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In the fifteenth century, Florentines interested in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* included at least four (often overlapping) groups: members of the religious orders, teachers of moral philosophy in the university, a group of outstanding cultural figures (such as Leonardo Bruni, Giannozzo Manetti, and Marsilio Ficino) who re-translated, commented upon, and annotated the work, and finally a broad public that avidly read Aristotle's *Ethics* either in Latin or in the vernacular (1). Of course, the si-
tuation was not altogether new: one can find a similar set of figures involved in the reading and study of Aristotle's *Ethics* also before 1400. For example, Remigio de' Girolami, who taught in the Dominican convent of Santa Maria Novella, has left us a prologue on the *Ethics*; we know of *Ethics* teachers in the Florentine *studio* from 1357 on; Florentines such as Dante and Coluccio Salutati studied this work of Aristotle with great interest; and the Florentine libraries have left us a sizeable number of manuscripts containing various versions of a vernacular translation (2). Despite these indications of interest, however, no Latin re-translations of, commentaries on, or prologues to university courses on the *Ethics* survive for fourteenth-century Florence (or, indeed, for Italy). This makes it hard to know with any exactness how Aristotle's *Ethics* was taught and who its audience tended to be. Since these are the central questions of this paper, my focus will be on the fifteenth century and particularly on the second half, when commentaries on the Ethics became more numerous and the situation more clear (3). In particular, I shall concentrate on Niccolò Tignosi's commentary on the *Ethics*, which I believe is a good example of how the audience of the *Ethics* affected the teaching and presentation of this work in fifteenth-century Florence.

First, however, something must be said about two earlier Florentine *Ethics* commentaries. Both were written by Augustinian...
Hermits – Agostino Favaroni da Roma and Guglielmo Becchi Fiorentino – who taught in the Florentine *studio* (4). At the distance of forty years from each other (they were written respectively in 1416 and 1456), they exhibit different approaches and interpretative strategies, which can perhaps be attributed to a difference in their audiences. For example, the first commentary is based on Grosseteste’s (revised) translation; the second, on Bruni’s (5). The first covers only the first two books; the second, all ten. The first winds its way slowly through the text, giving the *lectio*, but also stopping for *quaestiones*, *dubia*, and *considerationes*; the second proceeds quickly and straightforwardly, almost in paraphrase fashion. The first relies explicitly on Eustratius, Pseudo-Dionysius, Albert the Great, Augustine, and Ambrose (more hiddenly, also on Thomas); the second’s base commentary is much more difficult to discern. The first has nothing of the «subordination of dialectic to rhetoric» (or, at least, to grammar) that supposedly characterizes the humanists; the order of studies mentioned repeats Thomas Aquinas and ignores rhetoric altogether (6). The second has no time to enter into considerations of this sort – in 128 folios it covers all ten books, so there is nothing on how children and young people should be educated.


(6) Florence, BLaur., Plut XIII. Sin. 1 (XV), ff. 10r, 27r.
It would be unfair to attribute the differences between the two commentaries to a single factor, but it is telling that Becchi's commentary is explicitly directed to *humanis studiis dediti* (7). This is not necessarily to say that Becchi was a humanist (like Favaroni, Becchi held a degree in theology and was associated with the Bolognese *studio* of the Augustinians); but it may well be that he taught (or wrote) in a way that he hoped suited his humanist listeners (or readers) - he covered all ten books, avoided *quaestiones* as much as possible, favoring a "clear" exposition of the text, and even went on to write on the *Economics* (1467) and *Politics* (1476) (8). Thus, especially four factors - a broader coverage of Aristotle's moral works, a different approach to *auctoritates*, a more direct (but still not philological) explanation of the text, and a newer base text - would seem to be connected in some way with the expectations of students in Florence after 1450 (9). These main characteristics are confirmed by all the surviving Florentine commentaries for the second half of the fifteenth century, as well as by the extensive notes of Ficino on Florence, Bib. Riccardiana 135. It is true that the breadth of...

(7) Florence, BLaur., Aed. 153 (XV), f. 128: *Haec paucia super libris his Aristotelis, omis- sis aliis, quae Commento non congruunt, exaravimus; atque id maxime, ut illis morem gere- rem, qui humanis studiis dediti, non dubiorum multitudinem, non rerum varietatem, non difficultatum perplexitatem, sed philosophi sinceram et claram intelligentiam habere perquisi- runt, quam, ut arbitror, haec cum legerint, adsequentur. Florentiae, MCCCCLV [=1456 mo- dern style], die IX Feb.*. The date is misprinted as 1465 in E. Garin, *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento italiano, Ricerche e documenti*, Florence, 1961; rpt. Milan, 1994, p. 71 note.


(9) A comparative example of broader coverage is offered by Ermolao Barbaro's teaching in Padua. A manuscript of the *Ethics* and *Politics* (now New York, Columbia University Li- brary, Plimpton ms. 17) has Barbaro's following note after the *Politics*: *Libros politicorum octo praeligii in gymnasio patavino totumque opus perfecX kalendas martias MCCCCL- XXVI quodque magis miresis tribus mensibus et diebus XVIII completa est interpretatio a nobis duce deo quo etiam auctore superiore anno X librum ethicum opus a nullo ante me perfectum fuerat interpretatus*; see P. O. Kristeller, *Un codice padovano di Aristotele po- stillato da Francesco ed Ermolao Barbaro: Il manoscrito Plimpton 17 della Columbia University Li- brary, in La Bibliofilia, L. (1948), pp. 162-178, rpt. and revised in In., *Studies in Renais- sance Thought and Letters*, I (Rome, 1956), p. 346 (337-353). Barbaro may also have tried to comment on the text more directly, since we have from him a *compendium*, which includes some *quaestiones* only at the very end. On the other hand, he used Grosseteste's text. On Bar- baro see also A. Poppel, *Il problema della filosofia morale nella scuola padovana del Rinascimento: Platonismo e Aristotelismo nella definizione del metodo dell'Etica*, in Platone e Aristotele a la Renaissance, Paris, 1976 (De Pétrarche à Descartes, XXXII), pp. 109-110 (103-146) and J. Kraye, *Renaissance Commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics, in Vocabulary of Teaching and Research between Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. O. Weijts, Turnhout, 1995 (Etudes sur le vocabulaire intellectuel du moyen âge, VIII), pp. 102-103 (96-117).
verage did not necessarily lead to an in-depth analysis of Aristotle's text. However, it is also likely that this approach to Aristotle coincided with a different ambition, felt by the students, in regard to their material. More specifically, a non-professional audience probably desired either introductions and overviews (such as what Becchi offered), or non-technical explanations of particular philosophical issues. Tignosi's commentary is a good example of the latter case.

I

Niccolò del messer Giacomo da Foligno (or Niccolò Tignosi) is best known as a physician and teacher of medicine in Florence and Pisa between 1438 and his death in 1474. At some point he may have taught Marsilio Ficino; but the records for the Florentine studio between 1450 and 1473 are seriously faulty, and to my knowledge we have no secure documentation to support this conjecture. Even less verifiable is Tignosi's teaching

(10) This is illustrated by Becchi's commentary as well as by Ermolao Barbaro's boast of having set a new record by commenting on the Politics in three months and eighteen days. Cfr. above, note 9.


(12) Now see J. Davies, Florence and its university during the early Renaissance, Leiden, 1998 (Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, VIII), especially Appendix IV, which lists payments made to teachers in the Florentine studio during this period. Tignosi's name appears only for the year 1450; see ibid., p. 194.

(13) Despite the oft-repeated statement that Ficino's notes on Florence, BRicc. 135 were taken from Tignosi's lectures, I have found nothing to substantiate this claim. The interpreta-
of moral philosophy, and whether his commentary is connected with lectures. The four surviving copies of the commentary are addressed to readers (14); the fact, however, is inconclusive, for lectures were often redacted for a broader reading public after they had been delivered.

Whether or not Tignosi’s commentary was the outgrowth of teaching, it remains worthy of consideration here for several reasons. First, it explicitly apologizes for its lack of elegance— which suggests that elegance was an expectation of the readers (15). Traditionally, elegance was not what was sought for in philosophical commentaries, and Tignosi himself, as we shall see, found it unnecessary in a commentary; it appears therefore that Tignosi (much like Becchi) had in mind an audience of humanists, and of uneven academic level at that (16). Thus, Tignosi’s commentary allows us to compare the techniques of two different, nearly contemporary commentaries addressed to roughly the same audience in Florence (17). Second, Tignosi’s commentary is of interest because— more than any other commentary of fifteenth-century Italy—it gives considerable attention to the issue of teaching virtue. Before considering, therefore, the controversy created by Tignosi’s commentary and what it tells us about the audience of the Ethics, something must be said about the commentary’s interpretative strategies and of Tignosi’s understanding of Aristotle on the point of teaching virtue.
Tignosi's approach to the *Ethics* has, in common with that of Guglielmo Becchi, the four characteristics mentioned above – it covers all ten books, is secretive about its base commentary, explains the text fairly directly, and is based on Bruni's translation. Some of these characteristics are handled in a strikingly similar way. In both cases, for example, Bruni's text is not just quoted by *lemma*, but is an integral part of the syntactical structure of the commentary and is almost always quoted in its completeness. Furthermore, neither commentary refers regularly to other interpreters of the *Ethics*. At the same time, there are of course some differences in the handling of these specifics. Tignosi praises, in his dedication, Eustratius, Averroes, Albert the Great, and Thomas (18). His commentary in fact does not mention them (Augustine is the authority most often explicitly quoted), but he depends very heavily on Averroes and Albert, whereas that of Becchi shows striking similarities with those of Eustratius and Thomas (19). Also, Tignosi's commentary is far more involved than that of Becchi in the discussion of philosophical problems. Toward the end of Book I, for example, Tignosi digresses (ff. 19r-21r) on whether the supreme good consists in the *habitus* of virtue or in its operation. Scattered throughout the commentary are *dubia* of various sorts, delicately phrased but occasionally addressed in the typical scholastic manner (two sides presented, then a *solutio* given) (20).

Anyone wishing to describe Tignosi's commentary as «typically scholastic», however, would be hard pressed to do so. It is so, perhaps, in the best sense of being a serious philosophical examination of the text; as a consequence, it employs *dubia*, and

(18) Florence, BLaur., Plut. LXXXVI, 49, f. 1ra-b (all quotations are from this manuscript): • *Plures viri clarissimi libros istos commentati sunt: Eustratius, Averrois, 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 pluteis truderetur*.

(19) For example, Becchi repeats almost verbatim Eustratius' observation that Aristotle did not say that *talis* [i.e., *ars principalis*] est civilis, sed apparebit...  » (Florence, BLaur., Aed. 153, f. 1v); cfr. The Greek Commentaries of the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle. In the Latin translation of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln (1253), ed. H. P. F. Merckx, I (Leiden, 1973), p. 26. Unfortunately, this manuscript lacks the first folio, thus we have lost the preface and any praise by Becchi of other commentators.

(20) Some examples of the phrasing of the *dubia* are: • *Videbitur... Respondetur uno modo*  » (f. 4v); • *Sed forte dubium est...*  » (f. 3v); • *Si petatur an... dicitur quod...*  » (f. 5v); • *Posset quae- ri...*  » (f. 31r).
makes (occasionally forced) use of distinctiones. If Tignosi wrote his commentary after Becchi's, he did not take to heart Becchi's objection to presenting dubia and to solving perplexing problems (21). Tignosi's commentary, however, represents a remarkable innovation in ways that Becchi's did not. Becchi's approach at least stood in a medieval interpretative tradition (the paraphrases of Averroes and Albert; the literal commentary of Thomas), even though his motivation was purportedly to help the followers of the studia humanitatis. Tignosi departed from the models available to him by limiting quaestiones and making the dubia more of an integral part of the text; by almost completely neglecting the divisio textus; by introducing syllogisms to explain Aristotle's arguments only rarely, and even then not formally (22); by his occasional use of the original Greek rather than of Latinized Greek forms (23); by his abundant use of historical examples, taken from the classics but also from contemporary events; and by his references to poets and poetry. We shall later see which of these aspects provoked resistance and by whom, and what they tell us about methods of teaching in Tignosi's time. For now, suffice it to say that Tignosi's commentary is innovative in several ways.

II

We come now to Tignosi's interpretation of Aristotle on the point of teaching virtue. This is important especially in order to complement Tignosi's statements in his later defense treatise about who should hear the Ethics. Also, there is a logical link between the audience of the Ethics and how virtue is learned (24).

Virtue and moral philosophy. - Tignosi, as other medieval commentators, has no trouble with Aristotle's definition of virtue

(21) See above, note 7.
(22) For example, he does not clearly proceed from the major and minor premisses to the conclusion, as Albert often does; rather, he often skips from the major proposition to the conclusion. An example: « Et [Aristoteles] arguit sic, operatio secundum virtutem melior est ipsa virtute; ergo felicitas convenientius ponitur in operatione secundum ipsam virtutem. Non enim potest haberit virtutis operatio sine virtute... » (ff. 18v-19r).
(23) For example, on ff. 6v, 11r, 17v, 30r, 114r.
as an *habitus electivus* (25). He fills out this definition by explaining that virtue can be of three sorts: although Aristotle usually has in mind the third, relative to the action of the will, sometimes he uses *virtus* in the sense of an inclination (26). However, Tignosi reinterprets Aristotle's statement that moral virtue concerns pleasures and pains (*voluptates et dolores*) to mean, not that pleasures and pains are the object of virtue (each virtue has its own object – courage, that which is fearsome; liberality, money), but that delight, pain, and so forth follow upon a particular action, as the consequences of virtue (27).

Tignosi's view depends on his understanding of the location of virtue, which he discusses at length. Tignosi divides the soul into five parts (vegetative, appetitive according to locomotion, sensitive/intellective, and two other kinds of appetitive – the sensitive and the rational). Centering his attention on the last three elements, Tignosi views the sensitive appetite as subservient to the rational appetite, which is in turn subservient to reason. The rational appetite he conceives of as the will, and that is where the moral virtues really reside, although some like to assign their place to the sensitive appetite (28). It is, in fact, the intellective or rational appetite that inclines one toward what the intellect has

(25) *Secundo volumine superioris operis habitum est quod virtus est habitus electivus in mediocritate consistens quo ad nos ratione terminata et ut sapiens terminaret* • (Lib. VI, f. 101v).

(26) *Virtus large sumpta est omnis dispositio rei conveniens ex natura sua, quomodo sanitas est virtus in corpore... Interdum capitur pro inclinatione quadam quomodo in ferrum virtus imprimitur a magnetee... et sic inclinationem appetitus humani sensitivi ad bonum dicit mus esse virtutem. Tertio modo ut dicit habitum inclinantem et habilitantem in actum laude dignum et isto modo est habitus electivus ut infra dictur // et in voluntate consistit et de hac virtute morali loquimur in proposito* • (Lib. I, ff. 28v-29r).

(27) *Virtus in genere quattuor concernit, scilicet obiectum circa quod operatur, ut fortitudo circa terribile, liberalitas circa pecunias; circumstantias inter quas operatur, de quibus infra in tertio, et actus quos operatur. Et quarto illa quae sequuntur actus, ut voluptas vel molestia sive gaudium vel dolor...* • (Lib. II, f. 32vb). • « ...circa omne quod contingit ratione moderari vel ordinaris contingit esse virtutem moralem... Et quamvis virtus sit sine passione animum perturbante, tamen non est sine passionibus quae appetitum sensitivum concintant... » • (Lib. II, f. 33vb).

(28) *Partes animae sunt quinque, scilicet vegetativa, appetitiva secundum locum moti var, sensitiva et intellectiva, et iterum appetitiva duplex, scilicet sensitiva et rationalis. Pars intellectiva dicitur rationalis quoniam in seipsa rationem formaliter habet. Appetitiva vero sensitiva in irascibilem dividitur et concupiscibilem, et dicitur rationalis non principaliter sed quia nata est oboedire judicio rationis. Non tamen cogitur a ratione quamvis nata sit illi oboedire • (Lib. I, f. 28va); • « ...virtutes morales dicitur principalius in voluntate fundati, et ob hanc causam dividitur appetitus in sensitivum et rationalem, et rationalis appetitus est voluntas... Ex quo sequitur quod homo bene ordinatus secundum appetitum sensitivum facilius actum virtuosum potest elicere » • (Lib. I, f. 28va).
judged to be good or otherwise (29). No matter how exactly one views the will and its role in performing virtuous acts, Tignosi concludes that the virtues really reside in this higher element of the appetitive soul, which somehow also partakes of reason. (Thus he considers the appetitive element that partakes of reason, and the intellective element that partakes of the appetite as being the same in Aristotle’s scheme.) However, he also allows that courage and temperance reside respectively in the irascible and concupiscible parts of the sensitive appetite. In his discussion Tignosi opposes, without naming him, Gerard of Odo's view that virtue is only *cum recta ratione* and not also *secundum rectam rationem* (30). He does not, however, agree with Socrates that virtue is prudence; thus he avoids an intellectualist view of virtue (31). Nor, perhaps, could he have done otherwise, given his understanding of the will as superior to the intellect in the generation of virtuous acts (32).

How is all this relevant to the acquisition of virtue? Tignosi's point that *virtus* can be understood in three different ways leads him, in Book II, to consider three different possibilities for its generation and its relation to the various parts of the soul. For example, he insists that the *virtus* generated by repeated acts, ordered by the will, is not *virtus* in the sense of an *habitus electivus*, but in the sense of an *habitus inclinans ad ea quae sunt con-

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(29) *Appetitus sensitivus est inclinatio in rem sensatam mediante judicio sensus de illius bonitate vel improbitate. Appetitus vero intellectivus, qui proprio nomine voluntas dicitur, inclinatur ad rem intellectam mediante judicio intellectus iudicantis an bona sit vel mala* (Lib. I. f. 2va).

(30) GERARDUS ODONIS, Sententia et expositio cum quaestionibus super libros Ethicorum Aristotelis, Brescia, 1482. Lib. II, loc. II, f. 68r.

(31) *Proprie ergo loquendo cum virtus et prudencia necessario sint in eodem homine, oportet quod virtus non sit solum secundum rectam rationem sed quod sit cum recta ratio; non est ergo virtus idem quod prudencia, ut dixit Socrates, nec virtus est solum secundum rectam rationem ut alii dixerunt; sed est secundum rectam rationem et cum ratione.... quia prudencia est recta ratio agibilium consona ad recto appetitu, ideo ut ea in intellectu adgeneretur requiritur conformitas inter intellectum et appetitum; nam sicut virtus moralis dicti conformitatem ad rectam rationem, sic prudencia importat conformitatem ad appetitum rectum. Et non solum determinat aliquid ad agendum sed dirigit circa operationem inveniendo medium et modum quibus acquiritur finis, et hoc in ordine ad appetitum ut appetitus rectificetur. Quapropter non generatur prudencia in intellectu nisi simul generetur virtus in voluntate* (Lib. VI, f. 119rb-119va).

(32) For example Tignosi says, *Ex quibus forsan aliqui non inane colligerent quod felici-
tas potius consistat in voluntate quam in intellectu et quod voluntas est perfectior et nobilior pars animae. Intellectus quidem cognoscit et cognitum voluntati praesentat; voluntas vero movetur ut fruatur; et sic quantum ad cognitionem ipsa intellectus eminet voluntati, sed vol-
tuntas intellectu fit potior quoniam ab ipsa sit motus* (Lib. I, f. 16vb).
sona rectae rationi (Lib. II, f. 34v). Also, his emphasis on the role of the will leads him to avoid giving exclusive importance to nature or teaching in the development of virtue. Tignosi does not disallow that we are born with the seeds of intellectual and moral virtue, and that these make it easier to acquire virtue (Lib. II, f. 32v); nor does he deny the influence of the stars (Lib. X, f. 195r). Likewise, he does not think that teaching is useless; however, contra Socrates, he does not think it sufficient, especially in the case of the great majority, who can only be restrained by fear of punishment. Thus he concludes that nature, teaching, and habituation are all in some way necessary for acquiring virtue.

It would be easy to demonstrate that Tignosi's views on acquiring virtue are hardly original. Often he attempts a reconciliation of the major commentators on this issue, and at points his commentary is little more than a paraphrase of what others have said. Even in their derivativeness, however, Tignosi's comments are interesting for their subtle emphases. Tignosi does not limit himself, for example, to saying that those who do not heed teaching should be governed by law; he expresses himself in very strong terms, saying that they must be punished with an iron rod. This sort of people he refers to disparagingly as vulgus, and Tignosi doubts that they can ever be «rehabilitated», as we would say today (34). Second, Tignosi argues that those who are habituated in the wrong way are responsible for their own condition. This is true on the one hand because they could have resisted such habituation in the first place, since the will is completely free (35). It is also true because the fundamental notions of

(33) Aliqui forsan verbis credunt, at verba vulgus nunquam compellerent qui timore pe-
nae et non virtutis amore timet improba facere.... Qui per antiquatam consuetudinem mali
sunt, mutati non possunt verbis, sed opus est castigare in virga ferrea et timore compellere
et frenare.... Alii consuetudine et exercitio ut in secunda huius dicebatur. Alii doctrina cum
pedagogi et parentes bonos mores pueros instruunt. Haec quidem tria forsitans aliquam ter-
va sunt. Naturalis dispositio facit ad virtutem ut in sexto dicebatur. Alcunam enim mun a
ativitye videntur fortis... Attamen virtus haec naturalis est imperfecta ut ibidem dictum est,
quo vero perficitur opus quod superveniat perfectus rationis usus. Et ob hoc doctrina requi-
rirur quae sufficeret si in solo intellectu vel in sola ratione virtus existeret, secundum opinio-
nem Socratis ponentis virtutem esse scientiam. Sed quoniam ad virtutem requiritur rectitudo
appetitus, necessaria est consuetudo per quam firmetur appetitus ad bonum • (Lib. X, f.
195ra-b).

(34) Cfr. note 33 above.

(35) Unde apparat multos esse impotentes ad bonos fieri, tamen haec impotentia est vo-
luntaria; nam, sicut delictum commissum ab ebrio iniuriente voluntarium est, quoniam
ebriari fut voluntarium, ita haec impotentia est voluntaria, quoniam malis actibus assudieri,
unde pravitas habituata est, fut voluntarium • (Lib. III, f. 54ra).
virtue are accessible to all, so that ignorance is not a valid excuse. The latter point is especially notable because of Tignosi’s description of what notions are important for moral virtue, and of how they are available to us. The necessary notions are, Tignosi thinks, human action, the human end, human status, and human ability. In turn, these come to us from a good nature, sufficient liberty, a good education, and correct teaching. It is not clear whether Tignosi wants to establish a one-to-one correspondence between the items in the first and second series, but his emphasis on *libertas* and *civiliiter vivere* seems to me an innovation in the interpretation of Aristotle (36).

We come now to the aim, subject, and method of moral philosophy according to Tignosi. Observing that moral philosophy tries to perfect man and make him prudent, especially in regard to his actions and passions, Tignosi sides with those who think that the proper subject of moral philosophy concerns whatever is appropriate to make man happy, or man inasmuch as he may be made happy. He explicitly rejects the views that the subject is the human good, or what is *honestum*, or happiness itself, or the virtues, or even human action. The subject is man himself inasmuch as he may attain to human happiness (37). This is not, as some might be tempted to say, evidence of the influence of humanism upon Tignosi; he depends here upon Gerard of Odo and Buridan, who had said very much the same thing (38). However,

(36) « Quattuor sunt necessaria ad virtutem acquirendam et fugiendam pravitatem, scilicet natura idonea, libertas sufficiens, educatio non mala, et sana doctrina. Per primam redditur homo capax principium (?) malorum per quem homo cunctos actus suos intelligit vel intelligenter audit. Libertas sufficit quando homo potest civiliiter vivere et humana opera expe- riri, quod necessarium videtur ad habendam notitiam virtutis. Educatio mala imbibit his quae de mente non possunt evelli, ut in graecis pluries patuit. Sed in diebus nostris in consi- lio florentino convicti, tamen ad patriam remeantes, ad vomitum, id est primam heresin, re- versi sunt, quoniam in illa fuerant educati. Sana doctrina his necessaria est qui sunt imbuen- di, quoniam non parum refert sic a pueritia instruamur. Ex quibus quattuor habitis habetur omnis notitia quae ad moralem requiritur, scilicet notitia operationis humanae, finis humani, status humani et potentatis // humanae. Et cum haec omnia commode possint haberi, hinc est quod nemo per ignorantiam nunc dicendum excusatur, nec per talem ignorantiam culpa caret. Propertea puniendus est » (Lib. III. f. 53r-53va).

(37) « Verum felicitas est quae trahit homines ad virtuose vivendum, quae finis in scientiis practicis, quals etiha est, rationem habet moventis principii, quo sit quod neque bonum humanum neque bonum honestum neque felicitas neque virtutes neque conveniens homini operatio debet poni subiectum philosophiae moralis, si de subiecto loquamur proprie. Consideratur tamen in libro ethicorum de homine ut solus habeat quae sibi debentur ad capiendo felicitatem..., Constat igitur hominem ut dictum est moralis scientiae subiectum esse » (Lib. I. f. 5r).

(38) See LINES, *Teaching Virtue in Renaissance Italy* cit., p. 111. For Buridan’s view of ho-
it is clear that, whatever Tignosi’s understanding of the exact subject of ethics, its aim remains the same as that of all other medieval commentators at least since Albert – practice. For, as Georg Wieland has shown, Aristotle’s *Ethics* was understood as providing the theoretical foundation for good behavior, and without the aim of practical implementation, its study was considered useless (39). For this reason, Tignosi has no illusions that moral philosophy is a science in the strong sense, and he is thus free to note the variability of its object. Although he recognizes that there are both universal and particular components to prudence, for example, he wishes to insist on the latter. As a *recta ratio agibilium*, prudence considers especially the realm of specific actions (Lib. VI, f. 110v, 111r)

Proper audience. – When it comes to the proper audience of moral philosophy, Tignosi points out that those who hear the subject must have some basic knowledge of what is to be discussed; he agrees with Aristotle that experience is a necessary factor; and he emphasizes the importance of emotional maturity, for which a good upbringing is deemed essential.

Tignosi maintains that education is indeed a necessary requirement for those who hear moral philosophy. However, he adds that it is sufficient for the hearers to know what is being asked and to what science it belongs (40). Does Tignosi therefore see moral philosophy as a subject for beginners? It is very hard to tell. In Book VI (following Thomas) Tignosi says that moral philosophy is to be studied after natural philosophy and before metaphysics (f. 112v). Therefore, his comments in Book I seem aimed only at explaining what hearers of moral philosophy need to


(40) *Et intendens quod juvenis non sit sufficiens, praemittit primo quod nemo bene iudicat nisi de cognitis, ut patet. Oportet quidem auditores circa dicenda aliquid erudiri, quoniam si nihil de illis noverit, non modo non judicabit sed nec addiscet. Sat est tamen volentem addiscere si cognoscat quid queritur et ad quam scientiam illud declarare pertineat...* (Lib. I, f. 7rb).
know already about that subject. Furthermore, Tignosi’s commentary, with its involved explanations about the nature of the soul, could be an illustration of his assumptions concerning his audience. If this were true, however, one would need to explain his very elementary descriptions of the three kinds of rhetoric and of the nature of the syllogism (41). Two explanations offer themselves. One is that the passages on psychology, rhetoric, and logic are part of an interpretative approach that tends to use the text as an excuse to display the commentator’s learning and furnish the reader with at least some of the rudiments of the arts (42). The other is that Tignosi does not have an especially learned audience in mind (43). The two explanations are not mutually exclusive and could point to a feast-day audience (if Tignosi taught the Ethics) that included hearers of different levels and ages. So there is no real reason to question the sincerity of Tignosi’s ladder of sciences because of the method of his own commentary.

Tignosi agrees with Aristotle that experience is also a requirement for hearers of moral philosophy. However, he does not insist on direct experience of civil and moral affairs. He offers two other possibilities for gaining the necessary first principles of this science – either personal habituation or belief in what others have to say (44). Tignosi still considers time to be an indispensable aspect of this experience (he speaks of «assuetudo longa» and the adverse effect of «brevitas temporis» on f. 8v), but it is not clear how long a long period is, and when exactly one can be considered ready to hear moral philosophy.

Whereas someone who lacks experience is, for Tignosi, an unqualified auditor of moral philosophy, a person who lacks matu-

(41) Tignosi briefly outlines the types of rhetoric on ff. 23v (Lib. I) and 197v (Lib. X). He says about the syllogism: «Syllogismus vero est oratio, ut dicitur in logica, in qua quibusdam positis et concessis necesse est aliquid evenire; nam quilibet habet in antecedente propositiones duas quarum altera est universalis, ex quibus sequitur tertia quae dicitur conclusio...» (Lib. VI, f. 105va).

(42) Some of these features are illustrated under the «doctrinal reading» rubric in J. HANKINS, Plato in the Italian Renaissance, I, Leiden, 1990, pp. 18-20.

(43) Cfr. note 16 above.

(44) «Et declarans qui insufficiens est auditor, dixit ex quo fit, id est sequitur, ut iuvenis, etc., quoniam non trite cognoscit nec operatur et paucum rem civilium, quae contingentes sunt, habet experimentium, nam principia huius scientiae vix ab eo creduntur, quae sumuntur via sensus, memoriae et experientiae. Verum licet non habeat de moralibus notitiam evidenter, tamen de illis habere potest credulitatem acquisitam per assuetudinem vel auctoritatem momentium » (Lib. I, f. 7rb).
rity is a completely useless one. A follower of his passions will scarcely take to heart the teaching on moderating them. Therefore, Tignosi says, only hearers who are not moved by fear, desire, and similar passions are truly ideal hearers. In explaining this requirement, Tignosi does not say that young people are therefore excluded by definition from hearing moral philosophy, but that they need special help from friends, relatives, and others if they are to exercise reason and thus overcome their impulses (45). It is therefore important that young people be brought up well, so as to be well disposed toward the virtues.

Tignosi does not really elaborate on what constitutes a good upbringing in Book I. He does, however, give an idea of what we should be taught not to do (burp, lie, get drunk, and so forth), specifics that are completely absent in most other commentaries. And he shows that knowledge of morals begins with these elementary matters, which we come to know through custom (as-suetudo). He also indicates that this training is indispensable for going on in virtue (46).

Method of teaching. — It is relatively straightforward to see that Tignosi understands prudence and all other sciences to be subject to sapientia (by which he means metaphysics), just as members of the body are subject to the head. Following Aristotle, Tignosi argues that this must be the case because, although civilis and prudentia may be the most important aspects of man, they are not so absolutely; furthermore, there is the fact of the variability of prudence's objects (Lib. VI, f. 109v). The order of the subjects of moral philosophy, however, seems clear but contradictory. In Book I, Tignosi sees the ars civilis (i.e., politics) as that which allows or disallows certain subjects within the city and has other arts under it. As usual, civilis orders the use or

(45) † Is ergo idoneus est auditor quoniarn timore, molestia, voluptate, concupiscencia, hiisque similibus non movetur. Indigent iuvenes auxilio magno, quoniam in ipsis passionum impetus fortior est quam iudicium rationis; auxilium autem est ex monitionibus amicorum, repraehensione parentum et suasione rerum quae sunt agendae; non parum refert socios et magistros probos ... » (f. 7va).

(46) † Nobis quidem pueros existentibus nequamquam desit instructio a parentibus, nutritce, pedagogo, vel quovis alio digno. Nam secundum mores civitatis imbuti facilius cognoscemus an recte doceamur; quis doceri non potest quod eructare in convivo est turpe, furari est iniustum, esse mendacem est probriissimum, ebrari, scortari flagitosum? Unde appareat quod cognitio de moribus incipit a notis nobis per assuetudinem. Nam si nullam haberemus de moribus cognitionem profecto numquam moveremur ad moralia perdiscenda » (Lib. I, f. 8ra-b).
presence of certain subjects, but does not order their conclusions. Nor does it teach what is good; one of its main functions seems to be that of clearing the way for the exercise of speculation (47). Ethics, instead, does teach what the *summum bonum* is, for the city as for the wise man. Economics and politics derive their definitions of the good from ethics, and thus depend upon and are subject to ethics; all three, at least in principle, are concerned with the same good, but have different functions in relation to it (48).

It would thus seem that, for Tignosi, politics is subject to ethics according to the teachings of Albert and Buridan (49). Book VI, however, presents a different picture. Here Tignosi depends heavily upon Thomas in his arguments that there are various kinds of prudence (that of the individual, of the family, and of the city), of which the principal is the *civillis*, which he divides into *legis positiva* (proper to those who write the laws) and *civillis* (proper to judges). All these prudences have the same habit in that they aim to reach the *summum bonum* or *finis ultimus* or *felicitas*; but the *legis positiva* is clearly the architectonic one, and Tignosi describes the prudences as differing inasmuch as the city is superior to the family, which in turn is superior to the individual (f. 111r-v). Furthermore, in Book X Tignosi maintains that at least a part of politics is such that it is not subject to any other science, and that rhetoric falls under it (50).

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(47) « Et si petatur an ipsa doceat quid est illud bonum, dicitur quod non. Sed bene docet illud in speculacione consistere, unde satis est ordinasse quod humana studia in vitia non labantur nec aliquod impedimentum ab ipsis oriatur et sibi invicem sint auxilio • (Lib. I, f. 5vb).

(48) « Collige summatim ethicam describere summum bonum quid sit, quae et quot sint virtutum species, et quae indifferenter deceant homines ut illud summum bonum adipsican
tur formaliter vel secundum gradum propinquum ut unicuique possibile est. Et summum bo
num quod docet duplex est, scilicet politicum de quo in hoc Primo, et illud quod sapientis
est in Decimo. Economica et Politica quid sit hoc summum bonum ab Ethica supponentes,
intendunt quomodo per diversos hominum gradus in communi sive pro societate possint vir
tutes et bonum procurari, salvari atque distribui quo societas vel familiaris vel civilis rectissi
ome gubernetur, unde patet etiam ambabus caeteris esse // priorerum, illasque sibi subalter
nari, quoniam quae dicta sunt in ethica praesupponunt • (Lib. I, ff. 5vb-6ra). • Patet igitur
idem quod bonum quod ethicai considerat et politica. In prima scimus quid est et elementa
traduntur civilis discipliniae; politica id esse praesupponit et salvare procurat... Hoc dictum,
scilicet quod idem sit bonum ab utraque consideraturn, non consanat iiis quae dicuntur in
Decimo, ubi videtur alia esse felicitas politica, alia quae in contemplatione est... • (Lib. I, ff.
6ra-b).

(49) See LINES, Teaching Virtue cit., pp. 132-135.

(50) « At politica statutam et firmam habet partem quam exequi dignam non credit, nec
est instrumentum alicuius scientiae; at rhetorica instrumentum est et politicae subicitur, ut
in prohemio huius declaratur • (Lib. X, f. 197va).
This confusion makes it difficult to know whether Tignosi really thought politics or ethics to be superior, but perhaps does not affect the order in which ethics, economics, and politics should be studied in his view. If one considers Tignosi's comments in Book I to reflect correctly the sequential nature of these subjects, one must at least conclude that politics should be studied after ethics, since the good it considers is defined in the ethics. Whatever the sequence, Tignosi appears to have no difficulty with the fact that the uncertain nature of the subject forces a pedagogical approach that is also not certain (51). Tignosi gives no indication that it would be better for moral philosophy to be founded on firmer principles, nor does he express a longing for Plato's ethical method, which might be more «scientific». The variability of human customs is not a matter of desperation, but of curiosity, and does not invalidate the possibility of finding good ways in which to order one's own life and that of the state.

III

Fortunately for us, Tignosi's commentary was not met with silence (as was the case, it seems, with Becchi's work). Although we do not have the letters or tracts written by Tignosi's opposers, we at least have his response to them. This treatise can be used to help us understand what Tignosi's contemporaries found innovative or difficult in Tignosi's commentary. Arguing from silence, we might also hazard a guess about what had become acceptable in Florence during the 1460s.

Before August 1464, Tignosi saw himself forced to defend his commentary against various detractors (52). His response was penned, apparently, with the intent to prove that his comments were according to truth and had all followed Aristotle's intention.

(51) • Siquidem tanta fiat certitudo, quanta secundum materiam declarandam sufficiens est, sat erit discipulo et docenti • (Lib. I, f. 6rb); • Non oportet doctorem tradere scientiam moralem per demonstrationes omneo certas quoniam habet causas fallibiles et variatas, ut supra dicebatur • (ibid., f. 6vb); • Quemadmodum doctores decet secundum subiectam materiam rationes adducere, sic tales habuisse satis sit addiscenti • (ibid., f. 7ra).

As proof, Tignosi reports that he took his explanations from the best-known commentators, wishing to bring them before the public (53). It is noteworthy that the whole preface to Tignosi's *Opusculum* is dedicated to defending the trustworthiness of his conclusions; nothing is said about the controversial nature of his method.

The first part of Tignosi's defense, « In eos qui antiquitati nituntur », responds to those who objected to Tignosi's failure to follow *antiquissima grammatica atque rhetorica* in his commentary. Here Tignosi provides some observations on the responsibility of a commentator (*Offitium commentatoris*). This brief section, to which Garin has rightly directed our attention (54), insists that a commentator's chief responsibility is to make the text under consideration as clear as possible, and to provide enjoyable reading to the first-comer and the expert alike. One of the key points in this passage is Tignosi's insistence on *faciliter edoceri*: commenting is not a matter of making the text obscure through the use of obsolete words, but of opening it up to the gaze of the beholder. Thus, one of an interpreter's main functions is that of distinguishing the text's parts, rightly and openly (55). However, Tignosi's point is that *res* are more important than *verba* in a commentary; although he points to Leonardo Bruni, Poggio Bracciolini, and Carlo Marsuppini as examples of *glossatores* who combined elegance with *recta declaratio*, he argues that elegance of style is not necessary in a commentary. The main function of a commentary is, rather, to explain the meaning and teach what may not be clear (56). Tignosi, who does not cease to
make fun of those who cling to the most ancient usage and who wish to take the men of that time as their examples, is also subtly disagreeing with the anachronistic attitude of those who take the language and men of the Latin golden age as their models\(^{(57)}\). In philosophy, he seems to say, verbal eloquence is worth little. The true proof of a commentary is whether it explains the text well.

From this point of view, Tignosi’s comments bear a striking similarity, not to humanist philology\(^{(58)}\), but to certain criticisms of Alfonsus of Cartagena against Bruni’s translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Alfonsus insisted that school text-books be true; he perceived the danger that moral doctrine would be subordinated to rhetoric. Defending the older translation, he declared, “Our translation is not then to be attacked because it is inconsistent with the usual diction of orators, even the best orators; it is rather to be inquired whether it conforms to the exact nature of the objects and a strict propriety of words”\(^{(59)}\). Tignosi adopted Bruni’s translation, but not – it would seem – on the basis of its elegance. The essential was, for him, the degree to which a translation or commentary made clear Aristotle’s thought\(^{(60)}\).

This is not to say that Tignosi was opposed in principle to the stylistic elegance of the humanists: he simply did not find it appropriate or necessary in a commentary. Nor does it mean that

\(^{(57)}\) “Antiquissimos secternur”, aiunt, “quorum exempla velut speculum intueamur et vim nobis ac vivum simulachrum preponamus. Quis enim ferat ardentissimam nostrorum temporum cupiditatem, quando instar loquentium puerorum lingua balbutiente metiri volumus, quae illi antiquissimis sapuerunt. Ipsorum ergo scientias, orationes, tropos, celebresque sermones et scribendi caracteres imitemur” • (Ibid., p. 468); “Stultissimum quidem opinor eos imitari velle quorum memoria fumus et famula est facta” • (Ibid., p. 470).

\(^{(58)}\) GARIN exaggerates when he says, “... Niccolò Tignosi da Foligno... polemizzò aspramente contro i metodi tradizionali, mostrandosi già tutto convertito alle esigenze della nuova filologia fiorita in Firenze nei circoli che avevano sostenuto l’Argiropulo”; see GARIN, *La cultura filosofica*, cit., p. 107.


\(^{(60)}\) A parallel may also be made between Tignosi and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. For Pico’s position and indeed that of other fifteenth-century Italian figures who did not find elegance of style necessary in commentaries, see J. KRAVE, *Philologists and philosophers*, in *The Cambridge companion to Renaissance humanism*, ed. J. KRAVE, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 145-146 (142-160).
he was completely unaffected by their considerations on education. There is an unusual insistence, in this section Offitium commentatoris, on the necessity to make things as clear as possible to the reader: « [commentatoris] proprium est apte, aperte, distincte ac recte singula propalasse ». We hear about the need to « clare disserere », to « siquid sub textu iacet in medium aperi- ri », to make sure that the reader not only reads and understands, but is also taught (61). The goal faciliter edoceri indicates that the audience for moral philosophy is not limited to university students on their way to examining the problems of metaphysics (although Tignosi thinks that may be ideal). It includes, rather, beginners as well as the deeply learned, and it includes distinguished amateurs such as Piero and Cosimo de' Medici (the dedicat- ees, respectively, of the commentary and Opusculum). For their benefit, it is necessary for explanations to be as straightforward as possible. Whereas earlier university documents had emphasized the need to utiliter edoceri (62), this concern is now complemented by that of reaching a much broader audience. Tignosi does not mean, of course, by faciliter edoceri that all of Aristotle's doctrine should be presented to a reader without his making any effort; but he does object to those who make almost a game of hiding the truth.

This is Tignosi's principal subject in the following section, « Adversus eos qui genus humanitatis non sapiunt ». Here he re- sponds to those who think that his commentary is directed, not to those who are learned or intelligent, but to those whose minds are rotting in laziness: rhetoricians, orators, and any others dedi- cated to the studia humanitatis (63). By referring to Cicero and some contemporaries (Manetti, Palmieri, Acciaiuoli, Rinuccini), Tignosi wishes to point out that not all rhetoricians and orators are stupid; he further praises their habit of teaching their subjects in a clear manner (64). Thus, Tignosi condemns the use of syl-

(61) For these quotations, see Sensi, Tignosi cit., pp. 469-470.
(63) « Cum a comentis meis haec ipsorum sit exclusa sententia non intelligentibus et eruditis ea tractanda predicant, sed his quorum in desidia et oti marcescit ingenium, quales rhesoet et oratores nominant et ceteros qui studiis humanitatis, rebusque civilibus annitun- tur » (Sensi, Tignosi cit., p. 471).
(64) « Contemnunt etiam gravissimum illum hominem Manettum Iannotium qui suo tempore oratores inter doctissimos habebatur; ut Matteum Palmerium lacerant, ac de Dona-
logisms, sophismata, enigmata, and sybillina carmina, which according to his opponents make a reader sweat (as he should) to extract the nuggets of truth from a text. That model of education is an elitist one, reinforced through the use of a highly technical and convoluted language that excludes newcomers and rewards insiders. Tignosi instead wishes to make his material accessible to the learned as well as those who are merely interested.

Here again a caveat is necessary. For Tignosi does not object absolutely to the use of viae syllogisticae in philosophy. In fact, he thinks that they are most useful and necessary in the natural and metaphysical sciences, and his own commentaries on the De anima and Posterior Analytics have been described as typically «scholastic» from this perspective (65). Instead, Tignosi presents an interesting and unusual application of Aristotle’s principle that the subject should determine the method («secundum subjiciam materiam recte loquitur»). The four kinds of arguments envisioned by Aristotle are: syllogism, induction, example, and enthymeme. The first two pertain to those matters in which truth must be extracted forcibly; but the latter two pertain to rhetoric and moral philosophy. In these studies, it is enough to grasp the truth almost figuratively; they are sciences that do not require methods foreign to themselves (66). Thus, Tignosi justifies his avoidance of syllogistic procedures as a matter determined by the nature of his text, and not on his presumed snubbing of a learned audience. His defense indicates someone who was sensitive to the particular philosophical genre with which he was dealing, and who was willing to adapt his exposition accordingly.

Tignosi was not, however, willing to adapt his commentary to the lowest common denominator of his potential audience. His section «Contra eos qui terminorum ignorantia reprehendunt» deals with the criticisms of those who found Tignosi’s work too difficult. These critics, to whom Tignosi refers as scola vulgaris, and who apparently had difficulty with anything that was even a

(65) See Ibid., pp. 386ff.
(66) «Sed in rhetoricis atque moralibus, omniumque civili negotio qui planissimi sunt argumentationis modi, scilicet enthymematum utimur et exemplo, quoniam hae scientiae instrumentis non indigent alienis.... In hac enim, veluti per figuram, nobis sufficit apprehendere veritatem» (Ibid., p. 472).
little bit ornamented (including Horace and Juvenal) or that did not use words near enough to the vernacular, reproved Tignosi for not being clear enough. According to these critics, « studiis litterarum dediti clara omnia deberent discere et predicare, quorum si quis quicquam obscurius aut in mendacio vel ficto velamine protulisset poenam haberet ut perpetuo silentio fruere-tur » (67). Tignosi responds that tractatio litterarum requires that those who approach it be prepared in two ways. First, they must have a firm mind, for knowledge does not come immediately and requires experience, time, leisure, and effort (experientia, tempus, otium, et labor). Second, it requires acquaintance with the terminology used to explain a particular science. Without a knowledge of the standard terms, any expectation of understanding the explanation will be useless (68). This section is especially interesting because it presents criticisms from a group that apparently had some knowledge of Latin and presumably some sympathy for the umanisti, but found large areas of literature and philosophy beyond their tastes and abilities. Tignosi must remind them of the effort involved in understanding particular styles and subjects. He does not bow to their ignorance. Nor does he fall into the trap exemplified by Bruni of doing away with a specific and technical philosophical vocabulary. Tignosi in fact emphasizes that he has used the commonplace terminology (trita termina) in his exposition of moral philosophy because each discipline has its own professional vocabulary that its students should know. It is also interesting because Tignosi refers to moral philosophy as a part (or subpart) of tractatio litterarum, thus underlining its close relationship with rhetoric, already made clear through his reference to the kinds of arguments moral philosophy employs. Indeed, Tignosi himself appears as a studiis litterarum deditus, charged with not having been clear enough.

Tignosi’s self-perception as a humanist is reinforced by his section « Inimici poetarum refelluntur » (69). We already know

(67) Ibid., p. 473. Note that Tignosi is assumed to be studiis litterarum deditus.
(68) « Secundum esse perhibent ut terminis assuescat quibus illam scientiam tradere sunt soliti auctores. Habet enim unaquaeque locutiones sibi proprias et dedicatas, troposque conformes quos cuiusque ignorantis labor erit in cassum et vana penitus reperietur intentio » (Ibid., p. 474).
(69) Given as « Inimici poetam refelluntur » in Ibid., p. 479, but see the alternate reading in Sensi, note 56.
why Tignosi does not depend so much on syllogisms and the other traditional expository devices which he uses instead in his other commentaries. Here he deals with those who criticize his use of the poets and historical examples. The first are supposed to be harmful, since they are among the basest elements of society and easily excite the minds of the crowd; the second are useless for understanding the philosophers' inspired descriptions of exalted matters (70).

Tignosi justifies his use of poetry and historical examples by appealing to the example of Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers. He is explicit about his intention to follow in their steps (« Ego vero secuturus istorum vestigia, puto »). Thus, Tignosi's technique is in part explained by the humanists' oft-repeated desire to imitate the style of the ancients. To my knowledge, this was the first time in Florence that such a desire was applied to the exposition of Aristotle's Ethics. Second, although Tignosi did not dare say so explicitly, one suspects that poetry and examples from history were to provide Aristotle's text with the persuasive and edifying power whose absence Petrarch had lamented in his De suì ipsius... ignorantia. Thus, rhetoric was associated with moral philosophy. This association lent further support to the long-standing treatment of ethics as a practical manual that could encourage the pursuit of the good.

IV

Scholars have interpreted Tignosi's commentary and Opusculum in two very different ways. According to Sensi, these works reflect three aspects of Tignosi's new method: the effort to grasp the original meaning of Aristotle's arguments, to interpret Plato and Aristotle historically, and to explain the text clearly. By the first, Sensi means a direct access to Aristotle's text, without the intermediary function of other interpreters. He recognizes, however, that Tignosi's effort did not meet with success on this occa-

(70) « Est quidem philosophorum res divina, tantaeque gravitatis, quod studentium contemplationem exsperat. At poetarum infima est conditio popularisque suasio, qua parte indi rem facile mentes hominum concitantur. Historia vero nihil utilitatis afferit ad recte contemplandum res altissimas, quas philosophi, velut afflati divino numine, descripterunt » (Ibid., p. 479).
sion, given his limited knowledge of Greek: he was forced to depend on the same interpreters to which he objected (71). Tignosi was instead more successful in understanding Plato and Aristotle historically, in the purity of their original thought (72). This feature is evident from Tignosi’s commentaries on the *Ethics* and the *Posterior Analytics* as well as in his treatise *De ideis*. Sensi, however, does not mean by this « sforzo di intendere storicamente, sia Platone, sia Aristotele », an effort to study how Plato’s thought influenced Aristotle’s, or how both philosophers were affected by historical circumstances. He refers instead to Tignosi’s desire to determine whether Plato or Aristotle’s view of the Ideas is more valid, and to his conclusion that Plato’s Ideas were valuable explanations for certain problems in physics (73). Third, Sensi emphasizes Tignosi’s attempt to produce a clear exposition of Aristotle’s text. Thus, Tignosi aimed for a direct clarification of Aristotle’s thought that avoided stringing together the conclusions of previous commentators (74); he made use of historical exempla and of classical poetry, of the enthymeme rather than the syllogism, and even referred to Ciceronian style in the *Opusculum* (75). Taken together, these characteristics make of Tignosi a « figlio genuino dell’Umanesimo » (76) and bring him close to the position of Argyropoulos, the great innovator in the Florentines’ method of studying philosophy, including the *Ethics* (77).

Kraye, instead, delivers a very different judgment about Tignosi. Tignosi’s method of interpreting the *Ethics* is not considered an example of true humanistic method, although it moves in that direction. On the humanistic side, she notes the use of clas-

(71) Ibid., pp. 388, 391.
(72) « C’è qui tutto un programma, tutta una vita, quella che il Tignosi spese sulla cattedra per attuare un’esigenza che maturò ancor prima che l’Argiropulo venisse a Firenze, la comprensione storica del pensiero aristotelico... » (Ibid., p. 391); « ... fu un commentatore che ebbe come principale scopo la comprensione storica dei pensatori nell’effettivo significato che le loro dottrine ebbero... » (Ibid., p. 422).
(73) Ibid., p. 404.
(74) Sensi says, « ... più che cucire le disparate sentenze dei commentatori, assai spesso egli preferisce chiarire direttamente il pensiero aristotelico, largamente ricorrendo all’esemplificazione storica e usando come autorità gli stessi poeti classici » (Ibid., p. 388).
(75) Ibid., pp. 390-393.
(76) Ibid., p. 390.
sical poetry and historical exempla; on the scholastic, his use of Thomas Aquinas, Averroes, and Albert the Great. Thus, Tignosi emerges as a bolder user of humanistic method than the «humanists» Argyropoulos and Acciaiuoli, whose commentary she describes as «essentially scholastic», given its non-Ciceronian style, use of syllogisms rather than classical exempla, addressing of quaestiones and dubia, reliance on medieval authorities, and lack of philological discussions (78). Thus, Kraye inverts the judgment of Garin and his followers on the relative humanism of the commentaries of Tignosi and Acciaiuoli, and even on Argyropoulos as a turning point in the application of humanistic methodology to the interpretation of the Ethics.

Both of these evaluations are problematic. Aside from the doubtfulness of Tignosi’s openness to Plato (79), Sensi’s view seems to claim too much for Tignosi’s humanism. For example, Sensi’s argument that Tignosi wished to interpret Aristotle’s text directly, without reading it through the medieval commentators, must reckon with the fact that nowhere does Tignosi emphasize a «direct» reading of Aristotle’s text, independent from the judgments of past commentators. Rather, he says, «lectis bonis sententiis et bonis item auctoribus, omnis mea comentatio contexta est» (80). At the beginning of the Opusculum he freely admits «Sumpsi cunctas expositiones ex auctoribus qui clarissimi sunt» (81), which reinforces the statement in the preface of his commentary, praising Eustratius, Averroes, Albert the Great, and Thomas (82). Tignosi used his own judgment, of course; his is not

(78) KRAYE, Renaissance commentaries cit., pp. 100-102.

(79) It is not necessary here to become involved in the complex issue of Tignosi’s overall Platonism, and of whether or not he accepted some Platonic doctrines in the realm of physics, but not in metaphysics and theology, as argued by BERTI, La dottrina platonica cit. Although the later tract De ideis accepts some Platonic concepts, Tignosi never accepted a Platonic or even a conciliatory method in ethics and was dismayed – after reading Acciaiuoli’s commentary on the Ethics – to see Aristotle’s doctrine so wrongly interpreted, as through a Platonic lens. See Tignosi’s tract, edited in THORNDIKE, Science and Thought cit., pp. 308-331 ( Appendix 18). Furthermore, any indication of an openness to Plato in ethics has to deal with Tignosi’s statement: «Concluditur quod cognitio universalis, sive hieideal boni non est necessaria, neque utilis ad aliqum scientiam vel artes, neque ad aliquod illarum exercitium» (quoted in SEnSI, Tignosi cit., p. 419 from Perugia, BCom. Augusta, Ms. L, 79, ff. 13-17v). In spite of the teaching of Argyropoulos, Tignosi’s commentary does not show a great openness as yet to Platonic and neo-Platonic ideas in interpreting Aristotle.

(80) Ibid., p. 480.

(81) Ibid., p. 467.

(82) See above, note 18.
simply a patchwork of what had been said before. However, his is no attempt to be profoundly original; as we have seen, his thoughts on teaching virtue confirm this dependence on older commentators. If « direct reading » was ever an ideal part of the humanistic approach to texts in the fifteenth century (a possibility that becomes ever less likely, given the studies by Sabbadini, Grafton, and Hankins), it was not so with Tignosi’s commentary (83).

Whereas Sensi claims too much for Tignosi’s humanism, Kraye seems to claim too little. Her emphasis on issues of style and sources in Ethics commentaries (for example, the use or not of quaestiones, syllogisms, poetical quotations and historical exempla; the type of commentary that a work represents; the Latin style in which it is written; its relative attention to philological matters; its relative independence from other commentaries) gives the impression that humanism was all about form and nothing about substance. Although there was certainly a large measure of vacuity in what the humanists said, it does not seem possible to reduce humanistic method to particular rhetorical or interpretative strategies, which in any case (as she herself demonstrates) could vary considerably from one humanist to the other.

Second, there is a difficulty with viewing any particular interpretative approach as a full expression of humanistic method. Kraye does try to be cautious on this score; for example, Lefèvre d’Etaples’ commentary is called only a « predominantly humanist exposition of the Ethics » (84), and she recognizes that Pier Vettori’s unphilosophical treatment of the Ethics in the sixteenth century was not always followed by other humanists (85). Yet, to describe Tignosi’s approach as « creeping humanism » (86) is necessarily to set it against some notion of full-blooded humanism and to evaluate it by that standard (in this case, Vettori’s philological treatment of the Ethics).

Some time ago, the characteristics of humanist Aristotelianism were described as: attention to philological analysis, a « historicizing » attitude, a tendency to use classical rather than me-

(84) KRAYE, Renaissance commentaries cit., p. 104, emphasis mine.
(85) Ibid., pp. 114ff.
(86) Ibid., p. 101.
dieval sources, a taste for citations from poetry and history, and a rejection of *quaestiones* (87). Recently, Kraye has offered a more modest description, emphasizing eloquent Latin translations, philological attention to the Greek text, and reliance on ancient Greek commentaries (88). She rightly drops from the previous categorization the suggestion that humanists generally disdained philosophical issues. She also recognizes that humanists were not in agreement as to the proper style to use in philosophical exposition. Still, one wonders how useful the remaining items are in defining a humanistic methodology when applied to Aristotle’s text. If one takes the specific case of the *Ethics* in Italy, one will find few commentaries after 1456 (whether or not by «humanists») that are not based on the new humanistic translations; also, even scholastic commentaries on the work came to make use of the advances in Greek philology; and reliance on the ancient Greek commentaries was nothing new, since they had been greatly influential ever since Grosseteste had translated them already in the thirteenth century. All of this points to the difficulty of defining a «humanistic methodology» in the case of the *Ethics* (89).

In spite of these problems, Sensi and Kraye have done well to note Tignosi’s application of rhetorical techniques to his exposition of the *Ethics* and his pursuit of the ideal of clarity. Indeed, although clarity did not amount for Tignosi to a direct (i.e., unmediated) *expositio textus*, Tignosi’s emphasis on *faciliter edoceri* surely conformed to his desire to explain the *Ethics* as straightforwardly as possible, without sacrificing the discussion of philosophical concepts and problems. For the purpose, Bruni’s non-technical translation probably seemed ideal. And Tignosi’s numerous references to the poets and to historical examples was certainly an innovation in explaining Aristotle’s *Ethics*. However, a different way of looking at Tignosi’s commentary is not to ask how much of a humanist Tignosi was, or to what extent his commentary reflects humanistic methodology, but whether it might

(89) However, this is not to say that no generalizations are possible. See D. A. Lines, *Ethics as Philology: A Developing Approach in Florentine Humanism*, forthcoming in the proceedings of the seminar *The New Aristotle: Renaissance Readings of the Corpus Aristotelicum* (Copenhagen, 23-25 April 1998), ed. Marianne Pade.
not reflect the needs and interests of a humanistically oriented audience.

As I suggested above, the commentaries by Becchi and Tignosi were both meant for humanist audiences and possibly indicate two different needs sensed by the audience of their time: the first, to have summaries and outlines (in and of itself nothing new, for *compendia* had a long history) and the second, to have more detailed, but not overly technical, explanations of particular works. This possibility is strengthened by a third fifteenth-century commentary, that of Donato Acciaiuoli (90), which was also directed to a humanist audience in Florence and which contains several parallels with that of Tignosi. For, although there are of course divergences in philosophical perspective, in style, and in translation used, there are also some points in common. For example, neither is written in Ciceronian Latin, both make extensive use of medieval philosophers, both include scholastic terminology, and both make use of *quaestiones* and *dubia* (91). Furthermore, both make marked (albeit different) use of rhetorical techniques and try to offer a clear exposition of Aristotle’s text (92). This ideal of clarity resulted, on the one hand, in the uncriticized use of a new translation (93), and on the other in the commentators’ practice of inserting explanations about even fairly simple subjects with which their audience may not have been familiar (94).

It did not, on the other hand, result in a real philological exami-


(91) On Acciaiuoli’s use of traditional authors and techniques, see BIANCHI, *Un commento* cit.

(92) In fact, although Acciaiuoli’s style is no model of Augustan prose, its clarity earned Vespasiano da Bisticci’s praise. See BIANCHI, *Un commento* cit., p. 35.

(93) Tignosi did not have to defend himself for having used Bruni’s translation of the *Ethics*. It would seem that, in less than fifty years, Bruni’s translation had affirmed itself even among the conservatives at Florence, who faulted Tignosi for many things, but not for this. Likewise, when Argyropoulos provided yet another translation of the work (between 1457 and 1463), taken as the base text of Acciaiuoli’s commentary, he did not need to defend his initiative. On Argyropoulos’ translation (which needs to be studied more in depth), see mainly L. FRATI, *Le traduzioni aristoteliche di G. Argyropulo e un’antica legatura Medicea*, in La bibliofilia, XIX (1917), pp. 3-8 (1-25) and GARIN, *Le traduzioni* cit., pp. 82-87.

(94) Concerning Acciaiuoli’s commentary, BIANCHI observes: “... spesso si ha addirittura l’impressione ehe taluni ehe taluni passi aristotelici costituiscano il pretesto per lezioncine di logica, matematica o metafisica. ... Tutto ciò sembra confermare le buone capacità didattiche dell’Argiropulo, ma lascia anche intuire quale fosse il livello di preparazione del suo uditorio” (BIANCHI, *Un commento* cit., p. 39).
nation of Aristotle's text, nor in an abandonment of all technical philosophical terms.

If we ask why the interpretation of Aristotle did not achieve this philological and philosophically non-technical character already with Tignosi and Acciaiuoli, two answers offer themselves. The first is that the commentators themselves were unwilling or unable to do so. Tignosi in fact was limited by his small knowledge of Greek so that he would not have been able to give a philological analysis of Aristotle's text even had he wanted to; Argyropoulos was, of course, a skilled Hellenist, but the fact of providing his own translation lightened the commentary itself from the burden of correcting Bruni's translation. Neither interpreter, however, seemed willing to dispense altogether with the technical philosophical vocabulary developed in the schools. In part this may have derived from their own training, in part it was the result of a conviction that philosophy could not dispense with its own technical vocabulary if it really was to be understood. But one can also answer the question from a different angle; for, if one considers the audience, it will be clear that it would not have been able to follow complicated philological analyses; and one can infer that at least some of the studiis litterarum dediti were also interested in philosophical problems, despite their lack of preparation in its technical aspects.

One is tempted to compare the audience of Aristotle's *Ethics* in fifteenth-century Florence with an undergraduate audience following a philosophy course in a modern north American university. However, some important differences must be kept in mind. For example, moral philosophy was a feast-day subject in fifteenth-century Florence and did not become a regular course until well into the sixteenth century (95). This meant that its teaching could not be continuous, that it was not a required course for an Arts degree, that no examinations were given, and that its audience was (at least potentially) fairly broad. In fact, feast-day lectures were not directed solely to students and were often given in public places where a large audience could attend. Although the use of Latin for the lectures did, of course, limit who might attend, it gave no real guarantee as to the audience's preparation.

(95) See Lines, *The Importance* cit., passim.
All considered, it seems best to think of the fifteenth-century course on the *Ethics* in terms of a modern public-lecture series where the audience is assumed to have some (but not very much) education and little (if any) technical expertise. Contrary to modern practice, however, the audience seems to have had more than a little say in the way the material was presented to them, and the assiduous attenders doubtless made sure that their own interests were served (96). At least in the case of the *studiis litterar­is dediti* attending lectures on the *Ethics* in Florence, this meant that overly complex philosophical problems tended to be avoided, in favor of clear expositions that could be followed also by the non-initiate. However, this did not yet lead (as it would with Poliziano) to a grammatical or philological analysis of the text, nor to throwing to the wind time-tested methods of understanding philosophical works. The desires of the audience and the self-respect of the teacher may have had a difficult cohabitation. But the audience’s level and expectations may have more markedly affected the teaching of Aristotle in Florence than was hitherto thought.

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