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Panel:
Turning Points in the Reception of Classical Antiquity

Boethius as a Transmitter of Aristotle's Linguistic Conventionalism

Shifts in approach to language, easily discernible in many Renaissance humanists as opposed to their scholastic predecessors were occasionally labelled as pre-Saussurian revolution, which had resulted in discarding the Aristotelian nomenclature model (R. Waswo). In addition, a hypothesis emerged that Saussure's ideas had been foreshadowed by René Descartes (S. Romanovski). Both these readings have been rightly called into question. Besides, Waswo's philological competence turned out to be vulnerable to criticism (J. Monfasani, M. Szymański). It would be, however, unfair to deny to the supporters of this controversial approach a certain intuitive penetration. Nevertheless, changing understanding of semantic deep structures, which they try to describe by appealing to modern linguistics, fits incomparably better the Aristotelian conceptual framework, transmitted by ancient commentators, in particular Boethius and Ammonios. Ancient commentaries being a way of doing philosophy give details, later omitted by Renaissance dialecticians on the grounds of their self-evidence and in this way provide a useful complement from our point of view. Research on Boethius's strategy, as conducted by Sten Ebbesen seems to be of particular use here. As John Magee rightly observes, *intellectus* has, according to Boethius's interpretation, a decidedly linguistic character and consequently semantic deep structures are inseparable from a concrete historical language with its cultural ballast. For this reason, within an Aristotelian frame, there is a place for both the universalistic tendencies and the historic ones, prevailing among humanists. A very interesting variant of the reversibility of the Aristotelian triad: things-concepts-words can be also found in Descartes.