

BOOK REVIEWS

Rega Wood, ed. *Richard Rufus of Cornwall In Physicam Aristotelis* (Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi XVI.) Published for The British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2003. Pages: xix + 300.

Prof. Rega Wood of Stanford University here edits a series of lectures on Aristotle's *Physics*. She describes the sole known manuscript containing the text, attributes and dates the commentary, and explains her editorial method. The result is an exemplary edition.

The text so edited will play a role in a further publication that Wood has been preparing. She refers to it as forthcoming on page 3: *Richard Rufus of Cornwall and the Origins of Scholasticism*. The edited text is early enough as to figure prominently in an account of "the origins of scholasticism." As Rega Wood points out in her introduction (2), those who lectured on Aristotle's writings brought about the change in the curriculum of the medieval university, from the classical trivium and quadrivium to what we call scholasticism. Understandably, then, while examining the lectures in question, word by word as editorial work demands, she uses her thorough familiarity with the text to fit it firmly in the known corpus of the one to whom she attributes the lectures, the Franciscan Richard Rufus of Cornwall.

Seeing as she has but one manuscript for the edition, Erfurt Quarto 312, Dr. Wood looks at it very closely. It is a composite manuscript, bound together under the care of Amplonius de Bercka in the early fifteenth century. Wood explains how it was put together and then describes its contents. She is interested primarily in the first fourteen folios (1ra-14ra). They contain *In Physicam Aristotelis*, the lectures or commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. This and other parts of the manuscript were written at Oxford somewhat before 1250. Wood tells us as well about the other pieces in the manuscript. Five of them can be ascribed to Richard Rufus.

As for the edition itself, though drawn from but one source, Dr. Wood points out that she did have a good manuscript to work with.

She also drew parallel texts into her study of the one manuscript, providing her with some context for her readings. Then a group of scholars went through the text to check on Wood's results. The manuscript contains abbreviations that can be read in different ways. Wood lists thirty-eight of them. She reads them as the intelligibility of the text suggests. (Wood also contributes eighteen novel abbreviations to *Abbreviationes*, the electronic dictionary of medieval Latin abbreviations developed by Dr. Olaf Pluta, Bochum University.) Dr. Wood explains how she presents the text, with her paragraphs and punctuation. Consequently she has good reason for the edition's details. Scholars will question some of them, dependent as the details are on the editor's judgment, but no critic can demand more from the edition. Questions about a reading are put into the variant apparatus. A second and substantial apparatus contains references to Rufus' *auctoritates*, to unusual terms explained by comparison with those of other authors, and to other contemporary material helpful for placing Rufus. Dr. Wood has contributed an edition of rare quality to the study of Aristotle's writings in the early thirteenth century.

There is a further question, adumbrated above. It has to do with "the origins of scholasticism" and Richard Rufus's role in the process. Dr. Wood shows the importance of the commentary by reviewing its proposals on projectile motion, heaven's place, and the beginning of the world. The commentary unpacked the challenge of Aristotle's natural philosophy to Christian understanding. She ascribes the commentary to Richard Rufus because of references to it in Rufus's own writings and in lectures by others. Here a commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* with five references to the commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* plays a central role in the argument. The *Metaphysics* commentary allows the conclusion that the same author wrote both commentaries and the author was Rufus. Wood also offers evidence that the views in the *Physics* commentary are characteristic of Richard Rufus as seen in other writings of his. Furthermore, she points out that, in 1320, Francis of Marchia's *Sentences* commentary mentions Bonaventure and Richard together when discussing projectile motion (49). The Richard is Rufus, given the theory of projectile motion that interests Francis of Marchia. With her assembled data, on page 74, she firmly declares Rufus the author of the lectures on Aristotle's *Physics* and dates it *post* 1231 and *ante* 1237. One may say 1235 or before. The evidence is

sound, the conclusion is clear, and Dr. Wood has good reason to raise the question about the consequences for “the origins of scholasticism.”

Scholarship is not etched in stone, but nurtured in debate. In the exchange, gratitude accrues to those who, by adducing new material and proposing sound theses, urge the debate into a new stage. Of such gratitude Dr. Wood merits a goodly portion for her edition and presentation of Richard Rufus’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*.

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Jens Röhrkasten. *The Mendicant Houses of Medieval London 1221-1539. (Vita Regularis Ordnungen und Deutungen religiösen Lebens im Mittelalter, 21)* Münster, 2004. Pages: xii + 670.

The friars were part of the fabric of life in medieval London, where they were known through their charitable activities as well as their teaching, preaching and hearing confessions. Each of the friaries developed its own network of devotees and benefactors, who turned to them for spiritual assistance and advice. Friars filled many of the ecclesiastical offices from the ministry to the underprivileged to an apostolate carried out in the royal household, where mendicant confessors and preachers were in vogue. The arrival of the first friars in the capital city in 1221 and 1224, the friaries constructed for them and their urban influence form the basis of a major study by Dr Jens Röhrkasten, lecturer in the Department of Medieval History at the University of Birmingham. The seeds of this most impressive monograph have been germinating for the last decade in a series of articles and contributions to conference *acta* and monographs on the friars. This volume, which has been eagerly awaited, demonstrates the author’s unflagging search for materials to illuminate the life and work of the friars. A volume based on the ordination and probate registers would have produced an enriching account of the friars’ lives and their influence. Not content to rely on these valuable sources alone, the author has investigated a number of archives containing information on the friars and their