as Scholasticism, Aristotelian philosophy became the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church. Bonetus's commentaries deserve further study for their place in the evolution of the understanding of Aristotle's writings.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

On Nicolaus Bonetus, see entry

<http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/>