

AFDIA - Chapter Fifteen - Text and Discussion

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On Aristotle's style: https://www.academia.edu/19535705/Reading_Aristotles_Writing

I. Introduction: The Andronicus-Hypothesis

Jonathan Barnes describes the style, such as it is, of Aristotle’s writing:

The syntax is spare, ornamentation is rare, transitions are abrupt, and connections opaque: the language rarely seems to have been chosen with any aesthetic aim, and often enough the intellectual aim is hard to discern- reading Aristotle, as the poet Thomas Gray put it, is like eating dried hay.¹

Montgomery Furth echoes this sentiment. “Aristotle’s text,” he says, “is terse and elliptical, and reads like cipher.” For this reason, he reports, most translators feel obligated to “interpolate in the light of their understanding of its meaning and their sense of diction and style.” In other words, because the meaning of the text is rarely transparent or helpfully explicated translators regularly attempt to explain it to their readers. So, to cite just one egregious example, the 11 lines of Greek in *Physics* III. 201b33-202a7 are rendered by Wicksteed and Cornford into 30 lines of readable English.² Furth argues that because the text itself is not written in good prose “no translation can simultaneously attain that aim [of being literal] and be in good English.”³