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Editor in chief Cristina D'Ancona (cristina.dancona@unipi.it)

Mailing address: Dipartimento di Civiltà e Forme del Sapere, via Pasquale Paoli 15, 56126 Pisa, Italia.



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Cover

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

Book Announcements & Reviews

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EC – Elisa Coda

GM – Giovanni Mandolino

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Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages, I: *New Commentaries on Liber de causis* (ca. 1250–1350); II: *New Commentaries on Liber de causis and Elementatio theologica* (ca. 1350–1500). Edited by D. Calma, Turnhout, Brepols 2016 (Studia Artistarum 42), vol. I, 1-562 pp., vol. II, 1-418 pp.

These two volumes are the first outcome of a project directed between 2011 and 2016 by Dragos Calma at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca (Romania), funded by the National Research Council of Romania. The aim of the project was the critical edition of hitherto unpublished medieval commentaries both on Proclus' *Elementatio theologica* and on the *Liber de causis*.

The *Elementatio* was translated and adapted into Arabic in the 'Abbāsīd Baghdad during the first half of the 9th century, within the circle of the philosopher al-Kindī. The *Kitāb al-idāh li-Aristū'ālīs fi l-ḥayr al-mahd* ("Book of Aristotle's elucidation on the pure Good") was created out of this translation. The Arabic adaptation introduces doctrinal modifications such as the description of the divine first principle as "pure Being", the insertion of a theory of the *creatio ex nihilo* and the reduction of the Proclean hierarchy of metaphysical principles to the three Plotinian hypostases One, Intellect, and Soul. It is mostly in this form that the Proclean theses became known to medieval Latin culture: the Arabic adaptation, translated into Latin in the 12th cent. by Gerard of Cremona (m. 1187) under the name of *Liber de causis* entered the *curricula* of the European universities and was time and again read and commented upon, as attested by wide manuscript circulation and by the relevant number of commentaries it received. In 1268 William of Moerbeke translated into Latin the *Elementatio theologica* and this, as is well known, allowed Aquinas to recognize the real origin of the *Liber de causis*. This discovery, however, did not diminish the fortune of the *De causis*, which lasted well into the Renaissance and the early Modern Age, parallel to the reception of the *Elementatio*. Much exegetical material related to the *Liber de causis* and to a lesser extent to the *Elementatio* was produced during the Middle Ages: among the commentaries the most famous ones, such as those by Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great or Giles of Rome have been edited and thoroughly studied. However, our knowledge of this exegetical material is still largely incomplete. *Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages* contributes to give more detailed picture of the history of this fortune.

Calma's chapter "Considerations on a Recently Discovered Corpus of Texts", vol. I, pp. 11-52, sets the book under review in the field of research on the Latin *Liber de causis*. The starting point of the project was Richard Taylor's list of 29 Latin manuscripts containing 31 commentaries on the *Liber de causis*: although Calma does not mention the bibliographical reference, as noticed also by J. Monfasani (*Renaissance Quarterly* 70/4 [2017], pp. 1465-6] this list is to be found in R. Taylor, "The *Liber de causis*: A Preliminary List of Extant MSS", *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 25 (1983), pp. 63-84 (in part. pp. 81-4). Fourteen of the commentaries listed by Taylor were still unpublished before the start of Calma's project: seven of them are now edited in these two volumes.

The two volumes deal chiefly with commentaries on the *Liber de causis*, with two exceptions. L. Miolo, "*Liber de causis in libraria*. Pour une mise en perspective du *Liber de causis* dans la bibliothèque du Collège de Sorbonne", vol. II, p. 337-400, offers a description of the fortune of the *Liber de causis* in the Middle Ages, based on the 1255 statutes of the Paris University and further documents. The *De Causis* was introduced for university teaching along with the so-called *libri naturales* of Aristotle. Since this chapter deals with the text of the *De causis* itself and with the milieu of its diffusion, it would have been more fitting to place it before the other contributions devoted to the commentaries.

F. Retucci, "*Sententia Procli alti philosophi*. Notes on an Anonymous Commentary on Proclus' *Elementatio theologica*", vol. II, pp. 99-179, studies an anonymous commentary on this work that dates from the first half of the 15th century. This commentary usually quotes only Proclus' *lemmata* (selecting 147 of them out of 211), without the rest of each proposition. The anonymous author sometimes rephrases the Latin translation, replacing William of Moerbeke's terminology with equivalent terms for the sake of clarity. Some adjustments of Proclus' theses and the use of Christian sources suggest that the anonymous author was a theologian, probably familiar with Berthold of Moosburg's commentary on the *Elementatio*. The authorship is not certain, but some similarities in structure and content exist with John Krosbein's commentary on the *Liber de causis* edited by D. Calma, "A Medieval Companion to Aristotle: John Krosbein's Paraphrase on *Liber de causis*", vol. II, p. 11-97.

The other contributions offer the edition (partial or complete) of seven commentaries on the *Liber de causis*. The criteria of selection of these commentaries, as stated by Calma, "The Exegetical Tradition of Medieval

Neoplatonism”, vol. I, p. 21-2, are largely due to the circumstances of the research work, such as the availability of the manuscripts and the more or less advanced state of one or other edition. Thus, although most commentaries are edited integrally, for some others only the edition of the commentary on the first proposition is given.

The seven works are listed and summarized below, starting from the commentaries published integrally.

1) The commentary attributed to Peter of Auvergne, edited by M. Maga, “Remarques sur le commentaire au *Liber de causis* attribué à Pierre d’Auvergne”, vol. I, pp. 53-135, transmitted together with Siger of Brabant’s commentary on the *De causis*. An abridged version of this commentary is attributed to Godefroid de Fontaines.

2) Two works on the *Liber de causis* edited by A. Baneu and D. Calma, “Le commentaire sur le *Liber de causis* de Jean de Mallinges”, vol. I, pp. 153-286. The first consists of two questions *Super libellum de causis* (published as “Annexe 1” in the contribution, *ibid.*, pp. 176-8). The other text consists of the *Reportationes de causis* attributed to the mysterious Jean de Mallinges, possibly Jean de Malignes, a magister at the Faculty of Arts in Paris (end of the 13th cent.). The *Reportationes* rely in two instances on the *Quaestiones super Librum de causis* of Siger of Brabant, composed between 1274 and 1276: hence these dates are the *terminus post quem* for the *Reportationes*, that belong perhaps to the Parisian milieu. Less convincing is the hypothesis *ex silentio* that infers the *terminus ante quem* from the absence of references to the commentary by Giles of Rome, written around 1289-91. Among the other sources of the *Reportationes* are Albert the Great’s and Thomas’ commentaries on the *Liber de causis* and passages from the *Elementatio theologica*. Jean de Mallinges combines a lemmatic commentary and several questions: an unusual method of commenting, which is nevertheless attested also in the cases of the commentaries by the ps.-Adam of Bocfeld and by William of Leus. On the latter see in the same volume D. Carron, “A Theological Reading of the *Liber de causis* at the Turn of the Fourteenth Century: The Example of William of Leus”, pp. 467-549. In the manuscript of Jean de Mallinges both the lemmata and the questions are numbered progressively, but, for unknown reasons, the questions are attached to *lemmata* that do not correspond to them. The edition restores the correct order, providing a table that describes the order in the manuscript (pp. 167-70).

3) Some anonymous questions on the *Liber de causis* contained in ms. Florence, Bibl. Naz. Conv. Soppr. E. 1.252 (first quarter of the 14th cent.), edited by I. Costa and M. Borgo, “The *Questions* of Radulphus Brito (?) on the *Liber de causis*” (pp. 287-357). These questions are tentatively attributed by Costa to Radulphus Brito on the basis of cross-references in other works by Radulphus.

4) 37 questions on the *Liber de causis* contained in ms. Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, Dep. Erf. CA 4° 316, dating from the end of the 13th or the first half of the 14th century, edited by . Székely and D. Calma, “Le commentaire d’un maître parisien conservé à Erfurt” (pp. 359-465).

5) The *Expositio in librum de causis* by William of Leus contained in the ms. Vatican Library, *Cod. Borgh.* 352, edited by D. Carron, “A Theological Reading of the *Liber de causis* at the Turn of the Fourteenth Century: The Example of William of Leus” (pp. 467-549). This commentary springs from the Dominican *studia* in Provence and was composed between 1305 and 1308 at the Toulouse convent. The text is published together with William’s dedicatory epistle to the Cardinal de la Chapelle-Taillefer. The structure of the commentary gives for each proposition a literal commentary with a *divisio textus* and a *quaestio*. The first 30 propositions out of 32 are commented upon: since the *explicit* mentions 32 propositions, it is likely that the part corresponding to the last two went lost. The prologue of the commentary is placed in a somewhat odd position, between the first proposition and its literal exposition. The manuscripts of the *Liber de causis* sharing the greater number of variants with the lemmas of William’s commentary are mss. B (= ms. Brugge, Bibliothèque de la ville 478) and C (= ms. Brussel, Bibliothèque Royale II, 2314) of Pattin’s edition (“The *Liber de causis*. Édition établie à l’aide de 90 manuscrits”, p. 132). The orthographic criteria of the edition are questionable: in part the spelling of classical Latin is re-established, in part the medieval one is preserved (e.g., p. 520).

6) A paraphrase-commentary on the *Liber de causis* by John Krosbein (end of 14th century), attested in five manuscripts and edited by D. Calma (pp. 11-97). This *magister* commented on the whole corpus of Aristotle plus some pseudepigraphal works such as the *De causis*, and on Proclus’ *Elementatio theologica*. A description of each of the five manuscripts of the paraphrase on the *De Causis* is followed by the *stemma codicum*, and a reconstruction of the diffusion of Krosbein’s works in the late Middle Ages. Krosbein was probably a German Dominican with ties in Paris. His method as a commentator, consisting in writing short paraphrases and selections of pericopes from the Aristotelian works, contributed to the fortune of his commentaries as

introductory readings for students in philosophy. The main source for the paraphrastic form of commentary lies in the *De causis et processu universitatis* by Albert the Great: Krosbein's works may thus represent a new ground for research in the history of Albertism during the late Middle Ages and the early Modern Era. An outline of the doctrinal content is given. It may be added to Calma's remarks that this text, unlike most commentaries on the *Liber de causis*, was not written for didactical purposes, as John Krosbein himself informs us at the end of his work: *Hec autem que consignavi, non scripsi ut docens, sed ut intellectum meum exercens* (*ibid.*, p. 97.14-5).

7) A *Questio de quolibet* on the first proposition of the *Liber de causis* by Henry of Geismar (d. 1431), a *magister in artibus* from the University of Prague, later on active also in Erfurt and in Hamburg. This *questio* is edited by D. Calma and I. Székely, "Cause and Causality in Henry of Geismar's *Questio de quolibet*", pp. 181-223, dates probably from the Erfurt period, around 1414.

The commentaries on the *Liber de causis* only partially edited are the following:

1) An anonymous commentary contained in the ms. Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek 4° Cod. 68, of which A. Baneu and D. Calma edit the parts corresponding to the propositions 1 and 4, "The *Glose super Librum de causis* and the Exegetical Tradition", pp. 137-52. It is uncertain whether the exegetical notes are materials for teaching or for study. Several sources are echoed: Proclus' *Elementatio* and the commentaries on the *Liber de causis* by Albert the Great, Thomas, and Giles of Rome. The date of Giles' work, namely the years 1289-91, counts as the *terminus post quem* for the anonymous commentary. One may disagree with the editors' claim that the text does not deserve a complete edition because of its corrupt state and because it consists mainly of quotations (*ibid.* p. 147).

2) A partial edition by M. Meliàdò ("Le *Questiones super Librum de causis* attribuite a Johannes Wenck. Concezione, fonti e tradizione manoscritta del commento", pp. 225-70) of the *Questiones super Librum de causis* attributed to Johannes Wenck (m. 1460). Of the twenty questions, only the prologue and the commentary on prop. 1 are edited here.

3) An anonymous commentary transmitted by four manuscripts (housed in Wrocław, Krakow and Prague) and edited by A. Baumgarten, "Theologia philosophorum *parcialis*. Un commentaire sur le *Liber de causis*", vol. II, pp. 271-336. The Prologue contains an exhortation to the study of philosophy, as is characteristic of other texts from central Europe during the 14th and 15th centuries. This one is inspired by a pseudo-Thomistic work: the commentary on Boethius' *De Consolatione philosophiae* by William of Wheatley. Passages extracted from Thomas Aquinas' commentary on the *Liber de causis* are accompanied by *quaestiones* of the anonymous author, where some topics typical of 15th century philosophy feature. Baumgarten provides an exhaustive description of the manuscripts, arguing that all four are independent of each other. The commentary presents a number of parallels with an anonymous commentary on the *Metaphysics* stemming from Krakow and edited only in part: Baumgarten concludes nonetheless that these two works do not belong to the same author. The *terminus ante quem* for the composition is 1454 or early 1455, as proved by the note of possession on one of the manuscripts; the *terminus post quem* can be inferred from the contents and from the use of the sources, especially the treatise *De Ente et essentia* of John of Nova Domus, probably composed in 1407.

This overview of the contributions shows the (justly) philological aim of the book reviewed, although analyses of the philosophical and theological contents are also given. *Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages* offers thus a rich dossier on an interesting and still only partially known subject. Its main value lies in the presentation of a great deal of unpublished material in a homogeneous and straightforward way (manuscript tradition, sources, outline of the doctrinal contents, critical text). It is regrettable that some texts are only partially available. However, the information provided partly fills this gap, and the complete editions are announced by the authors.

The two volumes succeed in showing the continuity of the widespread interest raised by the *Liber de causis* and the persistence of a "Medieval Neoplatonism" (*De Causis* and *Elementatio theologica*) throughout the last centuries of the Middle Ages. However, as Calma himself says (p. 22), this corpus calls for further work. And the same is true for the variety of interpretations and of traditions that emerges from the commentaries edited. *Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages* is to be considered mainly as a starting point for further research.

GM