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Thirteenth and Fourteenth-Century Commentaries on the *de Longitudine et Brevitate Vitae*

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THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH-CENTURY
COMMENTARIES ON THE
DE LONGITUDINE ET BREVI-TATE VITAE

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ABSTRACT

The article seeks to summarise recent research carried out by the author into thirteenth and fourteenth-century commentaries on the *De longitudine et brevitate vitae*. The texts of some representative commentaries are examined as a means of assessing the reception of Aristotle's natural philosophy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As this is an area which has received comparatively little attention from researchers up to now, it is hoped that in examining commentaries on this one text of the *Parva naturalia* what emerges might serve to give a clearer picture of the reception and understanding of Aristotle's natural philosophy. The article also contains some brief comments on the two medieval translations of the *De longitudine*, by James of Venice and William of Moerbeke. In an appendix, a transcription of the prologue to Walter Burley's commentary is also included.

1. *Introduction*

As has been recently pointed out, medieval commentaries on Aristotle's *Parva naturalia* have received scant attention from scholars up to now:

In the history of natural philosophy very little attention has been given to the study of the medieval commentaries on Aristotle's Small Works on Natural Things (*Parva naturalia*). Aristotle's works *De iuventute et senectute*, *De respiratione*, and *De morte et vita* contain a general consideration of the processes of aging, death and dying, as well as the internal motions of contraction and dilation of the viscera. The method of doing science through commentaries and questions on Aristotle's works was important to medieval science and directly connected to university teaching. Though we are well aware of the extant manuscripts of medieval series of questions and commentaries on these works, until recently these topics have been studied only occasionally, if at all.¹

¹ E. I. Kouri and A. I. Lehtinen, "Disputed Questions on Aristotle's *De iuventute et senectute*, *De respiratione* and *De morte et vita* by Henricus de Alemannia," in M. Folkerts and R. Lorsch, *Sic itur ad astra: Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik und Naturwissenschaften. Festschrift für den Arabisten Paul Kunitzsch zum 70. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden, 2000), 362-375; on 362.

This was a situation which became apparent to me in preparing the first edition of the commentary on the *De longitudine et brevitate vitae* of Peter of Ireland (see below). The idea grew that in examining commentaries on this one text of the *Parva naturalia*, something might emerge to give a clearer picture of the reception of Aristotle's natural works in general.

1.1. *Life as a philosophical concept in Aristotle*²

An area of Aristotle's thought which has sometimes been passed over is the 'natural' consideration of life found in his philosophy of biology.³ This area of investigation was developed by Aristotle in his works *De animalibus* and in the treatises which make up the *Parva naturalia*. In general Aristotle explains the coming-to-be and passing-away of substances as being primarily due to the matter out of which the substance is formed. Thus, with regard to life, it is the material conditions that underlie life which are focussed upon in the *De longitudine et brevitate vitae*.

A living being is highly structured and unified in such a way that the four elements and the accompanying qualities are arranged in a certain way. Where there is a balance between the elements, there the individual continues to exist for a certain amount of time. There is, however, a natural instability in all composite substances, as is pointed out in the *De longitudine*: "opposites destroy each other."⁴ For Aristotle, the elements tend not towards complexity but towards simplicity. The two active qualities, the hot and the cold, will be transformed into each other unless they are equally balanced.⁵ Again, a nature is maintained so long as the correct proportion of heat and moisture within it is maintained;⁶ destruction follows when what should be kept in place gains the mastery. Destruction, or passing-away, is the natural and inevitable outcome of material necessity.

² I have dealt with this topic in a more extended fashion in "The Commentary of Peter of Auvergne on Aristotle's *On Length and Shortness of Life*," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 69 (2002), 153-200; 161-166.

³ Nonetheless, on this topic see, G. Freudenthal, *Aristotle's Theory of Material Substance* (Oxford, 1995); M. L. Gill, "Aristotle on Matters of Life and Death," in J. J. Cleary and D.C. Shartin (eds.), *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 4 (1988), 187-205.

⁴ *De longitudine*, iii, 465b 3.

⁵ See, *De generatione et corruptione*, II vii, 334b 23-24.

⁶ See, *Meteorologica*, IV ii, 379b 35.

Passing-away can, however, be 'postponed' by a number of factors. For example: "the environment either works with or works against composite substances ... ensuring that they exist for a greater or lesser period of time than nature warrants."⁷ Thus, one cause of the length or shortness of life will be the environment.

Again, all stable substances are compounds of the moist and the dry. The decay of living beings, i.e., the process of aging and death, consists in their becoming dry and cold.⁸ As the vital heat diminishes, its ability to draw in moisture from the environment lessens; it begins to dry out as well as getting colder. Length of life will depend upon the preservation of vital heat and inner moisture; shortness of life will be due to something becoming colder and so drying out.⁹ Aristotle distinguishes between two kinds of moisture, one which evaporates easily and another 'fatty' moisture which is more resistant to drying up, be this due to the action of heat or of cold.¹⁰ Thus, plants live longer than animals because they have an oiliness which allows them the better to retain their moisture and be resistant to cold.¹¹ Similarly aquatic animals do not live as long as land animals because their moisture is not as 'fatty'.¹²

The four elements cannot produce life on their own—something must act from outside, be this the vital heat or heat used as an instrument of the soul. Vital heat informs matter so as to perpetuate the species. It is considered to be 'more divine' than the four elements.¹³ Thus, whatever is hotter will live for longer and hence sexual difference will be a factor, Aristotle holding that the male lives longer than the female.¹⁴ The eternal process whereby life is transmitted and the species preserved is something which is immanent, individuals producing individuals.¹⁵ And yet, the persistence of species points to a good within the sublunary world where life or existence continues throughout change and in an ordered fashion.¹⁶

⁷ *De longitudine*, iii, 465b 27 ff.

⁸ *Ibid.*, v, 466a 19-20.

⁹ *Ibid.*, v, 466a 29 ff.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, v, 466a 23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vi, 467a 6 ff.

¹² *Ibid.*, v, 466b 33 ff.

¹³ See, *De caelo*, II iii, 286a 9.

¹⁴ *De longitudine*, v, 466b 14 ff.

¹⁵ See, *Metaphysica*, XII iii, 1070a 28.

¹⁶ *De anima*, II iv, 415a 26—b 7.

1.2. *The two translations of the De longitudine*

There were two medieval Latin versions of the *De longitudine et brevitate vitae*. The first was translated, together with some other books of the *Parva naturalia*, by James of Venice (ca. 1125-1150). The second was the revision of the text by William of Moerbeke. Thirdly, medieval commentators had the *Compendium De causis longitudinis et brevitatis vitae* of Averroes, which was translated by Michael Scot ca. 1220-35. The influence of the text of Averroes was such that its vocabulary is often mixed with that of Aristotle.

In the absence of a critical edition of the translations I have examined a few manuscripts and would make some preliminary points. The *vetus* and the *nova* were both made directly from the Greek. Each employs a word for word literal method which allows us to compare them quite closely to modern Greek editions of the text of Aristotle. This literalness could prove to be a problem for the average reader—James of Venice left some untranslated words in Greek letters in his translations, and William of Moerbeke sometimes simply transcribed Greek words into Roman letters. It is a moot point as to whether Moerbeke's translation makes any significant advance on the previous translation. Certainly, Moerbeke is the first to give a translation of all of the text of Aristotle as we now have it; beforehand, the *vetus* stopped at 467a 26, thus omitting lines 467a 26 - 467b 9. I have already drawn attention to a curious situation in Moerbeke's translation, where he transliterates some Greek words which he could easily have translated, given that a translation was already available in James of Venice's version.¹⁷ In any case, no matter which translation was available to comment on, authors were sometimes highly challenged by the text and employed considerable ingenuity in attempting to grasp the *intentio auctoris*.

2. *Averroes*

The earliest commentary we know of that was available to thirteenth-century scholars was that of Averroes.¹⁸ The text, as trans-

¹⁷ See Michael Dunne, "The Commentary of Peter of Auvergne," 159-161, where some examples are given.

¹⁸ The text is to be found in *Corpus Commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem*, Vol. VII: "Compendium Libri Aristotelis De Causis Longitudinis et Brevitatis Vitae," 129-149, edited by A.L. Shields (Cambridge, Mass., 1949).

lated by Michael Scot sometime between 1220 and 1235, was integrated into many of the commentaries of the following century, sometimes without acknowledgement. The influence is not a uniform one, however: Averroes will form much of the background to Peter of Ireland's commentary, will be mentioned, for example, by Walter Burley in the same breath as Aristotle, but will be completely absent from Peter of Auvergne's commentary. It has to be acknowledged that Averroes' text presents no particular doctrinal problems. Its merit is double: it is a readable paraphrase of Aristotle's text (as we have already mentioned, the translation by James of Venice of the text of Aristotle cannot have been easy to read), it also attempts to reflect philosophically on the points which the text brings up. Averroes in the course of his text refers to the *De generatione et corruptione* and also to the fourth book of the *Meteorologica*. In addition, he refers to Galen as a medical source. This is important, because when Averroes states at the beginning of his text that he intends to speak "de causis longitudinis et brevitatis vitae," the kind of reasons he has in mind will not just be limited to natural philosophy but will also include medical sources, and not just what is contained in Aristotle's text. Averroes' emphasis upon the four elemental qualities and their correspondents in a living body, the humours, will be very influential. The most faithful follower of Averroes' project, as outlined in the *compendium*, is probably Peter of Ireland. If one looks at the works which Peter quotes, there are extensive quotations from Aristotle's *Physica*, *De caelo*, *De generatione et corruptione*, the fourth book of the *Meteorologica*, *De anima*, *Parva naturalia*, *De animalibus* and also from the available medical authors, Constantine the African, Galen, Haly Abbas, Isaac Israeli, Nicolaus Peripateticus and al-Razi. Again, it is interesting to note that Peter of Auvergne explicitly excludes medical authors from his study of the text.

3. *Peter of Spain*

I think that I am correct in saying that we have no commentaries on the *Parva naturalia* before the middle of the thirteenth century. However, if they suddenly appear in great profusion after 1250 then we must presume that a great deal of personal reading of these works was going on before this. Who then was the first Latin author to comment upon the *De longitudine*? There are two likely candidates: Peter of Spain and Albert the Great. Here there is a

problem which may not respect a strict chronology. I am sure that a medieval lecturer, just like his modern counterpart, used his notes over a certain amount of time during his teaching career. Not just that, he may also have tended to follow the style and methods which his teachers used. Therefore, although a commentary might have been written down at a certain point, it might record a text that is either new or has been in use for a certain amount of time. In this regard, the commentaries of Peter of Spain and Albert the Great seem to be older in that they do not have the more modern elements of a *divisio et expositio textus*, as found in those of Adam of Buckfield and Peter of Ireland. What Peter of Spain and Albert the Great have in common is that both here deal with the philosophical problems brought up by the text of Aristotle without directly referring to or acknowledging the text itself. In my opinion, this suggests an early form which was perhaps being used initially for private teaching.

Turning to the text of Peter of Spain (Petrus Juliani, Johannes XXI, 1220-1277),¹⁹ one has to note that although it is called a *Tractatus de longitudine et brevitate vitae* it is not a commentary on Aristotle's text, still less an *expositio textus*. There is no mention of a text of Aristotle or any of his other works, nor is there any reference to Averroes. And yet it is clear from many unacknowledged passages that the work has been inspired by the *De longitudine*. The vocabulary is very much influenced by Averroes' commentary and by medical sources, references being made to compound substances (*mixta*) and to bodily constitutions (*temperamenta*) as well as to the presence of suffering (*dolor mortis*).²⁰ The text is perhaps

¹⁹ The text is to be found in Volume III of the *Obras Filosóficas* of Peter of Spain, edited by P. Manuel Alonso (Madrid, 1952), 413-490.

²⁰ The notion of the *dolor mortis* is not to be found in the *De longitudine* text but turns up in the *De iuventute et senectute, de morte et vita*. Although this latter text had been translated by James of Venice it does not seem to have been very popular, as only five manuscripts containing it survive. The theme of the *dolor mortis* is to be found in later authors such as Peter of Flanders in his *Questiones super librum de morte et vita*. The third *quaestio* "Vtrum mors naturaliter sit sine tristitia" is rather interesting in terms of its argumentation. Death is something which is natural, and yet nature naturally intends to save life rather than extinguish it. Old age, which we are told is *via ad mortem naturalem*, is accompanied by pain and sadness since, we are told, *senes sunt tristes naturaliter* and thus, at the end of life, *senex debet maxime tristari*. The author then gives a 'psychological' explanation: sadness arises from a knowledge of what is coming. The separation of the soul from the body is something which happens '*insensibiliter*': "in senibus anima auferetur a corpore insensibiliter." Thus, he concludes "non patet quod mors naturalis liceat fieri cum tristitia aliqua." The same subject matter, it seems,

one of the richest treatments of the topic. In re-reading Peter of Spain's text, I am now convinced that it was a major influence, either directly or mediated by another author, on the prologue of Peter of Ireland's commentary as well as on the rest of the text. Both authors indeed were close to medical schools, Peter of Ireland to Salerno and Peter of Spain to Montpellier. The distinctions which each makes of factors affecting health and sickness may well have derived from a common medical heritage. The role of the *spiritus* as the link between soul and body is also common to both.²¹ Indeed, the medical vocabulary which Peter of Spain uses is as rich if not richer than Peter of Ireland's. Certain elements, it seems, are particular to Peter of Spain: the "machina corporis," the heart as the "domus vitae." Also Peter of Spain does not espouse a naturalism typical of Aristotelianism, the fact that liquids coagulate to form a living thing under the influence of heat, unlike that which happens with stones and metals, is attributed to the providence of God.²² Corruption or passing away is linked to the return of the creature into the nothingness out of which it was created.²³ The influence of the stars is also noted.²⁴ The value of the study of human beings is advocated since if we are the most perfect of animals, what is learnt in the study of human beings will be of use regarding the less perfect, namely, animals and plants.

Although there is a very rich medieval tradition of considering the ethical dimension of death, it is surprising to note that Peter of Spain is the only one among the authors I have examined to introduce such considerations into his commentary. He holds that modern humans live for a shorter time than those of old, and that the universe is growing old and approaching its end as determined by divine providence: "ut ad meliorem statum perducat." (p. 485).

4. Albert the Great

The paraphrase of Albert is conventionally dated to between 1251 and 1260.²⁵ As with the case of Peter of Spain, we do not find a

was discussed by Henricus de Alemannia in his *quaestio* "Utrum in morte naturali sit aliquis dolor" see Kouri/Lehtinen "Disputed Questions on Aristotle's *De iuventute et senectute*, *De respiratione* and *De morte et vita* by Henricus de Alemannia," 369.

²¹ Peter of Spain, *Tractatus de longitudine*, in *Obras* (ed. Alonso), III: 462.

²² *Ibid.*, 445.

²³ *Ibid.*, 438.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 456.

²⁵ See, J. A. Weisheipl (ed.), *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences. Commemorative*

divisio textus, nor again a series of *quaestiones*. Large parts of the text of the *De longitudine* are integrated into the commentary but without always being distinguished from Albert's own contribution. Unlike Peter of Spain, however, Albert makes explicit reference to the Arabic commentators, and the influence of such authors as Averroes and Avicenna is clear. Medical sources are again to the fore.

In his prologue Albert explicitly excludes a moral consideration of life and death—his concern will be with the natural causes of length and shortness of life. Albert states that a natural consideration is appropriate since the soul is not a factor in length and shortness, rather the body or material conditions are. Again, the role of philosophy, as distinct from medicine, is that philosophy will consider the causes of length and shortness of life in general, whereas medicine deals with particular causes. It must have been the case that the original interest in this text was certainly practical as well as theoretical. In what way could it offer solutions: could it offer a way to extend life? Even when certain accidental features are taken into account such as gender, size, and geographical position, a natural length of life would seem to be pre-determined. As Albert puts it (p. 358), repeating a proverb: “tres vitae canis faciunt vitam equi, et tres vitae equi faciunt vitam hominis.” The image of the lamp burning, as put forward by Avicenna, makes it clear that the flame of life gradually consumes the material resources. His words regarding death are somewhat clinical: “non amara est mors senum ... quia membra sunt jam quasi putrida et insensibilia ... cui non succuritur per auxilium medicinae.”

An interesting terminological shift can be observed in his writings. In the *vetus* translation insects are called *incisa*. However, Albert prefers the term *anulosa* (also to be found in Buckfield and in Peter of Spain). He also uses the terms *rugosa*; Moerbeke will later use the Greek term *entoma*. The source of this term ‘*anulosa*’ is probably Michael Scot's translation accompanying the Great Commentary of Averroes on the *De anima*.²⁶

Essays 1980 (Toronto, 1980), Appendix I: “Albert's Works on Natural Sciences (*libri naturales*) in Probable Chronological Order,” 565-577; on 571. The text is to be found in the *Opera Omnia*, ed. Borgnet, IX: 345-371.

²⁶ See, *Averrois Cordubensis, Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De anima*, ed. Crawford (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), 124: I v, 411b 19-21: “Et videmus vivere etiam cum dividuntur, et similiter quedam animalia anulosa, quasi anima in eis sit una secundum formam, etsi non est una secundum numerum”; 158: *De anima*, II ii, 413b 19-22: “... et ita accidit in alio modo anime in animalibus anulosis quando absconduntur; utraque enim pars habet sensum et motum in loco.”

One always feels that Albert is a rock of common sense. He has the innately critical attitude of the philosopher-scientist. Where the legend of the barnacle geese is concerned, he testifies that he has gone and checked the matter and found that they are birds like any other. As regards women, he is on their side, claiming that they are better behaved than men, more virtuous by nature (*feminae sunt castae et viri luxuriosi*), whereas Peter of Ireland and Nicolaus Peripateticus took the opposite view. No other of our authors displays anything like the same amount of information on animals: Albert in his commentary speaks of starfish, of lizards and crocodiles; he dismisses a legend concerning how vipers give birth, he talks of bears, storks, herons and swans, and also of the existence of warm-blooded sea creatures in northern seas. Some of his observations can be quite homely, for example, discussing how reproduction affects length of life, he states that “*Gallinae multum ovantes cito moriuntur.*” He updates many of Aristotle’s examples, using those which would be more familiar to his listeners. So instead of referring to the palm tree as living for a long time, he refers to the oak tree.

In the course of the text, he informs us that he has already commented on the *De iuventute et senectute*, which he calls the *De aetate*, and the *De sensu et sensato*. He also refers to the *De spiritu et inspiratione*—which Adam of Buckfield states that he was unable to obtain.

5. Adam of Buckfield

The commentary of Adam of Buckfield uses the *vetus* text and appears to date from sometime in the 1240s or 1250s.²⁷ Although Adam’s regency in Arts began at Oxford in 1243, I am not convinced that he openly lectured on Aristotle at such an early date and would therefore tend to place the works in the early 1250s.²⁸ There is still much work to be done on the figure of Adam, as well as on the chronology of his works. The surviving manuscripts transmit something of his teaching career. Lohr has listed a commen-

²⁷ On Adam’s life and works, see R. Sharpe, *A Handlist of Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland Before 1540* (Turnhout, 2001), 6-8. An excerpt from the text is to be found in Michael Dunne (ed.), *Magistri Petri de Ybernia, Expositio et Quaestiones in Aristotelis Librum De Longitudine et Brevitate Vitae* (Louvain, 1993), 35-38.

²⁸ On the earlier dating of Adam’s commentaries, see, for example, R. C. Dales, *The Problem of the Rational Soul in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden, 1995), 48.

tary on the *De longitudine* and another on the *De morte et vita*, but both are on the *De longitudine*.²⁹ In many of the manuscripts two versions of the commentary are copied with the other being placed in the bottom margin of the page. In addition, upon examining the manuscripts I have identified a third version by Adam, or at least one which owes much to his commentary. A future critical edition will, therefore, pose some interesting problems for the editor. It should also be noted how popular Adam's commentaries were and what a wide diffusion they seem to have had. It seems to me that Adam's may have been one of the earliest straightforward commentaries on the text of Aristotle, rather than being a paraphrase. It employs the device of the *divisio et expositio textus* which is to be found in later commentaries. The continuous references to the text of Aristotle as well as the relative brevity of the lemmata means that the text must have been readily available at the time of the composition. Adam runs on clearly and concisely through the text, using the device of the *supple* when necessary (he is the only one of our authors to use this technique).

In his prologue, Adam states that he regards his text as being one of those works which follow on from the *De anima*, and whereas the other works of the *Parva naturalia* refer to some aspect of animal life, here in *De longitudine* all living things will be considered, since all live and all die. Again, he agrees with Albert that here one deals with the universal causes of length and shortness of life and not the particular, since this is the task of medicine.

In his treatment of the *incisa*, he speaks as following: "Multa parva animalia cuius sunt incisa que habent magnam pororum incisionem siue diuisionem in suo corpore in quibus attrahunt spiritum cuius sunt musce infra unum annum moriuntur." Later, however, he also uses the term *anulosa* with the following explanation: "Et vocat animalia anulosa incisa eo quod per decisionem multiplicantur sicut et plante." Normally, however, he is content to repeat the examples which Aristotle gives in the text, (for example, the size of fish in the Red Sea), and there is not the same attempt as we have seen in Albert to adapt the examples for Northern European readers.

²⁹ See, C. H. Lohr, "Medieval Latin Aristotle Commentaries," *Traditio* 23 (1967) [A-F], 313-413; on 323.

6. *Peter of Ireland*

The commentary of Peter of Ireland is perhaps the most in depth of all of the treatments of the text in either the thirteenth or the fourteenth centuries.³⁰ He devotes seven *lectiones* to the text and a total of twenty-two *quaestiones*. This kind of *expositio* was common by the middle part of the thirteenth century, although it is unusual for so many *quaestiones* to survive. With the passage of time, however, the understanding of the text was not the problem, given the availability of commentaries, and so the *quaestiones* began to separate from the *lectio* and to stand on their own. This is evident in commentaries dating from the latter part of the thirteenth and the first few decades of the fourteenth century. For example, both *sententiae* and *quaestiones* survive by Peter of Auvergne (see below), whereas with Johannes de Janduno (1258-1328), the whole of the *Parva naturalia* are treated in a series of *quaestiones*.

It may be worth adding to this sketch of Peter of Ireland's text that this author does attempt to reconstruct Aristotle's philosophy of life by looking at and exploring all of the sources, not just the text of the *De longitudine*. There are the conventional references to *Physica* V, *Meteorologica* IV, the *De generatione et corruptione*; but Peter is unusual in giving many references to the *De plantis*, and especially in his extended references to the *De animalibus*.

7. *Peter of Auvergne*

The commentary by Peter of Auvergne was probably completed sometime before the mid 1280s, as is the case with the majority of his other philosophical works.³¹ It would seem, from extant works, that the commentary by Peter of Auvergne is one of the earliest to use the *translatio nova* of the *De longitudine et brevitae vitae*. William of Moerbeke translated this version sometime between 1260 and 1270.

According to P. De Leemans, Peter's commentaries on *De somno et vigilia*, *De longitudine et brevitae vitae*, *De iuventute et senectute*, *De*

³⁰ The text is to be found in Dunne (ed.), *Magistri Petri de Ybernia, Expositio et Quaestiones*, 67-155.

³¹ On Peter's life, works and bibliography, see, G. Galle, "A Comprehensive Bibliography on Peter of Auvergne," *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 42 (2000), 53-79.

respiratione et inspiratione, *De morte et vita* and *De motu animalium* were probably meant to be the completion of Thomas' commentaries on the *Parva naturalia*.³² Peter treated the books of the *Parva naturalia* in two ways, namely as *sententiae* or literal commentaries, and also as *quaestiones*. Thus, there are *quaestiones* on the *De sensu et sensato* and the *De memoria et reminiscencia*, but no *sententiae*—because St. Thomas had already commented on them. There are both *sententiae* and *quaestiones* on *De somno et vigilia* and *De iuventute et senectute*. There are, however, extant *sententiae* only on *De longitudine et brevitate vitae*, *De respiratione et inspiratione* and *De morte et vita*. It should also be noted that Peter commented on the *De motu animalium* “per modum scripti” and “per modum quaestionis.”³³

It is interesting to note that the *divisio scientiae* found in the Prologue seeks to determine which is the proper branch of knowledge, which should deal with this subject. The answer is that natural philosophy will include the study of living things, inasmuch as they have an immanent principle of motion and rest. The study of the nature of the rational soul does not form part of natural philosophy. On the other hand, the study of vegetative and sensitive life will form part of the investigations of the scientist or natural philosopher, insofar as these levels of life depend upon material conditions. Natural philosophy will include an examination of the causes of health and sickness as well, but in general not in detail, since the particular causes of health and sickness are dealt with in medicine. Thus, Peter is one of the first to exclude medical authors from his consideration.

8. *Walter Burley*

The commentary of Walter Burley (1275-1346) brings us into the fourteenth century.³⁴ Like Peter of Auvergne he had a very long career in the Arts Faculty and produced a large number of works.

³² P. De Leemans, “Medieval Latin Commentaries on Aristotle’s *De Motu Animalium*. A Contribution to the *Corpus Commentarium Medii Aevi in Aristotelem Latinorum*,” *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 67 (2000), 272-360, on 298.

³³ *Ibid.*, 298-360; 322-330. I have described the contents of the text of Peter’s commentary on *De longitudine* in “The Commentary of Peter of Auvergne,” 166-172.

³⁴ On Walter’s life and works, see Sharpe, *Handlist of Latin Writers*, 709-729. Since it is the only text which has not been published, I have included a transcript of the prologue in an appendix to this paper.

Unlike Peter of Auvergne, his guide in interpreting the text of Aristotle is Averroes. Indeed, like many fourteenth-century authors, he mentions Averroes always in connection with Aristotle. The text which is commented upon is the *nova*, and here again we have a commentary on the *causes* of length and shortness. In his prologue he refers to both intrinsic and extrinsic causes, and states that he will consider only the intrinsic causes, of which there are two: the soul and the matter. Extrinsic causes of length and shortness of life (which he does not intend to consider) arise *ex motu et aspectu corporum celestium*. The text contains both an *expositio* and some *quaestiones*. Animals compared to plants are referred to, however, as *animalia decisa*, and the example given is that of the *anguilla*. It would seem, therefore, that the commentary of Averroes is relied upon more than the *nova* of Moerbeke. The latter provides the *lemmata* but not, it would appear, the vocabulary of the commentary.

9. Conclusion

It was my intention here to give a brief overall survey of a selection of commentaries on the *De longitudine*. It is hoped that something of the importance of these commentaries has emerged. There is still, however, much to be done. Most of the authors dealt with here produced commentaries on the rest of the *Parva naturalia*, and these need to be investigated and edited before conclusions can be reached regarding the reception of these works of Aristotle. Parallel and complementary research will also be necessary regarding the *quaestiones* on the *Parva naturalia*. Here it is not only the edition of the texts that is a desideratum, but also an investigation into the relationship between these *quaestiones* and the commentaries which preceded them. Of the authors looked at here, it may well be that the writings of Peter of Auvergne turn out to be the most interesting, since he left both commentaries and *quaestiones*. Finally, a much-needed research tool in these investigations is the edition of the two translations of Aristotle available to medieval authors. We look forward to that appearing in the *Aristoteles Latinus* series.

APPENDIX 1

Gualterus de Burley (1275-1346)
Expositio libri De longitudine et breuitate vitae

I have transcribed the text taking the following manuscripts into consideration:

London, Lambeth Palace, MS 74, ff. 152r-158r [= L]

Oxford, Oriel College, MS 12, ff. 109r-115r [= O]

Vaticano, BAV, Vaticanus latinus 2151, ff. 232rb-239r [= V]

The medieval orthography has been retained, especially the convention of an initial 'v' and internal 'u'.

De eo autem quod est alia longe vite esse [I, 464b 19]³⁵

Intencio in hoc tractatu est³⁶ de causis longitudinis et breuitatis uite. Due enim sunt cause longitudinis et breuitatis uite: vna intrinseca, alia extrinseca. Extrinseca³⁷ attenditur ex motu et aspectu corporum celestium³⁸ de qua causa non intenditur hic set de causis intrinsecis. Et sunt due cause intrinsece longitudinis et breuitatis vite.

Nam secundum Philosophum, secundo *De anima*: anima est principium³⁹ secundum omnia genera vite, et per consequens est principium longitudinis et breuitatis uite. Quia tamem vita est aliud a longitudine et breuitate vite oportet longitudinem et breuitatem vite habere aliam causam. Et accipitur illa ex parte corporis, cui consonat hoc quod Commentator dicit hic quod existimandum est de⁴⁰ causis longitudinis et breuitatis vite istis corporibus ex parte 4 qualitatum elementorum que sunt calidum, frigidum, humidum et siccum. Et certum est⁴¹ quod iste qualitates sunt qualitates corporales. Et ideo bene dictum est causas longitudinis et breuitatis vite ex parte corporis esse accipiendas. Et de illis causis acceptis ex parte corporis intendimus hic.

Iste liber habet partem prohemiale et partem executiuam. In prohemio facit tria. Primo proponit intencionem suam. Secundo causam intenti. Et tercio continuat se cum dictis et dicendis in proponendo intencionem suam. Dicit quod considerandum est⁴² quare quedam animalia sunt longe vite et quedam breuis. Et non solum est hoc considerandum in animalibus, immo⁴³ vniuersaliter determinandum est de longitudine et breuitate vite cuiuslibet viuentis.

Causa intenti est quia de istis contingit dubitare et de eo quod est per

³⁵ De eo autem quidem hoc esse longe, et cetera L

³⁶ est] bis V: + determinare L

³⁷ causa extrinseca L

³⁸ supercelestium L

³⁹ + vite L

⁴⁰ om. L

⁴¹ om. OV

⁴² quod considerandum est om. OV

⁴³ set s.l. quomodo V

se manifestum non inquiritur in sciencia,⁴⁴ set de eo quod est dubium.

Duo dubia proponit: vnum est vtrum eadem sit causa longitudinis et breuitatis vite in animalibus et plantis vel aliqua et alia.

Aliud dubium est vtrum sana⁴⁵ secundum naturam et ea⁴⁶ que sunt longe vite secundum naturam sunt eadem vel alia, et egrotancia et ea que sunt breuis vite. Istam dubitacionem soluit dicens quod egrotancia secundum quasdam suas⁴⁷ egritudines sunt breuis vite, et egrotancia secundum quasdam egritudines possunt esse longe vite.

Intendit quod languor aut contingit ex inproportione primarum qualitatum⁴⁸ aut accidit languor ex quodam superfluo superueniente primis qualitibus proportionaliter se habentibus. Et si languor accidat isto modo, contingit aliquando quod⁴⁹ languor prolongat vitam eo quod remouet illud cuius presencia abreuiat⁵⁰ vitam. Si enim morbus separet illud superfluum et mutat illud ad exteriora, talis morbus est causa longe vite.

Tercio continuat dicta in hoc libro dictis in libris precedentibus et dicendis⁵¹ in libris subsequentibus, vt satis planum est in litera, et cetera.

*Sunt autem, et cetera*⁵² [465a 2]

Hec est⁵³ pars executiua huius libri in qua exsequitur propositum. Et quia longitudo et breuitas vite sunt accidentia, ad cognicionem accidentis requiritur cognicio subiecti. Ideo Philosophus primo determinat de viuentibus que sunt subiecta longitudinis et breuitatis vite, premittens quod ipsa viuencia diuersimode se habent ad istas passiones, et hoc tam viuencia differencia genere quam et differencia specie; que⁵⁴ etiam sunt vnus speciei viuencia, sunt differencia in diuersis locis; que sunt⁵⁵ etiam vnus speciei et viuunt in eodem loco, diuersimode se habent ad istas passiones.

Exemplum primi: plante differunt genere ab animalibus et sunt longioris vite quam animalia. Exemplum secundi: homo et equus differunt specie et homo est longioris vite quam equus. Exemplum tercii: homines habitantes in regionibus frigidis et homines habitantes in regionibus calidis sunt eiusdem speciei, et homines habitantes in regionibus calidis sunt longioris vite quam habitantes in regionibus frigidis. Exemplum quarti: Sortes et Plato manentes in eadem regione sunt eiusdem speciei, et forte Sortes est longioris vite quam Plato. Commentator dicit hic quod longitudo et breuitas vite differunt multis modis: aut per comparacionem ad genus, verbi gratia quod vegetabilia vniuersaliter sunt longioris vite

⁴⁴ non inquiritur in sciencia *om. OV*

⁴⁵ sanus *V*

⁴⁶ egrus *V*

⁴⁷ suas *om. V*

⁴⁸ + et certum est quod talis languor abbreviat vitam *L*

⁴⁹ + talis *L*

⁵⁰ abbreviaret *L*

⁵¹ dictis *L*

⁵² Sunt autem et hanc habencia *L*

⁵³ + secunda *L*

⁵⁴ *om. L*

⁵⁵ *om. L*

quam animalia; aut per comparacionem ad speciem, verbi gratia quod homo est longioris vite quam rana et palma est longioris vite quam ficus; aut per comparacionem ad alium modum, verbi gratia quod habitantes in regionibus calidis et humidis sunt longioris vite quam habitantes in locis frigidis et siccis; aut secundum comparacionem ad indiuidua, verbi gratia quod Socrates sit longioris vite quam Plato. Cause istorum patebunt in sequentibus ...