

Alfred van der Helm. *Thomas Manlevelt, 'Questiones libri Porphyrii'*. Leiden and Boston: Brill 2014, xiii + 433 pp. Cloth € 168,00, US\$ 218.00—Four hundred years before David Hume, Thomas Manlevelt speculated that there is no need to postulate the existence of substance underlying the qualities we perceive. All appearances can be preserved by supposing that qualities mutually support and adhere to one another, so by Ockham's razor, the idea of substance is unnecessary. Alfred van der Helm, in his very full and detailed Introduction to the Latin text of Manlevelt's commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge*, here edited and published for the first time, argues that Manlevelt was an enthusiastic follower of the nominalist ideas of William of Ockham. Medieval nominalists performed both a vertical reduction of Aristotle's categories, eliminating universals in favour of particulars: *Quaelibet res imaginabilis existens est de se, sine omni addito, res singularis et una numero*, wrote Ockham in his commentary on the *Isagoge*; and also a horizontal reduction, reducing Aristotle's ten categories to two or three: substance, quality, and possibly quantity. Manlevelt goes further, floating the suggestion that there are just bundles of token qualities.

But who was Thomas Manlevelt? To be frank, no one knows. What we do have are a treasure trove of manuscripts, mostly in eastern European libraries, containing works attributed to him. They range over various logical and metaphysical topics, their content suggesting their author was writing during the second quarter of the fourteenth century. The text edited here is said to be "*compile per Thom. Manlvel Anglicum doctorem solemptnem*". Another treatise, on fallacies, has the *explicit*: "*lectus Lovanii per mag. Thomam Anglicum dictum Manlvel.*" The most extensive

investigation of his identity, by Lorenz in 1996, places him in Paris in the 1330s, subsequently teaching at Louvain. The epithet '*Anglicus*' deserves comment. It could mean that Manlevelt was English, or might simply mean that he was a member of the English nation at the University of Paris, one of four nations there into which members of the Arts faculty were divided by geographical origin, in this case, anyone from Britain or from the Germanic- and Slavic-speaking countries. Louvain, lying in Brabant, belonged to this region in the early fourteenth century, van der Helm notes (pp.64-65), though later it was included in the Picard nation. The identity of Thomas Manlevelt is still an enigma.

The present text is a set of questions on Porphyry's *Isagoge*. Porphyry was a neo-Platonist of the third century CE, a pupil of the great Plotinus. The neo-Platonists, noticing that Plato's works contained little on logic, assumed Aristotle was a dutiful pupil of his master, and interpreted Aristotle's logic as recording Plato's ideas. A Roman senator, Chrysaorium, puzzled by Aristotle's *Categories*, sought an explanation of the text from Porphyry, who composed both a commentary on that work and a general introduction, the *Isagoge*, to Aristotle's logic. Translated into Latin by Boethius in the sixth century, the *Isagoge* was taken up in succeeding centuries as every student's first introduction to logic, followed by the *Categories* itself. Hence these two commentaries of Manlevelt's, found together in a single manuscript, expand on and explain these two basic elements in the medieval Arts student's education.

The *Isagoge* is famous for redefining the predicables, from Aristotle's four (genus, definition, property and accident)—see *Topics* I cc.4-5—to five: genus, species,

differentia, property and accident (see p.49). This small change was accompanied by a larger one: what are the predicables, anyway—words or things? Following Boethius (see p.52) and Ockham (p.54), Manlevelt sides with the nominalists. Indeed, he goes further. Although the present text does not repeat his denial of substance, found in his commentary on the *Categories* (an extensive treatise which van der Helm says he intends to edit in the future), there are radical passages, e.g. in Q42, where he claims *pace* Porphyry that fire can exist without heat, so quality is separable from its substance—see pp.376-7.

There are several indexes, though unfortunately the subject index covers only the text, not the Introduction. One might question some of the editor's claims, e.g., his argument placing Manlevelt so firmly in the Ockhamist tradition rather than that of Buridan: it turns largely on his claim (p.27) that Buridan's main writings date from the 1350s, but in fact his *Summulae de Dialectica* was assembled through repeated revisions over twenty years from the late 1330s onwards, and his attack on Burley's realism dates from the early 1330s. So if Manlevelt was indeed in Paris in the 1330s, he must have been aware of Buridan's nominalism as much as Ockham's.

This whole treatise, the first of Manlevelt's to appear in a modern edition, will repay further study, and it will be good to see Manlevelt's *Categories* commentary given similar careful treatment.

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