

# ROBERT GROSSETESTE AND EUSTRATIUS OF NICAEA ON CONCEPT FORMATION AFTER THE FALL

## ROBERTO GROSSETESTE Y EUSTRACIO DE NICEA SOBRE LA FORMACIÓN DE CONCEPTOS DESPUÉS DE LA CAÍDA

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### Abstract

This paper explores the similarities between a crucial passage in Robert Grosseteste's commentary on *Posterior Analytics* and the commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 6 written by the Byzantine commentator Eustratius of Nicaea (d. ca. 1120). According to the present author, Eustratius may be the direct source of Grosseteste's epistemology and concept formation theory in the commentary. A tentative revision of the chronology of Grosseteste's Greek studies may be necessary to account for the relationship between the two texts.

### Keywords

Robert Grosseteste; Eustratius of Nicaea; *Posterior Analytics*; Theory of Knowledge; State of Perfection

### Resumen

Este artículo analiza las similitudes entre un pasaje crucial en el comentario de Roberto Grosseteste sobre los *Analíticos posteriores* y en el comentario sobre la *Ética a Nicómaco* 6 escrito por el comentarista bizantino Eustracio de Nicea (m. ca. 1120). Según el autor, Eustracio podría ser la fuente directa de la epistemología y de la teoría de la formación de conceptos de Grosseteste en su comentario. Al parecer, es necesaria una revisión tentativa de la cronología de los estudios griegos de Grosseteste para dar cuenta de la relación entre los dos textos.

### Palabras clave

Roberto Grosseteste; Eustracio de Nicea; *Analíticos posteriores*; teoría del conocimiento; estado de perfección

Robert Grosseteste wrote the first known commentary on *Posterior Analytics* in the Western Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> The text has been preserved in many surviving manuscripts and has influenced the later generations of scholars. Research shows that Grosseteste's commentary is a crucial source for the commentary written by Albert the Great, the giant of thirteenth-century scholasticism, and several other Medieval and Renaissance commentators in England and continental Europe.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, Grosseteste's commentary has proven challenging concerning its sources as it witnesses a Greek commentary tradition not entirely known to us.

Our knowledge of these sources has considerably improved thanks to the diligent work of modern scholars such as Minio-Paluello, Dod, Ebbesen, and Rossi.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Grosseteste's Greek sources in his commentary on *Posterior Analytics* require further findings. This paper contributes to earlier scholarship with a new modest proposal concerning one of the most crucial passages in Grosseteste's work. This wrought passage concerns concept formation following the loss of our Edenic

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Grosseteste, *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros*, ed. P. B. Rossi (Firenze: Olschki, 1981). On the Medieval Latin commentary tradition on this Aristotelian work, see Steven J. Livesey, "Medieval Commentaries on the *Posterior Analytics*", in *In Aristotelis Analytica Posteriora: estudos acerca da recepção medieval dos Segundos Analíticos*, edited by A.C. Storck (Porto Alegre: Linus Editores, 2009), 13-45.

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Pietro B. Rossi, "Grosseteste's Influence on Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century British Commentators on *Posterior Analytics*. A Preliminary Survey", in *Robert Grosseteste. His Thought and Its Impact*, edited by J. P. Cunningham (Toronto: Pontifical Institut for Medieval Studies, 2012), 140-166; Pietro B. Rossi, "New Translations of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* and the Cultural Milieu in Fifteenth Century Florence", in *Raison et démonstration Les commentaires médiévaux sur les Seconds Analytiques*, edited by J. Biard (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 199-221; Pietro B. Rossi, "Commenti agli 'Analytica Posteriora' e gli Umanisti italiani del quattrocento: una prima indagine", *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* 108/4 (2016): 759-774.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Lorenzo Minio-Paluello, "Jacobus Veneticus Graecus Canonist and Translator of Aristotle", *Traditio* 8 (1952): 265-304; Bernard G. Dod, *The Study of Aristotle's Posterior Analytics in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Unpublished Dissertation, 1970); Sten Ebbesen, "Anonymus Aurelianus II, Aristotle, Alexander, Porphyry and Boethius. Ancient Scholasticism and Twelfth-Century Western Europe", *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Âge Grec et Latin* 16 (1976): 1-128; Sten Ebbesen, "Philoponus, 'Alexander' and the Origins of Medieval Logic", in *Aristotle Transformed. The Ancient Commentators and their Influence*, edited by R. Sorabji (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 445-461; Pietro B. Rossi, "Tracce della versione latina di un commento greco ai Secondi Analitici nel *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros* di Roberto Grossatesta", *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* 70 (1978): 433-439. On the general issue of the reception of Ancient Greek philosophy in the West, see Sten Ebbesen, "Greek-Latin Philosophical Interaction", in *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, edited by K. Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15-30.

perfection. I argue that Grosseteste has possibly paraphrased or rephrased a nearly identical text found in the commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 6 written by the byzantine commentator Eustratius, the metropolitan of Nicaea (d. after 1120). Grosseteste translated into Latin Eustratius' commentaries on *Nicomachean Ethics* 1 and 6 at a later stage. However, I would like to advance the hypothesis that at the time of the composition of his commentary on *Posterior Analytics*, Grosseteste had access to a Greek manuscript preserving the Greek-Byzantine commentaries on *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>4</sup>

### 1. Concept Formation after Adam's Fall

Before methodically explicating Grosseteste's passage, I shall briefly present Aristotle's text from which Grosseteste's comment originates.<sup>5</sup> In *Posterior Analytics* 1.18.81a38-81b9, Aristotle writes:

Φανερόν δὲ καὶ ὅτι, εἴ τις αἰσθησις ἐκτέλειται, ἀνάγκη καὶ ἐπιστήμην τινὰ ἐκτελειοῦναι, ἢν ἀδύνατον λαβεῖν, εἴπερ μανθάνομεν ἢ ἐπαγωγῇ ἢ ἀποδείξει, ἔστι δ' ἡ μὲν ἀποδείξις ἐκ τῶν καθόλου, ἡ δ' ἐπαγωγή ἐκ τῶν κατὰ μέρος, ἀδύνατον δὲ τὰ καθόλου θεωρῆσαι μὴ δι' ἐπαγωγῆς (ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ ἐξ ἀφαιρέσεως λεγόμενα ἔσται δι' ἐπαγωγῆς γνῶριμα ποιεῖν, ὅτι ὑπάρχει ἐκάστῳ γένει ἕνια, καὶ εἰ μὴ χωριστὰ ἔστιν, ἢ

<sup>4</sup> I expand on chronological matters in the conclusions of this paper.

<sup>5</sup> In light of its importance for understanding Grosseteste's epistemology, the passage at hand has been described, among others, in Étienne Gilson, "Pourquoi saint Thomas a critiqué saint Augustin", *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 1 (1926-1927): 5-127, at 95-96; Lawrence E. Lynch, "The Doctrine of Divine Ideas and Illumination in Robert Grosseteste", *Mediaeval Studies* 3 (1941): 171-173, at 169; A. C. Crombie, *Robert Grosseteste and the Origins of Experimental Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 73-90; Eileen F. Serene, "Robert Grosseteste on Induction and Demonstrative Science", *Synthese* 40 (1979): 97-115; Steven P. Marrone, *William of Auvergne and Robert Grosseteste: New Ideas of Truth in the Early Thirteenth Century* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 166-178; Steven P. Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), vol. 1, 99-100; Pietro B. Rossi, "Robert Grosseteste and the Object of Scientific Knowledge", in *Robert Grosseteste: New Perspectives on his Thought and Scholarship*, edited by J. McEvoy (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 53-76, in part. 70; James McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 83-84; Jeremiah Hackett, "Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon on the *Posterior Analytics*", in *Erkenntnis und Wissenschaft/ Knowledge and Science Probleme der Epistemologie in der Philosophie des Mittelalters/ Problems of Epistemology in Medieval Philosophy*, edited by M. Lutz-Bachmann, A. Fidora and P. Antolic-Piper (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), 161-212, at 187; Christina Van Dyke, "A Divinely Aristotelian Theory of Illumination: Robert Grosseteste's Epistemology in his Commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17/4 (2009): 685-704; Christina Van Dyke, "The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth: Robert Grosseteste on Universals (and the *Posterior Analytics*)", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 48/2 (2010): 153-170. On medieval theories concerning the loss of the state of perfection, see Luciano Cova, *Peccato originale: Agostino e il Medioevo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016) and Gianluca Briguglia, *Stato di innocenza. Adamo, Eva e la filosofia politica medievale* (Roma: Carocci, 2017).

τοιονδι ἕκαστον), ἐπαχθῆναι δὲ μὴ ἔχοντας αἴσθησιν ἀδύνατον. τῶν γὰρ καθ' ἕκαστον ἢ αἴσθησις οὐ γὰρ ἐνδέχεται λαβεῖν αὐτῶν τὴν ἐπιστήμην· οὔτε γὰρ ἐκ τῶν καθόλου ἄνευ ἐπαγωγῆς, οὔτε δι' ἐπαγωγῆς ἄνευ τῆς αἰσθήσεως.

It is evident too that if some perception is wanting, it is necessary for some understanding to be wanting too – which it is impossible to get if we learn either by induction or by demonstration, and demonstration depends on universals and induction on particulars, and it is impossible to consider universals except through induction (since even in the case of what are called abstractions one will be able to make familiar through induction that some things belong to each genus, even if they are not separable, in so far as each thing is *such and such*), and it is impossible to get an induction without perception – for of particulars there is perception; for it is not possible to get understanding of them; for it can be got neither from universals without induction nor through induction without perception.<sup>6</sup>

i) According to Grosseteste (212.203-215, ed. Rossi), we should read this Aristotelian text against the background of the earlier *Posterior Analytics* 1.16.79b23-28, where Aristotle distinguishes two types of ignorance, namely ignorance ‘in virtue of a negation’ (κατ’ ἀπόφασιν) and ignorance ‘as a disposition’ (κατὰ διάθεσιν).<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, in this latter passage, Aristotle does not define what ignorance in virtue of a negation is, he only provides a definition for ignorance as a disposition and explains that this is an “error that comes about through deduction”. In Robert’s view in *Posterior Analytics* 1.18.81a38-81b9, Aristotle finally accounts for ignorance by a negation. Robert explains that when one of the senses is deficient, so will the related type of knowledge of the specific object for that sense. Thus because induction moves from the individuals, which are the proper object of sense-perception, a deficient sense will affect the inductive process and, thereby, the intellectual cognition of that singular. As the deficiency of sensorial cognition affects induction and intellectual knowledge, the universal notions that are the terms of the demonstration will also be fallacious. Finally, given that science properly-so-called can only be demonstrative, fallacies in the demonstration will also affect the science related to a specific class of individuals. In

<sup>6</sup> Aristoteles, *Analytica Posteriora*, I.18.81a38-82a9. All translations of *Posterior Analytics* are taken from Jonthan Barnes, *Aristotle. Complete Works* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Aristoteles, *Analytica Posteriora*, I.16.79b23-28: Ἄγνοια δ' ἢ μὴ κατ' ἀπόφασιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ διάθεσιν λεγομένη ἔστι μὲν ἢ διὰ συλλογισμοῦ γινομένη ἀπάτη, αὕτη δ' ἐν μὲν τοῖς πρώτως ὑπάρχουσιν ἢ μὴ ὑπάρχουσι συμβαίνει διχῶς ἢ γὰρ ὅταν ἀπλῶς ὑπολάβῃ ὑπάρχειν ἢ μὴ ὑπάρχειν, ἢ ὅταν διὰ συλλογισμοῦ λάβῃ τὴν ὑπόληψιν. τῆς μὲν οὖν ἀπλῆς ὑπολήψεως ἀπλῆ ἢ ἀπάτη, τῆς δὲ διὰ συλλογισμοῦ πλείου (“Ignorance – what is called ignorance not in virtue of a negation but in virtue of a disposition – is error coming about through deduction. In the case of what belongs or does not belong primitively this comes about in two ways: either when one believes *simpliciter* that something belongs or does not belong, or when one gets the belief through deduction. Now for simple belief the error is simple, but when it is through deduction there are several ways of erring”).

other words, whereas ignorance as a disposition concerns deduction, ignorance in virtue of a negation affects the induction of universal terms from sense perception.

ii) Afterwards, the text (212.216-213.228, ed Rossi) diverges from the explanation of Aristotle's text. It presents Grosseteste's account for the reason and origin of ignorance: 1) not all sciences, writes Robert, require induction from sense-perception. All sciences are contained in their purest universal form in God's Mind. Not only does God's Mind possess in itself all universals, but it also knows the individuals in their universality, whereas we only grasp them together with their accidental individual properties; 2) by the same token while receiving irradiation of God's perfect science, also the lower angelic intelligencies share the same universal knowledge and—in a way which is reminiscent of texts from the Arabic source-material—while knowing the superior cause each of the lower intelligencies also knows itself and that which comes after it as its cause;<sup>8</sup> 3) thus, Grosseteste claims that those intelligencies whose knowledge is not sense-perception based are granted science in its most complete form.

iii) Unlike the separate intelligences and God, following the loss of Edenic perfection, the rational human soul has lost its capacity to act purely intellectually (213.229-214.244, ed. Rossi). 1) Because of the bond with the body and the flesh, the rational soul can no longer receive the same irradiation of divine light as the higher intelligencies and the unembodied souls; 2) As “the purity of the eye of the soul” – a Platonizing metaphor which Grosseteste refers to the intellectual part of the soul – is obnubilated and burdened by the body, bodily affections and lower impulses, men's purely intellectual activity is somewhat asleep and only relies on sense-perception data; 3) yet, after long time and experience with sense-perception data, reason and rationality somehow awaken and ascend from the undifferentiated and confused sense-perception based knowledge to more and more abstracted and complex notions; 4) accordingly, by ascending to a more abstract level of cognition through experience, the intellect first forms what Grosseteste calls “universale incomplexum”, in which the mind grasps a simple universal or notion by separating something's accidental features from its essence; 5) then it becomes capable of a more complex operation (“universale complexum experimentale”) consisting in associating one or more simple universal in propositions concerning natural laws or phenomena. 6) already at this point, the rational part of the soul is involved in the process, as the “eye of the soul” must be pure from bodily hindrances in order to divide the common trait from the manifold individuals and to infer the general law in which the different terms relate with each other.

iv) Grosseteste describes (214.255-215.272) the passage between the formation of these two types of universals within two epistemic stages. First, one needs at least two

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<sup>8</sup> The available literature on Arabic intellect theories and their cosmological implications is vast. See the introductory Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna & Averroes on Intellect* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). On the sources of Grosseteste's reference to separate intelligences and their mode of cognition, see Rossi, “The Object”, 70.

sensibilia to form what he calls an *intentio aestimata* resulting from the mind noticing that one event is frequently associated with another; then the *intentio* thus formed must undergo a thought experiment that validates the same *intentio*. Here Grosseteste draws a concrete example from Avicenna:<sup>9</sup>

when someone many times sees the eating of scammony accompanied by the discharge of red bile and he does not see that scammony attracts and draws the red bile, then from the frequent perception of these two visible things, one begins to form a notion of the third, invisible element, that is that scammony is the cause that draws out red bile.

v) Finally (215.272-216.291 ed. Rossi), Grosseteste expresses his conviction that knowledge properly so-called is not confined to the sensorial level but must ascend to the intelligible level. In its present state, following the loss of Adamic perfection, the intellectual power of the soul is clouded over. Accordingly, the soul's capacity to understand (*aspectus*) is inseparable from its loves (*affectus*) and cannot transcend them.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the *aspectus*, namely reason, must desire to be turned away from the sensible world.

When the latter (*scil.* the *affectus* or one's loves) are turned towards the body and the seductions of matter that surround us, they entice the capacity for truth to dally with them and they distract it from its true light, leaving the mind in a darkness and idleness that only begin to be relieved when it issues through the external senses into a light, which is a reminder of that other Light, its birthright.<sup>11</sup>

The task for the soul is to transcend the ephemeral objects towards proper knowledge, which in Grosseteste's view, means that the intellectual part of the soul turns from sensorial knowledge to the intelligible contents present in God and in the lower intelligences.

Let me summarize the passage's content: according to Grosseteste, knowledge is coordinated with the nature of the knower. Whereas God and the separate intelligences know things in their universality – either because the universals are found in God's mind, or these are irradiated among the intelligences – the human rational soul must initially rely on sense-perception-based data. In Grosseteste's epistemology, due to the loss of the perfection that followed Adam's sin, the mind alone cannot relate two

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Grosseteste, *Commentarius*, 214,254-215,261. The reference goes to Avicenna, *Canon*, I.ii.2. I cite the text in the English translation by Simon Oliver, "Robert Grosseteste on Light, truth and 'Experimentum'", *Vivarium* 42/2 (2004): 151-180, at 173. On this passage, see Bruce S. Eastwood, "Mediaeval Empiricism: The Case of Grosseteste's Optics", *Speculum* 42/2 (1968): 306-321, at 308-309; John R. Milton, "Induction Before Hume", in *Handbook of the History of Logic* (vol. 10), *Inductive Logic*, edited by D. M. Gabbay, S. Hartmann and J. Woods (Oxford and Amsterdam; North Holland, 2011), 1-41, at 17-18.

<sup>10</sup> On *aspectus* and *affectus* in Grosseteste, see Brett W. Smith, "A Theme Song of His Life: *Aspectus* and *Affectus* in the Writings of Robert Grosseteste", *Franciscan Studies* 76 (2018): 1-22. See also Brett W. Smith, *Aspectus et Affectus in the Thought of Robert Grosseteste* (Rome: If Press, 2023).

<sup>11</sup> McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, 84.

*sensibilia* within a cause-effect relation but requires an additional illumination, or better irradiation, from the supreme Light. However, this condition is not a definitive one. By repeating sensorial experiences and transcending bodily impulses and passions, the intellectual power in the human soul awakens. This allows the soul to rediscover its intellectual nature and to receive illumination or irradiation from above, thus acquiring knowledge of something. This process involves at least two stages: first, grasping single terms from sense perception, then the capacity to relate these terms to a proposition or law of nature.

In the next paragraph, I shall address the central issue of Grosseteste's source in this passage.

## 2. A Medieval Greek Source?

As stated above, the importance of this passage for reconstructing Grosseteste's epistemology has not escaped the attention of modern scholars.<sup>12</sup> However, all attempts so far at detecting the source or sources of the passage have yet to be successful. In general, when looking for sources, scholars have pointed out the combination between Aristotle's induction theory and Augustine's illuminationism. This seems reasonable since, when talking about illuminationism in medieval epistemology, Augustine is undoubtedly the most important and most cited source.<sup>13</sup> Grosseteste himself famously pays tribute to Augustine's authority in his *Tabula*, a prospect of some 440 topics divided into nine subjects where the bishop of Lincoln listed biblical, patristical, theological, and profane sources for each subject.<sup>14</sup> Here Augustine is the most frequently cited author on human and divine knowledge.

According to Grosseteste light is not just a metaphor for describing God but rather an essential property of God himself. Accordingly, if this is the case, everything God created exists and acts insofar as it participates in light.<sup>15</sup> Notably, Grosseteste's theory

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<sup>12</sup> See the literature collected at nt. 5.

<sup>13</sup> The available literature on the topic is vast. See the introductory Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 58-65 *et passim*. On Grosseteste's scholarship on Augustine and other Church Fathers, see Pietro B. Rossi, "Magna magni Augustini auctoritas: Grossatesta e i Padri", in *Ipsium verum non videbis nisi in philosophiam totus intraveris. Studi in onore di Franco De Capitani*, edited by F. Amerini and S. Caroti (Parma: E-theca OnLineOpenAccess Edizioni, 2016), 437-469, esp. 457-58.

<sup>14</sup> Harrison S. Thomson discovered the *Tabula*. See Harrison S. Thomson, *The Writings of Robert Grosseteste Bishop of Lincoln, 1235-1253* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 122-124. See also Philipp W. Rosemann, "Robert's Grosseteste's *Tabula*", in *Robert Grosseteste: New Perspectives*, edited by J. McEvoy (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 321-355.

<sup>15</sup> See McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, 91. See also Jack Cunningham, "Lumen de Lumine: Light, God and Creation in the Thought of Robert Grosseteste", in *Bishop Robert Grosseteste and Lincoln Cathedral Tracing Relationships between Medieval Concepts of Order and Built Form*, edited by N. Temple, J. Shannon Harris and Ch. Frost (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 81-98.

of light is complex and based on several sources, including works written in Arabic.<sup>16</sup> However, unsurprisingly, when explaining in his *Hexaemeron* that light is the most subtle of all things of bodily nature and is the first corporeal form, Grosseteste appeals once more to the authority of Augustine.<sup>17</sup> The importance of Augustine becomes even more evident if one thinks that on some critical issues in Grosseteste's commentary on *Posterior Analytics*, Augustine could provide plenty of material for building up the epistemology sketched in the previously mentioned crucial passage (212.203-216.291, ed. Rossi). For instance, consider Grosseteste's reference (212.216-213.228, ed. Rossi) to God as possessing all Universals or Forms in his Mind. Few would deny a similarity with *quaestio* 46 of Augustine's *Quaestiones LXXXIII*, where the bishop of Hippo famously described Plato's forms as existing in the divine Mind.<sup>18</sup> Grosseteste himself refers to this text several times in his work, including in the *Commentary on Posterior Analytics*.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, no text in Augustine matches Grosseteste's passage under scrutiny. Instead, a passage from the commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 6 written in Greek by the commentator and theologian Eustratius of Nicaea should be considered as a source. As specialists would know, later in his life, Grosseteste went on to translate Eustratius' commentaries on books 1 and 6, along with other ancient and Byzantine commentaries on the same work.<sup>20</sup> In what follows, I shall cite the two texts one after the other.<sup>21</sup>

Eustratius, *Commentary on Nicomachean Ethics* 6, ms. Eton College 122, f. 108rb: *Si quidem igitur non ordinem illum et legem quam ex Creante assumpsit transgressus esset, sed ad ordinem meliorem sui ipsius aspiciens et annuens permansisset et illius irremisse*

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<sup>16</sup> On Grosseteste's complex theory of light and its sources, see the excellent Cecilia Panti, *Roberto Grossatesta. La luce* (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2011), 87-174.

<sup>17</sup> See Robert Grosseteste, *Hexaemeron*, 1.10.1, edited by R. C. Dales and S. Gieben (London: The British Academy, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Aurelius Augustinus, *Quaestiones LXXXIII*, q. 46.1-2, edited by A. Mutzenbecher, CCSL 44a (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), 70-73.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Robert Grosseteste, *Commentarius*, 139-140; Robert Grosseteste *Commentarius in VIII l. Physicorum Aristotelis*, edited by R. C. Dales, (Boulder, Col.: University of Colorado Press, 1963), 55. Grosseteste collected several Augustinian passages on this topic in his *Tabula*, under the entry "De rationibus in mente divina". See Robert Grosseteste, *Tabula*, edited by R. Rosemann, CCCM 130 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 268.

<sup>20</sup> The translation of the Greek-Byzantine commentaries on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is dated 1246-1247 by Mercken, but the same author admits that Robert indeed started earlier translating this corpus. See H. Paul F. Mercken, *The Greek Commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle: Eustratius on Book I and the anonymous scholia on Books II, III, and IV* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 40\*. On the medieval Latin reception of these commentaries, see Michele Trizio, "From Anne Komnene to Dante: The Byzantine Roots of Western Debates on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*", in *Dante and the Greeks*, edited by J. Ziolkowski (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 105-139.

<sup>21</sup> I use bold and italics to distinguish between Grosseteste's close quotations from Eustratius' commentary and Grosseteste's paraphrase of it, respectively. Grosseteste's translation of Eustratius' commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 6 still needs to be edited. I am preparing the critical edition of the text. The text of Eustratius' passage cited in this paper has been collated from ms. Eton College 122 (thirteenth century, second half, copied in England).



desiderans fruitionem, a deterioribus autem tantum abstinisset quantum praecognovisset ipsa secundum proportionale convenientis ipsi et ordinis et naturae, permansisset utique ipsi et perfectum inconcussum. Quia autem avidus fuit circa deteriora et ea quae secundum sensum frui vita praeconcupivit, eam quae ad meliora negligens annuitioem, propter hoc et a propria excidit perfectione et generationi succubuit et corruptioni, **et intellectualis ipse oculus gravatus est et convelatus, grossiori carne et mortali perturbante ipsum.** Hinc et a sensibili ligatus est cognitione, immediate quidem operante circa propria cognoscibilia, exsuscitante autem ipsum quemadmodum generatione obdormientem et ex quibus ipsa cognoscit singularibus occasionem ipsi ad universalis supponente constitutionem et ex immediata operatione sua, quam circa particularia ostendit, largitionem ipsi tribuente communes conceptiones inductive constituere, ex quibus immediatis existentibus quoniam et ex immediatis occasionibus ipsas intellectus congregavit, scientificas conducit conclusiones. Hinc et ignorantiae deponit velum, et sui ipsius fit et a ponderoso passibilitatis exoneratus, aspicit et annuit ad meliora et ad ipsum Factorem. Si enim non et ipse intellectus sub corruptionem secundum substantiam cecidit, sed quidem secundum substantiam coniugatus corruptibilibus, corruptus est et ipse secundum operationem, non potens neque in imperfectis servare perfectum neque in corruptis omnino incorruptum. Consequenter ergo ei quae ex principio intellectivi animae perfectioni et ei qui postea casui inductio dignitatum in scientiis superaccidit constitutio.

Grosseteste's text runs as follows:

Robert Grosseteste, *Commentary on Posterior Analytics* (213,229-216,282, ed. Rossi): Et similiter si pars suprema anime humane, que vocatur intellectiva et que non est actus alicuius corporis neque egens in operatione sui propria instrumento corporeo, **non esset mole corporis corrupti obnubilata et aggravata**, ipsa per irradiationem acceptam a lumine superiori haberet completam scientiam absque sensus adminiculo, sicut habebit cum anima erit exuta a corpore et sicut forte habent aliqui penitus absoluti ab amore et phantasmatis rerum corporalium. **Sed, quia puritas oculi anime per corpus corruptum obnubilata et aggravata est, omnes vires ipsius anime rationalis in homine nato occupate sunt per molem corporis**, ne possint agere, et ita quodammodo sopite. Cum itaque processu temporis agant sensus per multiplicem obviationem sensus cum sensibilibus, expurgiscitur ratio ipsis sensibus admixta et in sensibus quasi in navi delata ad sensibilia. Ratio vero expurgata incipit dividere et seorsum aspicere que in sensu erant confusa, utpote visus, colorem, magnitudinem, figuram, corpus confundit, et in eius iudicio sunt hec omnia accepta ut unum. [...] Verumtamen non novit ratio hoc esse actu universale nisi postquam a multis singularibus hanc fecerit abstractionem et occurrerit ei unum et idem secundum iudicium suum in multis singularibus repertum. Hec est igitur via qua venatur universale incomplexum a singularibus per sensus adminiculum. Universale enim complexum experimentale non acquiritur a nobis habentibus mentis oculum indefecatam nisi sensus ministerio. [...] Manifestum est itaque quod deficiente aliquo sensu in nobis habentibus **mentis oculum mole corporis corrupti** occupatum deficiet etiam universale incomplexum ex singularibus sensus deficientis venatum, et deficit etiam universale complexum experimentale ex eisdem singularibus sumptum, et per consequens omnis demonstratio et scientia que erigitur

supra universalis sic venata. *Ratio enim in nobis sopita non agit nisi postquam per sensus operationem, cui admiscetur, fuerit expergefata. Causa autem quare obnubilatur visus anime per molem corporis corrupti* est quod affectus et aspectus anime non sunt divisi, nec attingit aspectus eius nisi quo attingit affectus sive amor eius.

Comparing the two texts suggests that Grosseteste possibly re-elaborated Eustratius' passage by rephrasing it or citing it almost *verbatim*. This Eustratian passage may have escaped scholarly attention because Eustratius' commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 6 remains unedited. Upon close inspection, the structure of Eustratius' text has been preserved in Grosseteste's commentary. For example, both texts begin with a conditional sentence introduced by 'si'. In both texts, the conditional sentence explains that, had man preserved his perfection, he would have been capable of pure intellection. After the loss of Adamic perfection, men are bound to sensorial knowledge. Let me focus more closely on the intertextualities between the two texts.

1) Both texts explain that in the present condition, the "eye of the soul", a platonic imagery that describes the intellectual power of the soul, is obscured and clouded over by the burden of the body and the flesh.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, four times in his commentary (213.231; 213.236-237; 215.273; 215.279-216.280 ed. Rossi), Grosseteste reverberates Eustratius' description of the intellectual power as obstructed by the flesh and the bodily impulses. Eustratius writes:

propter hoc et a propria excidit perfectione et generationi succubuit et corruptioni, et intellectualis ipse oculus gravatus est et convelatus, grossiori carne et mortali perturbante ipsum.

For this reason, man lost his perfection and fell within the realm of generation and corruption. Furthermore, his very intellectual eye has been burdened and clouded by the thicker and mortal flesh that disturbs it.

Eustratius' reference to the "ticker and mortal flesh" (*grossiori carne et mortali*) as that which obstructs the intellectual capacity in the human soul matches Grosseteste's description of that same intellectual capacity, the eye of the soul, which is obstructed "because of the weight of the body" (*per molem corporis* or *mole corporis*). Furthermore, the two authors describe the detrimental effect of flesh and body over knowledge by using almost the exact words: Eustratius writes that the eye of the soul "has been burdened and clouded over" (*gravatus est et convelatus*) by the body, Grosseteste echoes Eustratius and writes that men's intellectual power is "obnubilated and burdened by the corrupt body" (*mole corporis corrupti obnubilata et aggravata*). He also writes that the purity of the eye of the soul "has been obnubilated and burdened" (*obnubilata et aggravata est*) by the same body. The similarities between the texts are striking.

2) Both texts explain that in the present state, the intellectual power of the soul lies asleep because of the shock of birth and the loss of Adam's pristine condition. However,

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<sup>22</sup> Plato, *Respublica*, 533CD.

as we pursue knowledge by repeating sensorial experiences, reason awakens. Writes Eustratius:

Hinc et a sensibili ligatus est cognitione, immediate quidem operante circa propria cognoscibilia, exsuscitante autem ipsum quemadmodum generatione obdormientem [...].

Hence [the eye of the soul] is also bound to sensorial knowledge. Nevertheless, as the latter operates on the objects of knowledge coordinated to it, it awakens the eye of the soul that lulled somehow asleep due to the generation process [...].

If my hypothesis is correct, this Eustratius passage is rephrased by Grosseteste twice. First (at 214.238-241 ed. Rossi), Grosseteste explains that “and so when our senses are operative for a certain amount of time through repeated exposure of sense-perception with the sensible objects, reason (although mixed with the senses) awakens” (*Cum itaque processu temporis agant sensus per multiplicem obviationem sensus cum sensibilibus, expergiscitur ratio ipsis sensibus admixta*). Later in the text (at 215.277-279 ed. Rossi) Grosseteste repeats that “in fact, since reason is lulled asleep, it cannot operate unless it awakens through the sensorial activity with which is mixed” (*Ratio enim in nobis sopita non agit nisi postquam per sensus operationem, cui admiscetur, fuerit expergefacta*). In short, the bishop of Lincoln, appropriated Eustratius’ claim that reason is at first lulled to sleep and that, through repeated exposure to sense-perception, reason awakens. I argue that Eustratius’ *exsuscitante* matches Grosseteste’s *expergiscitur*, and that Eustratius’ *obdormientem* referred to as the eye of the soul, matches Grosseteste’s *sopita* as referred to reason. These are all synonyms.

3) But there is another issue for which Grosseteste may be indebted to Eustratius. As said before, the awakened reason functions in two different operations. Grosseteste explains that first, our mind grasps the *universale incomplexum*, that is to say, a simple universal or notion obtained after separating something’s accidental features from its essence. Then it becomes capable of a more complex operation (*universale complexum experimentale*) whereby our mind associates one or more simple universals in propositions concerning natural laws or phenomena. That is precisely what Eustratius says:

ex quibus ipsa cognoscit singularibus occasionem ipsi ad universalis supponente constitutionem et ex immediata operatione sua, quam circa particularia ostendit, largitionem ipsi tribuente communes conceptiones inductive constituere, ex quibus immediatis existentibus quoniam et ex immediatis occasionibus ipsas intellectus congregavit, scientificas conducit conclusiones.

from these (*scil.* the sensorial objects) sense-perception knows the individuals and accordingly allows him (*scil.* man) with the opportunity to form a universal term. Thus, even though sense-perception is an immediate operation concerned with individuals, it allows him (*scil.* man) to form common notions inductively. We may draw the scientific conclusions by taking a cue from the latter (which are immediate terms insofar as the intellect forms them through immediate operations).

From this text, it is pretty clear that, like Grosseteste, Eustratius distinguishes two different operations. First, the mind discerns a single universal term or a common notion through induction from sense-perception data.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, Eustratius claims that sensorial acts are immediate insofar as our senses grasp their objects in a quick and non-reflexive way. However, he also implies something similar regarding the universals abstracted from the sensorial data, for these are graspable immediately because, claims Eustratius, the intellect formed them by means of immediate and non-discursive acts. Second, the mind connects these universal terms to form a scientific conclusion in the form of a syllogism. In other words, I argue that Grosseteste found in Eustratius' text a primitive version of his more nuanced distinction between *universale incomplexum a singularibus* and *universale complexum experimentale*.<sup>24</sup>

To make my argument plausible and exclude other sources, I decided to look for parallels in the Latin tradition known to Grosseteste. To start with, I considered the platonic imagery of the eye of the soul used for describing the rational soul or intellect. This ancient imagery had a tremendous impact on the late ancient and medieval author, and, unsurprisingly, it is also vastly found in the writings of Augustine.<sup>25</sup> Yet, nowhere in his writings does Augustine say that the eye of the soul is "obscured and clouded over". After long research among the sources potentially available to Grosseteste, I found that only Eustratius describes the eye of the soul through these two qualifications. By contrast, Grosseteste's statement that the eye of the soul is obnubilated "because of the weight of the body" (*per molem corporis* or *mole corporis*) reflects a similar expression found in Augustine and in the later medieval tradition that depends on Augustine.

The importance of Augustine is evident in Matthew of Acquasparta's *Quaestiones disputatae de providentia*, where Matthew (died 1302) recalls a doxography found in Augustine's *De Trinitate* XII.15. The text concerns knowledge as reminiscence in Platonic terms, a solution that both Augustine and Matthew exclude. According to Plato, says Matthew, the soul has in itself all knowledge, "but it cannot display awareness of it insofar as it is burdened by the burden of the body" (*sed mole corporis gravata anima*

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<sup>23</sup> On Eustratius' problematic usage of the term 'common notion', here to be understood as the universal grasped inductively from sense-perception data, see Michele Trizio, *Il Neoplatonismo di Eustrazio di Nicea* (Bari: Pagina, 2016), 182-185.

<sup>24</sup> On this crucial distinction, see the literature cited at note 5. It should be recalled that when incorporating Eustratius' distinction between different operations, Grosseteste added something of his own, namely the role of the mental experiment (Grosseteste appeals to the case study of scammony as the cause for the discharge of red bile) for completing the *universale complexum experimentale*.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Augustine, *De genesi al litteram libri duodecim*, 12.7, edited by I. Zicha, CSEL 28.1 (Wien: Tempsky, 1894), 389,15-17: "Dicitur spiritus et ipsa mens rationalis, ubi est quidam tamquam oculus animae, ad quem pertinet imago et agnitio Dei"; *Soliloquiorum libri duo*, 6.12, edited by W. Hörmann, CSEL 89 (Wien: Tempsky, 1986): "Oculus animae mens est ab omni labe corporis pura, id est, a cupiditatibus rerum mortalium iam remota atque purgata".

*considerare non potest*).<sup>26</sup> These words are actually by Matthew, not by Augustine. In *De Trinitate* XII.15 the expression *mole corporis aggravata* does not appear. More importantly, Matthew wrote after Grosseteste and must be ruled out as a potential source. More interesting is the occurrence of the expression at hand in Radulphus Ardens (died ca. 1200). In his *Speculum Universale*, Radulphus wrote that in the present condition, we have no access to the inner part of the soul, “while we are burdened by the weight of the body” (*mole corporis aggravamur*).<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, in his outstanding *The Light of Thy Countenance*, Steven Marrone pointed at another short passage from Radulphus’ *Speculum*, where the author writes that in the present condition, the reason lies asleep and is almost buried.<sup>28</sup> Marrone does not venture to speculate on the relationship between Grosseteste’s and Radulphus’ texts, *i.e.*, whether one is the source of the other or they both depend on an earlier source. However, according to consensus, Radulphus’ *Speculum* was composed between 1231 and 1236, slightly after the composition of Grosseteste’s commentary on *Posterior Analytics*.<sup>29</sup>

In general, after the example of Augustine, Grosseteste knew this expression and used in his commentary on *Posterior Analytics*. But nothing prevents us from thinking that, because of an insufficient proficiency in Greek, Grosseteste had rendered Eustratius’ Greek text using a formula he was more comfortable with. Think that in most Augustinian passages where the expression occurs, and in the later medieval witnesses, nowhere does the expression occur as referred to as the eye of the soul.<sup>30</sup> Again, only Eustratius describes the eye of the soul as “burdened and clouded over”.

Another hint at potential Latin sources for parts of Grosseteste’s text is McEvoy’s book on Grosseteste, published in 2000.<sup>31</sup> Concerning the crucial passage at stake in this paper, McEvoy wrote: “In the normal case the higher human powers are “lulled to sleep” (in the Boethian metaphor) by the weight of the flesh”. However, McEvoy did not produce any precise reference to the Boethian *corpus*. It is not clear at first whether the reference to Boethius concerns the description of the eye of the soul as “lulled to sleep” or the imagery of the weight or burden of the flesh. Scrutiny of Boethius’ writings suggests that McEvoy referred to the latter. Boethius’ *De consolazione philosophiae* includes several references to the condition of the soul in this life as veiled or obnubilated by passions and false opinions. For example:

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<sup>26</sup> Matthew of Acquasparta, *Quaestiones disputatae de providentia*, q. 6, edited by G. Gál (Quaracchi: Typographia collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1956), 381,6-9.

<sup>27</sup> Radulphus Ardens, *Speculum universale* (libri I - V et VII - X) liber 3,41, edited by C. Heimann and S. Ernst, CCSL 241 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 206, 1472.

<sup>28</sup> Marrone, *The Light*, 99.

<sup>29</sup> On the commentary dating, see the present paper’s conclusions.

<sup>30</sup> The most interesting expression at hand in Augustine is the passage of *Soliloquia* cited at note 25.

<sup>31</sup> McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, 84.

Sed quoniam firmioribus remediis nondum tempus est, et eam mentium constat esse naturam ut, quotiens abiecerint veras, falsis opinionibus induantur, ex quibus orta perturbationum caligo verum ilium confundit intuitum, hanc paulisper lenibus mediocribusque fomentis attenuare temptabo, ut dimotis fallacium affectionum tenebris splendorem verae lucis possis agnoscere.<sup>32</sup>

Still, as it is not yet time for stronger medicine, and as it is the accepted opinion that the nature of the mind is such that for every true belief it rejects, it assumes a false one from which the fog of distraction rises to blot out its true insight, I will try to lessen this particular fog little by little by applying gentle remedies of only medium strength. In this way, the darkness of the ever treacherous passions may be dispelled, and you will be able to see the resplendent light of truth.

This Boethian passage describes, in a purely Neoplatonic fashion, the state of the embodied soul, dragged by false opinions and passions. The effect of these on the soul is described as a “cloud” or “darkness” (*caligo*).<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, in book III, *carmen XI*, Lady Philosophy says:

Quisquis profunda mente vestigat verum / cupitque nullis ille deviis falli / in se revolvat intimi lucem visus / longosque in orbem cogat inflectens motus / animumque doceat quicquid extra molitur / suis retrusum possidere thesauris; / dudum quod atra texit erroris nubes / lucebit ipso perspicacius Phoebus. / Non omne namque mente depulit lumen / obliviosam corpus invehens molem; haeret profecto semen introrsum veri / quod excitatur ventilante doctrina.<sup>34</sup>

Whoever deeply searches out the truth / And will not be decoyed down false by-ways, / Shall turn unto himself his inward gaze, / Shall bring his wandering thoughts in circle home / And teach his heart that what it seeks abroad / It holds in its own treasuries within. / What error's gloomy clouds have veiled before / Will then shine clearer than the sun himself. / Not all its light is banished from the mind / By body's matter which makes men forget. / The seed of truth lies hidden deep within, / And teaching fans the spark to take new life.

Lady Philosophy explains that the soul must teach her “inner sight” to unveil the truth in herself hidden in cloudiness: “Not all its light is banished from the mind / By body's matter which makes men forget, / The seed of truth lies hidden deep within, / And

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<sup>32</sup> Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae*, I,6,21, edited by C. Moreschini (München-Leipzig: Saur, 2005), 25,53-59. All English translation are taken from Victor Watts, *Boethius. The Consolation of Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1969).

<sup>33</sup> See also Boethius, *De consolazione*, V,III, 145,6-10: “an nulla est discordia veris / semperque sibi certa cohaerent, / sed mens caecis obruta membris / nequit oppressi luminis igne / rerum tenues noscere nexus?” (“Or is there no discord of truths / Which ever sure in union join? / Is mind, oppressed by members blind, / In lesser brightness powerless / To see the slender links of things?”).

<sup>34</sup> Boethius, *De consolazione*, III,XI, 91,1-12.

teaching fans the spark to take new life” (*Non omne namque mente depulit lumen / obliuioſam corpus inuehens molem; haeret profecto ſemen introrſum veri / quod excitatur uentilante doctrina*). In all probability, this is the paſſage McEvoy referred to. Also, this text refers to ignorance as cloudineſſ that veils true innate knowledge. In addition, at the very end of this paſſage, Lady Philoſophy ſuggeſts that the ſoul’s inner wiſdom, albeit forgotten due to the burden of the body, can be revived by repeated learning (*doctrina*). This paſſage vaguely reflects the bulk of Groſſeteſte’s text under ſcrutiny. Yet, although Boethius and Groſſeteſte might have a general agreement concerning the primary doctrinal ſtandpoint (based on the authors’ Neoplatoniſm), Eustratius’ long text reflects much cloſer Groſſeteſte than Boethius’ three lines in his *Conſolation of Philoſophy*. Groſſeteſte does not ſimply ſay that intellectual knowledge is ſparked by “teaching” (*doctrina*). By contrast, in complete agreement with Eustratius, he claims that what re-ignites our knowledge is ſenſible experience. One may also concede that in the *Conſolation*, Lady Philoſophy begs God with the following words: “Diſperſe the clouds of earthly matter’s cloying weight” (*Diffice terrenaſ nebulas et pondera molis*).<sup>35</sup> However, theſe references to our earthly condition as cloudy and heavy are vague. They do not match Groſſeteſte. Not to mention that in this latter paſſage, Lady Philoſophy ſpeaks in general terms and does not address the caſe of the embodied ſoul directly.

Searching for Latin ſources for Groſſeteſte’s paſſage reveals generic doctrinal ſimilarities and vague linguistic correſpondences. Theſe are not enough to point at an earlier Latin ſource as the baſis for Groſſeteſte’s paſſage. By contrast, I advance a moдеſt propoſal: it is reaſonable on a textual baſis that when compoſing the paſſage from the commentary on *Posterior Analytics* under ſcrutiny, Groſſeteſte appropriated Eustratius. He rephraſed and modified the text of the Byzantine commentator; he also added material of his own. However, the backbone of Groſſeteſte’s argument is incredibly cloſe to Eustratius’s text. Should there be a better ſolution, I would be happy to change my mind. So far, reſearch in the Latin tradition only accounts for bits and pieces of Groſſeteſte’s text. A potential candidate as an alternative ſource muſt include in the ſame paſſage the following:

1. A general deſcription of knowledge in the preſent condition as oppoſed to purely intellectual knowledge.
2. A hypothetical claule explaining what would have happened had men preſerved their intellectual capacity in its pure ſtate.
3. A deſcription of reaſon as lulled to ſleep becauſe of the burden of the body and its affections.
4. A reference to the ſoul’s love for material and ſenſible things as that which prevents the ſoul from intellectual knowledge.

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<sup>35</sup> Boethius, *De conſolatione*, III, IX, 80, 25.

5. A description of the eye of the soul as “burdened and clouded over” (*nota bene*: the two qualifications are an essential requirement).
6. A description of reason as awakened by repeated sensorial experience.
7. A reference to two distinct operations belonging to our mind: first grasping single concepts and then forming complex scientific propositions.

The advantage of referring to Eustratius is that his text fulfills all these requirements. Indeed, one may ponder whether Grosseteste produced this text without looking directly at one or more sources. According to this view, the above-mentioned close similarities between the two texts would be a miraculous coincidence. However, at a certain point in his career, Grosseteste found a manuscript preserving precisely Eustratius’ commentaries on *Nicomachean Ethics* 1 and 6, along with other Greek and Byzantine commentaries. As I will suggest in the conclusions, Grosseteste found this now-lost Greek manuscript earlier than expected, that is to say, years before the date of his translation of *Eustratius cum aliis*. So, why should we rule out the possibility that Grosseteste’s crucial passage on concept formation in men’s present state depends on the nearly identical text by Eustratius?

### 3. Grosseteste and Eustratius of Nicaea’s Neoplatonism

To summarize the previous paragraph, Grosseteste may have learned from Eustratius that induction and sense-perception-based knowledge are a consequence of the loss of Adamic perfection. Before the fall, men were allowed purely intellectual knowledge through direct irradiation from a superior light. However, in the present state, the soul’s intellectual power, the eye of the soul, is obscured and clouded over by the burden of the body, and thus we are obliged to form concepts from sense-perception data. However, through the repetition of sensorial experiences, reason awakens and starts recollecting a superior form of knowledge. This process involves two operations: firstly, the inductive grasping of the single universal term and, secondly, the connection of two or more terms within syllogistic and deductive reasoning.

It is now time to look at the philosophical background of Eustratius’ theory of concept formation. As I argued elsewhere extensively, a close inspection of Eustratius’ vocabulary demonstrates that the metropolitan of Nicaea is indebted to late-antique Neoplatonism and, in particular, to Proclus.<sup>36</sup> According to the latter, later-born concepts, *i.e.*, concepts assembled by induction from sense-perception data, are not a reliable source of knowledge, but they nonetheless play the crucial role of reactivating

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<sup>36</sup> See Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, 143-187.



the innate knowledge of the soul.<sup>37</sup> In the passage previously discussed, Eustratius frames this theory within a Christian context and explains that, while recollecting knowledge, the mind turns its attention from the sensible world to God. When recollecting its inner knowledge, the soul turns from the sensible particulars to the Separate Intelligence, namely the Mind of God, which Eustratius also calls the First Cause or the First Light, and receives illumination from above.<sup>38</sup>

However, in the same commentary, Eustratius endorses Proclus' view with little concern for its compatibility with Christianity. For example, in two different passages in his commentaries of *Nicomachean Ethics* 1 and 6, Eustratius claims that, once the rational soul reverts upon the intelligible world, it dances around the Intelligence and grasps one by one the Forms in the same Intelligence which the latter grasps all at once.<sup>39</sup> On both these occasions, Eustratius cites a well-known passage in Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* and does not try to explain that Proclus' Intelligence should be identified with God's mind.<sup>40</sup> By contrast, in a purely Neoplatonic fashion, Eustratius simply refers to the Intelligence as 'Nous'.

However, there is more. In light of what has been called Grosseteste's 'metaphysics of light', Grosseteste must have been happy seeing that Eustratius speaks of God as the First Light.<sup>41</sup> The impact of this new Greek source on Grosseteste is even easier to understand when one considers the following passage from Eustratius' commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 6 where the commentator distinguishes between the intelligibles as the archetypic Forms and sense-perception data. Eustratius writes (ms. Eton College 122, f. 107rb):

si haec quidem sensu et phantasia comprehensibilia illa autem mente et maxime intellectu a passionum remoto turbatione et in puro stante et primo illuminato lumine et immobilibus illis intrepide accedente.

whereas sense-perception data are grasped by sense-perception and imagination, the Forms are grasped by the mind and in particular by the intellect when it is undisturbed

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<sup>37</sup> On this doctrine, see Carlos Steel, "Breathing Thought: Proclus on the Innate Knowledge of the Soul", *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism*, edited by J. J. Cleary (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 293-309.

<sup>38</sup> Eustratius, *Commentarius in Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea*, edited by G. Heylbut (Berlin: Reimer, 1892), 294,22-25. See Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, 194.

<sup>39</sup> See Eustratius, *Commentarius*, 47,4-11; 314,8-18.

<sup>40</sup> See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, edited by C. Steel et alii (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007-2009), 807,20-808,8. On Eustratius' appropriation of this passage, see Kimon Giocarinis, "Eustratius of Nicaea's Defense of the Doctrine of Ideas", *Franciscan Studies* 12 (1964): 159-204, in part. 191; Carlos Steel, "Neoplatonic Sources in the Commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics* by Eustratius and Michael of Ephesus", *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale* 44 (2002): 49-57, at 52.

<sup>41</sup> On Grosseteste's so-called "metaphysics of light" See A. C. Crombie, *Robert Grosseteste*, 128-134. See also Andreas Speer, "*Lux est prima forma corporalis*. Lichtphysik oder Lichtmetaphysik bei Robertus Grosseteste", *Medioevo* 20 (1994): 51-76. See also McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, 91-92.

by the passions, when it is pure, when the First Light illuminates it and when it grasps these unmoved realities firmly.<sup>42</sup>

As I noted above, a text that describes God as the First Light and knowledge as an illumination bestowed by this Supreme Light on human intellect must have been alluring to Grosseteste. The following passage (ms. Eton College 122, f. 112ra) is even more appropriate:

Pura enim facta et libera a passionibus anima resplendet ea quae ad intellectum vicinitate, recipit autem illinc intellectualiter operari, et sic entium assumit comprehensionem simplicibus appositionibus contingens ipsa, non repente ut proprie intellectus neque omnia simul, sed secundum unumquodque ipsorum intellectum circumambulans et ex alteris quae ab ipso intellectu intelliguntur in alterum transiens.

When the soul is pure and free from the passions, it is illuminated through the proximity with the Intelligence and becomes capable of intellectual operation. Even though the soul grasps the Beings and attains them through direct intuitions, it cannot grasp them immediately and all at once like the Supreme Intelligence, but rather one by one as the soul dances around the Intelligence and moves from one intelligible content found in the Intelligence to the other.<sup>43</sup>

As I said above, this passage introduces the Neoplatonic imagery of the soul dancing around the Intelligence and grasping the Forms that the Intelligence grasps all at once. More importantly, the text describes the soul as shining due to its proximity to Intelligence. As I wrote elsewhere, Eustratius quotes Proclus' *Platonic Theology* here, which makes it clear once more that the Intelligence referred to in the passage is the Neoplatonic *Nous*.<sup>44</sup> Grosseteste must have found this reference to illumination by the Intelligence very familiar precisely because of its Neoplatonic undertones. The reference to the soul's impassibility as the prerequisite for intellectual knowledge neatly within a Neoplatonic theory of knowledge that Grosseteste could also find in other sources available to him, such as Augustine: body and bodily impulses are not desirable for those who strive for proper knowledge. Unsurprisingly, also in the passage from his commentary on *Posterior Analytics* under scrutiny (213,231; 213,236-237; 215,273; 215,279-216,280, ed. Rossi) Grosseteste claims that we cannot attain intellectual knowledge precisely because the eye of the soul, human intellect, is burdened by body and flesh. In short, through Eustratius and his Neoplatonism, Grosseteste had access to Neoplatonic theories he knew from other sources, like the same Augustine.

To account for the importance of Eustratius in Grosseteste, I appeal to another passage from the commentary on *Posterior Analytics* (141,131-141 ed. Rossi), where Grosseteste writes that Plato's ideas exist eternally in God's mind. As I said before, Augustine is one of the most cited sources for this understanding of Plato's Forms.

<sup>42</sup> For the Greek text, see Eustratius, *Commentarius*, 294,22-25.

<sup>43</sup> Eustratius, *Commentarius*, 314,4-18.

<sup>44</sup> See Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, 152.

However, Eustratius says precisely the same thing in his commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 1:<sup>45</sup>

Ita enim qui circa Platonem dicebant, rationes quasdam inducentes enhyopostatas (id est per se subsistentes) divinas intellectuales, ad quas dicebant omnia materialia esse et fieri, quas et species et ideas vocabant et tota et universalia, presubsistentes quidem his quae in corporibus sunt speciebus, separatas autem ab his omnibus, in conditoris Dei mente existentes [...] Ideas autem non ita aiunt, sed rationes enypostatas, superstantes omnino et supererectas et corporibus et naturis, numerum quendam divinum per quem velut per exemplum Conditozem operari materialem factionem.

That was the opinion of the platonists, who introduced certain enypostatic reasons (namely self-subsistent realities) as divine thoughts, archetypes for the existence and coming to be of all material reality. They called them species and ideas or wholes and universals. These exist before the species that exist in bodies. Still, they are removed from all of them, for they exist in God's mind [...] They (*scil.* the platonists) speak of ideas not this way, but rather as enypostatic reasons that exist above all and transcend both bodies and natures, a certain divine number through which the Creator created the material world.

In short, Grosseteste's appropriation of Eustratius was somehow facilitated by the similarity between the latter's vocabulary and that present in other Latin sources available to Grosseteste, like Augustine. However, no Augustine passage matches Grosseteste's sophisticated explanation of knowledge in the present state found in the commentary on *Posterior Analytics*. By contrast, the similarities between Eustratius and Grosseteste can hardly be regarded as coincidental.

All the evidence suggests that Grosseteste could find in Eustratius plenty of material relevant to his philosophy. At times even Eustratius' ambiguities could have eased Grosseteste's appropriation process. For instance, consider Eustratius' ambiguous description of the separate Intelligence containing all Forms in itself: as said above, sometimes Eustratius identifies this Intelligence with God, whereas on other occasions, he follows his beloved Proclus in speaking of *Nous*, the second hypostasis in Neoplatonic cosmology. Grosseteste would have paid little attention to this, for his commentary on *Posterior Analytics* allows both solutions. According to Grosseteste, the pure and undisturbed intellect could contemplate the First Light, God Himself, and his *cognitiones*, which at the same time are the principles of knowledge of created things and their exemplary causes. However, says Grosseteste, even if the intellect cannot attain the knowledge of the First Light, it can still receive irradiation from an

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<sup>45</sup> See Eustratius, *Commentarius*, 40,22-41,29. On this passage as a possible source for Grosseteste's commentary on *Posterior Analytics*, see Alain De Libera, *La querelle des universaux. De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Éditions de Sueil, 1996), 242-243.

intelligence whereby it knows the exemplary forms and the created causal reasons of things created after the intelligence.<sup>46</sup>

As pointed out by Alain de Libera, a close inspection of other passages from the same commentary suggests a very close philosophical affinity between Eustratius' Neoplatonism and Robert's epistemology and cosmology.<sup>47</sup> In short: in light of his Neoplatonism Eustratius must have immediately attracted Grosseteste's attention. Eustratius may be the source of the passage from Grosseteste's commentary on *Posterior Analytics* where Robert describes the epistemological consequences following the loss of Adams' perfection (212.216-216.291, ed. Rossi).

### Conclusions

Grosseteste found in Eustratius a simple metaphysical structure of reality focused on the relationship between the Intelligence, the separate *Nous* that Eustratius seldom identifies with God's mind, and the particular human soul. Interestingly, in Eustratius, the fall does not bear immediate eschatological and moral underpinnings; more importantly, it entails a gap in the level of knowledge. Indeed Grosseteste's cosmology and metaphysics are more developed than Eustratius', but to Robert, the Byzantine commentator's focus on the relationship between Intelligence and human intellect must have been alluring.

As I said above, the reason why, so far, no one has considered Grosseteste's source in *Posterior Analytics* (212.203-216.291 ed. Rossi) is that Eustratius' commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 6 is still unedited. The present paper partially fills this gap and provides students of Grosseteste with a new hypothesis on the source of Grosseteste's epistemology in this commentary.

After discussing the pros and cons of my argument, it is time to address some chronological matters concerning the dating of Grosseteste's Greek studies. The discovery presented in the present essay suggests the need for a reassessment of the current account of the beginning of Grosseteste's Greek scholarship.<sup>48</sup> When did he

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<sup>46</sup> Robert Grosseteste, *Commentarius*, 139,96-141,45. This passage is discussed in Marrone, William, 167-169. See also De Libera, *La querelle*, 242-243.

<sup>47</sup> See De Libera, *La querelle*, 242 et passim.

<sup>48</sup> On Grosseteste's Greek studies, see Anna Carlotta Dionisotti, "On the Greek Studies of Robert Grosseteste", in *The Uses of Greek and Latin. Historical Essays*, edited by A. Grafton and J. Kraye (London: The Warburg Institute and the University of London, 1988), 19-39; James McEvoy, "Robert Grosseteste's Greek Scholarship. A Survey of Present Knowledge", *Franciscan Studies* 56 (1998): 255-264. See also Ezio Franceschini, "Roberto Grossatesta vescovo di Lincoln e le sue traduzioni latine", *Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti XCIII, 2 (1933-1934)* (Venezia: Reale Istituto Veneto, 1933), 1-138; Philipp W. Rosemann, "Robert Grosseteste", in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English: Volume 1: to 1550*, edited by R. Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 126-136.

start learning Greek and collecting Greek manuscripts for his translations? According to the scholarly *consensus*, Grosseteste must have started learning Greek in the early 1230s.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the probable presence of Eustratius in the commentary on *Posterior Analytics* suggests that he may have started a few years earlier. At this point, the question concerns the dating of his commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. According to Southern, Grosseteste composed this commentary around 1220. Dales thought the commentary must have been composed around 1228,<sup>50</sup> whereas Crombie was keen to date the text in the early 1220s.<sup>51</sup> By contrast, McEvoy and Panti dated the composition after 1224-1225 (and indeed before 1230).<sup>52</sup> Finally, Marrone has dated the text between 1228 and 1230.<sup>53</sup> To sum up, there is no definite agreement on this, but the different proposed dates suggest that Robert composed his commentary in varying stages between 1220 and 1230.

I am not in the condition to provide a more precise guess than those already proposed, but I am inclined to accept McEvoy's and Panti's more precise dating for the composition of the commentary on *Posterior Analytics* in its fuller form between 1225 and 1230. I would like to challenge the widespread idea that Grosseteste must have composed the commentary before 1232, before the conventional date for the beginning of Greek studies. The traditional argument for this is that Grosseteste shows no knowledge of untranslated Greek sources in this commentary on *Posterior Analytics*. Years ago, McEvoy wrote: "Grosseteste had finished writing the commentary before he began to study the Greek language."<sup>54</sup> As stated above, while agreeing that Grosseteste's commentary dates before 1230, the present paper's findings provide evidence that Grosseteste displays some direct knowledge of Greek sources in the original language when composing his commentary.

But what about the dating for Grosseteste's translation of Eustratius and the other Greek and Byzantine commentators on *Nicomachean Ethics*? Paul Mercken, the distinguished editor of parts of this Greek-Byzantine *corpus*, suggested 1246-47 as a reliable date.<sup>55</sup> That would be around twenty years after the composition of

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<sup>49</sup> See Dionisotti, "On the Greek", 26.

<sup>50</sup> Richard C. Dales, "Introduction", in *Roberti Grosseteste, Episcopi Lincolniensis, Commentarius in VIII libros physicorum Aristotelis* (Boulder, Col: University of Colorado Press, 1963), xiv-xv. See also Richard C. Dales, "Robert Grosseteste's Scientific Writings", *Isis* 52/3 (1961): 381-402, at 395-396.

<sup>51</sup> Crombie, *Robert Grosseteste*, 46-47.

<sup>52</sup> I rely on Panti, *Roberto*, 3. See also James McEvoy, "The Chronology of Robert Grosseteste's Writings on Nature and Natural Philosophy", *Speculum* 58/3 (1983): 614-655, at 642.

<sup>53</sup> Marrone, *William*, 41.

<sup>54</sup> See McEvoy, "The Chronology", 637. For a more nuanced approach, see Daniel A. Callus, "Robert Grosseteste as a Scholar", in *Robert Grosseteste, Scholar and Bishop: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventh Centenary of his Death*, edited by D. A. Callus (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 1-69, at 36-37: "by 1230-1231 he (*scil.* Grosseteste) must have known more Greek than the statement of Roger Bacon would lead us to believe."

<sup>55</sup> See nt. 20.

Grosseteste's commentary on *Posterior Analytics*. However, as Mercken has pointed out, in the close of his commentary on Ps.-Dionysius' *Angelical Hierarchy*, Grosseteste cites from Michael of Ephesus' commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 10, namely one of the commentaries included in the same *corpus* preserving Eustratius' commentaries.<sup>56</sup> Since Grosseteste's commentary on *Angelical Hierarchy* dates between 1239 and 1242,<sup>57</sup> We can safely infer that in the late 1230s, Grosseteste already had on his desk a Greek manuscript preserving the Greek-Byzantine commentators on *Nicomachean Ethics*. That would be a ten-year gap between the production of the commentary on *Posterior Analytics* and *Angelical Hierarchy*.

Concerning the chronology of Grosseteste's Greek scholarship, after a hint found in Roger Bacon, most scholars point to 1235, when Grosseteste became bishop of Lincoln and had access to financial resources to pursue his Greek studies.<sup>58</sup> But others, like Weishepl and McEvoy, date the beginning of Grosseteste's interest in Greek scholarship in 1232, a little after the composition of his commentary on *Posterior Analytics*.<sup>59</sup> The real question would be, when did Grosseteste become acquainted with the Greek manuscript of the Greek-Byzantine commentaries on *Nicomachean Ethics*? This is hard to say. We have essential and precise information only about a few of the Greek manuscripts owned by Grosseteste, like the Greek manuscript of the Testament of Twelfth Patriarchs, a work translated by Grosseteste in 1242.<sup>60</sup> As it is well known to scholars, substantial evidence concerning this manuscript suggests a close relationship with John of Basingstoke (died 1252), who returned to England with Greek manuscripts relevant to Grosseteste's interests. Along with John, Grosseteste probably exploited his connections with the Franciscans to obtain Greek manuscripts from Constantinople and the South of Italy.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, his manuscript preserving the Greek-Byzantine commentaries on *Nicomachean Ethics* is now lost.<sup>62</sup> Concerning this manuscript, Callus speculates that John brought it from Greece in 1242, but this cannot be the case since Mercken found out that Grosseteste knew the Greek-Byzantine commentaries already between 1239 and 1240.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>56</sup> See Mercken, *The Greek*, 40\*-42\*.

<sup>57</sup> See Daniel A. Callus, "The Date of Grosseteste's Translations and Commentaries on Pseudo-Dionysius and the *Nicomachean Ethics*", *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 19 (1947): 186-210.

<sup>58</sup> See e.g. Franceschini, "Roberto Grossatesta", 9-21; Callus, "Robert Grosseteste", 34-44; Dionisotti, "On the Greek Studies", 20; Rosemann, "Robert Grosseteste", 128.

<sup>59</sup> See James A. Weishepl, "Science in the Thirteenth Century", in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 1, *The Early Oxford Schools*, edited by J. I. Catto (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 435-469, at 435. McEvoy ("Robert Grosseteste's Greek", 255), speaks of 1232 as the "conventional date" for the beginning of Grosseteste's Greek studies.

<sup>60</sup> See Marinus de Jonge, "Robert Grosseteste and the Testament of the Twelfth Patriarchs", *The Journal of Theological Studies* 42/1 (1991): 115-125.

<sup>61</sup> McEvoy, "Robert Grosseteste's Greek", 257-258.

<sup>62</sup> A list of these manuscripts is found in Dionisotti, "On the Greek Studies", 36-39.

<sup>63</sup> Callus, "The Date", 208.

Chronology is the most problematic issue in my argument. It is challenging to discern traces of Greek scholarship in Grosseteste's writings (like the commentary on *Posterior Analytics*) in the late 1220s. If Grosseteste – as I believe – appropriated Eustratius' commentary when composing his commentary on *Posterior Analytics*, he probably started collecting Greek manuscripts earlier than expected. Most probably at this stage, Grosseteste had not yet the skill to translate Eustratius' text into sound Latin. He may have received support from someone who was already well-trained in Greek to grasp the general meaning of the text.<sup>64</sup> When rendering Eustratius' text, Robert rephrased it, reproduced it in its general structure, and added elements of his own. However, the backbone of Grosseteste's argument is identical to Eustratius' text. Is this a coincidence? No matter how things are, it is hoped that the present paper revives and stimulates further discussion on Grosseteste's sources in his commentary on *Posterior Analytics*.

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<sup>64</sup> The witnesses to Grosseteste's capacity to translate texts written in Greek on his own are well known. These include passages from Roger Bacon's work where Roger claimed that Grosseteste knew Greek and Hebrew, but needed to be better at translating texts written in these languages on his own. Bacon claims that Grosseteste relied on helpers who were native speakers. All these witnesses have been diligently collected in Mercken, *The Greek Commentaries*, 34\*-35\*.

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