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# ARISTOTLE'S 'PLATONIC' EGYPT*

ὦ Σώκρατες, ῥᾳδίως σὺ Αἰγυπτίους καὶ
ὁποδαποὺς ἂν ἐθέλῃς λόγους ποιεῖς.
Pl. *Phdr.* 275 b 3–4

## § 1. Scientific vs. 'Mythical' Egypt

The presence of Egypt in Aristotle's work is quantitatively important, as a glance at Bonitz's index[1] or a quick search of the online *TLG* will show. However, most of the references to Egypt and Egyptian culture and people in the extant corpus are scattered pieces of information used by the Stagirite in his scientific research,[2] and consist, for example, of reports on the presence of certain animals (e.g. hippopotamus *HA* 502 a 10, crocodile 503 a 1, ichneumon 612 a 16, white and black ibis 617 b 29–31) or on certain phenomena related to animals (e.g. *HA* 562 b 25–26, 608 b 32–35), references to customs and rites such as the cult of Apis (*EE* 1215 b 37 – 1216 a 2), mummification (*EE* 1235 b 1–2), or scant traces of political history such as the building of the pyramids (*Pol.* 1313 b 21–22). Most of this material arguably comes from ethnographic and historical sources, and Herodotus' influence is evident (see e.g. the anecdote in *Rh.* 1417 a 5–7).

There is, however, another function performed by Egypt in the Aristotelian corpus, which is more interesting philosophically and conceives of Egyptian civilization as an imaginary construct, making it the paradigm of a unified cultural and historical horizon to be opposed, contrasted or simply compared with the Greek world. We can therefore speak of

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1 Bonitz ²1961, 14.

2 See the Appendix.

a 'scientific' and of a 'mythical' presence of Egypt in Aristotle's works: this 'mythical' Egypt, which can be understood as complementary to the 'scientific' one more often referred to in technical works,[3] allows Aristotle to situate in space and time, if only approximately, the discussion of problems such as the origins of practices and discoveries and the transmission of knowledge through time.

This paper aims to examine the main passages in which the imaginary and mythical presence of Egypt is evident, in order to investigate the background and influences of Aristotle's reflections on memory and time through Egyptian examples. As we will try to show, the legacy of Plato's use of Egypt in the dialogues is manifest in all of these references, Plato's Egypt being the filter through which the Stagirite rediscovers the Egyptian model as a cultural construct and a literary device.

## § 2. Time: Antiquity

The most important element in the 'mythical' representation of Egypt that we find in Aristotle's works is the venerable antiquity of the Egyptians as a civilization. Even if, as Diogenes Laertius (1. 8) reports, in the *Περὶ φιλοσοφίας* Aristotle had affirmed that the Magi were older than the Egyptians (fr. 6 Rose$^3$),[4] primacy in πρεσβύτης is more often strongly assigned to the latter in the corpus. The two key passages referring to the venerable antiquity of Egyptian civilization are in the *Meteorologica* and in the *Politics*.

The short text of the *Meteorologica* (1. 352 b 20–22) comes right after a longer section on the climatic changes that led to the physical formation of Lower Egypt, a passage to which we will return later on. What Aristotle insists on is that the land in which the Egyptians actually live was created

[3] As we will see, the two approaches are sometimes intertwined, for example in the discovery of sciences such as astronomy or mathematics. Scientific data concerning the reproduction of animals and the fertility of the land (cf. e.g. *HA* 562 b 25–26, 584 b 6–10, 584 b 31; fr. 284 Rose$^3$ [=280 Gigon]) are certainly influenced by the imaginary construct of the fertility of the Nile region: see Froidefond 1971, 344.

[4] The fact that Diogenes Laertius underlines that, according to this tradition, the Magi were said to be "even more ancient than the Egyptians" (καὶ πρεσβυτέρους εἶναι τῶν Αἰγυπτίων), suggests that Aristotle consciously created a hyperbole by comparing the Magi to the civilization which was usually considered the most ancient of all. On possible influences from Eudoxus and the Academy on *Περὶ φιλοσοφίας*, see Untersteiner 1963, 82–84, Chroust 1965, 575–579, Froidefond 1971, 345; Aristotle's knowledge of Zoroastrianism and the problem of his presumed work entitled Μαγικός is discussed by Rives 2004.

by the Nile, but in passing he reminds the reader that the Egyptians are "the most ancient of men" (ἀρχαιοτάτους … τῶν ἀνθρώπων). As the Stagirite explained in the previous section (351 b 9 – 352 a 17), a relatively recent development of the Nile Valley does not call into question the venerable antiquity of the Egyptians, as they were originally settled in the southern part of the region.

The antiquity of Egyptian civilization is definitely more important in Book 7 of the *Politics*, where Aristotle traces back to Egypt the origin of the separation of castes and, apparently, of all political institution.[5] After having explained that the division of citizenship into γένη is common to Egypt and to Crete, where it was introduced by Sesostris and Minos respectively, the Stagirite develops a digression on several discoveries in human history, assuming that it is undeniable that the priority in the discovery of this organization of the state must be assigned to the Egyptian civilization, since "the reign of Sesostris is of far greater antiquity than that of Minos" (1329 b 23–24).[6] But this does not imply that Minos was inspired by Egyptian laws, since "these and many other things have been invented several times over in the course of ages, or rather times without number" (1329 b 25–27).[7] The development that follows is of particular interest (1329 b 27–33):

> τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἀναγκαῖα τὴν χρείαν διδάσκειν εἰκὸς αὐτήν, τὰ δ' εἰς εὐσχημοσύνην καὶ περιουσίαν ὑπαρχόντων ἤδη τούτων εὔλογον λαμβάνειν τὴν αὔξησιν· ὥστε καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς πολιτείας οἴεσθαι δεῖ τὸν αὐτὸν ἔχειν τρόπον. ὅτι δὲ πάντα ἀρχαῖα, σημεῖον τὰ περὶ Αἴγυπτόν ἐστιν· οὗτοι γὰρ ἀρχαιότατοι μὲν δοκοῦσιν εἶναι, νόμων δὲ τετυχήκασιν ἀεὶ[8] καὶ τάξεως πολιτικῆς.

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[5] The whole passage has sometimes been suspected of being an interpolation: for a discussion see Newman 1887, 573–575. Even if we assume that the text is not in its place, there is no proof that Aristotle was not its author, and it can be argued for a general coherence with the rest of the *Politics*: see Weil 1960, 306–308; Schütrumpf 2005, 388–393.

[6] An informed discussion of the historiographical context and Aristotle's aim in this passage can be found in Bertelli's note in Bertelli–Canevaro–Curnis 2022, 391–395.

[7] On this emblematic Aristotelian hypothesis of the polygenetic nature of discoveries, the principles of which are set out in *Metaph.* α 1. 993 a 30 – b 5, see Weil 1960, 328–329 n. 8, with parallels.

[8] ἀεί is an integration independently proposed by Bernays and Susemihl – cf. Susemihl [3]1894, 139 – and then adopted by most editions. Without the adverb, the sense would be slightly different, allowing for a period in which the Egyptians

> For necessity may be supposed to have taught men the inventions which were absolutely required, and when these were provided, it was natural that other things which would adorn and enrich life should grow up by degrees. And we may infer that in political institutions the same rule holds. Egypt witnesses to the antiquity of all these things, for the Egyptians appear to be of all people the most ancient; and they have laws and a regular constitution existing from time immemorial.[9]

The first part of the argument, which outlines a 'heurematic' history of the evolution of mankind, finds a relevant and famous parallel in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, as we will see. In the second part, Aristotle cites the history of Egypt as evidence that the emergence of political order cannot be dated. If the Egyptians, the most ancient known civilization, have no memory of a time in which they were not governed by law, this means that the existence of a πολιτικὴ τάξις is to be imagined as one of the first and spontaneous acquisitions of mankind.[10] Egypt's remote, timeless antiquity is used as an image to convey the Aristotelian idea that every human community is naturally led to develop a 'constitutional' and political order.

Through this manipulation of the Egyptian example, Aristotle is already in dialogue, if only implicitly, with Plato's account in the *Timaeus*. While strongly reaffirming the historical primacy of the Egyptians and their legislation, the account of the *Politics* tacitly challenges the fictional chronology put into the mouth of the Egyptian priest, according to which the ancient city of Athens was founded a thousand years before Sais (*Ti.* 23 d 4 – e 5).[11] Moreover, as regards the distinction of social γένη, Aristotle contradicts the very possibility of establishing a form of dependence between Egypt's class-system and possible Greek parallels, be it in the sense of a derivation of the Laconian constitutions from the

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would have lived without a political constitution: for a defence of the text of the manuscripts, see Schütrumpf 2005, 400. The necessity of integrating ἀεί is defended by Kraut 1997, 112.

[9] Translations of Aristotle are reproduced from the revised Oxford translation edited by Barnes 1984. Occasional changes are indicated.

[10] For a different interpretation of the passage, see Kraut 1997, 112: the Egyptians preserve no memory of the origin or development of their constitution. However, this reading seems to be contradicted by the references to Sesostris as a legendary legislator in the text.

[11] For the complex relative chronology of Athens and Sais in the *Timaeus*, and the place of the war against Atlantis in this timeline, see Gill ²2017, 113–114, and Nesselrath 2006, 114.

Egyptian system,[12] or, as Plato has his Solon learn, in that of an Egyptian imitation of an original Athenian model (*Ti.* 24 a 2 – b 3), which was made to correspond to the philosopher's own tripartite elaboration in the *Republic*.[13] While Plato used the venerable antiquity of Egypt to present his history as more ancient than the oldest civilization known to Greece, Aristotle restores the correct order in the *Politics* and, opening himself to the polygenetic discovery of political arrangements, excludes any possible historical interference between Egypt and Greece.

## § 3. Time: Leisure

We have seen how, in the same passage, the introduction of Egyptian history is combined with the outline of a 'heurematology' developed in two steps: the first human discoveries were things that were necessary (1329 b 27), and only afterwards were other practices and things developed that concerned the embellishment and enrichment of existence. This sequence is bound to remind the reader of a more famous 'heurematic' passage in Book A of the *Metaphysics*, a text which introduces a notorious and debated mention of Egypt (981 b 13–25).[14] Wisdom (σοφία), says Aristotle, was attributed to the inventors of the necessary arts not only because of the utility of their findings, but above all because through their discovery they demonstrated a superior capacity for understanding (981 b 13–17). This is shown by the fact that admiration for the inventors

[12] This had been clearly affirmed, for instance, by Isocrates in the *Busiris* (17–18): on the ancient *quaestio*, already known to Herodotus (2. 167), cf. Livingstone 2001, 139–140. Aristotle's position is summarized by Bertelli in Bertelli–Canevaro–Curnis 2022, 396–397. It should be added that the expressions suggesting derivation (1329 b 22, ἐντεῦθεν, and 1329 b 24, ἐξ Αἰγύπτου) must be interpreted figuratively: see the discussion on *Metaph.* A 981 b 20–25 *infra*, in which we find a similar use of ὅθεν.

[13] Cf. Brisson 2000, 162–163; Herodotus knew of seven classes (2. 164), and Isocrates' account in the *Busiris* (15–22), while possibly influenced by Plato – cf. Livingstone 2001, 48–56 – is not explicit about the tripartite structure. On the possible relationship between the *Timaeus–Critias* and the *Busiris*, see Livingstone 2001, 66–73, and Vasunia 2010, 227–229, and also *infra*. The coherence between the outline of ancient Athens and Socrates' call at the beginning of the *Timaeus*, to 'set in motion' the ideal state of the *Republic*, is explored in detail by Regali 2012, 71–77.

[14] Another interesting parallel is provided by fr. 53 Rose$^3$ [≈ 74. 1 Gigon] (*apud* Iambl. *Comm. Math.* p. 83 l. 6–22 Festa), alternatively attributed to the *Protrepticus* or to the *Περὶ φιλοσοφίας*, but the attribution to Aristotle has been disputed: see the discussion in Verlinsky 2018, 145–146 n. 23.

of disciplines is, in fact, inversely proportional to the usefulness of these disciplines. We must therefore imagine that the discovery of the 'unnecessary' arts, which are directed towards recreation, was greeted with more praise than the inventions driven by necessity (981 b 17–20). Aristotle then moves on to the arts which have no other aim than study and knowledge (981 b 20–25):

> πλειόνων δ' εὑρισκομένων τεχνῶν καὶ τῶν μὲν πρὸς τἀναγκαῖα τῶν δὲ πρὸς διαγωγὴν οὐσῶν, ἀεὶ σοφωτέρους τοὺς τοιούτους ἐκείνων ὑπολαμβάνεσθαι διὰ τὸ μὴ πρὸς χρῆσιν εἶναι τὰς ἐπιστήμας αὐτῶν. ὅθεν ἤδη πάντων τῶν τοιούτων κατεσκευασμένων αἱ μὴ πρὸς ἡδονὴν μηδὲ πρὸς τἀναγκαῖα τῶν ἐπιστημῶν εὑρέθησαν, καὶ πρῶτον ἐν τούτοις τοῖς τόποις οὗπερ ἐσχόλασαν· διὸ περὶ Αἴγυπτον αἱ μαθηματικαὶ πρῶτον τέχναι συνέστησαν, ἐκεῖ γὰρ ἀφείθη σχολάζειν τὸ τῶν ἱερέων ἔθνος.
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> But as more arts were invented, and some were directed to the necessities of life, others to its recreation, the inventors of the latter were always regarded as wiser than the inventors of the former, because their branches of knowledge did not aim at utility. Hence, when all such things were already provided,[15] the sciences which do not aim at giving pleasure or at the necessities of life were discovered, and first in the places where men had leisure.[16] This is why the mathematical arts were founded in Egypt; for there the priestly caste was allowed to be at leisure.

Aristotle's argument is not entirely linear,[17] but its content is clear enough: the progressive discovery of the sciences and arts led to the development of forms of knowledge that had no immediate utility. These sciences first appeared in places where men were allowed to have leisure: in Egypt, the caste system, whose remote origins are mentioned in the *Politics*, allowed the priests to discover mathematics. As is well known, a fierce debate has arisen about the accuracy of Aristotle's information and its value for the history of ancient science, mostly in opposition to Herodotus' account of the practical origins of geometry.[18] But it should

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[15] On the translation of ἤδη πάντων τῶν τοιούτων (981 b 20–21), see Verlinsky 2018, 140.

[16] I am adapting the translation to the text edited by Primavesi 2012, 470; see the discussion in Verlinsky 2018, 158–161.

[17] See Verlinsky 2018 for a detailed analysis.

[18] For an overview of this notorious *quaestio*, see Verlinsky 2018, 135–137.

be kept in mind that the passage from the *Metaphysics* does not aim to provide a factual reconstruction of the circumstances leading to the introduction of the arts. In fact, by introducing this primordial, remote Egypt where αἱ μαθηματικαὶ τέχναι were first discovered, Aristotle seems to be doing just the opposite, that is signalling to the reader that he is not pretending to historical accuracy, but articulating in a mythical and narrative form what is essentially a distinction between types of knowledge: his 'heurematology' is thus exposed as a literary construction in order to present a static tripartition that allows us to locate this specific form of knowledge Aristotle is looking for, which can be identified with 'wisdom' (σοφία).

If our general analysis is correct, we can trace here a powerful application of the 'mythical' Egypt we identified at the beginning: the Egyptian horizon provides a background of venerable antiquity for the higher consideration given to the 'free' theoretical sciences as compared to applied knowledge. Because of its paradigmatic antiquity, Egypt is the perfect setting for indicating a past which is more a matter of abstraction than of chronological precision. So when we discover that the 'heurematic' priority of Egypt was not limited to the invention of things of primary importance for human life (a fact established in the *Politics*, as we have seen), when we realize that this priority also concerns the theoretical sciences, we are led to see that the picture drawn by Aristotle is probably to be understood as being more outside history than before it, exactly as it happens with Plato.[19] Aristotle uses Egypt to introduce the primary necessity of leisure (σχολή) for theoretical observation and the relationship between the ἐλευθερία of science and the σχολή of human beings, a theme already discussed by Plato.[20] In fact, Aristotle follows a similar pattern to Plato's Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, who sets the invention of writing against an Egyptian backdrop,[21] in order to develop his own reflection on the relationship between the written word and philosophical discourse.

Despite the conciseness of the passage, it is perhaps possible to detect a deeper Platonic influence: Aristotle implies that what enables this leisure to give birth to science is a specific form of political organization which, as we have seen, he thinks Egypt was the first civilization to introduce,

[19] On Plato's use of Egypt as a 'uchronia', see Froidefond 1971, 291–294; similar considerations can be found in Vasunia 2010, 223–226.

[20] Cf. Bénatouïl 2020, 119–158.

[21] The theme of Egypt as a 'civilization of writing' also appears in Aristotle, as we will see *infra*.

namely the division of society into classes.[22] A similar link between the Egyptian constitution and the invention of the sciences can be found in Plato's *Timaeus* (24 b 7 – c 3): it is the νόμος (24 b 7) that Athena gave to the Egyptians that helped them to develop knowledge in divine matters and to apply that knowledge to human matters (24 c 2–3, ἐκ τούτων θείων ὄντων εἰς τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἀνευρών), down to the specific arts of divination and medicine (24 c 1–2, μέχρι μαντικῆς καὶ ἰατρικῆς). The importance of the σχολή given to the priests, a theme actually absent but implicit in the *Timaeus*,[23] is echoed in the *Critias*, but this time in relation to the creation of myths and research into the past (110 a 3–4: μυθολογία γὰρ ἀναζήτησίς τε τῶν παλαιῶν μετὰ σχολῆς ἅμ' ἐπὶ τὰς πόλεις ἔρχεσθον). Another antecedent, as is well known, is Isocrates' praise of the freedom given to Egyptian priests in the *Busiris* (21–22),[24] a passage to which Plato himself responds playfully in the section of the *Timaeus* that we have quoted.[25]

There can be no doubt that Aristotle was well aware of all these texts and of the various implications that the image of archaic Egypt had for thinking about political structures and their impact on the development of knowledge. Still, he does not mention science in general, nor does he repeat the examples provided by Isocrates in the *Busiris* and Plato in the *Timaeus*. Rather, he chooses to mention 'the mathematical arts', and this in a context where the reader expects to find philosophy. It is perhaps not unreasonable to see in this choice another subtle influence of his Platonic approach to the Egyptian tradition: on the one hand, mathematics – and specifically the theoretical mathematics which Aristotle attributes to ancient Egypt – are propaedeutic disciplines in the education of the philosopher in the *Republic*. The disciplines of arithmetic, geometry and astronomy – three of the arts of this educational program – are listed among the inventions of Theuth in the *Phaedrus* (274 c 8 – d 1), but Plato associates mathematics not only with his mythical Egypt, but also

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[22] Cf. Froidefond 1971, 346–347.

[23] In the *Timaeus* (22 a), the intellectual elite of the Egyptians is clearly represented by the same sacerdotal caste of which Aristotle praises the freedom to dispose of their time. This was an innovation compared to the account in Herodotus' *Histories*: see Verlinsky 2018, 161–162.

[24] Aristotle's text has sometimes been interpreted as a reprise (or a correction) of Isocrates: see Cambiano 2012, 35–36. On the importance of σχολή in the *Critias* and the role of Plato in the debate, see also Froidefond 1971, 310.

[25] See Livingstone 2001, 66–67, specifically for the passage on the invention of sciences.

with the historical one. In *Laws*, Book 7, he cites Egyptian customs as a positive model for teaching the rudiments of mathematics to the citizens of the state from a very young age (819 a 8 – d 3), a choice that frees people "from the deep-rooted ignorance, at once comic and shocking, that all men display in this field" (819 d 1–3).[26]

On the other hand, Aristotle's limitation of Egypt's discoveries to propaedeutic disciplines such as are mathematics diminishes the importance of the reference to this "barbarian" wisdom in the definition of the genuine σοφία sought in the *Metaphysics*, that is to say the science of primary causes and principles: in *Metaphysics* A, all discussion of the history of "this kind of research" (983 b 20–21: τῆς τοιαύτης … φιλοσοφίας) is based on the Greek tradition. This echoes the ambiguous praise found in Plato's dialogues, both in the *Timaeus*, where the positive aspects of the Egyptian constitution are attributed to the influence of the mythical Athens of the past, and elsewhere in the *corpus*.[27]

To conclude this discussion of the *Metaphysics*: the possibility cannot be excluded that, in referring to αἱ μαθηματικαὶ τέχναι, Aristotle had in mind astronomy in addition to arithmetic and geometry, in accordance with the *Phaedrus*. Be that as it may, the eminence of Egyptian astronomy is affirmed in Book 2 of *De caelo* (292 a 7–9), in which the Egyptians, together with the Babylonians, are cited as an ancient and reliable source on each of the stars. In this detail too, Aristotle follows a Platonic-Academic tradition, as shown by the *Epinomis* attributed to Plato,[28] where Egypt and Syria are mentioned as the regions from which the observation of the stars originated, due to the optimal conditions of their sky in the summer, which makes it possible to see each and every one of the celestial bodies (986 e 9 – 987 a 6).[29]

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[26] See Froidefond 1971, 309–315.

[27] Cf. *e.g. Lg.* 747 c–d, on Egyptian and Phoenician πανουργία. On this ambiguity in Plato's treatment of Egypt, see Brisson 2000, esp. 160–161, 166, and already Froidefond 1971, 337–340.

[28] The Platonic authorship of the *Epinomis* was already doubted in Antiquity and nowadays the dialogue is considered spurious. Diogenes Laertius (3. 37) knew of an attribution to Philip of Opus, which is generally accepted by scholars: see Aronadio in Aronadio–Petrucci–Tulli 2013, 173–178; *contra* see Brisson 2005, 21–23.

[29] The *Epinomis* is here part – or possibly the origin – of a wider tradition: see the commentary by Aronadio in Aronadio–Petrucci–Tulli 2013, 372, underlining that Philip, just as we have seen in Plato, wishes to uphold the superiority of Greek culture, as shown just a few lines later by the assertion that the Greeks "have a situation which is about the most favourable to human excellence" (987 d 3–5), a statement reminiscent of *Ti.* 24 c–d. Aristotle, for his part, is not content to repeat

## § 4. Remembering the Past

The mythical and immemorial past evoked by the Egyptian setting is naturally connected to the issue of memory. In this context, we find another sign of the strong influence of the Platonic view of Egypt on Aristotle, and we can specify the use that Aristotle makes of Plato's Egypt as a way of talking about the persistence and transmission of human knowledge.

As we have seen from Book 7 of the *Politics*, Aristotle is perfectly at ease with the theory of independent discoveries, even in the case of spheres as complex as political constitutions. This multiplicity is conceived not only in relation to space, which allows him to suggest, for example, that the Cretans "rediscovered" the division of society already practiced in Egypt, but also in relation to time. Within the same area or civilization, the same thing can be discovered more than once, after a kind of oblivion. Scholars have underlined that this idea stems from the Platonic theory of natural cataclysms, as laid out in the *Timaeus* (22 b – 23 a) and in the *Laws* (3. 676 a – 680 b),[30] but that for Aristotle the slow passage of a long period of time is in itself a force of progressive oblivion.[31] This could have an important consequence: similar dynamics cannot be thought of as sparing people on the basis of their geographical location but should affect more or less everyone. Remarkably, the case of Egypt is explicitly treated by Aristotle in the work in which he deals with these problems most extensively, the *Meteorologica*.

In Book 1, Aristotle expounds his theory of climatic and geographical change on the surface of the earth, arguing for a general regularity and gradualness in such large-scale phenomena of this kind. This involves a well-known dialectic between moist and dry,[32] so that "where there was dry land there comes to be sea, and where there is now sea, there one day comes to be dry land" (351 a 23–25). But such changes develop over periods of time so immense compared with the length of human life that entire civilizations vanish before any traces of their course are recorded (351 b 8–13), nor can their development be reconstructed through the movements of populations associated with these changes,

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the astronomical ideas of the Egyptians, but, when referring to them, stresses the importance of the confirmation brought by experience (cf. *Mete.* 1. 343 b 9–11, 343 b 28–32). See also Froidefond 1971, 317–323. The Egyptians' primacy in astronomy was already hinted at by Herodotus (2. 4).

30 On Plato's theory of cataclysms, see Long 2021, 55–60.

31 See Weil 1960, 328–331.

32 See Wilson 2013, 169–178.

since these too, Aristotle continues, escape historical memory because of their slowness (351 b 22–25). It is in this context that the Stagirite gives the example of Egypt, in a passage which requires closer examination (351 b 22 – 352 a 2):

> τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον χρὴ νομίζειν καὶ τοὺς κατοικισμοὺς λανθάνειν πότε πρῶτον ἐγένοντο τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἑκάστοις εἰς τὰ μεταβάλλοντα καὶ γιγνόμενα ξηρὰ ἐξ ἑλωδῶν καὶ ἐνύδρων· καὶ γὰρ ἐνταῦθα κατὰ μικρὸν ἐν πολλῷ γίγνεται χρόνῳ ἡ ἐπίδοσις, ὥστε μὴ μνημονεύειν τίνες πρῶτοι καὶ πότε καὶ πῶς ἐχόντων ἦλθον τῶν τόπων, οἷον συμβέβηκεν καὶ τὰ περὶ Αἴγυπτον· καὶ γὰρ οὗτος ἀεὶ ξηρότερος ὁ τόπος φαίνεται γιγνόμενος καὶ πᾶσα ἡ χώρα τοῦ ποταμοῦ πρόσχωσις οὖσα τοῦ Νείλου, διὰ δὲ τὸ κατὰ μικρὸν ξηραινομένων τῶν ἑλῶν τοὺς πλησίον εἰσοικίζεσθαι τὸ τοῦ χρόνου μῆκος ἀφῄρηται τὴν ἀρχήν. φαίνεται οὖν καὶ τὰ στόματα πάντα, πλὴν ἑνὸς τοῦ Κανωβικοῦ, χειροποίητα καὶ οὐ τοῦ ποταμοῦ ὄντα, καὶ τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἡ Αἴγυπτος Θῆβαι καλούμεναι. δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ Ὅμηρος, οὕτως πρόσφατος ὢν ὡς εἰπεῖν πρὸς τὰς τοιαύτας μεταβολάς· ἐκείνου γὰρ τοῦ τόπου ποιεῖται μνείαν ὡς οὔπω Μέμφιος οὔσης ἢ ὅλως ἢ οὐ τηλικαύτης.
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> In the same way a nation must be supposed to lose account of the time when it first settled in a land that was changing from a marshy and watery state and becoming dry. Here, too, the change is gradual and lasts a long time and men do not remember who came first, or when, or what the land was like when they came. This has been the case with Egypt. Here it is obvious that the land is continually getting drier and that the whole country is a deposit of the river Nile. But because the neighbouring peoples settled in the land gradually as the marshes dried, the lapse of time has hidden the beginning of the process. Thus, all the mouths of the Nile, with the single exception of that at Canopus, are obviously artificial and not natural. And Egypt was originally what is called Thebes, as Homer, too, shows, modern though he is in relation to such changes. For Thebes is the place that he mentions; which implies that Memphis did not yet exist, or at any rate was not as important as it is now.

At first glance, the passage seems quite straightforward: Aristotle argues that the Egyptians are the perfect example of a slow migration of people that accompanies climatic changes, and gives details of the reasons for their movement towards the increasingly dry Nile delta, in accordance with the received knowledge of his time and evidently intervening in

debates concerning not only Egyptian history and geography,[33] but also Homeric scholarship.[34] What is especially interesting for us is to determine how this example relates to the general principle affirmed at the beginning of the text we have quoted, concerning the preservation of memory through slow and gradual migrations, and how it relates to what Plato says in the *Timaeus*. One possible interpretation is that Aristotle is here taking a stand against Plato, implying that Egypt is no exception when it comes to the impact of cataclysms and the occurrence of long-lasting, and therefore easily forgotten, changes in both climate and civilization. On the contrary, it is one of the best examples to evoke when dealing with such phenomena. It will be useful to recall the words that Plato attributes to the Egyptian priest speaking to Solon at the beginning of the *Timaeus*: the region of Egypt is protected from all catastrophes by its climate and by the Nile, so that civilization has continued uninterruptedly and has preserved the memory of human history more completely than anywhere else.

According to a reading of Aristotle such as the one here presented – and which has been proposed, among others, by Christian Froidefond in his book on the "Egyptian mirage"[35] and by Malcolm Wilson in his study on the *Meteorologica*[36] – the priest's speech in the *Timaeus* would make no sense, and Aristotle would here be refuting Plato's argument by pointing out the impossibility of believing that a particular civilization could maintain an uninterrupted memory of its history throughout the ages. It is more than likely that Aristotle had the *Timaeus* in mind when writing these pages of the *Meteorologica*, as is also suggested by the mention of the Greek myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha, which occurs in

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[33] The role of the Nile in the development and maintenance of Egyptian civilization was already known to Herodotus (2. 5, with the famous description of Egypt as "a gift of the Nile") and the fact that the delta area was of recent origin was not unknown (2. 10, 15). Herodotus had a different opinion about the antiquity of Memphis (2. 99), but when he affirms that ancient Egypt corresponds to the region called Thebes, Aristotle closely follows the historian, using almost the same wording (2. 15). Aristotle apparently devoted a treatise to the river, the *Περὶ τῆς τοῦ Νείλου ἀναβάσεως*, of which a medieval Latin epitome survives: on the problem, see De Nardis 1992.

[34] For another example of such a geographical *quaestio* in connection with Homer, see fr. 169 Rose$^3$ [= 392 Gigon] *apud Schol. Od*. 4. 356 a 1 Pontani.

[35] Froidefond 1971, 345.

[36] Wilson 2013, 174, n. 141: the scholar credits "an anonymous reader" for this intuition.

both texts (Pl. *Ti.* 22 a 7 – b 1; Arist. *Mete.* 1. 352 a 32–33), and this reading cannot be excluded: Aristotle's criticism of the *Timaeus* is well known, and we have already seen that the reaffirmation of the primacy of Egypt in terms of πρεσβύτης that occurs later in the same passage (352 b 10–22) can be understood as a correction of what Plato invents about his mythical ancient Athens.[37] Nevertheless, this reading should probably be tempered, for Aristotle does not say that in a case like that of Egypt all memory of previous events is lost, but only that men do not remember "who came first" (τίνες πρῶτοι), and "when" (πότε), and "what the land was like" (πῶς ἐχόντων … τῶν τόπων): what is forgotten are the details. The persistence of the memory of major events – and of the migration itself – is not called into question, and it should also be noted that Aristotle explicitly refers to a source, Homer, in order to defend his position: this would be proof that a form of memory of these events persists, precisely in the case of Egypt,[38] which makes it a perfect example for imagining lesser known, or entirely forgotten, similar cases.[39]

## § 5. Transmitting Memory

If this is so, how can memory be preserved through change? One last feature that allows us to detect a correlation between Aristotle and Plato's Egypt is the written word. In Plato, the use of Egypt in the discussion of the value of written discourse and its comparison with the living and oral practice of philosophy is well known: the interpretation of the Egyptian tale of the *Phaedrus* has been one of the crucial points in the debate on the hermeneutic procedures we use to read Plato's written dialogues. Writing is also referred to in the *Timaeus* story: the memory of ancient events is entrusted to written records, which are kept in the sacred temples (23 a 1–4), so that they are "saved" (23 a 4: σεσωσμένα) from oblivion. One of the difficulties in preserving the memory of the past in regions such as Greece is the lack of a continuous written record:

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[37] Cf. *supra* pp. 242–243.

[38] Since Aristotle closely follows Herodotus, he could not ignore the fact that the historian attributed to the priests knowledge of the evolution of the country and the Nile region (2. 10, 15).

[39] Such as the case of Argolid, discussed just after Egypt (352 a 9–18): see Verlinsky 2007 [А. Л. Верлинский, "Аристотель о высыхании Арголиды (*Meteor*. I, 14, 352 a 9–13)"].

whole generations are left metaphorically "voiceless" (23 c 3: γράμμασιν … ἀφώνους), because in each of the cataclysms only the illiterate and uncultured part of the population is spared (23 b 1: τοὺς ἀγραμμάτους τε καὶ ἀμούσους). The redaction of written records is therefore of primary importance in the *Timaeus* narrative, but the priest chooses not to rely on them in presenting the ancient history of Athens and Atlantis: he proposes himself to show "briefly" (23 e 5: διὰ βραχέων) the laws and deeds of the ancient Athenians, adding that there will be an opportunity to check the details (τὸ δ' ἀκριβές) in the books themselves, but this will require the appropriate amount of leisure (24 a 1–2: κατὰ σχολήν).[40] In other words, written records are an instrument of transmission, but their use is somewhat limited, and they are only used to confirm and verify a parallel oral tradition:[41] it should not be forgotten that Egypt is the country of both Thamous and Theuth, the birthplace of both writing and the criticism of writing. In the *Timaeus*, too, Egypt is an imaginary geographical setting for the ambivalent value of writing.[42]

The same ambivalence is associated with Egypt in Aristotle, in an ambiguous text from Book 3 of the *Politics*. The Stagirite contrasts the state governed by laws with the state governed by a βασιλεύς[43] and, specifically, gives the arguments of the defenders of kingship.[44] In no case, they argue, should one base the practice of a science on written rules, as this would be utterly foolish (1286 a 12: ἠλίθιον), since laws are not adapted to the contingency of specific situations and concern the universal (1286 a 10: τὸ καθόλου), "hence it is clear that a government acting according to written laws is plainly not the best" (1286 a 14–16). Between the premisses and the conclusion of this argument we find a curious example, of which we do not know exactly what to make (1286 a 12–14):

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[40] Reading and writing take time, as Plato never fails to remind us (cf. *Tht.* 143 a 2). Here we possibly have another subtle trace of the σχολή theme associated with the Egyptian priests, on which see *supra* pp. 244–245.

[41] In addition to the γράμματα, the Muses, as daughters of Mnemosyne, ensure transmission through memory: hence the detail that the men who are saved from catastrophes are both ἀγράμματοι and ἄμουσοι.

[42] See already Brisson 2000, 157–158. On the ambiguous role of writing in the transmission of the Atlantis tale, see Tulli 1994, 97–103.

[43] On the Platonic (and anti-Platonic) background of this debate, see Accattino, in Accattino–Curnis 2013, 14–17.

[44] The opposite argument will be set out later, with the reprise of the technical example (1287 a 33–41): see Wexler–Irvine 2006, 14–16.

> καί πως ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ μετὰ τὴν τετρήμερον κινεῖν ἔξεστι τοῖς ἰατροῖς (ἐὰν δὲ πρότερον, ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτοῦ κινδύνῳ).
>
> And in Egypt the physician is allowed to somehow alter his treatment after the fourth day, but if sooner, he takes the risk.

The role of the reference to this Egyptian custom is unclear. It is commonly understood that κινεῖν, in the context, must refer to divergence from a written prescription, and it is clear that the overall argument here presented by Aristotle is that in medicine a doctor should not be bound by written prescriptions, as the application of the art concerns in each case the individual and not the universal.[45] A doctor must thus be prepared to adapt his recommended treatment to each specific case. What is not at all clear is whether the Egyptian practice is being invoked as a positive or a negative example in this context, and what the function of this "sandwiched" example is in either case. The positive interpretation of the example is the most common, to the point that Ross decided to make it clear in the text by integrating the adverb εὖ before πως.[46] If we follow this reading,[47] the Egyptian physicians are an example of the possibility of changing the prescribed treatment according to the evolution of the patient's condition over a period of time.[48]

Scholars who interpret the passage as a negative example stress that the νόμος applied here to medicine is not primarily the written prescription from which the physician can be released after the fourth day, but precisely the rule which obliges him to wait four days[49] before changing his treatment,[50] if he does not want to incur a κίνδυνος, which is probably

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[45] Cf. *Metaph.* A 981 a 19–21, with Cambiano 2012, 21–22.

[46] Ross 1957, 100. Other editors have intervened: Newman 1902, 98, followed by Aubonnet 1971, 91, excises πως, interpreting it as the interpolation of a marginal πῶς; by a copyist who did not understand the meaning of the text, while Curnis, in Accattino–Curnis 2013, 124–126, interprets the sentence as a question and prints πῶς … ἰατροῖς; But the function that this (rhetorical?) question would have here is quite unclear: see *infra* n. 53.

[47] See, among others, Tricot 1962, 241, Pellegrin 1990, 262, Mueller-Goldingen 2016, 235, and obviously all the translators and commentators uncritically reproducing the authoritative text printed by Ross 1957.

[48] This period is considered short by the interpreters following this reading: see e.g. Viano 1955, 164 ("dopo solo quattro giorni").

[49] This is considered too long a lapse of time by interpreters following this reading: see e.g. Aubonnet 1971, 91.

[50] See e.g. Aubonnet 1971, 91; Froidefond 1971, 349.

to be read as a legal penalty if the treatment does not work.[51] I find this second interpretation more convincing than the first, as it would show that Aristotle is invoking a proper, juridical νόμος, applied to a τέχνη. But if this reading is correct, the problem of the function of the example is obvious: why is the Stagirite introducing this custom here? Is he suggesting that the Egyptians are ἠλίθιοι? Is he introducing an objection?[52]

We may be able to find a middle ground: in itself, the example is neither entirely positive nor negative, but rather functional to Aristotle's present argument. By claiming that even in strict Egypt some form of exception was contemplated for physicians, Aristotle is able to argue that no civilization, even the strictest, had ever accepted to fully entrust the operation of a *techne* such as medicine to static written prescriptions. The fact that this exception was established by a written νόμος obliging each and every physician to start from the prescription, allowing them to apply a different treatment – even if not radically, as can be suggested by the adverb πως[53] – only after the fourth day, may be ironic, but it once again reflects the portrayal of Egyptian civilization as one based on ancient, unchangeable, and written laws.[54]

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[51] An interesting parallel, which gives a more precise formulation of this law, is found in Diodorus (1. 82. 3). I give the passage in the translation by Oldfather 1933: "the physicians draw their support from public funds and administer their treatments in accordance with a written law which was composed in ancient times by many famous physicians. If they follow the rules of this law as they read them in the sacred book and yet are unable to save their patient, they are absolved from any charge and go unpunished; but if they go contrary to the law's prescriptions in any respect, they must submit to a trial with death as the penalty, the lawgiver holding that but few physicians would ever show themselves wiser than the mode of treatment which had been closely followed for a long period and had been originally prescribed by the ablest practitioners". There are no grounds to the suggestion formulated by Burton 1972, 239–240, who, rather haphazardly, implies that the four-day period mentioned by Aristotle and not found in Diodorus would be the result of a misunderstanding of the three days that elapsed before a corpse was handed over to the embalmers.

[52] This is what seems to be implied in the translation by Curnis in Accattino–Curnis 2013, 126, which interprets the sentence as a question ("e come mai in Egitto ai medici è consentito derogare dalle regole dopo quattro giorni e se lo fanno prima, è a loro rischio e pericolo?").

[53] If we understand this often excised adverb (see *supra* n. 47) as modifying κινεῖν ἔξεστι, we could think that the physician was allowed to change the prescribed mode of treatment only to a certain extent. I thank the anonymous referee of the journal for this suggestion.

[54] On the antiquity and unvarying nature of the Egyptian constitution, see *supra* pp. 241–242.

The Egyptian setting of the example thus seems to be charged with the same symbolic "mythical" role that informed Plato's decision to set his imaginative representation of the reflection on the ambivalence of writing in the same country: it is not unreasonable, I think, to see, even in such a minimal detail, the heritage of the *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus*.

## § 6. Conclusions

The analysis of selected passages in which Aristotle refers to Egypt has shown that there are traces of a "mythical" function of the Egyptian setting in the Stagirite's works. Egypt is used as a timeless horizon in which the traces of the passage of time itself and its influence on human behaviour and cultural practices can be seen. It is the setting for the origins of both mankind and human expressions in the fields of politics and science, making it the perfect fictional and symbolic location for discussing memory and the transmission of knowledge across the ages. By emphasizing this association with time, tradition and memory, Aristotle treats Egypt as a paradigmatic, semi-legendary backdrop to evoke and discuss the central issues of the acquisition, preservation and renewal of knowledge over time.

Even though specific correspondences are not immediately visible, it is clear that in this use of Egypt as a philosophical tool, Aristotle is inspired by Plato's Egyptian tales in the *Timaeus* and in the *Phaedrus*, but feels free to correct his model and to introduce novel elements that he recovers from the historical or ethnographic tradition. Most strikingly, Aristotle's Egypt, unlike Plato's, is not the paradigm of an entirely ideal and unnatural reality, a singular haven of unity and continuity with tradition, somehow protected from the inexorable rules of tragic and perpetual mutation that affect the rest of the world. Rather, it represents the imaginary construction of an almost unchanging civilization in a world of constant but recurring change.

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## *Appendix*

Mentions of Egypt in Aristotle[55]

| Bekker pages | Type | Egypt (place) or Egyptians (people / culture) | Content / context |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Analytica posteriora* | |
| 98 a 29–34 | example | Egypt | example of πρόβλημα concerning the flow of the Nile |
| | | *De caelo* | |
| 274 b 15–16 | example | Egypt | "in Egypt" = example of place |
| 292 a 7–9 | historical-cultural | Egyptians | ancient and excellent mastery of astronomy (mentioned together with the Babylonians) / sources of knowledge about the stars |
| 298 a 3–4 | scientific | Egypt | some stars visible in Egypt (and in Cyprus) are not visible in the North |
| | | *Meteorologica* | |
| 343 b 9–11 | scientific / historical-cultural | Egyptians | Egyptian astronomers attest that some of the fixed stars can get a tail, and this is confirmed by observation |
| 343 b 28–32 | scientific / historical-cultural | Egyptians | Egyptian astronomers affirm that conjunctions of the planets with one another, and with the fixed stars, can take place, and this is confirmed by observation |
| 351 b 25 – 352 a 2 | scientific / historical | Egypt / Egyptians | morphologic and climatic change in the region, northern Egypt generated from a deposit of the Nile, migration of the Egyptians from Thebes towards the Delta |
| 352 b 19–30 | scientific / historical-cultural | Egypt / Egyptians | Egyptians are the most ancient of men, their actual land has been produced by the river. History of the aborted attempts to make a canal to the Red Sea (Sesostris and Darius) |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Historia animalium* | | | |
| 500 a 4–6 | historical-cultural | Egyptians | the Egyptians call some snakes 'horned' even if they do not technically have horns |
| 502 a 10 | scientific | Egypt | home of the Egyptian hippopotamus |
| 503 a 1 | scientific | Egypt | home of the Egyptian crocodile |
| 557 a 29–31 | scientific | Egypt | presence of a specific kind of fish in the sea between Cyrene and Egypt |
| 559 b 1–2 | scientific | Egypt | eggs can be hatched spontaneously in the ground, by being buried in dung heaps, as it is done in Egypt |
| 562 b 25–26 | scientific | Egypt | in Egypt hens lay twelve times a year |
| 581 a 1–2 | scientific | Egypt | home of a specific kind of mice covered with bristles like hedgehogs |
| 584 b 6–10 | scientific | Egypt | among the regions in which eight-months' children usually live and are brought up |
| 584 b 31 | scientific | Egypt | among the regions in which twin-births are more frequent |
| 597 a 4–6 | scientific | Egypt | cranes migrate towards southern Egypt and the sources of the Nile |
| 606 a 21–25 | scientific | Egypt | in Egypt some animals are bigger than in Greece, some smaller, some of around the same size |
| 608 b 32–35 | scientific | Egypt | in Egypt animals are abundantly fed, thus even the fiercest creatures live peaceably together |
| 612 a 16 | scientific | Egypt | home of a species of ichneumon |
| 617 b 29–31 | scientific | Egypt | home of the white and the black ibis |

[55] I am not including dubious or spurious works.

| Bekker pages | Type | Egypt (place) or Egyptians (people / culture) | Content / context |
|---|---|---|---|
| *De generatione animalium* | | | |
| 770 a 33–35 | scientific | Egypt | in Egypt most species are multiparous, therefore monstrosity occurs more often |
| *Metaphysica* | | | |
| 981 b 23–25 | historical-cultural | Egyptians | birth of mathematics, thanks to the leisure accorded to priests |
| *Ethica Eudemia* | | | |
| 1215 b 37 – 1216 a 2 | example / historical-cultural | Egyptians | cult of Apis as an example of animals being given licence to satisfy their desires / argument against a brute form of hedonism (sex and food) |
| 1235 b 1–2 | example / historical-cultural | Egyptians | practice of keeping (mummifying) corpses (example in exposition of the 'useful' as ethical criterion) |
| *Politica* | | | |
| 1286 a 12–14 | historical-cultural | Egyptians | Egyptian physicians are allowed to deviate from prescribed treatments after the fourth day |
| 1313 b 21–22 | historical-cultural | Egyptians | construction of the Pyramids as an example of a means to keep the peasants working and thus avoid conspiracies against the rulers |
| 1329 b 2–5; 22–25 | historical-cultural | Egyptians | Egyptian laws (dating back to Sesostris) establish a division into social classes; Sesostris is way more ancient than Minos, so that we must assume that he was the first to propose such division |
| 1329 b 31–33 | historical-cultural | Egyptians | Egyptians are the most ancient of peoples, and they have always known laws and institutions |
| *Rhetorica* | | | |
| 1393 a 32 – b 4 | example / historical | Egypt | Egypt's strategic position in the Persians' campaigns against Europe (example of persuasion based on historical events) |
| 1417 a 5–7 | example / historical | Egyptians | a phrase attributed to the Egyptian mutineers in Herodotus (2. 30) |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Athenaion Politeia* | | | |
| 11 | historical | Egypt | Solon, after having passed his legislation, quits Athens and goes to Egypt |
| *Fragmenta* (R. = Rose[3], G. = Gigon) | | | |
| fr. 6 R. = 23 G. (from *De philosophia*; *ap.* D. L. 1. 8) | historical | Egyptians | the Magi are more ancient than the Egyptians |
| fr. 169 R. = 392 c G. (from *Problemata Homerica*, *apud Sch. Od.* 4. 356 a 1 Pontani) | historical | Egypt | the head of the Nile anciently used to be located at Naucratis (= solution of a Homeric problem concerning *Od.* 4. 354–357: how can sailing from Pharos to Egypt take a whole day?) |
| fr. 283 R. = 285 G. (*ap.* Orib. *Coll. Med.*, *CMG* IV, p. 99, 14 – 102, 24 Raeder) | scientific | Egypt | in Egypt eight-months' children usually live and are brought up, due to favourable climatic condition and various other causes (cf. *HA* 584 b 6–10) |
| fr. 284 R. = 280 G. (*ap.* Str. 15. 22, 695) | scientific | Egypt | cases of quadruplets and septuplets in Egypt; fertility of the Nile region |
| fr. 347 R. (*ap.* Ael. *VH* 1. 15) | scientific | Egypt | in Egypt hens lay twelve times a year (cf. *HA* 562 b 25–26) |
| fr. 358 R. = 269 G. (p. 445) (*ap.* Ar. Byz. *Epit.* p. 10, l. 8–11 Lambros) | scientific / historical cultural | Egyptians | description of specific techniques of Egyptian apiculture |
| fr. 611 R. = Tit. 143, 1 G. (excerpt ἐκ τῶν Ἡρακλείδου Περὶ πολιτειῶν) | historical | Egypt | Solon, after having passed his legislation, quits Athens and goes to Egypt (synthesis of the episode in the *Athenaion Politeia*, ch. 11, cf. *supra*) |

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The presence of Egypt in Aristotle's corpus is twofold. On one side, notices about the land and its inhabitants – be them humans or beasts – are vastly exploited in scientific works such as the *History of Animals*. On the other hand, ancient Egypt is less often but more significatively mentioned as a unified cultural and historical horizon, opposed, contrasted or simply compared with the Greek world. The paper examinates some examples of this tendency, especially focusing on Aristotle's *Politics*, *Metaphysics* and *Meteorologica*. Insisting on the association with time, tradition and memory, Aristotle treats Egypt as a paradigmatic and semi-legendary background used to evoke and discuss the central issues of acquisition, persistence and renewal of knowledge over time. Doing this, whilst reemploying other elements from ethnographical and historical sources, the Stagirite stays faithful to Plato's literary use of Egypt and more specifically to the Egyptian settings evoked in the *Phaedrus* and in the *Timaeus*, but feels free to correct his model and to introduce novel elements in a similar theoretical framework.

В корпусе сочинений Аристотеля можно встретить два вида упоминаний о Египте. С одной стороны, в таких естественнонаучных трудах, как *История животных*, широко используются сведения о стране и ее обитателях – как людях, так и животных. С другой стороны, менее частыми, но более весомыми представляются упоминания о древнем Египте как культурно-историческом единстве, которому противопоставляется, с которым сопоставляется или просто сравнивается греческий мир. В статье рассматриваются несколько примеров такого рода, в частности, из *Политики*, *Метафизики*

и *Метеорологики* Аристотеля. Подчеркивая роль времени, традиции и исторической памяти, Аристотель использует Египет как парадигматический и, вместе с тем, полулегендарный фон, позволяющий поднимать и обсуждать центральные проблемы возникновения, сохранения и обновления научного знания на протяжении веков. При этом Стагирит в целом следует изображению Египта у Платона, особенно в *Федре* и *Тимее*, однако использует, перерабатывая их, также другие этнографические и исторические сведения. С их помощью он корректирует платоновскую версию и вводит новые элементы, сохраняя главные черты теоретического подхода Платона.

# CONSPECTUS



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Статьи сопровождаются резюме на русском и английском языке
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