

TRANSMISSION OF GREEK THOUGHT TO THE WEST

PLATO & NEOPLATONISM

Chalcidius (late 3rd-early 4th cent. Christian exegete): incomplete translation & commentary of *Timeaus*

Henricus Aristippus in Sicily (12th c.): translated the *Meno* and *Phaedo*

Leonardo Bruni (c. 1370-1444/Florence) translated a selection of Plato's dialogues (from Greek to Latin).

Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499/Florence): 1st complete translation into Latin of Plato's works (publ. 1496), and translation of Plotinus's *Enneads* into Latin (1492).

Neoplatonic thought was transmitted in the following:

- (a) Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (written 524, in prison)
- (b) Macrobius' *Commentary on Cicero's Dream of Scipio* (written c. 400 CE).
- (c) Pseudo-Dionysius. A collection of writings attributed to Dionysius the Aeropagite (see Acts 17:34), but 19th century scholarship determined to be written c. 500 by a disciple of Proclus, held considerable authority throughout the middle ages and was a Christian Neoplatonism.
- (d) *Theologica Aristotelis*: this summary of Books 4-6 of Plotinus's *Enneads* had been wrongly attributed to Aristotle (until 13th century)
- (e) *Liber de Causis*: this work based on Proclus's *Elements of Theology* was wrongly attributed to Aristotle (until 13th century).

ARISTOTLE

Victorinus (4th century): Latin translations of Aristotle's *Categories* and *De interpretatione*, as well as of Porphyry's *Isagoge*.

Boethius (470-524/Padua?): translated the entire *Organon* and wrote commentaries on all but the *Posterior Analytics*, as well as a translation of Porphyry's introduction (*Isagoge*) to the *Categories*, but only *De Interp.* and *Categories* were readily available until 12th century.

James of Venice (c.1128): translated *Posterior Analytics*; with the rediscovery of other translations by Boethius, this completed the *Organon*.

Translations of Aristotle:

- Greek to Syriac: Works by Aristotle, Porphyry, and other Greek writers were translated into Syriac at the Nestorian school of Edessa in Mesopotamia (closed in 489), at the schools of Nisibis and Gandisapora in Persia, and at Monophysite schools in Syria.
- Greek & Syriac to Arabic: The Abbasid dynasty came to power in 750 and Syrian scholars were welcomed in Baghdad. A regular school of translators was set up there (832), with some works translated from the original Greek, others from the Syriac. It was here that the *Liber de Causis* (a work based on Proclus) and *Theologica Aristotelis* (a summary of Plotinus) assumed the identity of works by Aristotle.
- Arabic to Spanish & Latin: Translation out of Arabic occurred primarily in 12th c. Toledo under the direction of Archbishop Raymond (1126-51) — prominent translators incl. John of Spain, Gerard of Cremona, Michael Scot (died c.1235), and Herman the German (died 1272) — and in Sicily.
- Greek to Latin: Improved translations from the Greek prepared by William of Moerbeke in the 13th c.