

**Interpreting Aristotle's *Ethics* in Fifteenth-Century Florence:
John Argyropoulos, Donato Acciaiuoli, and Niccolò Tignosi***

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In discussions about Renaissance ethics, scholars have rightly given attention to the important controversy between Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444) and Alfonso de Cartagena (1384-1456) in the first decades of the fifteenth century (Birkenmajer; Gentile, 307-332; Morrás; Hankins 2003; Codoñer Merino; González Rolán *et al.*, 289-329; Lawrance). This debate, which centered on the new Latin translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* published by the chancellor of Florence in 1416/1417, highlighted (among other things) the importance that contemporaries such as Cartagena attached to the technical language of philosophical texts and their unease with the flowery, Ciceronian, and philosophically imprecise style of Bruni's rendering. From Bruni's perspective, it was fair game to question the familiarity of his detractors and of previous translators with the Greek original –something that, he thought, authorized him to offer a Latin version that rendered the (supposed) eloquence of the Greek.

Although the controversy helps illuminate some of the differences between humanists and scholastics when it came to philosophy, there is the danger of reading all Renaissance interpretations of the *Ethics* within a narrative of humanist versus scholastic approaches. This article proposes that we may gain a different viewpoint by examining Florence's intellectual environment in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. At that time Aristotle's *Ethics* –a work previously of particular interest to several Florentine figures, from Matteo Palmieri to Guglielmo Becchi (Lines 2002, 185-191)– became again an object of intense discussion there. This development owed much to the teaching of Johannes Argyropoulos (*ca.* 1410-1487) and the commentaries by Argyropoulos's student Donato Acciaiuoli (1429-1478) and the professor of medicine Niccolò Tignosi (1402-1474). A study of how these three figures dealt with the *Ethics* will show that the interpretive lens of "Renaissance humanism" is not particularly helpful for understanding why Tignosi's commentary had an extremely limited diffusion, while Acciaiuoli's commentary became (Bianchi 2003, 14, n. 6) "by far the most widely read commentary on the *Ethics* during the Renaissance."

Given the recent historiography (Lines 2002, 214-217), it may seem odd to point scholars' attention to Argyropoulos and his circle once again. Some time ago, Eugenio Garin underlined the significance of Argyropoulos' teaching of the *Ethics* in Florence (1457-1458) and of Acciaiuoli's commentary based on the Byzantine scholar's lectures. Emphasizing the convergence, in Argyropoulos' lectures, of a "rara perizia filologica con una superiore conoscenza storica", Garin saw Argyropoulos as a turning point for the Florentine understanding of ancient texts. Through him, Garin said, the Florentines were

* I wish to thank Alessia Grillone for her helpful reading and corrections of the draft article. In terms of transcription criteria, I silently expand abbreviations, modernize punctuation and capitalization, differentiate *u/v*, change *j* to *i*, and maintain *e* or *ae* as found in the manuscripts. I indicate lemmata in italics.

able, not only to view the past in its authenticity, but to grasp the unity of ancient thought through a reconciliation of Plato and Aristotle (Garin 1987, 240-244; idem 1994, 102-106). Charles Schmitt too (42) repeatedly indicated Acciaiuoli's commentary as one of the first applications of humanist methodology in philosophy, while Mario Sensi (391, 411) lauded Tignosi for his program of "historical understanding of Aristotelian thought."

Nowadays, leading scholars have tempered and even overturned these judgments. Arthur Field's detailed study of Argyropoulos, Acciaiuoli, and Tignosi (1988) has posited that they held different attitudes especially on the Plato-Aristotle question (for him, Argyropoulos was more Aristotelian than Acciaiuoli, who strove to reconcile the two philosophers), and has questioned assumptions about their commentaries' closeness to humanist milieus. He also notes that Tignosi's commentary must have been "monumentally boring" for most of his contemporaries and bears only superficial evidence of humanist approaches (155). Subsequent studies by Luca Bianchi, Jill Kraye, and Eckhard Kessler of Italian fifteenth-century commentaries on the *Ethics* have downgraded their humanist elements. Bianchi (2003), for example, noted the dependence of Acciaiuoli's commentary on scholastic methods and commentators (such as Eustratius). Kraye and Kessler subsequently proposed the 1497 commentary by the Frenchman Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples as the first "predominantly humanist exposition of the *Ethics*" to have reached print (Kraye 1995, 104; Kessler).

These conclusions notwithstanding, studying the commentaries of Acciaiuoli and Tignosi remains valuable and timely for several reasons. One is that Alessia Grillone's current research on Argyropoulos's translation of the *Ethics* is providing a welcome analysis of its multiple redactions while highlighting the work's complicated relationship to Acciaiuoli's commentary. (This translation was not printed until around 1480, two years after the *princeps* of Acciaiuoli's commentary; the two texts were not printed together until the Venetian edition of 1535.) Another is that a fixed focus on humanism risks sidelining commentaries such as Acciaiuoli's, once it becomes established that it does not easily fit our notions of what humanism was. As we will see, various scholastic elements of Acciaiuoli's commentary (along with its Platonic slant) were probably responsible for the work's remarkable success. It is therefore worthwhile examining Acciaiuoli's commentary more closely, both for its way of proceeding and its context.

Because of the similarities and overlaps between the contributions of Argyropoulos and Acciaiuoli, I treat their approaches together, followed by an analysis of Tignosi's method. First, however, it is necessary to say something about our main characters and the sources.

1. Characters and Sources

Our starting point is Argyropoulos, a Greek scholar who moved to Italy after the fall of Constantinople (although he had been there previously, as a student of arts and medicine at the University of Padua, 1441-1444) and taught at the University of Florence from early 1457 to 1471 and again from 1477 to 1481.¹ (During the intervening years, but

¹ The date of his first recorded appointment in Florence, to teach "oratoriae facultatis ac philosophiae praecepta", was 1455, but Argyropoulos accepted only the following year and started teaching around

also from 1481 until his death in 1487, he was in Rome, where he may have taught privately.) Although Argyropoulos taught several philosophical subjects (e.g., logic and natural philosophy) during his sojourns in Florence, of particular relevance here are his lectures on the *Ethics*, which began in February 1457 and presumably were completed the following year.²

Among Argyropoulos's students was the patrician Acciaiuoli (D'Addario; Ugurgieri della Berardegna; Garin 1987; Bianchi 2003; Staico, esp. 1279-89; Lines 2002, 489-490), a prominent cultural figure in Florence who led a circle of noblemen interested in the humanities and had been heavily involved in discussions about who would replace Carlo Marsuppini as a professor in the *studium* after his death in 1445 (Field 1988, 77-106). Acciaiuoli never taught at the university (indeed, it is unlikely that he ever formally studied for a degree), but he was clearly influential on university matters and was Argyropoulos's most devoted student.

Tignosi was a student of Paul of Venice and taught philosophy and medicine in various Italian towns (Lines 2016 with bibliography). He seems to have taught continuously in Florence from 1450 to 1464 and may therefore have heard Argyropoulos. He had a fairly traditional background and later attacked Plato's doctrine of the Ideas in his treatise *De ideis* (Thorndike, 332-363; Rotondò, 242-248). We have no evidence that he ever taught the *Ethics* in Florence. If he hoped that his commentary would endear him to the Florentines, he was sorely disappointed, since it was attacked from all sides.

A note about the sources. Argyropoulos's teaching was recorded by Acciaiuoli, whose facility in taking down these lectures led, according to Arthur Field, to "one of the most extraordinary achievements in notetaking of the entire Quattrocento" (Field 1988, 207). Indeed, we have manuscripts from Acciaiuoli's hand that are associated (in a complicated way) not only with Argyropoulos's lectures on the *Ethics* (Florence, BNC, ms. II I 104 = *F*), but also with those on the *Physics* (Florence, BNC, ms II I 103) and *De anima* (Florence, BNC, Magl. V 42; partial edition in Brown), for a total of some 1500 pages (Field 1988, 114, n. 28).

Acciaiuoli's notes on Argyropoulos's *Ethics* lectures in *F* need to be used with caution, but nevertheless offer some pointers as to the Greek scholar's approach. As I hope to argue more fully elsewhere, the manuscript is unlikely to be simply a fair copy of the notes Acciaiuoli took while listening to the lectures (i.e., what are known by scholars as "second-order notes"; Blair): it bears traces of interventions by Acciaiuoli and reelaboration in some parts, as well as substantial additions. Furthermore, Argyropoulos's in-class explanations appear to be summarized at various points rather than reported

January or February 1457, beginning with logic and ethics (Field 1988, 55 and 83 n. 18). On Argyropoulos see also Zippel; Cammelli; Bigi; Seigel; Geanakoplos; Verde; Field 1987; Monfasani 1993, esp. 167-176; Lines 2002, 425, 487-89; Bianchi 2003; Grillone. Cf. Matula, which is imprecise on some biographical details.

² As evidenced by the *praefationes* to the lectures: that on Books I-V was given on Friday, 4 February 1456 (*stile fiorentino*) and that on Books VI-X on 1 February 1457 (*s.f.*); see Florence, Bib. Ricc. 120, ff. 1-36 and the edition in Müllner, 3-30. The Riccardiana manuscript is an autograph of Donato Acciaiuoli; see Field 1988, pp. 110, n. 14. The notes of Benedetto Colucci da Pistoia on a manuscript of the *Ethics* in the translation of Bruni (Bologna, Bib. Univ. 2703) come from the lectures of Argyropoulos on Books III to V and, if contemporary with the manuscript, suggest that Argyropoulos had finished lecturing on the first half of the *Ethics* by May 1457. See Field 1988, 56 n. 2 and (for a transcription of the notes) Hankins, 228-229.

verbatim, and the Greek scholar is referred to in the third person.³ Nonetheless, various elements of *F* seem attributable with certainty to Argyropoulos: the asides about Bruni's translation, for instance, can be explained by Argyropoulos's reliance on that version in class, as announced also in his first course *praelectio* (Müllner, 18). Likewise, in Book X (f. 185r) and elsewhere the text provides some fairly elementary explanations about Aristotle's natural philosophy, in keeping with Argyropoulos's point that ethics should be studied before physics (Müllner, 16; Bianchi 2003, 22-23). Although some of the material in *F* is explicitly attributed to the Greek scholar, through expressions such as "Ioannes Argyropolos dixit [...]" (see below), on other occasions it is impossible to disentangle the words of Argyropoulos from Acciaiuoli's intervention. Rather than indicating my doubts in each instance, in what follows I refer to the text we have in *F* versus Acciaiuoli's printed commentary.

It is likewise hard to assess how much of the commentary that goes under Acciaiuoli's name is actually his own work. The commentary was likely ready by 1463 if not earlier,⁴ so Acciaiuoli would have had ample time to discuss its contents with Argyropoulos and benefit from any suggestions.

2. Argyropoulos and Acciaiuoli

Translation. Argyropoulos's decision to lecture on the *Ethics* on the basis of Bruni's translation may have been the result of both a practical consideration (his own version, which he continued to perfect until his death, was not yet ready; Grillone) and a desire to curry favor with his Florentine audience, with whom Bruni's translation was popular. If the latter was a factor, however, Argyropoulos does not seem to have given it much weight during his actual lectures. Already from the beginning of the *Ethics* he had to address a question that had challenged many earlier interpreters: whether, by stating that "all things seek *tagathon*," Aristotle meant that they seek what is good relative to themselves or, rather, the supreme good. Bruni had famously favored the latter solution ("Quapropter bene ostenderunt summum bonum, quod omnia appetunt", Aristotle 1496-1497, sig. a i^r) against the medieval Latin rendering ("Ideo bene enunciauerunt bonum quod omnia appetunt", Aristotle 1973, 375, line 5) in his polemic against Alfonso da Cartagena and others (Gentile, 314-327; Hankins). Argyropoulos voiced his disagreement with Bruni on this passage (though Acciaiuoli was clearly unconvinced)⁵ both in the

³ Cf. Garin 1987, 229: speaking about Acciaiuoli's commentary, Garin referred to "[...] quel commento alla *Nicomachea*, che ci dà in forma pulita nient'altro che le lezioni di Argyropulo [...]" See Bianchi 2003, 16-17 for valuable comments on the methodological difficulties of this position.

⁴ Acciaiuoli's commentary is dedicated to Cosimo the Elder (†1464). Vespasiano da Bisticci provided some hard-to-interpret passages on Cosimo's interest in the materials emerging from Argyropoulos's lectures; see, for instance, the citations in Bianchi 2003, 12, n. 2 and 16, n. 11.

⁵ See *F*, f. 11v, where Acciaiuoli explicitly tries to "save" Bruni's translation: "*Summum bonum*. Secundum translationem Leonardi hoc modo salvari potest: quod illa superiora appetunt summum bonum tamquam finem remotum, non autem tamquam finem propinquum. Dico illa superiora artem, doctrinam, actum et electionem [*in marg.*: quasi dicat philosophus: ars appetit bonum, doctrina appetit bonum, similiter actus et electio intendit quoddam bonum, ex quo bene ostenderunt summum bonum esse quod omnia ista simul quae hominis sunt appetunt], nam si de fine propinquo dicatur, non bene sequi videretur. Et tunc cum dicit "summum bonum quod omnia appetunt", oportet quod illud "omnia" non referatur absolute ad omnia, sed quasi dicat "omnia de quibus diximus", quae sunt principia humanarum operationum, tamquam si diceret "omnes [*ms. omnis*] homines appetunt summum bonum", aliter enim non bene procedet (?). Et hec

classroom and in his translation (“Quapropter bene veteres bonum ipsum id esse dixerunt, quod omnia appetunt”, Aristotle 1496-1497, sig. a ii”).

This dialogue with Bruni’s renderings is a constant feature of *F*, which often makes very quick corrections to Bruni’s translation; e.g., in Book V: “*degere*: melius *agere*” (f. 63v) or “*Quibus enim agentibus*: melius *agunt*, sic grece” (f. 66v). A particularly interesting instance is in VI, 3 (1139b29–30), where Bruni’s text has “Sunt ergo principia ex quibus syllogismus. Quorum autem non est syllogismus, eorum inductio est” (Aristotle 1496-1497, sig. c iii”). Here *F* comments (f. 79r):

Quorum scilicet principiorum; illud *autem* removeri debet: grece enim non est. Removeri inquam debet ne accipiat “Quorum autem [id est, earum rerum] quarum non est syllogismus, sit inductio”, quia hoc non esset verum. Nam sunt nonnulla per se que statim cognoscuntur sensu, unde in primo *Ethicorum* “principiorum autem quedam per inductionem, quedam sensu, prospiciuntur quedam consuetudine, quedam etc.”. Post illum textum *eorum inductio est* deesse videtur textus aliquantulum, quo inferri oportet quod non ratiocinatione probabili, sed demonstratione scientia consistit. Dixit autem Ioannes Argyropolus memorie habere se vidisse in textu *Ethicorum* in Grecia hoc quod deesse videtur. Sed sive sit sive non sit, subintelligenda “scientia” est et putandum hoc ab Philosopho dimissum tamquam notum, scilicet quod intelligit de ratiocinatione que demonstratio dicitur.

In many places the text in *F* goes on to cite the Greek as well as a new rendering of the phrase in question, implicitly or explicitly criticizing the Florentine chancellor. What is important here is not whether or not Argyropoulos quoted the Greek text in his lectures (it could just as well have been added in by Acciaiuoli as he was preparing *F*), but that there was clearly a potential audience for a revised (and more accurate) translation in mid-century Florence. This is doubtless one of the factors behind the respectable manuscript diffusion of Argyropoulos’s translation (28 manuscripts) as well as its extraordinary fortune in print (starting with an independent printing in Florence, *ca.* 1480), as we are learning from Grillone (*cf.* Frati; Garin 1947-1950; Garin 1951; Gionta; Lines 2002, 487-489).

Argyropoulos’s translation became particularly influential through Acciaiuoli’s commentary, which used it as its base text (see below). It also quickly supplanted Bruni’s rendering in many later *Ethics* commentaries, including outside of Italy (such as in the case of Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples and his commentary accompanying Aristotle 1496-1497).⁶

expositio est ad interpretationem Leonardi, quamvis ~~Argyropolo magis placeat alia translatio quae dicit “bonum.”~~ Intelligendum tamen quod grece *αγαθον* quandoque significat “bonum”, quandoque “summum bonum”; sed si cupimus “bonum”, dicendum est “quapropter bene diffinierunt antiani bonum esse quod omnia (absolute, sive animata sive inanimata) appetunt”, quasi bonum esse ~~quoddam~~ rem absolute (?) expetibilem [...]”.

⁶ For a preliminary overview of Renaissance commentaries using Argyropoulos’s translation (Lines 2002, 488-489), but disregard the erroneous listing of a 1478 edition.

Acciaiuoli makes direct reference to Argyropoulos's translation in the commentary's prefatory epistle,⁷ which (like the first extant redaction of the translation) is addressed to the dedicatee, Cosimo the Elder (Acciaiuoli 1560, sig. aa ii^v):

Cum post interitum quorundam doctissimorum hominum studia florentina magna ex parte remissa viderentur, venit in hanc urbem Argyropylus byzantius, vir ingenio praestans summusque philosophus ut iuventutem litteris graecis ac bonis artibus erudiret; iamque plures annos doctrinam tradidit nobis tanta copia, tam multiplicibus variisque sermonibus, ut visus sit temporibus nostris veterum philosophorum memoriam renovare. Sed inter caetera philosophiae opera cum Aristotelis libros qui *Ad Nicomachum de moribus* scribuntur mirifice esset complexus, eos tuo nomine latinos fecit publiceque deinde explicuit, non sine magna audientium approbatione. Habent enim libri ii summam dignitatem admirabilemque doctrinam; ordinem vero prope singularem. Itaque si accurata et exquisita quaedam explanatio accedat, magnum auditoribus afferunt fructum.

Quod ego iam inde ab initio mecum considerans, una cum plerisque aliis qui huius quoque preceptoris disciplinam sequuntur in iis audiendis, precipuam curam diligentiamque adhibui ut ea tantum documenta perciperem quae ad bonos mores et rectam vivendi rationem conferrent. Postea vero cum viderem hos libros a te et ab iis omnibus qui ingenio vehementer excellunt libentissime legi, ulterius progrediendum ratus, expositionem huius doctoris accomodatam praecipue menti Philosophi litteris mandare constitui, ut ii qui adesse non potuerunt et harum rerum desiderio tenerentur haec quae nos ex eius ore accepimus percipere et ipsi pro arbitrio possent. Quare traductionem illius ac ordinem explicandi pluribus verbis secuti sumus, lata interdum et diffusa oratione utentes ut explanatio aperta magis magisque omnibus esset communis.

Acciaiuoli makes good on these claims in the course of the commentary, where the lemmata are no longer taken from Bruni's translation, but from that of Argyropoulos. This feature means that most of the Greek scholar's asides (some of them rather biting) against Bruni's translation can disappear, while informing the commentary itself. As a result, most of the Greek words or quotations in *F* also become redundant, giving rise to a commentary focused more on philosophical issues than technicalities of language (cf. Bianchi 2003, 25-26).

A relevant instance is in VI, 3 (Acciaiuoli 1560, f. 105v). At the passage quoted above for *F*, Acciaiuoli makes no reference to textual problems, but smooths any difficulties out in his explanation:

Omnis doctrina que ex antecedenti fit, cognitione aut per syllogismum aut per inductionem fieri solet. Sed scientia fit ex doctrina, ut paulo ante probavimus, ergo scientia fit aut per inductionem aut per syllogismum. Non fit autem per inductionem,

⁷ I generally cite from the corrected 1560 edition (which includes both Acciaiuoli's commentary and Argyropoulos's translation), which I have compared with the *princeps*.

ergo per syllogismum. Quod probari potest hoc pacto, afferendo primo eas argumentationum species quas ponit Philosophus. Unde notandum quod quadruplex est argumentatio: syllogismus, inductio, enthymema, exemplum. In libro *Priorum* ostendit Philosophus quid sit syllogismus et enthymema. In *Topicis* quid sit inductio et exemplum, ut ibi patet. Syllogismus est oratio in qua, quibusdam positis, necesse est per ea que posita sunt aliquid aliud evenire, ut: Omne animal est substantia; omnis homo est animal; ergo omnis homo est substantia. Inductio est processio a singularibus ad universale, ut: Hic ignis calefacit; ille ignis calefacit et ille atque ille; ergo omnis ignis calefacit. Enthymema est processio ab una propositione ad conclusionem. Hoc communiter solet appellari consequentia, ut: Homo est, ergo animal est. Exemplum est processio a singularibus ad singulare simile, ut: Dionysius clandestinis insidiis aggressus est tyrannidem; Pysistratus eodem pacto et talis atque talis; ergo iste Catilina aggreditur tyrannidem. Verum cum hec sint quatuor, enthymema reducitur ad syllogismum; exemplum ad inductionem. Nam enthymema est syllogismus imperfectus; exemplum quoque est inductio imperfecta. Unde Philosophus in libro *Posteriorum* inquit: “Aut exemplo (quod est inductio) aut enthymemate (quod quidem est syllogismus) facultas ipsa solet oratoria suadere”. Cum igitur scientia fiat per inductionem vel syllogismum et inductio utatur singularibus, scientia vero sit de universalibus, ergo scientia non erit per inductionem. Relinquitur ut sit per syllogismum.

Some references to Bruni’s translation and textual problems, however, remain; these may provide food for thought to future editors of the Greek text.⁸

In addition to giving attention to the Greek text and to the correct translation of various terms into Latin, both *F* and Acciaiuoli’s commentary provide annotations of various kinds to Aristotle’s text. The main ones are discussed below.

Glosses. These explain particular expressions or historical figures. A case among many is in I, 5 (1096a4),⁹ where Aristotle is discussing happiness and honor but refers the reader to a fuller discussion elsewhere (*en toîs enkykliois*). Bruni had translated this allusion as *in coronis* (“Et de his quidem satis, nam et in coronis de his abunde dictum” [Aristotle 1496-1497, sig. a i^v]). The interpretation in *F* (f. 14v) is less than convincing from a modern perspective, given the claim that Aristotle is referring to a specific work he had written on the humanities:

In coronis: id est in libro quodam quem Aristoteles composuit, ut multi asserunt, et appellatus est Εγκυκλoια quasi sermones circulares; fuit autem de studiis humanitatis, de quibus sermo dicitur circularis quia ea studia et connexa admodum sunt et eodem sepius revolvuntur. Nec est intelligendum *in coronis*, id est circulis vel circularibus

⁸ A case in point is in I, 6, where Acciaiuoli states: “Notandum circa illa verba ‘non de omni loquebamur bono’ [*rectius*: ‘rationes non de omni bono sunt dictae’ (1096b9)], in textu graeco qui reperitur, et etiam in traductione Leonardi, non est ibi ‘non’; traductio vetus et Ioannis Argyropoli habet ‘non’. Et Eustrathius et alii expositores exponunt cum ‘non’ istum textum” (Acciaiuoli 1560, f. 9r). The Greek text edited by L. Bywater does not note any variants here (Aristotle 1894).

⁹ The modern chapter 5 is chapter 6 in the medieval translation.

disputationibus.¹⁰ Libros autem in quibus doctrinam tradit ακροματικα apellavit, ut *Etica* et *Physica* et huiusmodi, quos auditu dignos.

Argyropoulos's printed translation moves away from such a perspective by instead rendering *en tois enkykliois* as "in conversionibus" (Aristotle 1560, f. 6r),¹¹ something that Acciaiuoli follows in his printed commentary, which here (Aristotle 1560, f. 6v) reads:

Notandum quod a Philosopho facti sunt libelli de omnibus scientiis liberalibus brevissimi et per modum conclusionum, quos appellavit "conversiones"; et sic solent Graeci artes liberales appellare, quia videntur circulo quodam in se redire, cum unaquaeque aliis utatur. Hos libellos Philosophus appellavit "conversiones". Alii dicunt quaedam esse a Philosopho confecta ita ut finis unius scientiae sit principium alterius, et sic sint quasi circuli; quae opinio mihi non placet.

Structural and doctrinal summaries. As quoted above, Acciaiuoli's prefatory epistle makes specific reference to having followed Argyropoulos's *ordo explicandi*. This is an especially noteworthy aspect of the commentary, glimmers of which we can also see in F.

Often *F* provides statements of this kind: "In hac parte philosophus vult ostendere [...] hoc modo" (f. 12v). These function as a brief abstract of the argument being put forward by Aristotle in a certain passage. Similarly, at I, 7 (f. 17r, 1097a15):

Rursus vero ad id: Postquam Philosophus impugnavit opinionem Platonis, hac in parte revertitur ad propositum suum, ad investigandum scilicet diffinitionem felicitatis, et primo, post longum processum, ponit unam descriptionem de felicitate, scilicet quod est res quedam propter quam omnia alia expetuntur, ipsa vero propter aliquid aliud non expetitur.

Particularly illustrative of this procedure is the introduction to Book II (*F*, f. 29r):

In primo libro Philosophus ostendit felicitatem esse, deinde eam diffinivit et diffinitionis omnes partes declaravit, tum vero quasdam illius tetigit passiones, demum anime partes divisit et secundum divisionem illam distinctionem quandam fecit ipsarum virtutum. In hoc vero secundo libro ostendere ac demonstrare viam intendit per quam ad ipsam felicitatem pervenire possimus. Eiusdem enim est videre de termino et de iis que ad illum premium ferunt. Ostendit itaque per virtutes hoc fieri posse easque declarat in genere et ponit ipsarum diffinitionem. Primo repetendo divisionem virtutum in extremo libri superioris factam ostendit causam effectivam utriusque virtutis, scilicet intellective et moralis. Dicit enim intellectivam generari ex

¹⁰ This is how Eustratius of Nicaea (64–65) had explained the expression, as did Bruni. On the presence of Eustratius in Acciaiuoli's commentary (Bianchi 2003, 30–35).

¹¹ The Florentine manuscript redactions (O, A) of this passage here have "in hisce quoque tractationibus quas conversionis nomine nuncupamus", while the redaction dedicated to Sixtus IV has simply "et aliis in locis". My thanks to Alessia Grillone for this information.

doctrina ut plurimum, quod posuit ad differentiam eius virtutis intellective que generatur per (?) inventionem et ideo subdidit, experientia indiget et tempore. Moralis autem generatur per assuetudinem que et ipsa indiget tempore et nomen habet par (?) amore declinans, id est a consuetudine. [...] Omissa consideratione virtutum intellectivarum, moralis (!) assumit et inquit earum causam effectivam; quarum cum plures cause esse posse videntur, tangit duas tantum, scilicet naturam et operationem nostram et ostendit naturam non esse. Relinquitur esse operationem [...].

As these passages illustrate, although *F* does not offer a very detailed outline of how Aristotle structures his argument, it does give a sense of what the various books and chapters of the *Ethics* contain and of how Aristotle progresses from one topic to the next.

By contrast, Acciaiuoli's commentary offers a much more articulated *divisio textus*. It explains the start of Book II thus (Acciaiuoli 1560, f. 26r-v):

In primo libro Philosophus invenit finem ultimum hominis, qui summum est bonum atque felicitas. Et postquam invenit et diffinivit quid sit et in eius diffinitione accepit virtutem loco differentie et dixit quod ad perfectiorem intelligentiam eius diffiniti (scilicet ultimi finis et felicitatis) oportet declarare partes in diffinitione positas. Ideo nunc docet, in hoc secundo libro, de ipsa virtute in genere ut perfectius et clarius cognoscamus ipsum summum bonum iam diffinitum sive sit effectus virtutis sive sit aliquid quod est causa virtutum.

Dividitur autem hic liber in tres tractatus secundum tria principaliter considerata de ipsa virtute, de qua ipse est tractaturus ut, posito fine sicuti diximus et diffinito, partes diffinitionis elucescant et media ipsa, quae sunt virtutes, quibus possimus ut boni sagiptarii attingere illum finem. Eiusdem enim est considerare de termino et de iis que ad illum terminum ferunt. Sed cum primo oporteat scire rem esse, itam patuit virtutem esse. Habeatur igitur notitia causarum illius, de quibus etiam perfecte habebimus si est, deinde quid res est, deinde si res illa non est simplex, quotuplex est.

Philosophus in primo tractatu huius libri considerat causas a quibus emanat virtus. In secundo assignat diffinitionem virtutis ut habeatur quid ipsa sit. In tertio dividit virtutem in species suas ut singulae percipiantur.

Primus tractatus dividitur in quatuor capitula. In primo considerat a quo profluit virtus. In secundo quales operationes sunt a quibus fit virtus. In tertio circa quae versetur moralis virtus. In quarto quomodo ex operationibus studiosis generatur virtus.

Primum capitulum dividitur in duas partes. In prima resumit philosophus divisionem virtutis quam fecit in ultimo praecedentis libri [...].

Although this articulation is more developed than what we saw in *F*, it is not out of step with Argyropoulos. Indeed the early manuscript tradition (e.g., Florence, Bib. Ricc. 115, which contains Argyropoulos' translation dedicated to Cosimo along with marginal snippets from Acciaiuoli's commentary), like the *princeps* edition (Aristotle *ca.* 1480), already presents the translation divided in this way. In Book II, before "Post haec autem quid nam sit virtus consideremus oportet" (f. 24r), for instance, Bib. Ricc. 115 reads "Tractatus secundus Capitulum primum" (i.e., Book II, 5). In Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples's

tres conversiones edition of the text of the *Ethics* (Aristotle 1496-1497), this peculiarity of Argyropoulos's translation, which tied it very closely to Acciaiuoli's commentary (but also to that of Walter Burley; see below), was abandoned in favor of an organization according to the standard chapter progression. The change may have been due to a desire to make comparisons between passages easier for the reader.

The *divisio textus* parallels with Burley (1275-1346) are significant, for his commentary on the *Ethics* is structured according to divisions into *tractatus*, *capituli*, and *partes*, just as in Acciaiuoli's commentary (and, to a large extent, the early manuscripts and printed editions of Argyropoulos's translation). Despite numerous similarities between the divisions of Acciaiuoli and Burley's commentaries, there is also a slight difference in that Burley (1521, n.p.) divides the first chapter of Book II into three parts, whereas Acciaiuoli divides it into two. In fact, in some cases Acciaiuoli departs from Burley's schemes and follows alternative ones, such as the divisions proposed by Thomas Aquinas (whose system, however, is extremely confusing because all divisions are called *partes*, which can reach seven or more levels of nesting; cf. Bianchi 2003, 21). The main point, however, is that the Argyropoulos/Acciaiuoli enterprise seeks to make the text divisions clear, without following the hypercomplexity found in Thomas.

Outlines of syllogisms. Another distinctive feature of *F* is its sustained effort to explain Aristotle's statements from a syllogistical point of view. This often consists of supplying the missing middle term in a particular syllogism or in explaining how that syllogism proceeds.

This methodological interest is testified throughout the manuscript. Just a few examples will offer a flavor. The start of I, 2 (*F*, f. 12r, 1094a18) reads:

Si igitur agibulum: Hac in parte philosophus vult probare felicitatem esse ultimum finem hoc modo. Ille dicitur esse finis ultimus ad quem omnes alii fines referuntur. Sed felicitas est huiusmodi, ergo etc. Probat hoc per rationem ducentem ad impossibile, quia si non esset aliquis finis in humanis actionibus, vanus esset noster appetitus, quo ferimur ad illum finem.

Similarly, in I, 5 (f. 14v, 1095b30):

Patet igitur quantum ad hos attinet: prosequitur Philosophus refellendo opinionem eorum qui summum bonum in virtute ponebant, hoc modo. Illud quod est imperfectum non est ultimus finis. Sed virtus est huiusmodi, ergo etc. Declaratur per hanc consequentiam: si virtus esset felicitas, omnis virtuosus esset felix; sed hoc est falsum, ergo illud etiam. Ex quo sequitur quod antecedens sit falsum. Patet per rationem ducentem ad inconvenientes, quia si sic non esset, dormiens et qui non operatur secundum virtutem esset appellandus felix, quod est absurdum.

Acciaiuoli's commentary on the same passage (1560, f. 6v) does something quite similar:

Atque forsitan: haec est quarta pars in qua prosequitur Philosophus refellendo nunc eos qui summum bonum in virtute ponebant, et quamquam hi magis ad veritatem accessisse videntur quam superiores – quia virtutem habens est in potentia propinqua felix – tamen hanc opinionem etiam reprobatur tali ratione. Id quod non est perfectum, non est summum bonum. At virtus non est perfectum, ergo non est summum bonum. Minor probatur a Philosopho. Nam virtus potest esse in dormiente et in eo item qui non operetur ob impedimenta, et demum in his qui sint in maximis erumnis et calamitatibus constituti, quos nemo felices appellabit nisi positionem custodiens, sicuti fecere aliqui philosophi ponentes quaedam paradoxa.

Argyropoulos and Acciaiuoli are, of course, hardly alone in this practice, but I know of no earlier or contemporary commentaries that reconstruct Aristotle's syllogisms in such detail.¹²

Explanations. After providing a summary of the argument and an outline of the relevant syllogism, *F* at times supplies commentary, usually prefaced by expressions such as “notandum est” or “sciendum est”. These are, of course, the core of what one might expect from a philosophical commentary. They provide background to claims made by Aristotle, explain his thought, and also at times furnish criticisms of the Stagirite.

Particularly interesting is how *F* and Acciaiuoli deal with I, 6, where Aristotle discusses at some length (and criticizes) Plato's notion of the Ideas. *F* reads (ff. 15r-16v):

His igitur omissis: hac in parte Philosophus impugnare intendit opinionem Platonis, qui vult summum bonum esse Ideam. Eius opinionem latissime exposuit Argyropolos hoc modo. [...] *Huius opinionis:* contra Platonem hoc modo. Eorum in quibus est prius et posterius non est Idea. [...] Sed hec ratio non arguit contra mentem Platonis et est sophistica. Secundum quod bifariam potest considerari bonum [...] etiam de tali bono intellexit Plato, et sic non valet contra illum huiusmodi ratio. *Preterea cum bonum:* [...] Ratio autem superius assignata non valet contra mentem Platonis. [...] Notandum est quod sophisticè arguit Aristoteles, quia cum debuisset dividere sic (?) quod bonorum alia sunt propter se, alia sunt propter aliud et sic non procederet contra rationem Platonis, ipse divisit et dixit alia per se esse bona, alia propter aliud; cum per se et propter aliud non sint opposita, et divisio debeat fieri per opposita.

The comment, apparently by Argyropoulos, that Aristotle's arguments against Plato's Ideas may have been (at least partly) sophistical here was not original with him.¹³ In any

¹² As Bianchi (2003, 22) observes, “[Il commento di Acciaiuoli] esibisce una certa asciutta concisione, ottenuta tramite una sorta di ‘ritraduzione’ del pensiero aristotelico in sequenze di sillogismi.” He points to later commentators (Lefèvre and Omer Talon) as having a similar interest in reconstructing the syllogisms in the text. The classroom notes of Bartolomeo Fonizio taken from Argyropoulos's lectures on the *Posterior Analytics* display show a similar interest (e.g., Rossi, 760, ll. 260-265; 761, ll. 291-298). Eustratius also occasionally engages in this kind of reconstruction, but not on this scale.

¹³ Cf. Burley 1521, f. 8v: “Hic sunt duo intelligenda: primum quod secundum Eustratium haec ratio est sophistica; quia quamvis sit unum bonum per cuius participationem omnia alia sunt bona, tamen in bonis est ordo, ita quod quoddam bonum est honorabilius et quoddam minus honorabile [...] tamen secundum quod omnia bona participant uno bono et referuntur ad unum bonum, sic de omnibus bonis considerat una scientia, unde bene stant sil(?) quod de eodem bono sint diverse scientie et quod de omnibus bonis

case, it is not something repeated in Acciaiuoli's commentary. Nonetheless, Acciaiuoli does provide a detailed and lengthy explanation (and defense) of Plato's Ideas, as well as a multi-level critique of Aristotle's comments against Plato's Ideas. Much more developed than that given in *F*, these comments stress the presence of Ideas in God and, by implication, the closeness between Plato's philosophy and Christianity.¹⁴

Acciaiuoli first notes (1560, f. 7v) that chapter I, 6 is divided into four parts. He claims that, in the second part (beginning at *Qui igitur*), Aristotle opposes Plato's doctrine of a common and separate Idea of all goods through four arguments. Acciaiuoli then evaluates those arguments (ff. 9v-10r), but his first move is to assure the reader that Aristotle is not attacking Plato himself, but popular opinion about what Plato thought:

Fortasse: [...] Sed ut videamus quae fuit sententia Platonis, paulo altius est repetendum, ut intelligamus rationes Philosophi non procedere contra mentem Platonis, sed contra eam sententiam quam vulgus credebat vel dicebat esse Platonis. Plato igitur ex cognitione harum rerum et ordine eorum quae sunt et partibus mundi ascendit ad cognitionem primae causae eorum quae sunt, cui tribuit rationem causae efficientis et causae formalis et finalis. Primo efficientis, quia ea quae sunt ab aliquo sunt producta, et ne fiat processus in infinitum veniendum est ad unum quod sit producens tantum et non productum, et talis sit causa prima quae habet esse ex se ita quod nullo modo ab alio. Et ista causa prima est efficiens omnium quae sunt hic et ab ea profluunt et conservantur omnia, et est ut quidam paterfamilias. Ideo Plato ipsum vocavit patrem huius universi. Propterea dicitur causa formalis ob multas rationes: primo quia est semotus ab omni materia, et quicquid ipse est, forma est, et etiam quia complectitur formas omnium quae sunt. Nam cum ipse sit causa efficiens, necessario dicere oportet quod cognoscens efficit et intelligit ea antequam sint, quia si secus esset, ignoraret ea antequam produceret et sic ageret sine cognitione, quod est absurdum. Etenim Deus antequam produceret mundum intellexit eum, ergo erat mundus et erat in eo ab aeterno, non ut accidens quoddam (quia in Deo non est accidens ullum) sed supereminenti quodam modo. Plato igitur voluit quod omnia antequam producantur essent in Deo: non eo modo quo sunt hic cum materia et cum existentia, sed supereminenter et ipsa tantum, id est ratio formalis tantum uniuscuiusque rei. Ideo appellabat ipsas cum hac additione: ipsum hominem, id est rationem hominis; et ipsum equum, id est, rationem equi; et sic de aliis. Sunt autem haec in Deo perpetua et sine materia, et idem cum Deo re. Nec est inconveniens unum esse idem re, habere tamen plures rationes, ut ascensus et descensus in scala, et via ab Athenis Thebas et a Thebis Athenas. Licet idem sit spatium, tamen alia est ratio ascensus et alia descensus, et alia ratio viae ab Athenis et alia Athenas. Et sic Ideas rerum esse idem re cum Deo, differre tamen ratione dicebat Plato. Declarabat etiam et ostendebat has Ideas necessario esse ponendas in Deo exemplo artificum, qui cognoscunt id quod facere debent antequam fiat. Sicut faber et architectus cognoscunt domum a se faciendam et habent eam in mente, quae quidem

secundum quod habent attributionem ad unum et idem bonum sit una scientia." For the "sophistical" label, see Eustratius (78).

¹⁴ For the following, see also Field 1987.

est forma et ratio domus sine ulla materia. [...] Sed hoc interest, quod artifex acquirit illam formam nec semper habuit eam; Deus autem ab eterno habet rationes et exemplaria omnium rerum. [...] Est etiam Deus causa finalis. Non solum enim ab ipso omnia profluunt, sed etiam ad ipsum omnia referuntur tanquam ad verissimum finem. Nam cum sit summum bonum, expetitur ab omnibus et omnia ad ipsum tendunt tanquam ad ultimum et perfectissimum finem. Sic igitur summum bonum censuit esse Plato, id est, ipsum Deum cuius participatione sint alia bona, id est, reliqua quicquid habent boni inde habeant tanquam a fonte et causa.

Acciaiuoli thus manages both to bring Aristotle and Plato's thought closer together and to offer a Christianized version of their philosophy, according to a well-established trend within Renaissance interpretations of Aristotle (Kraye 1988, 342-348; Bianchi 2011).

Dubitationes. *F* also occasionally contains extended questions or *dubitationes*. Although in some cases these follow doubts raised by Aristotle himself, in other cases they arise separately, generating an independent discussion. An example is the question expressed at the end of VI, 1 (f. 74r-v, 1139a1-16):

Virtus autem: scilicet consistit circa opus proprium, unde in secundo. Est ergo dicendum quod omnis virtus et illud ipsum cuius est virtus bene se habens perficit et opus eius bene reddit [*in margine:* scilicet cuius est virtus]. Ex supradictis videtur oriri difficillima dubitatio. Nam Philosophus velle videtur quod diverse debent esse potentie perceptive, quemadmodum et res etiam diverse sunt. Hoc non videtur verum, hoc pacto. Omnia que intellectus possibilis suscipere potest, intellectus agens agere potest et versanice (?). Sed cum intellectus agens intelligibilia agere potest sive necessaria sive contingentia sint, sic intellectus possibilis suscipere posse videtur. [Two further objections follow.] Ad hec dicunt nonnulli quod Philosophus non intelligit potentias dumtaxat potentias, sed unam potentiam informatam diversis habitibus. [...] Hec solutio mihi non placet. [Here follow responses to each of the points above.] Sic animi rationalis potentia primo ad omnia se habet; sed cum sint diversa, diverse etiam potentie sint necesse est.

As is often the case, here *F* does not name the interpreters who held certain positions. It provides only a generic reference to “nonnulli” who held that Aristotle acknowledges only one potency, not two. Matters are somewhat different in Acciaiuoli's published commentary (1560, f. 102v), which contains the same *dubitatio*, but associates this interpretation with Walter Burley. In any case, philosophical questions are a strong characteristic of Acciaiuoli's commentary, although they are at times presented somewhat more informally than in other interpretations (Bianchi 2003, 21-22).

Sources and allusions. Three further aspects need mentioning, albeit briefly. One is that, as already indicated by Bianchi (2003, 24-25), both Argyropoulos and Acciaiuoli provide only rare references to classical figures, events, or poetry outside of those already present in the text. (We will see this point's significance when we discuss Tignosi.) The most common reference is to Cicero's moral works, but the effect overall is of a fairly

dry, straightforward, and traditional exposition of the *Ethics*. Secondly, of the manuscripts recording Argyropoulos's lectures (taking into account also Acciaiuoli's notes on logic and the *Physics*), *F* mentions its sources least frequently (Monfasani 1993, 167-169). One should therefore not confine an analysis to the individuals named. Finally, in emphasizing Acciaiuoli's use of Albert the Great and Eustratius, Bianchi (2003, 28-35) perhaps underestimated his dependence on Thomas Aquinas. A remarkable characteristic of *F* is the number of extracts from Thomas's *Sententia libri Ethicorum* in the margins. A detailed study will be needed to ascertain how many of these were incorporated into Acciaiuoli's commentary, but preliminary soundings indicate that these are frequent.¹⁵ What is certain is that Thomas's commentary remained highly influential in Florence during these years. An example is Florence, Bib. Ricc. 135, a manuscript of the *Ethics* (in Bruni's translation) with very dense marginal annotations in Marsilio Ficino's hand. The manuscript may be contemporaneous with Argyropoulos's lectures if its date "1456" is *stile fiorentino*. Rotondò (228), Kristeller (1987, 84), and others thought it consisted of student notes from Tignosi's teaching. In fact, as suggested in a recent study (Stefani), the notes are taken from Thomas Aquinas's *Sententia Ethicorum* and testify to Ficino's interest in the Dominican theologian's moral thought. There is no reason to associate them with classroom teaching.

3. Tignosi

Much of this contrasts strongly with Tignosi's commentary (for what follows, see discussion and bibliography in Bianchi 2003, 25, 36-37; Lines 1999; Lines 2002, 192-220, 490-491). In this work, dedicated to Piero de' Medici when he was *gonfaloniere* and therefore dating to 1461, Tignosi made several choices that distanced it from Argyropoulos's lectures and the commentary Acciaiuoli was preparing.¹⁶

Some aspects, of course, are in common. For instance, Tignosi provides a literal commentary on the *Ethics* and gives occasional space to questions, something one would expect from an explanation of a philosophical work. Like Acciaiuoli, he does not mind straying into discussions about God. He is, however, rather less taken with Plato's philosophy and his theory of Ideas in particular. In his discussion of I, 6 he states: "Obiectum in quod dirigitur mens hominis ad contemplandum est Deus, et cum Deus sit ab homine separatus, cum non sit accidens neque proprium neque ratio, membrum vel substantia hominis, conceditur felicitatem hominis obiective esse in Deo et per consequens in bono separato, sed non in hydea ut dixit Plato, tenendo hydeam non esse Deum nec in Deo" (f. 13va). Tignosi reiterated his opposition to the Ideas in works from 1470 and 1472, including *De ideis* (Thorndike, 332-363).

Other differences abound. For instance, Tignosi bases his commentary on the translation of Bruni, whom he defends in the prefatory letter of the dedication manuscript

¹⁵ At *F* f. 2v, Acciaiuoli copies in the upper margin the last paragraph of Thomas's *Lectio 2* on Book I ("Sciendum est autem [...] scientiae politicae"). The first sentence appears in the commentary (1560, f. 3r) as "Itaque civilis dicitur principalissima a Philosopho non simpliciter, sed in genere activarum scientiarum." The presence of Thomas Aquinas in Acciaiuoli's commentary was recognized by Bernardo Segni (1550, ff. 7v-8r) in the introduction to his own (vernacular) commentary on the *Ethics* (Lines 2013, 834-835).

¹⁶ In what follows I use, for all citations, the dedication manuscript (Florence, Bib. Laur., Plut. LXXVI, 49 = *L*).

(f. 2r) against unnamed detractors (doubtless including Argyropoulos) accusing him of ignorance of Greek and Latin:

Plures viri clarissimi libros istos comentati sunt: Eustratius, Averois, Albertus et sanctus Thomas, quorum palma est. At novo labore fuit opus ut haec nova translatio, quam Leonardus arretinus –vir nostri temporis doctus et orator summus– ediderat, nequamquam scrineis aut pluttis truderetur. Cumque praelibati viri translationem aliam declarassent quae ineptissima visa est graecitatis ac latinitatis ignarum illum interpretem demollire conantes non potuerunt etiam clariora sic in lucem afferre quin textus Aristotelis quem aperire nitebantur clausus redderetur, quod (?) sane propter translatoris defectum evenisse cognitum est. Cum ergo vel Leonardus arretinus Aristotelem latinum effecerit qui prior barbarus legebatur, necessarium nobis visum est illum ut possumus explanare quo textum ipsum adeuntes videant quantum utilitatis latinis hominibus Leonardus attulerit, nec propter defectum exponentium se putent aggredi non posse quod scire desiderant.

In his explanation of Bruni's rendering of *tagathon* as *summum bonum* (I, 1), Tignosi therefore accuses of idiocy those who criticized this translation (f. 3va-b):

Ex quo sequitur non seipsos intelligere qui translationem damnant dicentes non esse “summum” sed “bonum” quod omnia appetunt; nam tenendo de bono in communi aut de Deo glorioso adhuc certum est quod per participationem et assimilationem mediate vel immediate summum bonum appetunt omnia.

Tignosi likewise follows Bruni's interpretation *in coronis* for *en tois enkyklois* in I, 5 (ff. 9vb 10ra). His small knowledge of Greek means that he is unable to comment on philological issues in the text, although very occasionally one finds a word in Greek.

The *divisio textus* (which, as we saw, is such a strong feature of Acciaiuoli's commentary) here receives a rather generic treatment. Tignosi does provide an outline of the particular books or sections he is interpreting. For instance, at the start of Book II he says (f. 29vb): “Iam ostensum est superiori volumine quod foelicitas est operatio secundum virtutem. Propterea in hoc secundo de eadem in generali dicturus quid ipsa sit, primo querit an nobis a natura sit innata vel per assuetudinem acquisita.” He does not, however, go on to divide each book or chapter in the detailed way that Thomas, Burley, and Acciaiuoli had done.

Likewise, Tignosi's reconstruction of Aristotle's syllogisms is quite rare. In its place, he offers a fairly tame summary of Aristotle's arguments, such as at I, 5 (f. 9vb):

Sed haec virtus videtur esse imperfectior fine quem querimus, et istud probat duobus rationibus. Prima est quod illa virtus potest esse in volente sive habente habitum et nunquam operante. Habens virtutis habitum, si non operetur, felix non est. Et similat ipsum dormienti qui, quamvis beatus sit, tamen ut dormiens et non operans minime felix esse dicetur, cum felicitas sit operatio.

With respect to Argyropoulos and Acciaiuoli, however, Tignosi makes one very eye-catching addition: the citation of historical examples along with a few references to poets and poetry. Some of the examples (many of them from Roman history) seem to be inserted rather gratuitously. When he is explaining logical induction, for instance (VI, 3, f. 105rb), Tignosi says: “et si Cesar dux Romanorum vicit hostes et Scipio vicit hostes et Attilius idem, et sic de singulis Romanorum ducibus, sequitur ergo quilibet Romanorum dux hostem conflixit.” (Although one might perhaps hold that this is no odder than Acciaiuoli’s reference, in the same passage, to Dionysius, Pysistratus, and Catiline!) When he discusses *sapientia* (VI, 7, f. 109ra), in an aside Tignosi praises the skill of people such as Francesco Brunelleschi, Gentile da Fabriano, and Francesco Sforza. As for the poets, their presence is not pervasive, but is nonetheless intrusive and strikes a false note (Rotondò 232-233).

Florentines were thus confronted with two, near-contemporary commentaries: one based on Argyropoulos’s lectures, whose one point of potential discomfort was the criticism of Bruni, but which provided a very ordered interpretation of the text, a reconstruction of the syllogisms, and significantly valued Platonic philosophy as well; the other that harkened back to Bruni’s translation, criticized Plato’s ideas, and tried to make the text more appealing to those who enjoyed the classics by its references to ancient history in particular.

The controversy that erupted around Tignosi’s commentary before 1464 shows him trying to defend himself from both students of philosophy (for whom the additional material was wholly frivolous) and lovers of letters (who found the philosophical explanations too hard; Sensi, 388-482; Lines 1999). These critics may well have been spurred on by the appearance of Acciaiuoli’s commentary, which was made attractive and fashionable by its association with a Greek scholar, worked from a new translation, and had an excellent way of laying out the text as well as the steps in Aristotle’s reasoning. In addition, it made a better “fit” with the current Florentine interest in Platonic philosophy.

I think these factors, rather than any presumed humanist features, were behind the very different fortunes of the two works. Tignosi’s commentary survives in only four manuscripts (Lines 2002, 490-491), whereas Acciaiuoli’s commentary is known through at least fifteen manuscripts and went through at least twenty-two printed editions (Lines 2002, 489-490).¹⁷ Both authors made claims about the clarity and accessibility of what they were providing,¹⁸ but they evidently had different thoughts about what would make an interpretation of the *Ethics* easily understandable. Acciaiuoli’s commentary shows that his audience was not hankering after stylistic elegance or the avoidance of scholastic questions. It was enough to have a new base text that was closer to the Greek and a way of laying out the text that made the sequence of the text’s arguments considerably easier to grasp. In a Florence where Greek studies were making swift progress, Tignosi’s

¹⁷ In addition to the the editions listed, there was also one in Madrid (1772).

¹⁸ For Tignosi, see the evidence in Lines 1999. For Acciaiuoli, see his prefatory letter cited above: “lata interdum et diffusa oratione utentes, ut explanatio aperta magis magisque omnibus esset communis.” Acciaiuoli apparently expanded on the explanations that Argyropoulos delivered in class, providing more paraphrase. Crucially, his aim was to make the explanation clearer (“magis aperta”) and within the reach of all (“magis omnibus communis”).

commentary must have seemed a product from at least a generation earlier. Argyropoulos and Acciaiuoli had the cultural and social prestige that would make their project endure for at least another century, providing interpretations that commentators in both Latin and vernacular studied and engaged with.¹⁹

¹⁹ A striking example is Bernardo Segni (1551); Lines 2013, 838-839.

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