

BIRKBECK MS. III

■ SENTENTIAE SAPIENTIAE ■ Italy (Verona), s. XV

This collection of dictums, mostly of ancient Greek and Latin philosophers, was compiled for the use of the monks of the Benedictine monastery of San Zeno in Verona. The monastery was a very important and rich one in the medieval and early modern periods. Throughout the Middle Ages it had a very strong relationship with the Holy Roman Emperors (who used to set up court there in their visits to Verona and northern Italy), and one of its abbots even appears in Dante's *Divine Comedy* (*Purgatorio*, chant XVIII).

f. 1-61v: Aristotle's (and Pseudo-Aristotle's) *dicta*, from various works: *Metaphysics*; *Physics*; *De coelo et mundo*; *On Generation and Corruption*; *Libri methauroorum*; *On the Soul*; *Sense and Sensibilia*; *On Sleep*; *On Length and Shortness of Life*; *On Youth, Old Age, Life and Death, and Respiration*; *Movements of Animals*; *Generation of Animals*; *Parts of Animals*; *De animalibus*; *De proprietatibus elementorum*; *De substantia orbis*.

f. 39v-40: *dicta* from Proclus's *De causis* and Porphyry's *De universalibus*.

f. 40v-42: *dicta* from Aristotle's *Categories* and *On Interpretation*.

f. 42-v: *dicta* from Gilbert de la Porrée's *Liber sex principiorum*.

f. 42v-60v: *dicta* from Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Politics*, *Liber de bona fortuna*, *Rhetoric*, *Poetics*, *Rhetoric to Alexander*.

f. 60v-61: *dicta* from Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*.

f. 61-v: *dicta* from Aristotle's *De pomo et morte*.

f. 61v-62: Plato's *dicta*.

f. 62: Socrates's *dicta* "ex libro Apulei".

f. 62v-69v: Extracts from Senecas the Elder's works, entitled *De formula honeste vite*, *De prudentia*, *De magnanimitate*, *De continentia*, *De iusticia*, *De mensura prudentie*, *De mensura magnanimitatis*, *De mensura continentie*, *De mensura iusticiae*, *De remediis futurorum bonorum*, and *Sensus*.

Paper, ii+69+ii leaves (first and last leaf pasted to cover boards, modern foliation at the top-right corner of each folio); 204 X 146 (147 X 97) mm. Leaves are not bound in the original order, but go 1–13, 26–35, 14–25, 36–69: this error in binding precedes the book's 1851 purchase by William Henry Black (see below), who noted the error at f. ii. Collation: 1¹², 2¹, 3–4¹⁰, 5^x, 6–7¹², 8³, 9⁶. 34 lines per page. Grey-pencil ruling.

Written in one gothic hand. The titles of the books from which the dictums are extracted are written in red. The first initial of the first dictum from each book alternates in blue and red (3-line, 4-line, 6-line, 7-line). Several capital letters in the text are filled in yellow. A small number of dictums is written in red (ff. 50v, 52v, 61, 61v). Sparse marginal annotations and underlining.

Bound in vellum on paper boards. The first and last leaf pasted to cover boards are re-used from a printed text.

Written in Verona in the fifteenth century. Pasted to the back of the front board is the *ex libris* of a Peter John Bruff. The manuscript figures in the catalogues of manuscripts on sale by Thomas Rodd the Younger (1796–1849) between 1836 and 1841 ("T. Roddi Catal." is also noted at f. i v). In March 1851, William Henry Black (antiquarian and British Library reader, 1808–1872) bought the book from bookdealer George Bumstead in Holborn (f. i v: "Bought of Bumstead, Holborn, 6/3/51; f. ii: "Liber Guillelmi Henrici Nigri Londinensis, mense Martio 1851"). The book appears to have been on sale again at Sotheby's in 1891. It was then owned by antiquarian and scholar R. A. H. Bickford-Smith (1859–1916), who bequeathed it to the Anglo-Hellenic League (founded in 1913), which in turn lent it

to King's College London: the dates of these transactions are unknown, as well as the date in which the book finally came to Birkbeck.

Secundo folio: “Non solum his gratiam dicere iustum est quorum opinionibus quis communicavit”.

Four records relating to this item can be found in the *Schoenberg Database of Manuscripts*: Schoenberg_67546, Schoenberg_67714, Schoenberg_95814, Schoenberg_98285.

Dr Giacomo Giudici, June 2017

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