HENRY OF GHENT: A NEW EDITION OF HIS WRITINGS IS IN PROGRESS

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The philosophical and theological life of the Middle Ages is not normally construed along nationalistic lines. There is a certain geographical interchangeability among the medieval masters that would never do for art and architecture, for example. Thomas Aquinas will fit just about anywhere (he was, in fact, Italian with a strong mixture of German blood), while not one in ten can tell you anything about the nationality of his compatriot and arch-rival, Cardinal Bonaventure (Italian also). There is nothing peculiarly Scottish about the thought of John Duns Scotus, nor does there seem to be anything particularly French about the ideas of Gilbert de la Porrée. It is somewhat more difficult, however, to picture Chartres at Naples or the Book of Kells at Erfurt.

Ideas in any age have a tendency to become common property anyway. Immensely portable and non-patentable, ideas and writings spread in medieval Europe, without benefit of the printing press, with a rapidity that often defies belief. It would not have been possible without the order and measure maintained in society by the Church and,

above all, without Latin, the common vehicle of communication and instruction. In such a setting, men tended to be identified with their place of origin more to avoid confusion with another of the same given name than to point to any peculiarly nationalistic trait. Petrus Paludis is duly noted as other than Petrus Abelardus and Petrus de Confleto, but nobody really asks what swamp or fen he came from!

This tendency has obscured the rather significant contributions made by the Low Countries to the intellectual life of Europe during the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. A list of names will have to do, but it by no means does justice to the actual state of affairs.[1] The 12th century gave us Walter or Gautier de Mortaigne in Flanders (1106-1174), and the rather anti-philosophical Walter of Maurentania, in Flanders also (c. 1180), a mystic and the Abbot of St. Victor, that great centre of mysticism in Paris and home to so many Medieval contemplatives. He was preceded by Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141), born at Ypres in Flanders, who came to Paris in 1133, and who after one-too-many headache-producing sessions of hair-splitting and logic-chopping threw up his hands and took refuge in the traditions of mystical theology. He was perhaps to be counted more fortunate than another of his successor-abbots, William of Champeaux, who leapt into the pit before the onslaughts of

Abelard. Those who stayed home, in the 12th century at least, seem to have fared somewhat better. Tournai (Doornik) was to become a centre of learning. Odon of Tournai (d. 1113), a philosopher of the realist sort, as might be expected of an avid reader of Plato's Timaeus, taught and founded the Abbey of St. Martin there. Simon of Tournai (c. 1190), known best for his work in canon law and one who was not averse to quoting heavily from the Physics of Aristotle, was Canon there.

The 13th century, as is to be expected, affords us the best view of the depth of talent sent from the Low Countries to all parts of Europe. There is David of Dinant (c. 1209), ". . . who was so stupid as to think that God was prime matter," as Aquinas remarks in one of his rare moments of pique. There is Gilbert of Tournai (c. 1250), a Franciscan, a follower of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, first Chancellor of Oxford University and himself a devotee of Aristotle cum mysticism. Gilbert apparently, like Odon and Walter of Mauretania in the century before him, eventually decided in favour of the mystical tradition of the Victorine School. Of more substance are Giles of Lessine, in Hainault (1230-1305), the Dominican and Thomist, and Godfrey of Fontaines (d. 1304), of the Sorbonne, Chancellor of the University of Paris, who became Canon of Liège, his birthplace, and finally ended up as Bishop of

Tournai in 1300. An adversary of the Thomist position, he seems to have been, like his better-known contemporary, Henry of Ghent (d. 1293), a secular master. Siger of Brabant (1235-1281/84), in virtue of his notoriety as one always suspect in matters of Aristotelianism and fidelity to church teachings (if for nothing else) perhaps overshadows all of them.

The decline in philosophy and theology characteristic of the 14th and 15th centuries in Europe was bound to be reflected in Belgium as elsewhere. But it is important to note also that, proportionately, it was no worse in Belgium than elsewhere. With the exception of Ruysbroek (1293-1381), there are no outstanding figures. Tournai dried up as a centre of intellectual life; Dominic of Flanders (d. 1500), a Dominican who taught at Bologna, is one of the last representatives of the Aristotelian tradition. Among others, we may simply note Peter of Brussels (c. 1509), and Walter of Bruges (d. 1307). Of more than passing interest, however, is the continuance of the mystic tradition in the capable hands of men such as John Ruysbroek and Gerard of Liège (c. 1400). As in the 12th century, we may assume that disenchantment with the results of the dialectical life had at least something to do with the interest in mysticism. Ruysbroek, an Augustinian monk, became prior of the monastery at Groenedael and is perhaps

best known for his influence on Gerard Groot (1340-1384), founder of the Brethren of the Common Life. Gerard of Liège wrote a work called the De Doctrina Cordis. Virtually unknown today, in the 15th century it was as popular as the Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis.

And finally, we may note the continuance of the medieval tradition of philosophical dispute at the fledgling University of Louvain where, for a full thirty years, between 1443 and 1473, one Peter de Rivo (1420-1472) and Henry of Zoemeren so hotly debated the respective merits of nominalism and realism as regards divine foreknowledge that the whole university was divided between them. Cologne and Paris were called in, but ultimately the matter found its way to the Roman court which, in 1470, excluded Henry, but in 1473 reversed itself and imposed a retraction on Peter.

HENRY OF GHENT

As remarked, Henry was a secular master at Paris, probably from about 1276 to 1292, and he is easily the best-known of all the Belgian philosopher-theologians of the Middle Ages, excepting, possibly, Siger of Brabant. The Servites thought highly enough of him to adopt him as their official doctor (he was in point of fact known as Doctor Solemnis, the Solemn Doctor), though there is no evidence that he ever had anything to do with them.

Contentious as he was orthodox, after all solemnis means established; someone who represents the established interests, he took on the Regulars -- chiefly the Franciscans and Dominicans -- in the battle over the confessional privileges, the right to hear the confessions of the students at the University of Paris. He was appointed to a commission established by Etienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris, which, in 1277, drew up a list of 219 philosophical propositions to be condemned. He championed Augustine and raged against Aristotle and Averroes, while giving equal time to all three. In the last quarter of the 13th century, it was his work and not that of Thomas Aquinas which was influential at the University of Paris. Etienne Gilson, in his monumental study on the thought of John Duns Scotus, openly acknowledges that the Doctor Subtilis argued and wrote not in response to the words and ideas of Aquinas but in response to those of Henry of Ghent.[2] He died as Archdeacon of Tournai in 1293, and his body is buried in the cathedral of that city. It is fitting that a renewed appreciation of his place in medieval thought should now lead to the editing and publication of his Opera Omnia in critical form.

Preparation for publication of this new and critical edition has actually been going on for several years, but only recently have the first volumes appeared. They are appearing under the general editorship of Rev. Dr. Raymond

Macken, OFM, researcher at the De Wulf-Mansion Centre, the Ancient and Medieval Philosophy Section of the "Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte" of the "Katholieke Universiteit Leuven," Louvain, Belgium. Working with Dr. Macken are several other scholars from various parts of the world; scholars who, through their publications, have already demonstrated an interest in the work of Henry of Ghent.

THE LECTURA ORDINARIA SUPER SACRAM SCRIPTURAM

A work which would normally be found in the Opera Omnia, was, in point of fact, edited in another series several years ago. This is the Lectura Ordinaria Super Sacram Scripturam, attributed to Henry with a high degree of probability.[3] The work was completely unedited prior to publication, though some brief extracts from it appeared in an article of Beryl Smalley.[4] Not as well known as some of Henry's other works, it is nevertheless quite extensive.

THE BIBLIOTHECA MANUSCRIPTA HENRICI DE GANDAVO

The first work of Henry that has appeared in this new critical edition is a work as authentic as it is important: Quodlibet I, which is volume V of the Opera Omnia.[5] Volumes I and II, however, are also now available to the public and something should be said about them first. These volumes are entitled, Bibliotheca Manuscripta Henrici de Gandavo,[6] and it is worth dwelling on them for a moment because they indicate the fundamental conceptions that stand

behind the whole series.

The operating structure of the Opera Omnia is laid bare in the Bibliotheca, particularly in the Catalogue which constitutes the first part of it. One of the first things required in a critical edition of a medieval thinker is a thorough study of a heuristic nature. Thus, it is necessary to pull together, insofar as this is possible, all the extant manuscripts of his works. In the case of the Solemn Doctor, this part of the project amounts to the indexing of some 230 manuscripts. Without doubt, there are some peripheral works to be found in this number, but the sheer volume of manuscripts in itself testifies to the author's importance. In order to be able to describe the manuscripts under the best possible conditions, it is necessary, whenever possible, to give them a direct and thorough examination in the original. It is only in the case of some manuscripts, containing a limited number of folios which merely make reference to Henry, that Macken restricts himself to describing just the single folios.

To this Catalogue, there has been added an Anciennes Mentions de Manuscrits, listing a number of manuscript citations of Henry. These do not correspond to any known manuscripts, nor do they correspond to any of the manuscripts which, until now, have not been sufficiently identified. Moreover, in cases where the manuscript cita-

tions can be identified, the later citations are incorporated into the description of those manuscripts.

A second important addition to the Catalogue is the Répertoire, which includes a list of 96 items and gives the actual state of research concerning each work of Henry (including those dealing with his teachings) contained in the Catalogue.

The usefulness of the Bibliotheca Manuscripta does not consist, however, solely in the fact that it constitutes a sound basis for the edition of the Opera Omnia. It has its own usefulness, since it permits us to examine not only the works of Henry, authentic and doubtful, but also the later works dealing with his teachings: works which show those teachings in both a favourable and an unfavourable light. Thus, a considerable amount of material has been brought together dealing with the Abbreviationes and the Impugnationes -- the digests and boiled-down handbooks of his thought, as well as the anti-Henry pamphlets. Indeed, the Impugnationes could even be edited on the basis of what is in the Bibliotheca. Some of them are of considerable interest, especially those of Bernard of Auvergne and Harvey of Nedellec. And, lest we forget, over the entire 17th century, the Servites considered Henry as having belonged to their order. So the Répertoire also contains a description of a series of courses, remaining in manuscript

form, which the Servites dedicated to his teachings.

Besides being a complete Catalogue, the Bibliotheca Manuscripta gives the first detailed description of many of the manuscripts it considers. Those descriptions, apart from several manuscripts which give only short excerpts from Henry, are exhaustive. A great number of them have never been previously described in extenso, because they are found either in the less well-known libraries, or in libraries whose catalogues are not as complete as they might be. The Bibliotheca, then, can serve in many cases as a source-book for just such a completion. Librarians will appreciate Macken's indicating the content of some of their manuscripts. The wealth of detail, for example, the identification of other works contained in the manuscript; indications concerning scribes, illuminators, bookbinders, etc., will save much of the librarian's time and effort.

The work also provides a catalogue for an important part of the microfilm collection of the De Wulf-Mansion Centre itself, because the Centre obtained the microfilms of nearly all the manuscripts dealt with in the Bibliotheca, apart from two where permission to microfilm was refused, and one which was heavily damaged. The fact that the catalogue has been drawn up on the basis of the manuscripts themselves, however, and not on the basis of the microfilms, serves as a guarantee of its accuracy.

THE CRITICAL EDITION OF QUODLIBET I

The important role played by Henry in the last quarter of the 13th century, both in the philosophical domain and in the theological, has already been alluded to. He remains an interesting source of our knowledge of the Augustinianism current in the latter part of the golden age of Scholasticism.

The 15 Quodlibetal Questions are the most certainly authentic works of Henry that we have, and it is for this reason that they appear first in this critical edition of the Opera Omnia. Of the authentic works of Henry, moreover, the Quodlibeta -- solemn university-wide disputes of questions philosophical and theological that took place at Christmas and Easter -- are easily the best-known and the most widely disseminated.

We now have a fair knowledge of the chronology of both the Quodlibeta and the Summa Quaestionum Ordinariarum -- the less formal and solemn disputes of matters theological and philosophical conducted by Henry at various times in the course of his long university career. J. Gomez-Caffarena,[7] working with the known dates for the Quodlibeta and through clearly identifiable references to them in the Summa, has dated quite accurately the various articles and questions of this latter work. The Quodlibeta, then, serve as the chronological framework for dating the

other works, but they also serve as reference points for tracing the doctrinal evolution of Henry himself. There may still be a trace of doubt in the dating of certain of these Quodlibeta, but that of Quodlibet I, now edited, is precise and definite: this dispute took place during Christmas, 1276.

The Quodlibeta have been edited on three previous occasions: in 1518, by the printer Jadocus Badius, at Paris; in 1608, with the commentary of Zuccolius, by Claserius, at Venice; and in 1613, with the same commentary of Zuccolius, by Jacobus de Franciscis, at Venice.

There were several preliminary studies published before this present edition of the Quodlibeta. First, Macken brought to light the Parisian university exemplar (or "master-copy") of the Quodlibeta, the 191 peciae (i.e., sections of the manuscript that were rented out separately to students desiring to make a copy of their own) of which correspond to those indicated in a taxation list dated 13 February 1304. In the same work, he also indicated the explicit peciae-marks -- already referred to in other manuscripts -- together with their precise location in the exemplar.[8] (We would also note in passing that this presentation of the exemplar was subsequently more fully developed in the Bibliotheca Manuscripta.) Following this, Macken examined a series of corrections in the text

of some of these Quodlibeta. Since the base text corresponds to the text as found in other manuscripts, Macken concluded that the corrections were made by Henry himself in the copy intended for "publication." Still another preliminary article dealt with the sources of Henry of Ghent. Only some tentative suggestions were made, since the study was limited to the sources contained only in Quodlibet I.[9]

The critical edition of Quodlibet I is the result of a comparative analysis of all extant manuscripts, 34 in number.

OTHER VOLUMES IN PREPARATION

Volume III will be a special volume continuing the Bibliotheca Manuscripta, not just with reference to the works of Henry, but with reference to his life and the events of his academic career as well. All the pertinent documents known at the present time are to be brought together with all authentic indications (especially indications of dates) which are found in his works or manuscripts.[10] Volume IV, also put together by Macken, will complete the Bibliotheca Manuscripta with a consideration of those materials which have come to light since the publication of Volumes I and II.[11]

The series began with the publication of the Quodlibeta both because of their unquestioned authenticity (as indicated above) and also because of considerations of

a practical nature. Macken was thinking of such things as the length of the work compared with the amount of time which colleagues have at their disposal; the particular interests of those colleagues; or reasons editorial in nature.

Four complete Quodlibeta are at present in preparation: Quodlibet II (R. Wielockx, Kath. Univ. Leuven, Belgium); Quodlibet IV (G. A. Wilson, Loyola University of the South, Louisiana, U.S.A.); Quodlibet X (R. Macken, Kath. Univ. Leuven, Belgium); Quodlibet XIV (J. V. Brown, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, Canada). R. Wielockx has elected to study charity in the theological and philosophical thought of Henry of Ghent. G. A. Wilson has been working on Henry's conception of man. Several works of Dr. Macken have already been mentioned and J. V. Brown has published several articles on the theory of knowledge of Henry of Ghent.

Question 31 of Quodlibet XII is exceptionally long and will appear, therefore, in a separate edition, at present in preparation. It is a special case, for in the literature, question 31 is known by the name, Tractatus super Facto Praelatorum et Fratrum. Only a small part of this work appears in the majority of manuscripts and in the editions of the Quodlibeta. The reason for this, as is noted in certain manuscripts, is because of its extensive

concerns, which were disputed separately prior to Quodlibet XII, and only later were added as a final question to this Quodlibet. This disputed question dealt with the confessional privileges of the mendicants -- as was said, a very controversial issue at the time. Few manuscripts have preserved the whole text of this question, so there is a large body of unedited material -- authentic, to be sure -- meriting publication on its own. This work has already been undertaken by a distinguished scholar on Henry of Ghent, and one with special competence in the domain of medieval controversies on the right of hearing confessions: L. Hödl, University of Bochum, Germany, editor, with W. Kluxen, of the Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters.

The last work of the Opera Omnia presently in preparation is the Syncategoremata, a work in logic attributed to Henry. It will be edited by H. A. G. Braakhuis (University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands), who is interested in general in the Syncategoremata of the 13th century.

THE EDITOR, THE DE WULF-MANSION CENTRE (KATH. UNIV. LEUVEN)

The centre for the editorial work for this series, as has been said, is the De Wulf-Mansion Centre. From its inception, this Centre has been interested in a practical way in the framework of medieval philosophy in general, and particularly in the medieval authors of the Low Countries. The importance of this series, however, goes beyond their

borders. It should be of great benefit to the international scholarly community, and particularly to all those in it who are interested in the work of Henry of Ghent. The undertaking, carefully prepared by an international team of scholars, is already well-advanced, and hopefully it will continue to generate even greater interest in the ideas of this widely-acknowledged philosopher and theologian.

Footnotes

[1]See Maurice De Wulf, Histoire de la philosophie en Belgique (Bruxelles, 1910), and, E. Crewdson Thomas, History of the Schoolmen (London, 1941).

[2]See his Jean Duns Scot (Paris, J. Vrin, 1952), p. 10.

[3]R. Macken, La « lectura ordinaria super sacram scripturam » attribuée à HENRI DE GAND. Edition critique (Analecta medievalia Namurcensia XXVI), Louvain, Editions universitaires de Louvain (Muntstraat 10), Paris: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1972, XXXII. 290 pp. + 4 clichés hors texte.

[4]B. Smalley, "A Commentary on the Hexaemeron by Henry of Ghent," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, XX (1953), 60-101.

[5]R. Macken, editor. Henrici de Gandavo, Quodlibet I (Henrici de Gandavo, Opera Omnia, V). Leuven: University Press, and Leiden: E. J. Brill (VI + 176* + 598pp. + 12 reproductions hors texte), 1979.

[6]R. Macken, Bibliotheca Manuscripta Henrici de Gandavo. I. Catalogue. II. Répertoire (Henrici de Gandavo, Opera Omnia, I-II). Leuven: University Press, and Leiden: E. J. Brill (1600 pp. + 34 reproductions hors texte), 1979.

[7]J. Gómez-Caffarena, "Cronologia de la « Suma » de Enrique de Gante par relacion a sus « Quodlibetos »," Gregorianum, XXXVIII (1957), 116-133.

[8]R. Macken, "Les Quodlibets d'Henri de Gand et leur exemplar parisien," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, XXXVII (1970), 75-96.

[9]R. Macken, "Les corrections d'Henri de Gand à ses Quodlibets," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, XL (1973), 5-51.

[10]R. Macken, Henri de Gand (1292), maître en théologie à l'Université de Paris, archidiacre de l'évêche de Tournai. Dates et documents. (In preparation: vol. III of the Opera Omnia .)

[11]R. Macken, Bibliotheca Manuscripta Henrici de Gandavo. IV. Continuatio. (In preparation: vol. IV of the Opera Omnia.)