

Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale. Liber III. Cap. 1-20. A cura di Antonio Punzi. Presentazione di Fiorella Retucci. Firenze: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2020. Union Académique Internationale e Unione Accademica Nazionale. Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi: Testi e Studi XXV. xl + 318 p. ISBN: 9788884508362. Paperback: € 56,00

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Thomas of York has a crucial place in the history of the first establishment of the Friars Minor within the European intellectual milieu of the central decades of the thirteenth century. Born around 1220, he joined the order founded by Francis of Assisi around 1245 starting a career of studying and teaching which led him to the function of regent *lector* at the Minorite *studium generale* in Oxford. Thomas was the fourth friar to hold this position in Oxford, giving his inception lecture on the 14th of March 1253, in the midst of the clash over the conferral of the degree of university master to members of mendicant orders. He directly took part in this political and religious conflict, composing in 1256 his *Manus quae contra omnipotentem extenditur*, a defence of the rights of the Minor Friars and more generally of the mendicants with respect to the access to the university career. Thus, Thomas of York was among the protagonists of the implantation of the Friars Minor in the cultural framework of the English kingdom, being not only involved in the activity of the Order in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, but also in the peculiar relation of the Minorites with Robert Grosseteste bishop of Lincoln, whose episcopal *curia* he joined for a certain period. Within such an articulated network of religious and intellectual relations, dominated by figures such as Grosseteste himself and Adam of Marsh, Thomas refined a vast culture not only in the theological field. Both Grosseteste's cultural network and the university context of Oxford, with the university colleges and the *studium generale* of the Friars Minor, represent the framework within which Thomas may have built up a fine philosophical culture. His writings show a clear mastery of texts such as the Aristotelian *Nicomachean Ethics* or the *Posterior Analytics* as well as of writings of the Arab-Latin tradition.

Among the works of the master, the *Sapientiale* represents the largest preserved writing and starting from a study by Martin Grabmann of 1913 it has been at the centre of the interests of historians of medieval philosophy. Already the German scholar judged the text as the first significant exposition of the “metaphysical system” of the Scholastic age. This judgment was reiterated by De Wulf, Longpré and Puillon, in studies that have offered a preliminary examination of the contents of the work and a discussion of its structure and complex manuscript tradition. A first editorial initiative aimed at the publication of a critical edition of the text was announced by the Frati

Editori Quaracchi in the 1920s. A second project was instead carried out by the scholars of the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto in the 1950s, producing an edition which was never published but it is still preserved in the archives of the Institute. Antonio Puzi and Fioralla Retucci, with the volume they edit, offer the first critical edition of a relevant part of the *Sapientiale*, namely of book III.

It is a work that directly deals with the results achieved by the Toronto équipe, but carefully reconsiders the nature of the text, the manuscript tradition, the structure of the work and the evolution that have characterized the composition of the *Sapientiale*. A careful examination of the features of the three known manuscripts of the work (F – Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr. A. VI. 437; R – Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 6771; V – Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 4301) allows the editors to shed light on the history of the drafting of the text, its accomplishment according to a specific systematic order, and its diversified circulation. The relationship that links the three manuscripts witnesses the sequence of different editorial stages: that of the drafting of the text, that of the organization of the material, and the final revision of the work which nevertheless appears incomplete, as shown by the state in which the text is preserved. In the first place it emerges how the *Sapientiale* is linked to another writing by Thomas of York, the *Comparatio sensibilibium*, which represents a first formulation of the contents which are then the subject of the more detailed discussion in the major work. The *Comparatio* is therefore a sort of primitive redaction of the *Sapientiale*, whose first version is attested by the codex R. V, on the other hand, contains a more mature and complete redaction of the writing. F represents an intermediate stage; in fact, it contains a version of the text that is close to R for what concerns the structure, while from the philological point of view it is halfway between R and V. Furthermore, a set of marginal annotations revise both the structure and the text of the *Sapientiale* and tend to standardize F to the most advanced drafting of the work, that is the one attested by V.

The existence of at least four editorial stages appears consistent with what emerges regarding the evolution of the structure of the *Sapientiale*. The text, which is presented as a treatise on metaphysics, adopts a tripartite argumentative sequence: the existence of God, his nature and his properties are the theme of the first part, followed by a discussion on the concept of being with respect to the creation and by a third section devoted to the being considered *in speciali*. With respect to this division, the manuscripts return a number of seven books, arranged in a different order in F and R than in V. The section of the text concerning the discussion of the division of being according to substance and accident constitutes book III in R and F, while it occupies the book IV, cc. 1-32, in V and in the marginal indications of F. Similarly, what in R and F is the fifth book, becomes the third book in V, while the third and fourth books of R and F are merged together in what in V is the fourth book of the *Sapientiale*. The observations of Punzi and Retucci makes clear that Thomas was responsible for a

profound revision of the structure of the text, which involved a reorganization of the material much more coherent with the argumentative program of the author.

Linking the philological analysis and the results of the study of the three manuscripts with those concerning the evolution of the structure of the *Sapientiale*, it is possible to draw a picture of Thomas of York's project. After the composition of the *Comparatio*, the master would have elaborated the idea of a larger and more systematic work, proceeding with the drafting of its various parts. The thematic order of the text, chosen by the author, does not coincide with the order of composition of the different parts of the text: therefore, Thomas worked on different doctrinal matters, collecting the composite material. From this phase of compilation of the work, a first version emerges, that is the one preserved in R and F. It reflects a state of the work that does not yet collect the material in the thematic order established by Thomas. It is in a subsequent phase, the one attested by the marginal notes of F and V, that he accomplished a redistribution of the material according to the order he had chosen.

In this way, the study of the two editors also highlights the method followed by the author to work on the *Sapientiale*: in his writing he didn't follow the thematic order, but rather he collected material, written at different times, perhaps also in relation to the teaching activity. The absence of chapter 7 in Book III confirms this state of things. According to the index of the work and the notes written by Thomas York himself, the chapter in question was intended to offer a discussion of the notions of divisible and indivisible, mutable and immutable, corruptible and incorruptible being. However, chapter 7 was never written, as an annotation of the manuscript tradition also attests (see p. 92). The absence of this chapter reflects the incompleteness of the work: after having rearranged the materials according to the established thematic index, Thomas did not complete the missing parts of the work which he had foreseen.

The ecdotal work carried out to create this edition of Book III of the work of Thomas of York clarifies some elements of the intellectual biography of this master on which historiography has been debating for a long time. The *Sapientiale* emerges from this critical edition work as the result of an articulated philosophical project. Thomas's intention seems the building of a systematic exposition of metaphysics, rooted on an accurate analysis of the notion of being in its various articulations. In this sense, the text gathers the fruits of an extensive reception of the major philosophical works which, in the central decades of the thirteenth century, made the content of metaphysics available in Latin: the Aristotelian texts and the texts of Arab philosophers. Among the latter, Avicenna and the Avicennian tradition have a prominent role: this is attested, for example, by the copious citations from the Avicennian *Metaphysics* and from that of Algazel, which is considered as the major expositor of the Persian master's thought.

With respect to this project, the study of the manuscript tradition offered by Punzi and Retucci sheds light on a long and complex editorial history. The *Sapientiale* developed along an extended chronological span, within which Thomas composed the

texts that he intended to collect in the work, revised them and arranged and rearranged them over time. The three manuscripts that hand down the work bear witness to this long process and its phases. In a certain sense, this critical edition offers to scholars the opportunity to grasp how the *Sapientiale* is truly the work of a lifetime, a text that marks the intellectual biography of its author. For this reason, the contribution of Punzi and Retucci is a valuable tool both for the study of the structuring of metaphysics as a discipline in the framework of medieval philosophical culture, and for the examination of Thomas of York's doctrinal engagement. In addition, this edition enlightens the evolution of the intellectual and religious contexts to which the *Sapientiale* belongs: the kingdom of England in the central decades of the thirteenth century and the order of Friars Minor with its complex relationship with culture.