

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE SYRIAC AND ARABIC VITAE ARISTOTELIS

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The extant Syriac as well as the extant Arabic *Vitae Aristotelis*, it is commonly held, are based on the biographical tradition established, "canonized" or represented primarily by Ptolemy-el-Garib and his *Vita Aristotelis*. Probably during the sixth or the seventh century A. D., a Syriac translation was made of Ptolemy's *Vita*.¹ Of this original translation only two rather scanty "abridgements" by some unknown Syriac epitomizers survive, which hereinafter will be cited as I VS and II VS, respectively. This original Syriac translation, or epitomes of this translation, together with additional sources and through several intermediaries, became the foundation of the major Arabic *Vitae Aristotelis*. The later Arabic biographers certainly never directly made use of the original Syriac translation. It therefore might be correct to maintain that the Arabic biographers derive most of their information about the life of Aristotle, indirectly and only through several intermediaries, from Ptolemy-el-Garib.²

¹ See A.-H. Chroust, "A Brief Account of the Traditional *Vitae Aristotelis*," *Revue des Études Grecques*, vol. 77, nos. 364-365. (1964), pp. 50-69.

² For the Syriac and Arabic *Vitae Aristotelis*, see, in general, F. A. Müller, "Die Griechischen Philosophen in der Arabischen Überlieferung," *Festschrift der Frankischen Stiftungen für Professor Bernhardt* (Halle, 1873); F. A. Müller, "Das Arabische Verzeichnis der Aristotelischen Schriften," *Morgenländische Forschungen, Festschrift für H. L. Fischer* (Leipzig, 1875); M. Steinschneider, "Die Arabischen Übersetzungen aus dem Griechischen," *Centralblatt für Bibl.-Wesen*, Beiheft no. II, part 5 (Leipzig, 1890-1891), and *ibid.* at Beiheft no. IV, part 12 (Leipzig, 1893); J. Lippert, *Studien auf dem Gebiete der Griechisch-Arabischen Übersetzungsliteratur* (Braunschweig, 1894); A. Baumstark, "Lucubrationes Syro-Graecae,"

The four major Arabic biographers of Aristotle were Al-Mubashir (subsequently quoted as I VA), who wrote during the latter part of the eleventh century;³ Ibn Abi Usaibia (subsequently quoted as II VA), who wrote during the middle of the thirteenth century;⁴ Ibn An-Nadim (subsequently quoted as III VA), who wrote near the end of the tenth century;⁵ and Al-Qifti Gamaladdin (subsequently quoted as IV VA), who wrote during the first half of the thirteenth century.⁶

Judging from the extant *Vitae* of Diogenes Laertius, ancient Greek biographies of philosophers—which served as models for the Syriac and Arabic biographers—seem to follow a certain pattern.⁷ They recited: (1) the name; (2) the name of the father; (3) sometimes the “social position” of the father; (4) the place of birth; (5) the time of birth; (6) the parents (sometimes the

Jahrbuch für Klassische Philologie, supplement, vol. XXI (Leipzig, 1894), pp. 333–524; A. Baumstark, *Syrisch-Arabische Biographien des Aristoteles* (Leipzig, 1900); J. Ruska, *Ibn al-Qiftis Tarih al-Hukuma* (Leipzig, 1903). For additional and detailed information about the literature on our subject, see M. Guidi and R. Walzer, “Studi su el-Kindi I: Un Scritto Introduttivo allo Studio di Aristotele,” *Memor. della Reale Accademia Nazionale delle Lincei*, Classe di Scienze Morali, series VI, vol. VI, fasc. 5 (Rome, 1940), pp. 375–419; R. Walzer, “New Light on the Arabic Translations of Aristotle,” *Oriens*, vol. VI, (1953), pp. 91–142.

³ His full name is Abu-(e)l-Wafa al-Mubashir (or, Mubassir) Ibn Fatik. He authored the *Kitab Mukhtar al-Hikam wa-Mahasin al-Kilam* (*The Book of Wisdom and Wonderful Sayings*). For reason of simplification the accents on the Arabic words have been omitted.

⁴ He authored the *Kitab uyun al-Amba fi Tabaqat al-Atiba* (*The Book of Sources for Information Concerning the School of Physicians*). Usaibia, who died in 1270, was a physician.

⁵ His full name was Ibn Abi Yaqub an-Nadim. He authored the *Kitab al-Fihrist*, which was written before the year 987. This work, like that of Al-Qifti (see note 6, *infra*), is more in the nature of a “biographical encyclopaedia.”

⁶ His full name is Al-Qifti Gamaladdin al-Qadi al Akram. He authored the *Tabaqat al-Hukama* (*Schools of Wise Men*). He died in 1248. See note 5, *supra*. Neither the work of An-Nadim nor that of Al-Qifti will be used extensively in this paper.

⁷ See, for instance, Diogenes Laertius V. 1–16, henceforth cited as DL V. 1–16: The Life of Aristotle; *ibid.* at V. 36–57: The Life of Theophrastus; *ibid.* at V. 58–64: The Life of Straton of Lampsacus; *ibid.* at V. 65–74: The Life of Lycon; *ibid.* at V. 75–85: The Life of Demetrius of Phaleron; and *ibid.* at V. 86–94: The Life of Heraclides of Pontus. See also A.-H. Chroust, “A Brief Analysis of the *Vita Aristotelis* of Diogenes Laertius (DL V. 1–16),” to appear in *Antiquité Classique* in 1965.

name and ancestry of the mother); (7) the general genealogy; (8) the schooling as well as the teacher or teachers; (9) the "intellectual qualities"; (10) the physical appearance; (11) travels; (12) "social connections"; (13) political or public activities; (14) scholarly activities; (15) some general information; (16) the death; (17) the last will and testament; (18) some particular events; (19) a list of the works produced; and (20) a summary of the philosophic teachings. As far as this is possible and feasible, we shall try to follow this scheme.

All Syriac and Arabic biographies agree that the Stagirite's name was Aristotle. An-Nadim (III VA 1) adds the remark that this name signifies "lover of wisdom"—confounding the name Aristotle with the Greek term φιλόσοφος—"the distinguished one," "the best one," "the perfect one," or "the excellent one." Mubashir's (I VA 1) remark that this name means "the perfect one," indicates that neither he nor An-Nadim knew or understood Greek.⁸

Then the name of Aristotle's father is given: Nicomachus. On this point, too, all the *Vitae* agree,⁹ except that Usaibia (II VA 2) and Al-Qifti (IV VA) refer to Nicomachus-el-Gerasi, an obvious confusion with Nicomachus of Gerasa, the Neo-Pythagorean philosopher. Aristotle's mother is also mentioned. I VS 3 calls her Parysatis, which is obviously an error;^{9a} An-Nadim (III VA 3) speaks of Phaestias, which is probably a misspelling of Phaestis; and both Mubashir (I VA 2) and Usaibia (II VA 1) refer to her as Phaestis, which is the correct name.

When recounting the genealogy of Aristotle, I VS 3 merely relates that Nicomachus, the father of Aristotle, was a descendant of Asclepius; Mubashir (I VA 2) and An-Nadim (III VA 2) record that Nicomachus was the son of Machaon,¹⁰ and through

⁸ Al-Qifti (IV VA) likewise begins his biographical sketch with an etymology of the name "Aristotle."

⁹ I VA 1 maintains that the name "Nicomachus" means "the fighter" or "conqueror."

^{9a} Parysatis was the wife of King Darius II, and the mother of Cyrus the Younger.

¹⁰ This seems to be an error. Nicomachus' father was also called Nicomachus ("the Elder"), and was supposedly the son of Machaon. This genealogy is patent nonsense. See A.-H. Chroust, "Aristotle's Genealogy," to appear in *Classical Folia* in 1966.

Machaon traced his lineage back to Asclepius. Usaibia (II VA 2), on the other hand, seems to garble the whole of Aristotle's genealogy when he insists that Nicomachus traced his ancestry back to Asclepius, who fathered Machaon, who fathered another Asclepius. This second Asclepius is, most likely, a corruption.¹¹ According to I VS 3, Mubashir (I VA 2), Usaibia (II VA 2), and An-Nadim (III VA 3),¹² the mother of Aristotle, Phaestis, likewise descended from Asclepius, although her exact lineage is not revealed. Indeed, I VS 3 insists that Aristotle's father and mother both descended from Asclepius. Hence, Mubashir (I VA 2) could rightfully maintain that Aristotle's family or ancestry was one of the most noble among the Greeks.

I VS 1 and II VS 1 record simply that Nicomachus, the father, was a physician in Stagira, while Mubashir (I VA 2), Usaibia (II VA 2) and An-Nadim (III VA 3) emphasize that he was not merely a physician, but the court physician of King Amyntas III of Macedonia. They also seem to stress the fact that Amyntas was the father of King Philip, who was the father of Alexander the Great. In mentioning the position of Nicomachus at the royal court of Macedonia—obviously a position of confidence and intimacy—the biographers seek not only to indicate Nicomachus' social position, professional standing and political connections, but also intend to point out the close personal connections which Aristotle's family had with one of the most powerful dynasties of that time.

All of the *Vitae* agree that Aristotle was born in Stagira,¹³ although our sources do not seem to know exactly where Stagira was located.¹⁴ None, however, mention the date of his birth. Nor

¹¹ Asclepius, which could be a scribal error, should read Nicomachus, namely, Nicomachus "the Elder," the father(?) of Nicomachus and grandfather(?) of Aristotle. See note 10, *supra*. Patronymics were frequently used of persons engaged in hereditary occupations. See, for instance, Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 595-597.

¹² An-Nadim (III VA 3) says that Aristotle's mother (Phaestis) descended from Asclepiades. This is a scribal error or, to be more exact, a "gens designation." Any descendant of Asclepius was an Asclepiade.

¹³ I VS 1; Mubashir (I VA 2); Usaibia (II VA 1).

¹⁴ I VS 1 maintains that Stagira was a town in Thrace, near Chalcidice and Olynthus; Mubashir (I VA 2) that it was located in the land of Chalcidice, belonging to the province of Thrace; and Usaibia (II VA 1) that it was located near

do the Syriac or Arabic *Vitae* refer to Aristotle's brother Arimnestus or to his sister Arimneste. And although An-Nadim (III VA 16) states that Theophrastus was the son of Aristotle's sister,¹⁵ he does not mention her name.

Mubashir (I VA 3) relates an unusual story about Aristotle's early training, found in none of the other *Vitae*, whether Greek, Syriac or Arabic: when Aristotle was eight years old, his father brought him to Athens and placed him in the Lyceum or, to be more exact, handed him over to a school of poets, orators and schoolmasters.¹⁶ Aristotle stayed in this school nine years, until, according to the general tradition, at the age of seventeen he supposedly entered the school of Plato. If Mubashir's account, repeated by no other biographer,¹⁷ is correct, then Aristotle went to Athens for the first time in the year 376 B. C. Thus, although we know that Aristotle's father Nicomachus died while Aristotle was rather young, Nicomachus must still have been alive in 376.

The story of Aristotle's stay at a "school of poets, orators and schoolmasters"—repeated in substance by Usaibia (II VA 28), although the latter does not mention Aristotle's exact age—might be explained as follows: There exists a tradition, not mentioned by the Syriac and Arabic biographers, according to which Aristotle

the towns of Olynthus and Methone, in a "land called Chalcidice, which is a part of Thrace." II VS 1 states that Stagira was in Macedonia. — The towns of Olynthus and Methone, but not Stagira, were probably known to the Syriac and Arabic biographers through Thucydides V. 18. I VS 2, as a matter of fact, insists that Stagira was a town "in Thrace, near Chalcidice and also near Olynthus, a locality mentioned by Thucydides in the fifth book, where he enumerates the allied cities." It is quite possible that Usaibia (II VA 1) derived his information from I VS 2.

¹⁵ This seems to be a confusion with Speusippus, who was the son of Plato's sister. Theophrastus was Aristotle's maternal cousin(?). See Mubashir (I VA 32); Usaibia (II VA 34).

¹⁶ Mubashir (I VA 3) continues: "This kind of learning [poetry and rhetoric], the knowledge of the language, the Greeks called the 'rounded or all-embracing education.' They did so because every one needed this kind of knowledge which is an instrument as well as a guide to all sorts of wisdom and virtue — showing us, too, how each department of human knowledge had been developed." Obviously, the expression "rounded and all-embracing education" is the Arabic rendition of the Greek ἐγκύκλια παιδεία.

¹⁷ The *Vita Marciana* 4, however, states that Aristotle received "a liberal education" while he was "still very young." But at the age of seventeen he was likewise a νέος.

went to Athens "at the age of seventeen . . . [where] he kept company with Socrates . . . and stayed with him a short time until Socrates met his death . . . After that he joined Plato."¹⁸ In brief, some *Vitae Aristotelis* do not make it clear whether Aristotle originally went to Athens for the express purpose of joining Plato and the Academy, or whether he entered some other school first. Since Socrates died in 399 B.C., and Aristotle was born in 384 B. C., the story that Aristotle "joined Socrates" contains a fatal anachronism.

But a reasonable explanation of this account may lie in the biographers' or epitomizers' confusing Socrates and Isocrates.¹⁹ Assuming, then, that the name Socrates is merely an erroneous substitution for Isocrates, we might also conjecture that perhaps in his first year or years in Athens—according to this tradition Aristotle went to Athens in the year 367—Aristotle actually became a member of Isocrates' school, at least for a while.²⁰ (It should also be borne in mind that early in 367 Plato went to Syracuse, not to return until 365/64.) In fact, the *Vita Marciana* 4, the *Vita Vulgata* 3, and the *Vita Latina* 4—as well as Mubashir (I VA 3) and Usaibia (II VA 28), an almost *verbatim* repetition of Mubashir's account—stress the fact that Aristotle received first a thorough training in rhetoric—a training which he

¹⁸ *Vita Marciana* 5; *Vita Vulgata* 4; *Vita Latina* 5. *Vita Latina* 5 also states that Aristotle stayed with Socrates three years, and that this information was originally contained in a letter of Aristotle addressed to King Philip of Macedonia.

¹⁹ A similar "confusion" might be detected in DL V, 3, where Aristotle is credited with having said that "it would be a base thing to keep silent and let Xenocrates speak out." Some scholars have replaced the name of Xenocrates with that of Isocrates. But the story is not that simple. We know that on the death of Speusippus in 339/38, Xenocrates became the new scholarch of the Academy, while Aristotle, who at the time was perhaps on a diplomatic mission in Macedonia, was passed over. "When he [Aristotle] saw the school under a new head," DL V, 2 relates, "he founded his own school in the Lyceum." It was perhaps then that he hurled the above mentioned remark at Xenocrates, thus giving notice that he would start a competing school.

²⁰ By the year 367 Isocrates and his school had gained a great reputation not only in Greece proper, but also in Macedonia and Thessaly. Hence, it would not be surprising that Aristotle should have joined this school, especially since around 367 the renown of the Academy was not yet established beyond Greece.

might well have received in the school of Isocrates.²¹ Tradition also has it that Aristotle's first didactic efforts at the Academy (between 360 and 355 B. C.) were connected with rhetoric,²² and that his first literary effort—probably the *Gryllus*, which carries the significant subtitle of *On Rhetoric*—was likewise related to rhetoric.²³ And finally, the *Gryllus* testifies to the bitterness of the rivalry between Aristotle and Isocrates (as does the Aristotelian *Protrepticus*, usually dated between 352 and 350 B. C., which is probably a rebuttal of Isocrates' *Antidosis*, published in 352 B. C.).²⁴ The *Gryllus* might be interpreted as an attempt on the part of Aristotle to justify his earlier "secession" from Isocrates and his school.²⁵ Of course, all these explanation are conjecture, based upon the assumption that the story about Aristotle's stay with Socrates refers actually to his early association with Isocrates and his school.²⁶

There must also have been a tradition, known to the Syriac and Arabic biographers, according to which Aristotle turned to philosophy only at the age of thirty, after having practiced medicine for some time. This information is to be found in I VS 6, although An-Nadim (III VA 6) merely mentions that "it is said that Aristotle started his study of philosophy only when he was thirty years old." This tradition is rejected outright by all biographers, and is not known or, at least, not mentioned by Mubashir. Usaibia (II VA 12) tries apparently to "set the record

²¹ Mubashir (I VA 3) reports that Aristotle went first to the Lyceum. According to tradition Isocrates for a while taught in or near the Lyceum.

²² See A.-H. Chroust, "Aristotle's Earliest Course of Lectures on Rhetoric," *Antiquité Classique*, vol. 33, fasc. 1 (1964), pp. 58-72.

²³ See A.-H. Chroust, "Aristotle's First Literary Effort: The *Gryllus*, A lost Dialogue on the Nature of Rhetoric," to appear in *Revue des Études Grecques* in 1965.

²⁴ Isocrates' *Antidosis*, in part, might also be an effort to discredit the "apostate" Aristotle.

²⁵ Aristotle's lost dialogue *Nerinthus* (DL V. 22: no. 6; *Vita Hesychii* 10: no. 6), according to the testimony of Themistius (*Oratio* XXIII. 356 -- Themistius mistakenly calls the *Nerinthus* "*Corinthius*"), contains the story of a "farmer" (an illiterate: the young Aristotle?) who joins Plato and his school after having read the Platonic *Gorgias*. He leaves his farm (the school of Isocrates?) and enters the Academy. This account might possibly be an autobiographical sketch.

²⁶ For details, see also A.-H. Chroust, "Aristotle Enters the Academy," *Classical Folia*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1965), pp. 21-29.

straight" by pointing out that those people are wrong "who contend that he [*scil.*, Aristotle] did not devote himself to philosophy until he had reached the age of thirty, and that up to that time he had tried his hand a governing cities [*scil.*, was interested in politics], his aim being to improve the political conditions of these cities."²⁷ The passage from Usaibia (II VA 12), reflects certain derogatory stories about the young Aristotle, probably put into circulation by Epicurus and the Epicureans. According to these stories, in his youth Aristotle had been a medical quack, a peddler of drugs, a mercenary and a squanderer; and only when he had failed in everything else did he turn to philosophy (at the age of thirty).²⁸

I VS 4, Usaibia (II VA 3) and An-Nadim (III VA 4) relate that at the age of seventeen Aristotle became the disciple of Plato, and that this happened on the advice of the Delphic oracle. Usaibia (II VA 3) also records that after the death of his father Nicomachus, the youthful Aristotle was "handed over" to Plato by Proxenus, apparently Aristotle's guardian (?).²⁹ This Proxenus, Usaibia continues, did this in compliance with the dictate of the Delphic oracle, or perhaps because he was a personal friend of Plato.³⁰ The same Usaibia (II VA 9-10), on the other hand, recounts that after having completed his "preliminary" or "pre-philosophic" studies at the age of seventeen, Aristotle attached himself to Plato at the Academy and became Plato's disciple for

²⁷ I VS 6 and II VA 12, however, can be reconciled. The original source used by the author of I VS was probably based on a Greek text which used the term *λατρική*, the source used by Usaibia (II VA 12) on a Greek text which contained the term *πολιτική*. — Some of Aristotle's detractors insist that Aristotle was a "late learner" (*δψιμαθήης*) and, hence, started the study of philosophy only at the age of thirty. See also *Vita Marciana* 11; DL V. 16 (Eumelus). This story goes back to Timaeus (frag. 156; Polybius XII. 8).

²⁸ See Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* XV. 2. 1; DL X. 8; Timaeus, in: *Frag. Histor. Graec.* 566 F. 156 (Jacoby); Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* VIII. 342 C; Polybius XII. 8. — Since Aristotle's father was a physician, it is probable that Aristotle had some knowledge of medicine. In ancient times certain skills were handed down from father to son as a matter of course.

²⁹ This information would indicate that by 367 B. C. Nicomachus was dead. Tradition has it that Aristotle lost his father fairly early.

³⁰ This information is quite interesting. It might explain Aristotle's connections with Hermias of Atarneus: Proxenus was a friend both of Plato and Hermias.

twenty years.³¹ According to Mubashir (I VA 9), Aristotle studied "ethics, politics, mathematics, physics and theology [metaphysics]" under the guidance of Plato; and Usaibia (II VA 28) says that he studied "dialectics [logic] politics [which included ethics], mathematics, physics and theology" with Plato, and that at the beginning of these "advanced" studies he was seventeen years old.

All sources, except one (II VS 2), agree that Aristotle stayed with Plato twenty years. II VS 2 merely mentions that as long as Aristotle studied philosophy under Plato's supervision, he concentrated on Platonic philosophy, until "frightened by the execution of Socrates he fled from Athens and stayed near the Hellespont" (II VS 3).³²

All the sources also agree that Aristotle was taught by Plato personally. Mubashir (I VA 10) is most explicit when he maintains that "because of the extraordinary impression which Aristotle made upon him, Plato did not entrust him to be taught by Xenocrates, as he did with his other pupils." II VS 2, as has already been shown, essentially says the same thing, insisting that during his stay at the Academy Aristotle studied (exclusively?) under Plato's direction, concentrating solely on Platonic philosophy.

The "extraordinary impression" which Aristotle made upon Plato is manifest not only in the fact that Plato insisted upon instructing him personally, but also in the lavish praise which Plato apparently heaped upon him. Thus, when it sometimes happened that Aristotle was not among Plato's audience, according to I VS 5, the latter would say, "the 'Mind' is absent," or "the philosopher is far from the truth," or "the audience is deaf."³³ Mubashir (I VA 10-11) insists that Plato flatly refused

³¹ The phrasing of this passage might support the conjecture that at one time Aristotle "transferred" from the school of Isocrates to the Academy. See *supra*.

³² This badly corrupted account seems to connect two wholly unrelated events in the life of Aristotle, namely, one of the reasons why in the year 323 B. C. Aristotle fled from Athens to Chalcis (see note 62, *infra*); and Aristotle's visit with Hermias of Atarneus (which is actually near the Hellespont) in 348/47. If our assumption is correct, then according to II VS 3, Aristotle stayed with Plato from 367 to 348/47, that is, twenty years. See, however, note 62, *infra*.

³³ The Syriac translator obviously did not completely understand the meaning of the Greek νοῦς ἀπεστί. Hence, he offered two alternatives, both of which are wrong. — According to Diogenes Laertius II. 6, Anaxagoras was called "νοῦς."

to hold a scholarly discussion unless Aristotle was present, remarking that he did not care to discuss philosophy "until the 'Mind' is here." And when Aristotle arrived, Mubashir continues, Plato would say, "begin to recite, the audience is complete," or, "read now, the 'Mind' is present."³⁴

A further indication of the high esteem in which Aristotle was held by Plato, Mubashir (I VA 13) and Usaibia (II VA 14) relate, was Aristotle's appointment as "acting scholarch" of the Academy "while Plato went to Sicily for a second time."³⁵ Usaibia adds to this information that when Plato returned from Sicily, "Aristotle moved to the Lyceum and there founded a school of his own, which was named after the 'walking Philosophers.'"³⁶ An-Nadim (III VA 5), on the other hand, simply claims that after Plato had gone to Sicily, Aristotle succeeded him in the scholarchate of the Academy.³⁷

³⁴ Usaibia (II VA 29) in essence repeats this story, which he probably took from Mubashir.

³⁵ Mubashir and Usaibia are here in error. According to tradition, Aristotle entered the Academy in the summer of 367 B. C. (unless he joined first Isocrates and his school — see notes 20 and 25, *supra*), while Plato departed for his second voyage to Syracuse in the spring of 367, not to return until 365/64. During Plato's absence Eudoxus of Cnidus was the "acting scholarch." In 361-360 Plato made his third and last visit to Sicily, and Heraclides of Pontus became the "acting scholarch" (Suda, *Heraclides*, frag. 2 Wehrli). It is not entirely clear from the Arabic biographers whether they refer to the second or the third journey of Plato — the second journey during Aristotle's stay at the Academy.

³⁶ Mubashir (I VA 14) says that "when Plato was dead, Aristotle went to a place in Athens called the Lyceum. There he founded a school of philosophy, which was named after the 'walking philosophers' [Peripatetics]." Usaibia (II VA 4), when copying from Mubashir, apparently combined I VA 13 and I VA 14, making it thus appear that when Plato returned from Sicily, Aristotle moved to the Lyceum and founded the "Peripatetic school." — As to the designation "Peripatetic," see also II VS 5 where we are informed that after having been the scholarch of the Academy for some time, Aristotle "left it for the Lyceum. And when he had founded his own school there, his followers came to be known as the 'Peripatetics' [the 'walking philosophers'], because he used to lecture to them walking up and down in the Lyceum." — The story that Aristotle founded his own school while Plato was still alive (or was absent in Sicily in 361-360), is based on some anti-Aristotelian tradition (Aristoxenus?). It is refuted by Philochorus, whose refutation is preserved in the *Vita Marciana* 9-12 (*Frag. Histor. Graec.* 328, F. 223, Jacoby).

³⁷ As a matter of fact, Aristotle never became scholarch of the Academy. —

Mubashir (I VA 5) further informs us that while Aristotle was "engaged in the study of rhetoric," this branch of learning came under severe attack by some "outsiders."³⁸ According to Mubashir (I VA 6-8) and Usaibia (II VA 27-28),³⁹ Aristotle strongly defended the cause of rhetoric—the proper (Platonic?) rhetoric—by pointing out that rhetoric (dialectics or logic) is the true foundation of all scientific or philosophic knowledge: "Man's superiority over animals," Aristotle proclaims in the account by Mubashir, "is founded on man's power of speech. Only he is a man, in the true sense of the term, who in his speech is capable of clarifying an issue by means of concepts and of expressing properly the thought of his mind—he who knows how to arrange words properly Since philosophic wisdom is the most exalted of all things, it must be expressed in the most lucid language . . . [and] be devoid of errors and mistakes Such defects obscure wisdom and truth, obstruct intercommunication, diminish perspicuity, befuddle the mind of the listener, defeat logic, and create ignorance."⁴⁰

The accounts of Usaibia (II VA 4) and An-Nadim (III VA 5) might reflect some of the unpleasant stories told about Aristotle's behavior towards Plato. According to one of these stories—a story which cannot be substantiated—Aristotle actually tried to force Plato from the Academy and, presumably, to take over the school. See, for instance, Aelian, *Varia Historia* III. 19, and *ibid.* at IV. 19; Eusebius, *Preparatio Evangelica* XV. 2. 2.

³⁸ It will be noted that Mubashir places this incident at a time when Aristotle was allegedly studying at the Lyceum with "some poets, orators, grammarians and schoolmasters" (Isocrates?), and prior to his joining Plato. See Mubashir (I VA 3) and Usaibia (II VA 9). Mubashir is possibly the victim of some confused source, possibly he confuses or misunderstands his sources. — Insisting that "to these slanderers belonged Epicurus and Pythagoras [Lycón Pythagoreus]," Mubashir is guilty of a serious anachronism. He has in mind the subsequent vicious attacks of Epicurus and the Epicureans on Aristotle. See, for instance, Aelian, *Varia Historia* V. 9; Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* I. 33. 93; DL X. 8; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* VIII 352 D ff.; Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* I. 1.

³⁹ Usaibia's report (II VA 27-28) differs only slightly from that of Mubashir.

⁴⁰ This story might possibly be a garbled reference to Aristotle's *Gryllus*, written about 360/59, where the Stagirite defended true, that is, Platonic rhetoric against Isocrates and his school. See A.-H. Chroust, "Aristotle's First Literary Effort: The *Gryllus*, A Lost Dialogue on the Nature of Rhetoric," to appear in *Revue des Études Grecques* in 1965. — The phrase, "since philosophic wisdom [φρονήσις?] is the most exalted of all things," might also be a reference to Aristotle's *Protrep-*

As to Aristotle's intellectual and moral qualities, Mubashir (I VA 38) relates that he was an avid reader of books, shunning empty talk. "When a question was put to him," Mubashir continues, "he weighed every word and kept silent for a while before he gave his answer. He spent some time of the day in the fields or by the rivers. He liked music and the company of mathematicians and logicians."

And "when Plato reproached him for his books and writings on philosophy," Usaibia (II VA 37) reports, "Aristotle defended himself as follows: 'As to the children and heirs of philosophy, I do not think it necessary to conceal anything from them. As to those who despise and hate philosophy, I do not deem it possible that these people could ever attain to philosophy, because of their ignorance of philosophic doctrines and their disdain and contempt for philosophy—a contempt which is really nothing other than their inability to gain access to so difficult a subject as philosophy. I have expounded the doctrines of philosophy as well as strengthened philosophy in such a manner as to make it impregnable. Hence its detractors cannot climb its gates: the ignorant cannot attain it, and the wicked cannot obtain it. I have put philosophy in an orderly form, which causes no difficulty whatever to the wise man, but is of no use to liars and imposters.'"⁴¹

An-Nadim (III VA 7) says that Aristotle "was the most eloquent man among the Greeks and the most eminent Greek writer of learned works, after Plato the most distinguished scholar among all Greek scholars, and the man who attained to the highest level

ticus, which extolls philosophic wisdom. Since the *Gryllus* was published about 360/59, Aristotle must have written this piece while he was still preoccupied with his "pre-philosophic studies." Moreover, between 360 and 355 Aristotle offered a course of lectures on rhetoric in the Academy. See A.-H. Chroust, "Aristotle's Earliest Course of Lectures on Rhetoric," *Antiquité Classique*, vol. 33, fasc. 1 (1964), pp. 58–72. Mubashir (I VA 6–8) and Usaibia (II VA 27–28) might also refer here to this course of lectures in which Aristotle probably defended Platonic rhetoric against its detractors.

⁴¹ There is a vague and unreliable tradition that Plato reproached Aristotle for having written too many books, thus making philosophy accessible not only to the "unworthy" or "uninitiated," but also to the "detractors of philosophy," exposing it to the attacks of its enemies.

of philosophy." Usaibia (II VA 16) tells us that Aristotle practiced goodness with zest; and that he devoted himself to promoting happiness among men (II VA 24). He displayed a great and abiding interest in public welfare and in the common weal (I VA 25), supporting the feeble, getting maidens married, protecting orphans, assisting those who were eager to learn, and obtaining alms for the poor (I VA 26; II VA 24). These traits of character are also included in Al-Qifti's recital of the intellectual and moral qualities of Aristotle. According to Usaibia (II VA 26), Aristotle was always very moderate, modest and unassuming, considerate in his dealings with people, and always ready to intercede on behalf of his friends. And he had much influence among his fellow men (II VA 15).

Mubashir (I VA 38), in what is probably a much idealized description of Aristotle's personal appearance, narrates that he was fair, a little bald-headed, of a good figure, and very bony, that he had small bluish eyes (or close-set eyes),⁴² an aquiline nose, a small mouth, a broad chest, and that he also wore a thick beard. Usaibia (II VA 36) fully concurs with this description of Aristotle's physical appearance, but claims that he grew a sparse beard rather than a thick one.⁴³ Mubashir (I VA 38) also states that when walking alone Aristotle would move hurriedly, but when in the company of friends he would move slowly. And finally, Mubashir (I VA 38) relates that Aristotle was moderate in his clothing, eating and drinking habits, sexual relations, and emotions.⁴⁴ Al-Qifti's description of Aristotle's appearance is essentially identical with that of Mubashir and Usaibia.

⁴² The story that Aristotle was μικρόμματος (had small eyes or close-set eyes) seems to be based on an old tradition. Obviously, the Arabic biographers did not know that this characterization had an unfavorable connotation with the Greeks: μικρόμματος is said to be an indication of μικροψυχία (pettiness, small-mindedness or meanness). See, for instance Pseudo-Aristotle, *Physiognomia* 808 a 29-31.

⁴³ Usaibia prefaces his description with the remark: "I saw a description of Aristotle's appearance in some books." Among the books he consulted might have been the *Vita* of Mubashir.

⁴⁴ Mubashir (I VA 38) also maintains that Aristotle held in his hand an astrolabe. This report might indicate that Mubashir's description of Aristotle's external appearance is taken from some likeness of Aristotle. It might also be based on a misunderstanding of the story, told by Diogenes Laertius (DL V. 16), that when Aristotle "went to sleep, a bronze ball was placed in his hand with a vessel under

The Syriac and Arabic biographers make only the briefest of reference to Aristotle's children. I VS 11, Mubashir (I VA 33) and Usaibia (II VA 35) merely mention that on his death Aristotle left one boy of tender age, called Nicomachus, and a young daughter, whose name is not mentioned. Aristotle's last will, however, which is preserved by Usaibia, An-Nadim and Al-Qifti, has more to say about Aristotle's children.⁴⁵

When Plato died, II VS 4 maintains, Speusippus took charge of Plato's school. Speusippus sent a message to Aristotle, who apparently was absent from Athens, requesting him to return and become scholarch of the Academy.⁴⁶ This unknown Syriac biographer apparently believed that Aristotle had been scholarch of the Academy for some time, until he established his own independent school in the Lyceum (II VS 5). Mubashir (I VA 14), on the other hand, insists that when Plato had died, "Aristotle went to a place in Athens called the Lyceum and there founded a separate school named after the 'walking philosophers' [Peripatetics]." ⁴⁷ Mubashir (I VA 17) seems to contradict himself, however, when he relates subsequently that after the death of Plato "Aristotle went to Hermias the Slave, the ruler of Atarneus. And when the Slave [Hermias] died, Aristotle returned to Athens." Usaibia (II VA 5) likewise records that after Plato's death Aristotle went to live with Hermias of Atarneus, and that after Hermias' death he returned to Athens. Thus, the Hermias episode,

it, in order that, when the ball dropped from his hand into the vessel, he might be awakened by the sound."

⁴⁵ See *infra*.

⁴⁶ Aristotle's absence from Athens might have been in connection with his visit with Hermias of Atarneus, although II VS does not mention Hermias or the Hermias episode. The story found in II VS 4 may also be a corrupt account of the following incident: at the time of Speusippus' death (c. 339/38), Aristotle was probably on a "diplomatic mission" (or he might have been the preceptor of Alexander) in Macedonia. It is not impossible that Aristotle was considered a possible successor of Speusippus in the scholarchate of the Academy, and that he was appraised of this by letter. We know also that in the final decision Aristotle was passed over, and that Xenocrates became the new scholarch. -- Themistius, *Oratio XXI* (p. 255 B), reports that on his death bed Speusippus wrote to Xenocrates in Chalcedon, asking him to take over the scholarchate. See also *Epistolographi Graeci* (edit. R. Hercher, 1873), nos. 32-34.

⁴⁷ See note 36, *supra*, and the corresponding text.

which constitutes an unattractive incident in the life of Aristotle, is passed over briefly in the Arabic *Vitae*,⁴⁸ and its details are simply ignored.

Aristotle's connections with the Macedonian royal court likewise receive only a very scanty and rather uninformative treatment by the Syriac and Arabic biographers. II VS 6 merely mentions that Alexander of Macedonia was the disciple of Aristotle; Al-Qifti (IV VA) says that Aristotle was the preceptor of Alexander; and An-Nadim (III VA 9) remarks that he was held in high esteem by King Alexander, who conducted his affairs in accordance with Aristotle's philosophic principles and precepts. Mubashir (I VA 18) and Usaibia (II VA 5)⁴⁹ relate that after the death of Hermias of Atarneus,⁵⁰ King Philip of Macedonia sent for Aristotle, and that Aristotle went to Macedonia, where he stayed, teaching philosophy (to Alexander?), until Alexander marched off to Asia.

As to the departure of Aristotle from Macedonia and his return to Athens, the Syriac and Arabic biographers have little to say, and even less about the tragic fate of Callisthenes, the nephew of Aristotle.⁵¹ Thus, Mubashir (I VA 19) and Usaibia (II VA 6) note briefly that when Alexander invaded Asia, Aristotle left Callisthenes as his successor in Macedonia and returned to Athens where he stayed ten years, teaching at the Lyceum. Mubashir (I VA 24-25) and Usaibia (II VA 22-23) once more try to explain Aristotle's departure from Macedonia, pointing out in a rather detached manner that when Philip had died and his son

⁴⁸ II VS 3 mentions that Aristotle withdrew from Athens to a place near the Hellespont. This might be an allusion to Aristotle's sojourn with Hermias. See note 32, *supra*, and note 62, *infra*.

⁴⁹ Usaibia (II VA 5) actually states that after the death of Hermias Aristotle returned to Athens, and that it was at Athens that he received Philip's invitation to come to Macedonia.

⁵⁰ This statement is incorrect. Hermias was captured and put to a cruel death by Mentor in 341/40. Aristotle went to Macedonia before that time.

⁵¹ The Arabs, in particular, had a high regard for Alexander the Great. Al-Qifti (IV VA) actually claims that it was Aristotle and Alexander who brought philosophy to the Muslim world. Hence, they probably suppressed the sordid Callisthenes incident (see Arrian, *Anabasis* IV. 10-14; Plutarch, *Alexander* 53 ff.; Valerius Maximus VII 2. 11; Curtius Rufus VIII. 8. 22; Themistius, *Oratio* X, p. 115, edit. Dindorf; Suda, article *Callisthenes*), which casts an unfavorable light on Alexander.

Alexander had succeeded him to the throne and had left Macedonia in order to conquer the lands of Asia, "Aristotle freed himself as well as disassociated himself from the affairs of the King."⁵² He founded the afore-mentioned seat of learning, "the Peripatetic school."⁵³ An-Nadim (III VA 10), again, says that when Alexander became king and marched off to war, Aristotle "was free and without business and, hence, went to Athens."

As to Aristotle's activities and teaching at the Lyceum after his return from Macedonia, Mubashir (I VA 31) and Usaibia (II VA 33) say only that "he had many disciples . . . among them Theophrastus, Eudemus, Arminus [Hermias?, Hermippus?], Ashulus [this name cannot be identified], and many other famous men, distinguished for their learning, prominent in philosophy, and famous for their noble descent." II VS 6 simply relates that "among his renowned pupils were Theophrastus, Eudemus and Alexander." Mubashir (I VA 35) also seems to know that Aristotle "wrote many books, about one hundred," on a great variety of philosophic subjects. Thus, what seems to be the most important period in the life of the philosopher Aristotle—between the years 335/34 and 323 B. C., when Aristotle did his most important work in philosophy—is passed over rather lightly by the Syriac and Arabic *Vitae*, and for that matter, by all other biographies.

Aside from having instructed (or advised) Alexander on the invitation of King Philip,⁵⁴ and in addition to his having exchanged many letters with kings and statesmen,⁵⁵ Aristotle, according to Usaibia (II VA 15), had much influence among the great men of his time, "as shown by the many honors bestowed upon him

⁵² This particular passage might be an allusion to the fact that after Alexander's accession to the throne, and especially after the foul murder of Callisthenes, the relationship between Aristotle and Alexander deteriorated badly.

⁵³ Mubashir (I VA 25) adds to the last sentence the remark that after his return to Athens Aristotle also "began to devote himself to the promotion of the common weal."

⁵⁴ Mubashir (I VA 31) relates that in addition to Alexander, Aristotle had many kings and princes for disciples. There is some doubt, however, whether Aristotle was in fact the teacher of Alexander. See A.-H. Chroust, "Was Aristotle Actually the Preceptor of Alexander the Great?", *Classical Folia*, vol. 18, fasc. 1 (1964), pp. 26-33.

⁵⁵ See, for instance, Usaibia, II VA 16; An-Nadim, III VA 9.

by kings." Moreover, Usaibia (II VA 16) continues, "he had many interviews [diplomatic dealings?] with contemporary kings. By these [diplomatic] negotiations he promoted their affairs and proved useful to them." Usaibia (II VA 17-18) also speaks of the many beneficial deeds and outstanding services Aristotle rendered the city of Athens, as well as of his interventions with King Philip on behalf of the Athenians in order to promote their interests and guarantee their generous treatment by the Macedonians.

Mubashir (I VA 27), Usaibia (II VA 25) as well as An-Nadim (III VA 13) seem to refer to the re-building of Stagira, when they insist that Aristotle "erected the city of Stagira," or that "he erected the buildings of Stagira." Stagira, as it is known, had been destroyed by King Philip. At the instigation of Aristotle, the King had the town rebuilt.⁵⁶ But Aristotle apparently did not limit himself to the role of an *oicist* or "builder of cities"; he became also the *nomethetes* or "lawgiver" of Stagira. Thus, I VS 7 says that he was "the lawgiver of Stagira," and Usaibia (II VA 14) maintains that he "drew up a code of laws for the people of Stagira." According to Mubashir (I VA 27), Aristotle must have been the *nomethetes* and *euergetes* (benefactor) of other cities as well, "devoting himself to writing constitutions for these cities." In fact, Usaibia (II VA 12) claims that he "tried his hand at governing cities, attempting to improve their conditions," and that "he did a great deal for the [Athenian?] common weal" (II VA 24).

Upon the death of Aristotle, I VS 10 relates, the people of Stagira, wishing to honor their great benefactor and most eminent son, "sent envoys to bring his ashes from Chalcis. And when they had brought the urn to Stagira, they deposited it in a place which they named *Aristoteleion*, where afterwards they made it a practice to hold their councils." Mubashir (I VA 29-30), Usaibia (II VA 30-31) and Al-Qiffi repeat this story,⁵⁷ adding that the people of

⁵⁶ The rebuilding of Stagira is attested by other *Vitae Aristotelis*, as well as by Pliny, *Histor. Natur.* VII. 109; Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio* II. 79; *Oratio* XLVII. 9; Aelian, *Varia Historia* III. 17, and *ibid.* at III. 54; Diodorus Siculus XVI. 32. 9; Valerius Maximus V. 6. 5; Plutarch, *Non Posse Suaviter Quidem Vixi Secundum Epicurum* 15 (*Moralia* 1097 B).

⁵⁷ Mubashir (I VA 29), ignoring the fact that the Greeks cremated their dead, says that they collected his bones and placed them in a bronze urn.

Stagira "sought comfort at the place of his tomb, and peace of mind where his bones rested. When something of a philosophic or learned nature seemed to them to be too difficult for a simple solution, they went to this place and sat down for deliberations. There they talked with one another about these matters, until that which previously seemed obscure and difficult became clear, and until they were sure about the issue which had been under discussion. For they believed that by coming to the place where Aristotle's remains were buried, their minds would be purified, their judgment would improve and their understanding would become more subtle. They went there, too, in order to pay their respect to him after his death, and to show their sorrow over his departure as well as their grief over the misfortune they had suffered by the loss of the fountainhead of wisdom which he had been to them."⁵⁸

A story, which is both an encomium of Aristotle and of the many public services he had rendered the Athenians, and, at the same time, an indication of the troubles he was soon to experience in Athens, can be found in Usaibia (II VA 17-21). This story, which is not recorded in the other Syriac or Arabic *Vitae*, is as follows: "On account of Aristotle's many good deeds and the outstanding services he had rendered the city of Athens, the Athenians decreed to call an assembly and to vote on an inscription in his honor. They had this inscription engraved on a stone column, which they set up on the highest point of their citadel, called The Summit [the Acropolis]. In this inscription they related that Aristotle of Stagira, the son of Nicomachus, had served the city well by his many good deeds and by his numerous acts of assistance and kindness, as well as by all his services to the people of Athens, and especially by his interventions with

⁵⁸ This is Mubashir's text. — An echo of this story might be seen in Usaibia (II VA 31), who quotes from Al-Muaudi. Here Usaibia reports that in a church (or mosque) in Messina, Sicily, the likeness of "a Greek wise man, namely of Aristotle, was hanging on a wooden block [a crucifix?] . . . The Christians extoll the miraculous or miracle-working powers of this idol . . . They also say that the reason for hanging him between heaven and earth was that people come there and pray for rain or for some other important matters which make them seek comfort in God Almighty, as, for instance, in times of misfortune or disaster, or when they tried to settle disputes."

King Philip for the purpose of promoting their interests and for seeing to it that they were treated kindly [by Philip]. Hence, the people of Athens wanted to make it quite clear that they were aware of, and grateful for, the good which resulted from all this; that they bestowed upon him distinction, honor and praise; and they would keep him in faithful and honored remembrance When the people of Athens had decided to set up this inscription, the decision was opposed by an Athenian named Aimaraus [Himeraeus?].⁵⁹ He objected to this decision about honoring Aristotle, and opposed it. He pounced upon the column, on which the Athenians had decreed to inscribe the words of praise and which they had set up on the place called The Summit of the City, and hurled it down. For doing this he was later seized by Antinoos [Antipater] and executed.⁶⁰ Afterwards, an Athenian by the name of Stephanus, with the approval of many others, set up a stone column. On this column they recorded such praise of Aristotle as had been contained in the original inscription. In addition, they also mentioned Aimaraus [Himeraeus], who had hurled down the [original] column, related what he had done, and recommended that he be exiled and the city purified."⁶¹ The

⁵⁹ Himeraeus, the son of Phenostratus of Phaleron and the brother of Demetrius of Phaleron, was a prominent partisan of the anti-Macedonian faction in Athens during the twenties of the fourth century B. C., and, hence, an opponent of Aristotle, who was probably considered a philo-Macedonian.

⁶⁰ Himeraeus, together with other prominent anti-Macedonian leaders, was executed by Antipater on October 5, 322 B. C. This execution, which had nothing to do with the above-mentioned incident, took place in connection with Antipater's re-capture of Athens after the battle of Crannon in 322. -- When the news of Alexander's death in Babylon (in 323 B. C.) reached Athens, the Athenians threw out the Macedonians and the philo-Macedonian partisans (or indicted them for "treason"), including Aristotle. See *supra*. When Antipater re-took the city, Himeraeus and Hypericles fled to Aegina. There they were captured by Archias of Thurii, who sent them to Antipater. See Plutarch, *Demosthenes* 28. Demosthenes, the most prominent among the anti-Macedonian partisans, committed suicide in order to escape execution.

⁶¹ If this story is true — and there are very serious reasons for doubting it — this incident must have happened after the battle of Crannon. See preceding note. The Athenians never passed a decree or erected a statue or *stèle* honoring Aristotle. It is possible, however, that in the biographical tradition of Aristotle the statue erected in honor of Philip (in 388 B. C.) or the later decrees of *proxenia* honoring Alexander or Antipater respectively, were transferred subsequently to

Himeraeus incident, which reflects the internal turmoil at Athens during the years 323–322, casts an ominous shadow on the future fate of Aristotle. When, after the death of Alexander in 323 B. C., the anti-Macedonian party at Athens assumed control for a short time, Aristotle, who was a “resident alien” suspected of philo-Macedonian leanings, found himself in serious trouble.

Aristotle’s flight from Athens in the year 323 B. C. is reported in some detail by the Syriac and Arabic biographers. While II VS 3 briefly remarks that “being frightened by the execution of Socrates, Aristotle left Athens and retired near the Hellespont,”⁶² and that Aristotle “finally went to Chalcis in Euboea” (II VS 7), Mubashir (I VA 20–21) and Usaibia (II VA 7–10), on the other hand, give a lengthy account of this event:⁶³ a hierophant named

Aristotle. Usaibia might also refer to the following: the Amphyctionic League at Delphi once dedicated to Aristotle an honorific inscription. See W. Dittenberger, *Syll. Inscript. Graec.* 3, no. 275; Aelian, *Varia Historia* XIV. 1. Late in 323 B. C., when the Amphyctionic League joined the anti-Macedonian revolt, this inscription was removed and apparently thrown into a well (where it was found in modern times). — According to Diogenes Laertius VII. 10–12, the Athenians voted a decree honoring the memory of Zeno, the Stoic. This incident might have been transferred to Aristotle by later biographers. See also Diogenes Laertius IV. 9.

⁶² This curious passage, it appears, actually combines and confuses two bits of information. Aristotle, being indicted for “impiety” in 323 B. C., feared that he might suffer the same fate Socrates had suffered in 399 and, hence, retired to Chalcis. See II VS 7. The reference to the Hellespont, on the other hand, might be an allusion to Aristotle’s sojourn with Hermias of Atarneus (Atarneus is situated in the vicinity of the Hellespont) in 348/47–345. Thus our biographer confounds Aristotle’s visit to Atarneus in 348/47 and Aristotle’s flight to Chalcis in 323. See notes 36 and 47, *supra*. — II VS 3 might also refer to the following situation: In 348 Philip of Macedonia took the city of Olynthus which was allied with Athens. This incident caused much anti-Macedonian sentiment among the Athenians. Aristotle, the “resident Macedonian alien,” no longer felt safe in Athens. In the heat of this public resentment, threats were probably uttered against Macedonian residents and against Aristotle. Fearing serious trouble — “the fate of Socrates” — Aristotle departed from Athens and took refuge with Hermias in Atarneus which, indeed, is “near the Hellespont.” Should our interpretation of II VS 3 prove to be correct, then this text would be the only known biographical reference stating the true reason why Aristotle went to Atarneus in 348/47. In the year 323, it will be noted, this situation repeated itself. This time Aristotle fled to Chalcis.

⁶³ The following reports are an almost exact replica of the indictment and trial of Socrates. It is not unlikely that the biographers transferred incidents which transpired in 399 to the “indictment of Aristotle.”

Eurymedon, prompted by jealousy and bearing an old grudge against Aristotle,⁶⁴ gave a distorted account of Aristotle's philosophy and subsequently charged him with having failed to properly worship the old gods, that is, indicted him for "impiety." Usaibia (II VA 7) adds to his story the remark that Aristotle tells all this in a letter addressed to Antipater. When Aristotle learned about Eurymedon's action (I VA 21) and received the bill of indictment, he left Athens (II VA 9) before any official action had been taken against him (II VA 9). He did so because he feared that the Athenians would attempt to do to him what they had previously done to Socrates (I VA 21; II VA 8). No one did Aristotle any harm before he departed (II VA 9). Usaibia (II VA 10) denies the truth of a story according to which Aristotle wrote an apology or a defense against the charges made by Eurymedon.⁶⁵

The Syriac (I VS 8; II VS 7) and Arabic (I VA 21; II VA 8) sources agree that Aristotle withdrew to Chalcis⁶⁶ on the Island of Euboea. II VS 7 and Mubashir (I VA 22) also relate that while in Chalcis he watched (or studied) the flow of the Euripus, the narrows which separate the island from the mainland, and Mubashir adds that he also wrote a book on this subject.⁶⁷ Usaibia (II VA 11), on the other hand, only recounts that Aristotle moved

⁶⁴ Anytus, one of the "prosecutors of Socrates," is also said to have been prompted by jealousy and by an old grudge.

⁶⁵ The charge of "impiety" brought against Aristotle in the year 323 might have been a "token charge" in what was really a "political" trial. This might be gathered from Usaibia (II VA 20), where we are told that some people (philo-Macedonians at Athens?) moved that a statue be erected in honor of Aristotle (who was probably regarded a philo-Macedonian partisan). This motion, Usaibia continues, was opposed (by the anti-Macedonian partisans?). Himeraeus, a prominent anti-Macedonian, led the opposition. Hence, it could be maintained that Aristotle was indicted because he was suspected of philo-Macedonian leanings. This suspicion might not have been wholly unfounded: Aristotle was a "resident alien"—originally from Macedonia—and apparently retained his close connections with Macedonia and the Macedonian royal court. Presumably, the Arabic biographers did not understand the political situation in Athens in 323-322.

⁶⁶ Mubashir (I VA 21) and Usaibia (II VA 8) refer to Chalcidice. This is but a misspelling of, or confusion with, Chalcis. This might also indicate that both used the same (corrupted) source.

⁶⁷ Mubashir (or his source) might have had in mind the Περὶ τῆς ἀναβάσεως τοῦ Νεῖλου, a (spurious?) work ascribed to Aristotle. See frags. 246-248 Rose.

into his home (in Chalcis) and stayed there until he died, implying, perhaps, that he was already a sick man when he arrived in Chalcis. According to I VS 8, Aristotle died in Chalcis 67 years old; according to II VS 8, Mubashir (I VA 23), Usaibia (II VA 11) and Al-Qifti (IV VA), 68 years; and according to An-Nadim (III VA 15), 66 years.⁶⁸ Mubashir (I VA 23) also claims that he was buried in Chalcis.⁶⁹

On his death, II VS 11–12, Mubashir (I VA 33–34) and Usaibia (II VA 35) record, Aristotle left two children of tender age, a son called Nicomachus,⁷⁰ and a daughter.⁷¹ He also left a large estate, numerous male as well as female servants (slaves), and many other things.⁷² He appointed Antipater executor of his last will, along with his many close friends.⁷³ Mubashir (I VA 34) presents the additional information that in his testament Aristotle proposed Theophrastus as one of the executors⁷⁴ if he wished to assist Antipater in the administration of the estate.

This last will and testament of Aristotle is preserved by An-Nadim, Usaibia and Al-Qifti. The three Arabic versions are almost identical. They differ only slightly from the last will quoted in Diogenes Laertius (DL V. 11–16). In all likelihood, these small differences are the result of linguistic and technical (legal) misunderstandings.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ An-Nadim also maintains that Aristotle died during the last days of Alexander (III VA 15). Alexander, however, died in 323, and Aristotle in 322 B. C.

⁶⁹ I VS 9 reports that "it is said that a swarm of bees was found around the urn containing his ashes." The bee was a symbol of the soul of a righteous man. See Porphyry, *De Antro Nympharum* 19.

⁷⁰ Nicomachus was the son of Aristotle and Herpyllis. Herpyllis, who apparently never became Aristotle's legitimate wife, is not mentioned by the Syriac or Arabic biographers, except in the last will of Aristotle.

⁷¹ This daughter, whose name—Pythias—is not mentioned by the Syriac and Arabic biographers, is also referred to in Aristotle's last will. She was the legitimate child of Aristotle and Pythias. Pythias, the mother, is not mentioned by the Syriac and Arabic biographers.

⁷² This is borne out by Aristotle's last will.

⁷³ The last will and testament of Aristotle can be found in An-Nadim (III VA 17), Al-Qifti and Usaibia. The Arabic version of this will differs only slightly from that preserved in DL V. 11–16.

⁷⁴ This, too, is borne out by Aristotle's will.

⁷⁵ For a comparison of the Arabic versions of Aristotle's last will and the version

A long list of Aristotle's writings is preserved by Usaibia. This list, which includes a number of pseudepigrapha, ultimately goes back to the list compiled by Ptolemy-el-Garib.⁷⁶ A brief classification of Aristotle's works can also be found in An-Nadim (III VA 18). Mubashir (I VA 35), who maintains that Aristotle "wrote many books, about one hundred, and that it is said that apart from these one hundred books he wrote others too," enumerates only twenty works, which he claims to have seen, namely, "eight books on logic; eight books on physics;⁷⁷ one book on ethics, one book on constitutions, one large book called *Metaphysics*, also known by the title of *Theology*, that is, *Divine Discourse*, one book on mathematics, and one book on mechanics."⁷⁸

A comparison of the Syriac and Arabic *Vitae Aristotelis* with other *Vitae*—Diogenes Laertius V. 1–16,⁷⁹ *Vita Marciana*, *Vita Vulgata*, *Vita Latina*, and *Vita Hesychii* (or, *Vita Menagiana* or *Vita Menagii*)—indicates that the Syriac and Arabic biographies implement, and must be implemented by, these other *Vitae*. Not to be found in the "Western" biographies are: the report that at the age of eight Aristotle was sent to Athens to enter the Lyceum, "a school of poets, grammarians, rhetoricians and schoolmaster" (Mubashir, I VA 3; Usaibia, II VA 28); that there was a tradition according to which Aristotle was already thirty years old when he turned to philosophy (I VS 6; Usaibia, II VA 12; An-Nadim, III VA 6; Al-Qifti, IV VA), and that until then he had practiced medicine (I VS 6); that at a very early stage of his career Aristotle defended rhetoric against its detractors and despoilers (Mubashir, I VA 5–8; Usaibia II VA 27–28); that when Plato went to Sicily (in 360/59?) he made Aristotle the "acting scholarch"

preserved by Diogenes Laertius (Hermippus?, Favorinus?), see A.-H. Chroust, "A Brief Analysis of the *Vita Aristotelis* of Diogenes Laertius (DL V. 1–16)," to appear in *Antiquité Classique* in 1965.

⁷⁶ There is also a short survey of Aristotle's writings in Usaibia. This survey is based upon, or taken from, Ibn Said Al-Qordubi.

⁷⁷ Like An-Nadim (III VA 18), Mubashir actually recites only seven titles on "physics."

⁷⁸ Mubashir (I VA 36) also mentions the "public" and private letters of Aristotle.

⁷⁹ See A.-H. Chroust, *op. cit. supra* note 75, *passim*.

(Mubashir, I VA 13; Usaibia, II VA 4; An-Nadim, III VA 5); that Aristotle derived from Plato the maxim of "training body and mind together"—an additional explanation of the origin of the term "Peripatetic" (Mubashir, I VA 15); that Plato reproached Aristotle for having written books on philosophy, and how Aristotle defended himself (Mubashir, I VA 37); that Aristotle went to Hermias of Atarneus in 347 because of an outbreak of anti-Macedonian feelings in Athens; that Aristotle addressed a letter to Antipater about his indictment in the year 323 B. C. (Usaibia, II VA 7); that Aristotle did not write a defense against the charges made by Eurymedon (Usaibia, II VA 10); that in Chalcis Aristotle studied the flow of the Euripus and wrote a book about this phenomenon (Mubashir, I VA 22); that Aristotle engaged in philanthropic activities (Mubashir, I VA 26; Usaibia II VA 24); that the Athenians erected a column in Aristotle's honor (Usaibia, II VA 17-18); that Himeræus had this column overthrown and for this was executed by Antipater (Usaibia II VA 20); and that Stephanus had a second column erected honoring Aristotle (Usaibia, II VA 21). Moreover, the Arabic *Vitæ* (Mubashir, I VA 38; Usaibia, II VA 36; Al-Qifti, IV VA) quote some additional and probably idealized information about the physical appearance of Aristotle.

While the Syriac *Vitæ Aristotelis*, in the main, are relatively insignificant, the Arabic biographies contain much fresh and extremely valuable information. The Arabs, especially Mubashir and Usaibia, refer to certain facts or data which are not mentioned in the other *Vitæ*. At the same time they implement or elaborate certain cryptic and mystifying references found in the other biographies. Undoubtedly, the Arabic *Vitæ* are replete with patent errors, blatant misunderstandings, naive distortions, obvious mis-translations and well-intentioned embellishments, all of which can probably be explained as the manifestations of an uncritical but excusable tendency to magnify and glorify Aristotle. This particular tendency, which permeates the whole of the "Oriental" *Vitæ*, can be discerned already in the Neo-Platonic *Vitæ* from which the Arabs (and Syrians), through the intermediary of Ptolemy-el-Garib,⁸⁰ borrowed extensively and, at

⁸⁰ In keeping with the general Neo-Platonic tradition, Ptolemy-el-Garib's *Vita* is essentially an encomium of Aristotle: under his pen the Stagirite becomes the

times, uncritically. Behind the Arabic and Syrian texts, however, we can frequently detect characteristically Hellenistic idioms as well as a typically Hellenistic mentality. Thus, despite occasional important differences between the "Occidental" and the "Oriental" *Vitae Aristotelis*, there is an undeniable basic agreement between these two trends or tendencies: both trends have the ultimate tendency to eulogize Aristotle—they differ only as to the specific means or details of achieving this goal; and both trends have their ultimate common source in the original "Occidental," that is, Hellenistic biographical tradition about Aristotle.

"divine Aristotle," who excels all other men, Plato excepted. In his determination to extoll Aristotle and his many virtues, Ptolemy one-sidedly seeks out materials which glorify Aristotle, attributing to him almost super-human qualities. Conversely, he suppresses or refutes all those stories and traditions which might possibly detract from the image of his hero. Without the least scruples Ptolemy credits Aristotle with achievements, honors and distinctions which actually belong to other historical personalities. In this fashion Aristotle is turned into an idol.

