

Seminar SAW : History of Science, History of Text

Abstract :

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Evrat de Conty's translation of Aristotle's Problems: a look at the manuscript tradition of the problem 35 on music

Completed in 1380 for Charles V, Evrat de Conty's translation and commentary of Aristotle *Problems* into French is for many reasons an interesting document when it comes to the study of how scientific texts were shaped and elaborated. A first set of reasons concerns Evrat de Conty's aims and means. Evrat de Conty proclaimed his aim was to restore and clarify the true meaning of the Aristotelian compilation which since the 13th c was famous for its obscurity. He uses a complex material: the Latin translation of Aristotle's *Problems* by Barthelemy of Messine in Sicilia in the middle of the 13th c. and the commentary on it made by Pietro d'Abano in the beginning of the 14th c. This last text existed in more than one version. A second set of reasons stems from the exceptional manuscript tradition which has reached us for this text. We have a copious autograph manuscript which can be describe as a "corrected second draft." This manuscript allows us to see the author at work while writing and making copious corrections of his text in several later edition readings. We also have 5 other manuscripts of the text. All are close to the autograph but with varying relations to it. A wide range of questions can be addressed with this material. Some of them relate to the author at work on the manuscript: how is Evrat copying and amending his own text? What are the textual means used in this work: colors, diacritic signs, type of writing, margin, etc. ? How far can we go in the identification of the different layers of text in the autograph manuscript? How does Evrat de Conty translate and use Pietro d'Abano and Barthelemy of Messine works in his text? Can we identify the version of Pietro d'Abano used by Evrat de Conty? Does Evrat de Conty incorporate other sources and how? How does he deal with his own additions? Some other questions relate to the variations of the manuscripts tradition. What are the variants found in the various later copies of the text? What can they teach us about the copying process, the audience intended for the manuscript? How far can a text be altered by the manuscript tradition and still be presented as the same text? Relying on existing published and unpublished ongoing studies of Conty's text and Pietro d'Abano's commentary we will look at some of these questions focusing on one particular instance from the section XIX of the *Problems*.