

## **AD ERUDITIONEM MULTORUM. THE LATIN VERSION OF THE *BOOK OF THE APPLE* AS A PHILOSOPHICAL PROTREPTIC**

---

IOANA CURUȚ\*

**Abstract** The pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de pomo* (*Book of the Apple*) is part of the pseudepigrapha genre which has enriched the Aristotelian *corpus* at the price of distorting Aristotle's real teachings. The present article seeks to re-evaluate the protreptic dimension of the opusculum and its connection to the tradition of philosophical exhortations, such as Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. From this perspective, we aim to reconsider Manfred's intention to translate the *Book of the Apple* by taking into account the very nature of a philosophical protreptic as manifested within both the text itself and the Prologue that Manfred attached to the Latin translation. Such an approach is motivated by our identification of a new source in Manfred's prologue and our reattribution of the first proposition (allegedly from *Liber de pomo*) present in the *Auctoritates Aristotelis*.

**Keywords** Pseudo-Aristotle, medieval philosophical protreptics, *Liber de pomo et morte*, Boethius, Manfred, the value of philosophy, *Auctoritates Aristotelis*

Although not entirely neglected, the medieval genre of the philosophical protreptic is much more often overlooked than any other literary genre employed in the Middle Ages as an expression of philosophical thought. One compelling sign of this

---

\* Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. [crtoiana@yahoo.com](mailto:crtoiana@yahoo.com).

The present article builds upon my introductory study published in Romanian in the same volume as my annotated translation into Romanian of the Latin version of *Liber de pomo* (Pseudo-Aristotel, *Liber de pomo et morte/Cartea despre măr și moarte*, introductory study, translation and notes by Ioana Curuț, "Ratio Mediaevalia", Ratio et Oradea: Revelatio, 2016). I have presented some partial results of my research within one of the semestrial conferences organized by the Center of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca), in May 2016. The present contribution would not have been possible without the *Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes* (IRHT) hosting my three-month research fellowship in Paris.

tendency of disregarding the medieval protreptic as such can be traced back to an entry on “literary forms of medieval philosophy” from one of the most prestigious philosophical encyclopaedias that bears no reference whatsoever to any medieval philosophical protreptic.<sup>1</sup> In stark contrast stands its direct ancestor – the Ancient philosophical protreptic – which receives considerable scrutiny from scholars, whether we refer to Greek productions or their Latin counterparts. But regardless of how scant the production of philosophical protreptics was in the Middle Ages, they did not cease to be an important aspect of medieval philosophical literature, nor did they have a lesser impact on their readership.

In the present paper, we shall examine one of the most famous medieval philosophical protreptics, *Liber de pomo* (*Book of the Apple*), showing that the philosophical aspect of the *Book of the Apple* was much more enhanced once the Latin version was produced. In order to prove our thesis, we shall employ two sets of arguments, while also highlighting the main characteristics of the opusculum, such as its original elaboration, its several stages of redaction and translation, its core message and its subsequent influence.

The first set of arguments refers to the fact that Manfred, the author of the Prologue to the Latin text, was highly responsible for orienting the text’s message towards a philosophical end. In this regard, after contrasting the Latin Prologue with the Hebrew one, we shall develop an interpretation of Manfred’s intention of translating the *Book of the Apple* by appealing to one of Manfred’s statements from his Prologue. Moreover, we shall determine a previously unidentified source of Manfred’s Prologue which derives from Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*, thus offering another argument in support of the inclusion of *Liber de pomo* within the long-standing tradition of philosophical protreptics.

The second set of arguments relates to *Liber de pomo*’s medieval reception which, we argue, was much more connected to the philosophical nature of the text. In support of this claim, we shall draw attention to several examples of its medieval reception, such as the commentary on Boethius’s *De consolazione Philosophiae*, or the recently edited commentary on *Liber de causis*, anonymously composed in the first half of the fifteenth century. In addition, we shall also consider the medieval *florilegium Auctoritates Aristotelis*, which compiles eight propositions allegedly extracted from *Liber de pomo*. After revealing that scholars have hitherto overlooked that the first proposition is in fact not from *Liber de pomo*, we shall draw the implications of this misattribution for the thesis stated above.

---

<sup>1</sup> Eileen Sweeney, “Literary Forms of Medieval Philosophy”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/medieval-literary/> (accessed 11 November, 2016). In fact, the term “protreptic” is used by Sweeney only in relation with Thomas Aquinas’s theological work *Summa contra gentiles*, further referring to Mark D. Jordan, “The Protreptic Structure of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*”, *The Thomist* 50/2 (1986): 173–209.

### ***Liber de pomo* and protreptic literature**

In Antiquity, protreptic literature (gr. *protreptikos logos*, ‘exhortatory discourse’) was devised as a means of persuading the reader into embracing a specific activity and adopting a new way of living by renouncing his old habits. Such discourses that aimed to convert the reader were developed within various areas of thought. One can recall for instance the famous example of the medical protreptic written by Galenus; yet another particular type of protreptic flourishing in Antiquity<sup>2</sup> more than others was the philosophical protreptic. It has been argued that the genre of the philosophical protreptic did not appear simultaneously with Aristotle’s homonymous work, but had in fact started with plural and often incompatible endeavours on the part of Isocrates and Plato, both of whom established a tradition of protreptic discourse that culminated with Aristotle’s text. The genre witnessed a comeback in Late Antiquity, in the forms of Iamblichus’s *Protrepticus* and Elias’s *Introduction to the Isagoge*, rendering different Neoplatonising versions of the traditional genre. Furthermore, it also intertwined with other literary forms of philosophical expressions, like in the case of Boethius’s *De consolazione Philosophiae*, circulating classical consolatory themes, rhetorical techniques of conversion, along with a heavy philosophical argumentation.

Regarding the popularity of this literary form in the High Middle Ages, the impact that Boethius’s *De consolazione* had on various readerships is impressive, if we consider the wide commentary tradition it has spawned.<sup>3</sup> In other contexts, the protreptic discourse pervaded the intellectual milieu of medieval universities, a situation which is more visible with respect to the emerging universities from Central Europe in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> On the Ancient tradition of philosophical protreptics, see the more recent James Henderson Collins II, *Exhortations to Philosophy. The Protreptics of Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> On the medieval tradition of Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*, cf. the classical work of Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen and Lodi Nauta, eds., *Boethius in the Middle Ages. Latin and Vernacular Traditions of the ‘Consolatio Philosophiae’* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). The medieval commentary tradition of the *De consolazione* was described in harsh terms by Pierre Courcelle in his *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire. Antécédents et postérité de Boèce* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1967), 333. One can find a pertinent response to Courcelle’s unfair criticism in Lodi Nauta, “Some aspects of Boethius’ ‘Consolatio philosophiae’ in the Renaissance”, in *Boèce ou la chaîne des savoirs. Actes du colloque international de la fondation Singer-Polignac*, ed. Alain Gallonier (Louvain-Paris: Peeters, 2003), 767–778; for Nauta’s response, 768–770.

<sup>4</sup> Sophie Wlodek, “Pourquoi étudiait-on la philosophie à l’Université de Cracovie au Moyen Age? Témoignage d’un maître de la première moitié du xve siècle”, in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter? Akten des X. Internationalen Kongresses für Mittelalterliche Philosophie der Société Internationale pour l’Etude de la Philosophie Médiévale 25. bis. 30 August 1997 in*

*Liber de pomo* is a privileged piece of work for at least three reasons. First of all, it circulated in at least four distinct medieval cultures: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and Latin. Secondly, its presumed Aristotelian authorship elevated the status of the opusculum to that of a text worth being read and commented upon in the medieval centres of knowledge. The third reason, historically restricted to the area of Latin thought, consists of the fact that *Liber de pomo* played a considerable role from the thirteenth century onwards in forging an image of Aristotle and of his teachings more suitable with the overall Christian dogma. Having been accessible to distinct cultures in the Middle Ages, the opusculum was greatly responsible for the emergence of a unique portrait of the Philosopher, providing Latins, in particular, with a strong argument for supporting the compatibility of Aristotle's thought with Christian doctrine.

Regarding its origin, the *Book of the Apple* is a Pseudo-Aristotelian text anonymously composed in Arabic in the tenth century (bearing the initial title *Kitāb at-Tuffāḥa*)<sup>5</sup> that has managed to enrich the Aristotelian corpus by providing a unique representation of Aristotle in medieval culture. The opusculum sets a conversation between a dying Aristotle and his faithful disciples, giving the Philosopher a last opportunity to exhort them to practice philosophy as a means to escape the fear of death. As it is suggested in the title, the scent of an apple helps Aristotle to prolong his life until he finishes his speech.

The most surprising parts of the text are those where the character of Aristotle is determined by the anonymous author to utter affirmations running contrary to the Philosopher's historical teachings, being more akin with the doctrinal core of the main monotheistic theologies. The main purpose of adjusting Aristotelian philosophy to a monotheistic readership is a feature of the text which has been preserved in all of its four different versions. The Arabic original was subsequently translated into Persian (*Tarjuma-imaḳāla-i- Arasṭāṭāls*)<sup>6</sup> in the thirteenth century, at

---

*Erfurt*, eds. Jan A. Aertsen, Andreas Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 26 (Berlin-New York: 1998), 330–338.

<sup>5</sup> The original Arabic version of *Liber de pomo* was unknown until the late nineteenth century. Preserved in the Istanbul codex Köprülü 1608, ff. 170b–181b, the manuscript is dated to around the sixteenth century and contains a complete version of the text which is explicitly attributed to Aristotle. Based on this manuscript and other two abridged versions of the Arabic *De pomo*, Jörg Kraemer was the first to establish in 1956 that the Arabic version was the model for the Persian one. Cf. Jörg Kraemer, "Das arabische Original des Pseudo-Aristotelischen *Liber de Pomo*", in *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida* (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1956), vol. 1, 488–490.

<sup>6</sup> A translation from Persian into English was accomplished by David S. Margoliouth, "The Book of the Apple, ascribed to Aristotle", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 24 (1892): 187–252. Margoliouth's translation was reprinted as an appendix in Mary F. Rousseau, *The Apple or Aristotle's Death* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1968), 60–

approximately the same time as the Arabic version was adapted into Hebrew by the Barcelonan translator Abraham Ibn Hasdây, with the title *Sefer hat-tappuah*.<sup>7</sup>

Both the Arabic-Persian and the Hebrew-Latin versions have as a recognizable model the platonic dialogue *Phaedo*, thus making Plato's text the main source of the Pseudo-Aristotelian dialogue. Although the anonymous author does not explicitly mention the Platonic dialogue, the *Book of the Apple* contains a series of considerable borrowings from this source, and yet it cannot be described in terms of a simple imitation. The possibility that the anonymous author had at his elbow an Arabic translation of *Phaedo* may be deduced from some formal cues, such as the structural similarity between the two texts or the recycling of some characters (Simmias, Crito), but also from the numerous doctrinal similarities, often joined by textual echoes from the platonic model.<sup>8</sup>

From the perspective of other sources, the Latin version of the *Book of the Apple*, inasmuch as it faithfully mirrors the Hebrew version, can be described, following Ruedi Imbach, as a "complex intertextual mosaic".<sup>9</sup> This phrase refers to the fact that the sources of the Latin version of the *Book* do not originate in the Latin culture of the thirteenth century, but in fact relate to Arabic sources later preserved by the Hebrew translator when composing his own version of the text. Moreover, the initial "mosaic" structure of the *Book* is further developed by the Jewish translator, Ibn Hasdây, who decides to add new textual elements to the original Arabic version that he is supposedly translating.

Thus, a significant turn took place in the transmission of the text with the elaboration in the year 1235 of what Abraham Ibn Hasdây described in his own words as a "translation" from Arabic into Hebrew of the *Book of the Apple* (*Sefer hat-*

---

76, and also in *Buch vom Apfel (Liber de pomo)*, ed., trans., commentary by Elsbeth Acampora-Michael (Frankfurt am Main: Vittoria Klostermann, 2001), 153–179.

<sup>7</sup> A list of manuscripts containing the Hebrew version can be found in Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Hebraeischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin, 1893), 267–270. After its first translation into Latin in the mid-thirteenth century, it was once again edited and translated into Latin by Joannes Justus Losius at the beginning of the eighteenth century: *Biga dissertationum* (Gisse Hassorum: Typis Henningi Mülleri, 1706). Another version of the Hebrew text doubled by a German translation is available in Jeremiah Musen, *Hatapuach. Übersetzt aus dem Arabischen ins Hebräische von Abraham ben Chasdai* (Lemberg, 1873). Ibn Hasdây's version received two translations into English: Isidor Kalisch, *Ha-Tapuach: The Apple. A treatise on the Immortality of the Soul by Aristotle the Stagyrte. Translated from the Hebrew with Notes and Aphorisms* (New York: The American Hebrew, 1885); Hermann Gollancz, *The Targum to «The Song of Songs»*. *The Book of the Apple. The Ten Jewish Martyrs. A Dialogue on Games of Chance. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic* (London: Luzac and Co., 1908).

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed comparison of the two dialogues, see Rousseau, *The Apple or Aristotle's Death*, 11 sqq.

<sup>9</sup> Ruedi Imbach, "Vorrede", in *Buch vom Apfel (Liber de pomo)*, vii.

*tappuah*).<sup>10</sup> The Hebrew version made by Hasdây in Barcelona survived in a fair number of manuscripts, but unfortunately has not yet received a complete critical edition based on all the known witnesses.<sup>11</sup>

Hasdây is the first to attach a prologue to the *Book of the Apple* and he is later followed in his gesture by Manfred. In his prologue, the Hebrew translator states his identity in a clear manner, expressing his opinion on the paternity of the book in believing that it was composed “by the Sages of Greece”. With regard to the utility of the translation, Hasdây points to its benefits for the “weaklings”, namely for “those who meditate upon the words of the heretics, who aver that, after the dissolution of the body, man has no real existence, and that man lives solely by reason of bodily existence, whereas, at his death, nothing remains”.<sup>12</sup> In this explanation, Mauro Zonta had seen an anti-Averroist stance on the part of Hasdây by means of which the Hebrew translator wanted to condemn their view regarding the dissolution of the individual soul after the corporeal death.<sup>13</sup> From our perspective, Hasdây’s declared intention for translating the text is rather clearly marked in his Prologue by a strong religious motivation, and not a philosophical one, given his expressed opposition towards what he calls “the heretics”.

Regarding Hasdây’s translation, his version of *Liber de pomo* presents numerous differences, both doctrinally and textually, in relation to the Arabic original. Since an Arabic manuscript of the *Book of the Apple* that is similar in almost all aspects to the Hebrew version has not been found, it is more reasonable to presume that Hasdây made his own version, adapting the Arabic original to his culture.<sup>14</sup> For instance, the Hebrew version develops the originally more concise introduction of the Arabic version by adding a preliminary scene, in which the sages, before going to visit the ill Aristotle, gather at a house in order to define the path of righteousness. This first interpolation, by which the Hebrew translator inserted

---

<sup>10</sup> Gollancz, *The Targum to «The Song of Songs». The Book of the Apple. The Ten Jewish Martyrs*, 92.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: “The accompanying translation has been prepared after collating and combining various printed versions and several manuscripts.” Gollancz’s volume does not contain the Hebrew text.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Mauro Zonta, *La filosofia antica nel Medioevo ebraico. Le traduzioni ebraiche medievali dei testi filosofici antichi* (Brescia: Paideia, 1996), 189: “Non é escluso che questa dichiarazione di Ibn Hasdai nascondesse un qualche spunto polemico nei confronti dell’averroismo che proprio allora cominciava a prendere piede tra i suoi correligionari provenzali.”

<sup>14</sup> It was a common practice for Hebrew translators to adapt and transform the original texts beyond recognition. Cf. Mauro Zonta, “Medieval Hebrew Translations: Methods And Textual Problems”, in ed. Jacqueline Hamesse, *Les traducteurs au travail. Leurs manuscrits et leurs methodes* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 129–142.

biblical topoi in the text, such as the love of the neighbour and fear of God, was preserved as such in the Latin version:

When the way of truth was closed against those Sages, and the path of equity hidden from those wise men of intellect and understanding, called in their won language Philosophers, the etymology of which expression is «lovers of wisdom», they all assembled together at on and the same time, and agreed to explain and to cause men to understand which was the right way in which man should walk, so that he might live by it. And they found but one way, and it was this: that man should seek for his neighbor that which he would seek for himself: that he should shun the thing which was blameworthy and ugly and conquer it: that he should confess to the truth, exact punishment from himself, and fear his Creator.<sup>15</sup>

Leaving aside all of the textual differences between the four versions of the *Book of the Apple*, the text undoubtedly maintained its distinct value as a philosophical protreptic over the centuries. This is clear for all its avatars, since both the Arabic author and the Hebrew translator intended to describe philosophy as an *ars vivendi* and as an *ars moriendi* as well, the speculative life being held in high esteem in both cases. Nonetheless, as we shall argue below, in the case of the Latin version of *Liber de pomo*, this specific feature of the text was so strong that its protreptic message ended up reduplicated in its Prologue.

### **Manfred's Prologue to *Liber de pomo et morte***

Just as the Hebrew version of the *Book of the Apple* had a prologue by its translator, the Latin translation also received a proem. But unlike the prologue authored by Ibn Hasdây, lacking any philosophical challenges, the one that accompanies the Latin *Liber de pomo* raises a range of problems, from the identity of the translator of the Latin text itself, to discovering the philological sources and making sense of the *intentio auctoris* of the Prologue. The author of the Latin Prologue is undoubtedly Manfred, given that he puts forth the same official formula that Manfred employed when presenting himself: *nos Manfredus, divi augusti imperatoris Friderici filius, Dei gracia princeps Tharentinus, honoris montis sancti Angeli dominus et illustris regis Conradi secundi in regno Sicilie baiulus generalis*.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the absence of the term 'king' in the same formula suggests the year 1258 as a very possible *terminus ante quem* for the translation of *Liber de*

---

<sup>15</sup> Gollancz, *The Targum to «The Song of Songs». The Book of the Apple. The Ten Jewish Martyrs*, 92.

<sup>16</sup> Marianus Plezia, *Aristotelis qui ferebatur Liber de pomo, versio latina Manfredi* (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1960), 40.3–7. For more details about Manfred's authorship of the Prologue, see Rousseau, *The Apple or Aristotle's Death*, 39.

*pomo*, since that is the year when Manfred became king of Sicily. The death of his father, Frederic II, in 1350, led Manfred to inherit the aforementioned attributions, so the *terminus post quem* of the completion of the text may be pushed back to 1350. Manfred's prologue enjoyed a relatively wide reception in the Middle Ages, since most of the manuscript evidence that contains *Liber de pomo* preserved the king's preface as well.<sup>17</sup> In order for us to tackle the problems the prologue raises, I shall first provide a brief summary of Manfred's prologue from a doctrinal perspective.

The prologue can be divided into four distinct but nonetheless intertwined parts. The first part represents an *exordium* in which Manfred lays down the basic metaphysical frame of his thought. Drawing on the biblical theme of man as an image of God (*Genesis* 9:6), the opening section of the prologue sets forth knowledge of self and knowledge of God as the two most noble traits of man, while ignorance with regard to both counts as the most damnable feature. Knowledge of the divine and the self is assured by God, which, in the words from *John* 1:9, is "The true light that enlightens every man coming into the world".<sup>18</sup> For man's ignorance is accountable for his endeavour into the corporeal realm, that makes him forget his noble origin. The sole remedy for his predicament is the cultivation of human sciences that help man get rid of his vices, lead to a better version of himself and provide access to his creator.

After stressing the paramount importance of the sciences for salvation, the second part of the prologue introduces a necessary link between the ignorant man and the attainment of the sciences, since merely under the guidance of sages do men stray from the wrong path. The difference between men, as Manfred puts it, relies in that some of them are convinced by the teachings of the sages to renounce their wrongdoing and pursue happiness, while others manage to improve themselves only by the very self-example that sages offer. Interestingly, next we see Manfred himself ambiguously adopting the persona of a sage or a member of the first class of people.

The third part shifts the previous perspective to reflecting upon an autobiographical event in Manfred's life. Lying on his sick bed without the prospect of living, Manfred tries to convince his entourage that he is less frightened by death

---

<sup>17</sup> Paolo Mazzantini, "Cenni introduttivi", in Bruno Nardi, *Lecturae e altri studi danteschi*, a cura di R. Abardo (Firenze: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1990), 109. Studying what he considered to be a second revision of the Latin translation of *Liber de pomo*, Mazzantini established that none of the manuscripts containing this latter version have Manfred's prologue.

<sup>18</sup> The English translation of the biblical passage is drawn from the *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible.



than they are.<sup>19</sup> The rationale behind his optimism is, according to Manfred himself, the instruction that he had received at the court of his father, where sages taught him various philosophical subjects, such as the nature of the world, the perishable character of bodies, and the immortality of the soul. Manfred also explicitly states that his father's library contained theological and philosophical texts dealing with such topics.

The fourth part is devoted to a short description of one particular book that Manfred had found in the library, namely *Liber de pomo*, said to be authored by Aristotle on his deathbed. Manfred urged the people surrounding him to read that book, if they wished to understand that his death does not cause him pain and suffering, as they would assume, but rather that, as a sage, he gladly embraces it.

Manfred also provides information regarding the translation of this text, which he claims to have translated from Hebrew to Latin after his convalescence. In a rather confusing terminology, Manfred notes that the Hebrew translator had previously inserted some passages into the original Arabic text. Moreover, Manfred admits that Aristotle is the author of the book, but that the philosopher did not write it himself: *Nam dictum librum Aristotiles non notavit, sed notatus ab aliis extitit, qui causam hilaritatis suae mortis discere voluerunt, sicut in libri seriae continetur.*<sup>20</sup>

With respect to the series of issues that Manfred's Prologue raises, one of them is his claim of the authorship of *Liber de pomo's* translation from Hebrew into Latin. While few scholars consider today Manfred to be the real author of the Latin version, the majority of them assert that the king had merely commissioned the translation, while some even deny Manfred any knowledge of Hebrew. On the one hand, Marianus Plezia, the Polish editor of the Latin *Liber de pomo*, inclines to think that Manfred was indeed the author of the translation, since the text showcases an imperfect knowledge of Hebrew, and it is known that at his court Manfred had Hebrew scribes that could have helped him in the process of translating. Moritz Steinschneider, on the other hand, was sceptical about Manfred's proficiency in Hebrew or the proficiency of any other Christian at that time.<sup>21</sup> However, Bartholomeus of Messina, a very active translator at the court of Palermo, remains a likely candidate for the authorship of the Latin *De pomo*.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed presentation of this biographical episode, see especially Bruno Nardi, "Il Canto di Manfredi (*Purgatorio*, III)", in Bruno Nardi, «*Lecturae*» e altri studi danteschi, ed. R. Abardo (Firenze: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1990), 99–100.

<sup>20</sup> Plezia, *Aristotelis qui ferebatur Liber de pomo, versio latina Manfredi*, 42.2–5.

<sup>21</sup> Steinschneider, *Die Hebraeischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher*, 268, quoted in Plezia, *Aristotelis qui ferebatur Liber de pomo, versio latina Manfredi*, 21, n. 38.

<sup>22</sup> This proposal was recently revived by Pieter de Leemans, "Bartholomew of Messina, Translator at the Court of Manfred, King of Sicily", in *Translating at the Court: Bartholomew of Messina and Cultural Life at the Court of Manfred of Sicily*, ed. Pieter de Leemans (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014), XI–XXIX.

More recently, Paraskevi Kotzia pointed out the ambiguity of the term ‘*transtulimus*’ by which Manfred indicated his involvement in the translation, that can be interpreted either as an act of commissioning on behalf of the king, or indeed as a plural of majesty underlining that Manfred is the author of the Latin version.<sup>23</sup> Without choosing either side, Kotzia interpreted ‘*transtulimus*’ as a sign of Manfred’s attempt at a triple justification – of his father, of Aristotle, and of himself:

Whether it was Manfred himself who actually translated the *Liber de pomo*, something which, as we have seen, cannot be decisively ruled out, whether he did so with the help of a Jewish translator, or ultimately assigned the work to someone else, the fact is that the content of the *Prologue* seems to serve the strategy of a triple justification to which I have already referred.<sup>24</sup>

As we have seen in the case of Kotzia’s reading of the text, the question of purpose emerges from the question of authorship. What intentions could Manfred have had in mind when bringing forth a Latin version of *Liber de pomo*, regardless of whether he really translated it or simply encouraged its translation?

Many scholars interested in the Latin version of *De pomo* sought to find hidden reasons for Manfred’s implication in the translation. One popular group of interpreters proposes that, by putting forth a Latin translation, Manfred’s action was in reality an act of justification. For instance, Ruedi Imbach suggested that Manfred’s strategy in writing the prologue was that of rehabilitating his father’s reputation, the emperor Frederick II, often accused by his detractors of apostasy or even atheism<sup>25</sup>. By showing that his father’s library contained a book that proclaimed the immortality of the soul, Manfred presumably wanted others to believe that Frederick II was a pious Christian. Imbach’s theory is also adopted by Acampora-Michel and Alessandra Beccarisi.<sup>26</sup> In addition to admitting that Manfred was interested in “clearing” his father’s image, Kotzia also conjectured that Manfred intended to both express his strong Christian faith and to present the Aristotelian philosophy as compatible with the Christian dogma, since the reception of the Aristotelian philosophy was confronted with censorship.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Paraskevi Kotzia, “*De Hebraea lingua transtulimus in Latinam*: Manfred of Sicily and the pseudo-aristotelian *Liber de pomo*”, in *Translating at the Court*, 73.

<sup>24</sup> Kotzia, “*De Hebraea lingua transtulimus in Latinam*: Manfred of Sicily and the pseudo-aristotelian *Liber de pomo*”, 85.

<sup>25</sup> Ruedi Imbach, *Dante, la philosophie et les laïcs* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1996), 114.

<sup>26</sup> *Buch vom Apfel (Liber de pomo)*, 48; Alessandra Beccarisi, “Le *Liber de pomo seu de morte Aristotelis*. Quand l’exemple deviant récit”, in *Exempla docent. Les exemples de philosophes de l’Antiquité à la Renaissance*, ed. Thomas Ricklin (Paris: Vrin, 2007), 278.

<sup>27</sup> Kotzia, “*De Hebraea lingua transtulimus in Latinam*: Manfred of Sicily and the pseudo-aristotelian *Liber de pomo*”, 81.

As far as our reading of the text is concerned, there could be a more obvious reason for explaining Manfred's alleged translation. It is true that Manfred links his finding of the *Book of the Apple* with his father's persona, since, as he confirms, he was educated at his father's court by numerous wise men, and the manuscript containing the Hebrew version of *De pomo* was to be found in his father's library. However, it seems unlikely for Manfred to express the intention of rehabilitating Frederick II by correlating his father's image with a text that explicitly condemns two views which were in fact associated with the emperor by his contemporaries, *i.e.* the mortality of the soul and the eternity of the world.<sup>28</sup> At best, Manfred is only praising the high level of culture that the court of Sicily had achieved by the time of his father's rule, and the excellent education he was able to receive there. While not subtly implying his and his father's orthodoxy, Manfred rather champions the royal court as a source of knowledge and a place where *philosophy* flourished.

From our perspective, the key for understanding Manfred's intention lies in the narrative he construes around his episode of illness, his recovery and the crucial role played by the small "Aristotelian" treatise in his attitude towards death. The one (and maybe only) reason why he translated the text from Hebrew into Latin – or was at least highly responsible for its appearance – was, in Manfred's own words: "for the sake of teaching the many" (*ad eruditionem multorum*).<sup>29</sup>

Manfred's prologue cannot be read as an act of faith, since he never mentions the dogmas of the Christian religion he should have abided as a true believer: the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Judgement, etc. Part of the themes developed by Manfred are common both to Christianity and philosophy: the existence of a Creator (or prime mover) that bestows knowledge upon men, the fall of man (or the negative nature of corporeality), and the immortality of the soul, they are all questions that can preoccupy a philosopher and not necessarily a Christian one. Manfred's heavy use of biblical passages in this text might probably decide in favour of an interpretation that stresses the author's intention of manifesting orthodoxy, if one did not take into consideration other textual instances where Manfred employed biblical metaphors, but for some other purpose than that of expressing piety.

In a seminal study from 1982 on the disputed date of the first entry of Averroes in the medieval Latin culture, R. A. Gauthier addressed the case of the letter emperor Frederick II allegedly sent to the masters of the Faculty of Arts from the University of Bologna. The letter had previously been used by R. de Vaux as

---

<sup>28</sup> Salimbene of Parma, the Franciscan friar who reported Frederick II's human experimentation with disapproval, characterized the ruler as "*homo pestifer et maledictus, scismaticus, hereticus et epycurus.*" (*Cronica fratris Salimbene de Adam ordinis Minorum*, ed. O. Holder-Egger [Hanover-Leipzig, 1905-1913], 31, 109–122.)

<sup>29</sup> Plezia, *Aristotelis qui ferebatur Liber de pomo, versio latina Manfredi*, 41.

proof that in 1231 the emperor sent Michael Scot's translations from Averroes to the University of Bologna, thus marking the debut of Averroism in the Latin world.<sup>30</sup> The letter survived in more than one hundred sources, all indicating Frederick II as its author, except one Parisian source that attributed the authorship of the letter to the emperor's son Manfred.

Gauthier dismantled de Vaux's theory by showing that the version of the letter that entitled Frederick was in reality forged after Manfred's epistle from 1263 addressed to the masters of the Faculty of Arts from Paris. Invoking an edition superior to the eighteenth century *editio princeps*, Gauthier emphasised the fact that the philosophical texts that Manfred promises to deliver to the Parisian Master cannot refer to the corpus of Averroes's works. Gauthier also made interesting remarks on the style Manfred employs in the letter: the king speaks in a language familiar to its addressee, namely the language of philosophy, quoting the definitions of science that were popular among the masters of Arts in that particular period<sup>31</sup>.

Consequently, Alain de Libera pointed out the manner in which Manfred employs biblical metaphors to express not his praise to divinity, but actually the excellence of philosophy, similar to the strategy employed by Aubry de Reims in his treatise *De philosophia*.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the similarity between the language and rhetorical strategy in Manfred's letter and the writings of some masters, such as Aubry of Reims, challenges the idea that Manfred's prologue is a declaration of orthodoxy that was also meant to rehabilitate Frederick II's reputation. It would seem that Manfred here is not at all concerned with religious issues, but his efforts are rather inclined to fashioning himself as a philosopher.

What went unnoticed to scholars was that, in the *laudatio* dedicated by Manfred to human sciences in the Prologue, his affirmation that by means of cultivating sciences one brings "his eyes, so accustomed to darkness, to the light of manifest truth" (*atque ad lucem perspicuae veritatis oculos tenebris assuetos attollat*)<sup>33</sup> is virtually identical to a passage from Boethius, *De consolazione*

---

<sup>30</sup> Roland de Vaux, "La première entrée d'Averroès chez les Latins", *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 22 (1933): 193–245.

<sup>31</sup> René A. Gauthier, "Notes sur les débuts (1225–1240) du premier «Averroïsme»", in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 66 (1982), 321–374; here 329: "Des son adresse, Manfred parle aux maîtres des arts de Paris le langage qui est le leur [...] Sans doute Manfred appelle-t-il trois fois la philosophie du nom de science (lignes 4, 16, 30), mais pour lui c'est tout un: pour la louer, il fait appel à la Métaphysique d'Aristote (ligne 8) ou à la définition de la philosophie alors classique chez les maîtres des arts (lignes 30–34)."

<sup>32</sup> Alain de Libera, *Penser en la Edad Media*, trans. José María Ortega and Gonçal Mayos (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2000), 108.

<sup>33</sup> Plezia, *Aristotelis qui ferebatur Liber de pomo, versio latina Manfredi*, 38. The translation belongs to Rousseau, *The Apple or Aristotle's Death*, 48.

*Philosophiae*, IV, 26.<sup>34</sup> This borrowing from *De consolatione* suggests that Boethius's work might have served as a literary model for Manfred, since both *De consolatione* and Manfred's Prologue comprise an autobiographical narrative linked with death and moulded into a meditation and an apologia for philosophy. Therefore, this Boethian influence could be the starting point of a future study that inquires the reception of the *De consolatione* at the court of Sicily in the thirteenth century.

Furthermore, it is manifest that Manfred forges his image after the model of the dying Aristotle from *De pomo*: surrounded by his disciples (in the case of the philosopher) or by his courtiers (in the case of Manfred), both of them hold a speech that praises death.<sup>35</sup> In light of these analogies, we can affirm that one of Manfred's probable reasons for writing a prologue in which he combines autobiographical notes with metaphysical themes is to create a self-image of an educated man, steeped in a liberal formation, that is much more than a *laïc interesse a la philosophie*, as Ruedi Imbach described him<sup>36</sup>, but actually a philosopher, a peer of the masters of the University of Paris, as the language employed in the letter from 1263 clearly reveals.

An argument meant to strengthen this mere suggestion is the fact that, according to Manfred himself, the translation of *Liber de pomo* into Latin had the specific purpose of "teaching the many". We believe that the phrase *ad eruditionem multorum* underlines an attitude that Manfred had kept in the aforementioned 1263 epistle to the "philosophers" of Paris. As R. Gauthier pointed out, Manfred was familiar with the current definitions of science from the intellectual medium of the Faculty of Arts. One of these definitions, quoted by Manfred, belonging to Arnoul of Provence, sounds extremely similar to the intellectual motivation behind Manfred's desire to provide philosophical texts *ad eruditionem multorum*. According to Arnoul of Provence, science can be defined as *nobilis anime possessio que distributa per partes suscipit incrementum et avarum dedignata possessorem, nisi publicetur, cito*

---

<sup>34</sup> Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae. Opuscula theologica*, ed. Claudio Moreschini (Munich/Leipzig: K.G. Saur, 2000), 116, ll. 89–92: "Ita est, inquit, illa. Nequeunt enim oculos tenebris assuetos ad lucem perspicuae veritatis attollere similesque avibus sunt, quarum intuitum nox illuminat, dies caecat."

<sup>35</sup> The similarity between Manfred's story and Aristotle's case was also noted by Kotzia, "De Hebraea lingua transtulimus in Latinam: Manfred of Sicily and the pseudo-aristotelian *Liber de pomo*", 79: "It is obvious that he aims to draw a clear parallel between himself and the Aristotle of the spurious work. Like 'Aristotle', Manfred lies gravely ill, surrounded by friends who are afraid for his life and who believe that, he too, shares their fears. Like Aristotle, Manfred has no fear of his approaching death. Both are aware that illness is simply something bodily, the result of an imbalance of the elements of which the body is composed. Aristotle owes his lack of fear to his philosophy, Manfred to the philosophical education he received at his father's imperial court".

<sup>36</sup> Imbach, *Dante, la philosophie et les laïcs*, 112.

*elabatur*.<sup>37</sup> This definition, stating that science grows *only when it is disseminated*, probably best explains Manfred's aspiration of contributing to the Latin world's knowledge of Greek and Arabic philosophy.

**The medieval reception of the protreptic dimension of *Liber de pomo***

*Liber de pomo*'s protreptic dimension, much emphasised by Manfred's Prologue, exerted an influence on later medieval texts. On the one hand, despite the fact that the Latin version of *Liber de pomo* was widespread in medieval universities and libraries as part of the Aristotelian corpus for nearly three centuries, it seems that it was never included into the *curricula* of any medieval university. On the other hand, occurrences of quotations from *Liber de pomo* attest the dissemination of the opuscle in the medieval schools. It might often be the case that such a spread can be explained by the usage of medieval florilegia like the famous *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, which selects eight propositions attributed to the Pseudo-Aristotelian dialogue.<sup>38</sup> Out of the eight propositions extracted under the title *Auctoritates libri Aristotelis De pomo et morte*, the first one, stating that philosophy's divine origin ("*Saepius mihi philosophia visa est res divina.*") is in fact borrowed from another medieval Pseudo-Aristotelian text, *De mundo*, that opens with the following strikingly similar statement:

*Multociens michi divina quedam ac mirabilis quippe res, Alexander, visa est esse philosophia, maxime autem in hoc quod sola elevata ad omnium contemplationem studuit noscere veritatem que in eis.*<sup>39</sup>

In our view, this association of a proposition bearing explicit philosophical implications (the phrase is actually formulated as a definition of philosophy) with *Liber de pomo* may have in turn represented another attempt to exploit the philosophical nature of the Pseudo-Aristotelian protreptic.

However, this circulation of a partial *Liber de pomo* does not exclude the possibility that *Liber de pomo* was also known amongst the scholastics in an unabbreviated form. This is indeed attested by an anonymous commentary to Boethius's *De consolazione Philosophiae*, attributed at times to Thomas Aquinas or

---

<sup>37</sup> Arnulfus Provincialis, *Divisio Scientiarum*, in, *Quatre introductions à la philosophie au XIIIe siècle. Textes critiques et étude historique*, ed. Claude Lafleur (Montréal-Paris: Publications de l'Institut d'études médiévales, 1988), 313–314, ll. 181–184.

<sup>38</sup> Jacqueline Hamesse, ed., *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis. Un Florilège Médiéval*, (Louvain-Paris: 1974), 273, n. 1. There has definitely been some confusion, because Hamesse's reference for the first proposition of *Liber de pomo* is to page 208, ll. 145–146 from Plezia's edition of *Liber de pomo*, but Plezia's Latin edition of the text stops at page 64.

<sup>39</sup> Aristotle, *De mundo. Translatio Nicholaj*, 391a1-5, in *Aristoteles Latinus XI 1–2*, ed. Willelmus L. Lorimer (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 29.2–5.

to William Wheatley, which showcases a strong familiarity with the Pseudo-Aristotelian text, confirming that Latin authors naturally associated *Liber de pomo* with Boethius's exhortation to philosophy. As we have shown above, this compatibility was already discretely suggested by Manfred in his Prologue, where he implicitly quoted from the *Consolation of Philosophy*.

The commentary on *Liber de pomo* preserved in manuscript Erfurt CA 4319 (ff. 135r-138v) and attributed to Albert of Saxony by Wilhelm Schum<sup>40</sup> is also probably from the fourteenth century. It is a literal commentary from the second half of the fourteenth century that also expands on the value of *Liber de pomo* as a protreptic. A quick reading of the *divisio textus* reveals that the author places *Liber de pomo* among those authoritative texts that discuss and plea for intellectual happiness. The theme of intellectual happiness originates in Aristotle's apologia for contemplative life expressed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7, which was later developed by Arabic and Latin commentators of the text. Besides the main task of providing a clear literal explanation of *Liber de pomo*, the author of the literal commentary also creates an association between the meaning of the text and several classical references within the genre of Latin philosophical protreptics, such as fragments from Cicero, Seneca, Boethius's *De consolazione Philosophiae*, Boetius of Dacia's *Summa de bono* or Averroes' commentaries.

Another example of a reception of the pseudepigraphic *Book of the Apple*, similar to the cases of the commentary on *De consolazione* and to the one on the dialogue itself can be found in the prologue of a commentary on another Pseudo-Aristotelian treatise, namely *Liber de causis*. Recently discovered and edited, this latter commentary of Central European provenance, written in the first half of the fifteenth century, quotes *in extenso* passages from *Liber de pomo* in perfect consensus with the other authorities of the late medieval protreptic. The commentary has recently benefited from a critical edition based on all four known sources.<sup>41</sup> By briefly examining the explicit quotations from *Liber de pomo* in this

---

<sup>40</sup> Wilhelm Schum, *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Amplönianischen Handschriftensammlung*, Berlin, 1887, 552 sqq. (quoted in Plezia, "Praefatio" in *Aristotelis qui ferebatur Liber de pomo, versio latina Manfredi*, 11). A complete transcription of the *divisio textus* is present in Pietro B. Rossi, "Odor suus me confortat et aliquantulum prolongat vitam meam: Il fragrante frutto e la morte di Aristotele", in *Vita longa: vecchiaia e durata della vita nella tradizione medica e aristotelica antica e medievale: atti del convegno internazionale, Torino, 13–14 giugno 2008*, eds. Chiara Crisciani, Luciana Repici, Pietro B. Rossi (Florence: Sismel-Edizioni Del Galluzzo, 2009), 114–119. For the misattribution of this commentary to Albert of Saxony, see Charles H. Lohr, *Latin Aristotle Commentaries. I. 1. Medieval Authors. A-L* (Florence: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2013), 46.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Baumgarten, "Theologia philosophorum parcialis. Un commentaire sur le *Liber de causis*", in *Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages: New commentaries on 'Liber de causis' and 'Elementatio Theologica'*, ed. Dragoş Calma, *Studia Artistarum* 42 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 267–325; here 271–336.

commentary, we conclusively grasp the common philosophical element of these quotations. For instance, one quotation refers to philosophy as a means for salvation (*Qui inveniat philosophiam inveniet vitam in utroque seculo*)<sup>42</sup>, while another quotation from the Prologue of *Liber de pomo* is linked precisely with Boethius's *De consolatione*:

*Ave magistra omnium virtutum moralium de summo cardine celi elapsa, id est de altitudine celi, ut vult venerabilis Boecius, I De consolatione philosophiae. Ipsa enim clarificat animam et trahit eam ab obscuritate ignorantiae ad lucem sapientiae et ad claritatem intellectus, ut habetur in libro De pomo et morte.*<sup>43</sup>

Similarly to the commentary on *Liber de pomo*, the prologue of the anonymous commentary on *Liber de causis* has the specific features of a protreptic, which at the same time urges towards assuming a practical dimension of the intellectual life, a feature that points to its inclusion into a unitary type of discourse often found in the prologues of the commentaries on the Aristotelian corpus produced in the Central European medieval universities from the fifteenth century.<sup>44</sup> In any of these cases, the quotations from *Liber de pomo* reveal the wide dissemination of this treatise and its importance in the intellectual formation of the scholars pertaining to this specific region, a fact indicated, for instance, by the quotation from *Liber de pomo* in the speech held by Stanislaus of Scarbimiria on the occasion of the election of Petrus Wysz as bishop of Cracow in 1392.<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, *Liber de pomo*'s successful career as a philosophical protreptic relied not only on its inherent philosophical discourse articulated under the authority of Aristotle or the Philosopher, but also on Manfred's efforts of composing a Prologue that would highly influence any reading of the Latin translation of the *Book of the Apple*, fully integrating *Liber de pomo* within the tradition of medieval philosophical protreptics. From this perspective, Manfred's main intention might not have been either to rehabilitate his father's image, or to prove Aristotle's compatibility with Christianity, or to build an image of a pious Christian for himself,

---

<sup>42</sup> Baumgarten, "Theologia philosophorum parcialis", 310.21–311.1; cf. *Buch vom Apfel (Liber de pomo)*, 96.

<sup>43</sup> Baumgarten, "Theologia philosophorum parcialis", 316.1–5; cf. Boethius, *De consolatione Philosophiae*, I, pr. 3, 3, ed. L. Bieler (Turnhout: Brepols, 1957), 5, and also *Buch vom Apfel (Liber de pomo)*, 92.

<sup>44</sup> For an overview of protreptic literature in Central Europe, see Juliusz Domański, *La philosophie, théorie ou manière de vivre? Les controverses de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, preface Pierre Hadot, Vestigia 18 (Fribourg Suisse: Éditions Universitaires; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1996), 79–84.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Plezia, "Praefatio", in *Aristotelis qui ferebatur Liber de pomo, versio latina Manfredi*, 14.



but rather to expose his philosophical side by putting forth an appraisal of philosophy and of a philosophical way of living. Ultimately, Manfred wanted or considered himself to be a philosopher whose aim was to disseminate knowledge for the sake of the intellectual and philosophical improvement of the many – *ad eruditionem multorum*.