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Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity

edited by
Jill Kraye
and Risto Saarinen



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MORAL PHILOSOPHY ON THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNITY

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MORAL PHILOSOPHY ON THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNITY

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Introduction

Over the past twenty years the transition from the late Middle Ages to the early modern era has received increasing attention from experts in the history of philosophy. In part, this new interest arises from claims, made in literature aimed at a less specialist readership, that this transition was responsible for the subsequent philosophical and theological problems of the Enlightenment. Philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre and theologians like John Milbank display a certain nostalgia for the medieval synthesis of Thomas Aquinas and, consequently, evaluate the period from 1300 to 1700 in rather negative terms. Other historians of philosophy writing for the general public, such as Charles Taylor, take a more positive view of the Reformation but nevertheless conclude that modernity has been shaped by conflicts which stem from early modern times.¹

Ethics and moral thought occupy a central place in these theories. It is assumed that we have lost something – the concept of virtue, for instance, or the source of common morality. Yet those who put forward such notions do not treat the history of ethics in detail. From the historian's perspective, their far-reaching theoretical assumptions are based on a quite small body of textual evidence. In reality, there was a rich variety of approaches to moral thinking and ethical theories during the period from 1400 to 1600. Scholastic discussions did not stop when the Middle Ages came to a close; on the contrary, they acquired many new features in sixteenth-century Neo-Scholasticism. Theories of human rights and of dominion were not modern inventions; these issues were already debated by medieval thinkers. This discussion continued into the early modern era when humanists and Reformers rediscovered ancient moral traditions such as Stoicism and, in addition, applied the theological insights of the Reformation to ethical issues.

After the work of P. O. Kristeller, Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner, among others, professional historians of philosophy have become aware of the wealth of innovation which can be found in the years between 1400 and 1600.² This awareness, even more than the theories mentioned above, has been a key factor behind the new scholarly interest in this

¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1981; John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*. Oxford: Blackwell 1990; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989.

² See, e.g., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. C.B. Schmitt, Q. Skinner, and E. Kessler, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988; C.B. Schmitt and B. C. Copenhaver, *Renaissance Philosophy (A History of Western Philosophy 3)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992.

period. The contributions in this book belong to this new current of historical scholarship. They are motivated, above all, by the conviction that the moral thought of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries still remains to a great extent unexplored. We are not yet in a position to formulate or evaluate abstract claims concerning the deeper meaning of the transition from the medieval to the early modern period. Before doing so, we must read and analyse the extant texts in all their diversity and variety. With special regard to the developments of moral philosophy on the threshold of modernity, this is what the present volume aims to do.

Although this book concentrates on individual case studies rather than attempting to present a comprehensive overview, a thread which connects many of the contributions is the continuity between late medieval and early modern moral thought. Ethical discussions initiated by medieval Aristotelians were carried on by Neo-Aristotelians in the sixteenth century. Far from abandoning or forgetting ancient and medieval ways of thinking about moral issues, humanists and Reformers sought to revive past ethical theories. The humanist programme of a return *ad fontes* by no means neglected the classical sources of moral philosophy. Given the weight of this evidence, one cannot simply assert that some moral treasure was lost or forgotten during the Renaissance and Reformation. Early modern ethics was attentive to older traditions as well as more recent ones. Its innovations should be seen in the light of this attentiveness.

The papers collected in this volume were first presented in a workshop entitled 'Late Medieval and Early Modern Ethics and Politics', held at the European Science Foundation (ESF) in Strasbourg, France, in November 2001. This workshop was one of the meetings of the 'Early Modern Thought' network. The network, funded by the ESF from 1999 to 2001, has already produced other volumes dealing with natural philosophy, language sciences and metaphysics.³ We are grateful to the ESF for funding this network and the publications which have arisen from it. We also wish to thank Kluwer Academic Press and the editors of *The New Synthese Historical Library* for agreeing to publish this volume in their series. We also owe a very special thanks to *Jussi Varkemaa* who has acted as the technical editor of the present volume.

The overall aim of the network was to reconsider the borderline between late medieval and early modern thought. In order to promote this

³ C. Leijenhorst, C. Lüthy and J.M.M.H. Thijssen (eds.), *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century (Medieval and Early Modern Science 5)*. Leiden: Brill 2002; R.L. Friedman and L.O. Nielsen (eds.), *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400-1700 (The New Synthese Historical Library 53)*. Dordrecht: Kluwer 2003; S. Ebbesen and R.L. Friedman (eds.), *John Buridan and Beyond. The Language Sciences 1300-1700* (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Science and Letters, forthcoming).

aim, three guidelines were adopted in the original workshop. First, the emphasis of the papers was to be on the early modern period. Second, contributors were asked to consider, where appropriate, the relevance of the medieval background to their topics. Third, the subject matter was to be approached both philosophically and historically. While some papers emphasize historical analysis, others concentrate on the intellectual reconstruction of philosophical sources. As a whole, however, this collection attempts to combine an historical reading of texts with a philosophically competent understanding of the issues at stake.

We have grouped the papers into three sections: 1. Scholastics and Neo-Scholastics; 2. Theories of Human Rights and Dominion; 3. Reformers and Humanists. While all three sections treat roughly the same time period, with a particular emphasis on the sixteenth century, they have distinct thematic profiles. Papers in the first group investigate the fate of Thomism and are thus concerned with the continuity of Aristotelian scholasticism in Catholic philosophy. *David Lines* studies the reception of the commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics* of two major medieval philosophers, Thomas Aquinas and Jean Buridan, in Renaissance Italy. He shows that Thomas Aquinas continued to exert an important influence, as can be seen, for instance, in the commentaries of Niccolò Tignosi and Donato Acciaiuoli, but that Buridan's commentary made little impact on fifteenth-century Italy. This is interesting because we know that Buridan was still influential at the time in the universities of France and central Europe.

Thomas Pink investigates the concept of obligation in the action theories of Francisco Suarez and Gabriel Vasquez. They understood obligation to be an internal justificatory force which rationally motivates the will. Pink asks why, for Suarez and Vasquez, this force does not merely recommend actions to the will but actually issues orders. He concludes that their view of obligation as an action-specific justificatory force presupposes a theory of action no longer shared by later philosophers. *Martin Stone* studies the doctrine of 'pure nature' in Michael Baius and Dominic de Soto. In Cardinal Cajetan's interpretation of Thomism, this doctrine expresses the state of man as directed to his natural end. According to this early sixteenth-century interpretation, one can theoretically discuss human morals without presupposing supernatural ends. Stone shows that although the Augustinian-minded Baius and the Thomist Soto differ in their philosophical outlook, they nevertheless agree in their criticism of this assumption of pure nature. Both prefer to think of human subjects as concrete and morally imperfect individuals.

Casuistry is a feature of early modern ethics which has received a generally negative, even hostile, treatment from later philosophers and historians. *Rudolf Schüssler* and *Sven K. Knebel* demonstrate, however, that

casuistic considerations contained important theoretical innovations. Schüssler sets out the probabilism of Bartolomé de Medina and traces the spread of ethical probabilism in the early modern period. He explains the ways in which probabilism can offer help with practical decision-making in uncertain situations. Schüssler concludes that liberty-centred probabilism can be regarded as an ancestor of modern liberalism and possessive individualism. Knebel uses the example of torture in order to show how early modern casuistry transformed moral reasoning. He claims that Leonard Lessius's interpretation of casuistry softens the natural rights paradigm of charity and opens the door to an expansion of human autonomy.

The second group of papers, 'Theories of Human Rights and Dominion', opens with *Roberto Lambertini's* study of Franciscan political theory. In his view, William of Ockham's position cannot be called the supreme Franciscan contribution to this branch of philosophy; rather, Ockham develops his own, highly specific theory from general Franciscan features. Lambertini notes that even the opponents of the Franciscans, Jean Gerson for instance, could adopt Franciscan ideas. Thus Gerson resorted to the idea that human dominion is a purely human institution made necessary by sin. *Virpi Mäkinen* shows how early modern ideas of individual rights of property and subsistence were anticipated by late medieval Franciscans. Even before William of Ockham, Godfrey of Fontaines formulated an idea of the inalienable individual right of subsistence.

Jussi Varkemaa analyses the moral casuistry of the fifteenth-century scholars Jean Gerson and Conrad Summenhart. Using the juridical language of his contemporaries, Summenhart articulates a liberty-based approach to natural rights. He defends the view that a human being is *dominus* of his own person and that this dominion is a natural right of the individual. Through Gerson, Summenhart's concept of subjective right becomes associated with Franciscan discussions. *Risto Saarinen* studies Martin Luther's view of the three estates: *oeconomia*, *politia* and *ecclesia*. The three estates are connected, on the one hand, with the tripartite division of ethics in medieval Aristotelianism. On the other hand, Luther's frequent use of the concept *ordinationes Dei* connects the estates with the idea of God's ordained power and covenant theology. Whereas his views of *oeconomia* and *politia* bear some resemblance to Aristotelian social ethics, his description of individual ethics as taking place in the sphere of *ecclesia* is permeated by the Christocentric theology of the Lutheran Reformation.

The third section of the book, 'Reformers and Humanists', is concerned with the transformation of ethics which took place as a result of the humanist search for new sources. *Günter Frank* and *Dino Bellucci* study Philipp Melanchthon's ethics in the context of his broader philosophy. After Luther's criticism of Aristotle, Melanchthon reintroduced

the *Nicomachean Ethics* into the university curriculum. At the same time, Melanchthon's commentaries on Aristotle are pervaded by Luther's biblical theology and his own distinctive philosophy of mind. Frank explains Melanchthon's conception of the human mind as God's image and indicates how this theological precondition shapes his practical philosophy. Dino Bellucci discusses Melanchthon's natural philosophy and the relationship between mind and body. In his theory of action, Melanchthon takes over much of Aristotle's teleology, but he interprets it in relation to natural and cosmic influences. He speculates on the notion of spiritual, or celestial, matter operative in the brain and the nerves. In his view, locomotion is produced in the body by the God-given spirits of the neural system. Not just theological theories, but also complex neurological and medical ones, inform Melanchthon's influential view of human action.

The three final articles are concerned with what happened when, in the sixteenth century, Aristotelian moral theory was confronted by at least two rival systems: post-Reformation Christian ethics, on the one hand, and Neo-Stoicism, on the other. Taking the Christian ethics of Lambert Daneau as his starting-point, *Christoph Strohm* outlines early Calvinist moral thought. Aristotle remained the most important ethical thinker in Daneau's Christian ethics. The revival of Stoicism, however, also had an impact on his views. By seeking to rationalize and internalize the new *Zeitgeist* of early modern Europe, Neo-Stoicism lent an aura of modernity to Calvinist ethics. *Lorenzo Casini* studies Juan Luis Vives's view of emotions. He demonstrates that while Vives harmonizes Stoic moral philosophy with Christianity, he nevertheless rejects the Stoic theory of the emotions and embraces the Aristotelian view instead. In the concluding article, *Jill Kraye* explores the sixteenth-century engagement with Neo-Stoicism through an examination of Marc-Antoine Muret's 1585 edition of Seneca. Muret, whose philosophical predilections inclined more towards Aristotelianism and Platonism than Stoicism, takes a rather critical view of Stoic philosophy: he judges some views held by the Stoics to be worthy of respect, but more often he denounces their doctrines as absurd and incompatible with Christian theology.

The original title of the ESF network, 'Early Modern Thought: Reconsidering the Borderline between the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times', was chosen in order to encourage an interdisciplinary discussion of the sources of modernity. The overall goal of this network was 'to replace the established paradigm of a great Renaissance divide between medieval and modern thought with a less rigid model'. We hope that the present volume contributes to this goal. Even more than suggesting new models of periodization, it is important to highlight the range and diversity of moral philosophy between 1400 and 1600. If we are to gain an adequate picture of this period, we cannot limit ourselves to a handful of classics. We must also

take into account the many interesting philosophers who were influential in their own time but are less well known today. If the studies collected in this volume show that these authors still deserve to be read and are worthy of new investigations, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

The Editors

Sources and Authorities for Moral Philosophy in the Italian Renaissance: Thomas Aquinas and Jean Buridan on Aristotle's *Ethics*

David A. Lines
(University of Miami, Florida, USA)

Like their medieval predecessors, Renaissance writers could look to a vast number of works from antiquity which were either connected with or bordered on moral philosophy. Many of the authors who were used remained the same as those cited in Geremia da Montagnone's *Compendium moralium notabilium*, probably written shortly before 1310: Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Valerius Maximus, Virgil, Horace, Catullus, Statius and others.¹ At the same time, a significant change was provided by the rediscovery or renewed study of several works from antiquity. For example, Marsilio Ficino's translations (1484, 1496) gave the Latin West, for the first time, access to the complete Platonic corpus.² Furthermore, the increasing availability of authors such as Lucretius, Epictetus and Plutarch would have important consequences for the development of moral thought.³ Nor were Petrarch's discovery of Cicero's *Letters* and philological work on Livy's *Decades* irrelevant, especially in the area of political philosophy.⁴

Despite the expansion of the canon, however, the works which had dominated the late medieval study of moral philosophy were not abandoned. Indeed, it would be wrong to suppose that the 'new' works and other favourite humanist authors supplanted the traditional practice of discussing virtue with constant reference to the Scriptures or to Aristotle or to both. The facile distinction between a Bible- and Aristotle-loving scholasticism, on the one hand, and a Plato- and Cicero-loving humanism, on the other, is now generally regarded, by serious scholars, as little more than a crude caricature. Not only did leading humanists such as Jacques

¹ On this work, see especially Ullman (1955), pp. 81–115.

² Hankins (1990), I, pp. 300–18. There had been, of course, other attempts during the course of the fifteenth century to translate selected dialogues; see *ibid.*, *passim*.

³ For the impact of Lucretius on moral philosophy, see Krays (1988), pp. 374–83; on Epictetus, see Krays (2001). The reception of Plutarch's *Lives* is discussed in Celenza (1997) and Pade (forthcoming).

⁴ One of Niccolò Machiavelli's main works is, indeed, his *Discorsi ... sopra la prima decada di Tito Livio*.

Lefèvre d'Étaples make constant references to the Scriptures when discussing virtue,⁵ but Aristotle was read and studied even more intensively during the Renaissance than before.⁶ Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, for example, enjoyed a remarkable success: in Italy, during the period 1300–1650, over 160 Latin interpretations (including translations, commentaries, compendia, and other genres) were devoted to this text alone.⁷ Furthermore, all over Europe the *Ethics* remained the standard text for the study of moral philosophy in the universities from the thirteenth through at least the seventeenth century.

Rather than insisting, however, on the popularity of this traditional text in Renaissance moral philosophy, my aim here is to study the *fortuna* of two medieval commentaries on it: Thomas Aquinas's *Sententia in libros Ethicorum* and Jean Buridan's *Quaestiones in Ethicam*. These were arguably the most important commentaries on the *Ethics* from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and their reception in Renaissance Italy is indicative of the continuing influence of the medieval commentary tradition during the heyday of humanism.⁸ The reception of the two works also, however, says something about the factors affecting their influence and the strategies sometimes adopted towards medieval authorities.

This paper is divided into three parts. First, I discuss some of the differences of perspective and emphasis in the commentaries by Thomas and Buridan. I then examine various factors which suggest the different reception of the two works in Renaissance Italy. The last part of the paper examines the efforts of a fifteenth-century commentator, Niccolò Tignosi, to reconcile the views of these and other medieval interpreters of the *Ethics*. A particular point of concentration will be the evolving attitudes towards Thomas's *Sententia* between the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. As will become clear, it was without question the most influential of the medieval *Ethics* commentaries in Renaissance Italy. This does not,

⁵ See, e.g., Lefèvre d'Étaples (1497).

⁶ On the reception of Aristotle in the Renaissance, some fundamental studies are Schmitt (1983), Lohr (1988), and Bianchi (2003).

⁷ Lines (2002), especially Appendix C.

⁸ The acquaintance of Renaissance writers with the medieval *Ethics* commentaries is becoming increasingly recognized. See, e.g., Coluccio Salutati's praise of the works on the *Ethics* by Eustratius, Michael of Ephesus, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Albert of Saxony, Gerard of Odo, Walter Burley, Jean Buridan, and Henry of Friemar: Salutati (1891–1905), IV.1, pp. 37–9, discussed by Bianchi (1990), pp. 53–4, who also treats the influence of Eustratius, Albert the Great, Thomas and Burley on Donato Acciaiuoli's *Ethics* commentary published in 1478: pp. 43–51; and that of Eustratius, Thomas and Burley on Bernardo Segni's commentary published in 1550: pp. 34–5. The Jesuit Antonio Possevino (1603), pp. 76–7, edited in Lines (2002), p. 543, especially praised, among medieval commentaries on the *Ethics*, those by Averroes, Thomas and Albert.

however, mean that readers' interpretations and views of his commentary remained static.

THOMAS AND BURIDAN ON ETHICS

Although the commentaries by both Thomas and Buridan can be dated to the years of their teaching at the University in Paris, there are noteworthy formal and doctrinal differences between the two works. Thomas's *Sententia* (possibly written around 1271–2)⁹ is a literal exposition. As such, it remains close to the text, sequentially discussing the *Nicomachean Ethics* and clarifying its content. On the whole, there are few digressions, even though Thomas's interpretation is of course still affected by his metaphysical and theological assumptions. Buridan's *Quaestiones* (c. 1340–60?)¹⁰ is characterized instead by the familiar scholastic procedure of posing and answering questions and objections. This method allows more interpretative freedom; and indeed Buridan addresses both issues of particular interest to him as well as those arising more directly from the text.

On a number of points Thomas and Buridan interpret Aristotle differently or with varying emphases. It is worthwhile considering a few examples in view of our later discussion of how the two were treated in Niccolò Tignosi's commentary in fifteenth-century Florence. Unfortunately, Buridan's commentary breaks off after Book X, q. 5, so on some issues a comparison with Thomas's commentary is not possible.

Connected with Aristotle's famous statement that 'moral excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains' (II.3, 1104^b9–10) is his later point that 'excellence is concerned with passions and actions, in which excess is a form of failure, and so is defect, while the intermediate is praised and is a form of success' (II.6, 1106^b25–27).¹¹ The medieval *recensio recognita* (probably by William of Moerbeke) reads: 'Virtus autem circa passiones et operationes est. In quibus quidem superhabundancia viciosa est et defectus vituperatus, medium autem laudatur et dirigitur.'¹² This passage proved problematic for several ancient and medieval interpreters, among them Thomas and Buridan, who were uncertain how to resolve the relationship between virtue and the passions. Thomas sees virtue as residing in the

⁹ Thomas (1969). The dating is not entirely certain: see Gauthier (1969), pp. 242, 245–6.

¹⁰ The dating is discussed in Michael (1985), pp. 871–873. The oldest surviving manuscript of the *Quaestiones* dates to 1363. Buridan's work still awaits a modern critical edition. I rely on Buridan (1637).

¹¹ English translations are taken from Aristotle (1984).

¹² Aristotle (1973).

higher part of the appetitive element ('in appetitu qui participat rationem'), a part of the soul which he associates with the will.¹³ Still, Thomas gives the emotions an important role in the activity of virtue. Emotions, much like the higher part of the appetitive soul, are in-between powers, belonging to both body and soul. Like Aristotle, Thomas does not think they are necessarily obstacles to the exercise of virtue: he sees them as morally neutral, but—because they are nonetheless powerful—needing the guidance of the will and reason. In some instances, the emotions can be impediments to the exercise of virtue, especially when they cloud the judgement.¹⁴ But it is also possible for them to play a positive role, for example by making a good seem more attractive because of its connection with pleasure. Likewise, the emotions can also be helpful *after* the act of virtue has been performed: they can increase the value of a particular act or confirm the agent's commitment to it. Thus, the emotions, viewed not as an overpowering of reason but as a physiological/psychological change, 'can be in a virtuous person, insofar as they are subordinate to reason'.¹⁵ So reason does not apparently need to exercise a despotic rule over them.

Buridan, however, is less sympathetic than Thomas to a positive role for the emotions. This is doubtless due in part to Buridan's emphasis on the will and its freedom.¹⁶ The fact remains that one finds hardly any positive references to the emotions in his commentary: he repeats standard Aristotelian fare that the young are not proper hearers of the *Ethics* because they follow their passions, points out the danger that the will may be perverted and discusses the need for pleasure and for the emotions to be repressed by the will.¹⁷

¹³ Thomas (1969), Lib. I, lec. III; Lib. III, lecs. XI–XIII.

¹⁴ E.g., *ibid.*, Lib. VI, lec. IV, p. 346, ll. 131–39: 'quando autem est vehemens delectatio vel tristitia, apparet homini quod illud sit optimum per quod sequitur delectationem et fugit tristitiam, et ita, corrupto iudicio rationis, non apparet homini verus finis, qui est principium prudentiae circa operabilia existentis, nec appetit ipsum, neque etiam videtur sibi quod oporteat omnia eligere et operari propter verum finem, sed magis propter delectabile'.

¹⁵ Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae, q. 59, a. 2 quoted in Barad (1995), p. 650. The main source for this paragraph is Barad (1995), who observes at p. 651: 'The rule of reason within the individual himself over his emotions is a political rule: each emotion contains within itself its own freedom, its own power of resistance, and it is the role of virtue to overcome this resistance, although never in such a way as to suppress the power itself.'

¹⁶ For freedom of the will see, e.g., Buridan (1637), Lib. II, q. 6.

¹⁷ Two examples will suffice. *Ibid.*, Lib. VI, q. 21, p. 563, Buridan states that every perfect virtue requires two habits besides prudence: 'unus, firmans et determinans appetitum ad faciliter sustinendum tristitias corporales, et refugiendum voluptates et oia, et ad reprimendum impetum aliarum passionum, quae possent appetitum movere ad rebellandum rationi; et ille habitus generatur ex assuetudine sustinendi et refutandi et reprimendi dictas passiones. Alius firmans et determinans appetitum ad amorem honesti, qui generatur ex multis actibus amandi honestum.' See also, *ibid.*, Lib. II, q. 4, p. 99: 'Verbi gratia, quod electio in voluntate sit per optime consona rationi, tamen forte appetitus sensitivus ad

Buridan, like Thomas, places moral virtue in the upper part of the irrational soul, explicitly connecting this with the will. He, however, arrives at this decision only after agonizing about the possible participation of the sensitive appetite in moral virtue. This indecision could be due to a desire to include the emotions somehow, even by giving them a very minor role. But it is clear that Buridan, in contrast to Thomas, is uncomfortable with Aristotle's discussion of the passions throughout Book II.

The differences between Thomas and Buridan on this point can be further illustrated by their attitude towards Stoic writers. Thomas is among the most vocal medieval critics of the Stoic position, opposing, for example, the Stoic views on the four cardinal virtues.¹⁸ Buridan may castigate the Stoics on some points but follows the Platonic/Stoic moral tradition antedating the translation of Aristotle's corpus. Indeed, Buridan's references to Seneca outnumber those to any other writer,¹⁹ and he takes into consideration, for example, Stoic perspectives such as the tripartite division of prudence.²⁰

A second difference between the two interpreters is their attitude towards the formation of virtuous habit. As is well known, Thomas insists on the importance of repeated actions in the formation of such a habit and therefore already refers to the *principia humanorum actuum* in his first lecture.²¹ Buridan, instead, has more difficulty with Aristotle's emphasis on actions. He describes a complicated chain process in which the will, the sensitive appetite, the bodily members and external things depend on one another's co-operation for producing an action. He concludes that virtue is generated not so much by external actions as by the inner promptings of the will. He does not deny that the repetition of a good action can create a praiseworthy disposition but argues that this disposition can be blocked by the sensitive appetite. The will, by contrast, is completely free, and the repeated willingness to do something (even when there is no possibility of carrying it out) creates a firmer disposition.²²

A third important area of disagreement between Thomas and Buridan concerns the subject of moral philosophy and the function of the *Ethics*. Eustratius had already argued that ethics is concerned with individual betterment.²³ Thomas elaborates on Eustratius's view, while at the same

oppositum passionatus, etsi ex toto rebellare non possit, tamen cum tristitia multotiens obediēt rationi, propter quod non erit ejus operatio perfecta consona rationi.'

¹⁸ Thomas (1969), Lib. II, lec. VIII.

¹⁹ Walsh (1966), pp. 26–7.

²⁰ Buridan (1637), Lib. VI, q. 18, p. 551; cf. Walsh (1966).

²¹ Thomas (1969), Lib. I, p. 5.

²² Buridan (1637), Lib. II, qq. 4–6, esp. q. 6, pp. 103–6.

²³ Eustratius et al. (1973), p. 2: 'ethicae quidem subiectum est secundum unum hominem melioratio, ut et bonus et optimus fiat sequens ea quae tradita sunt in morali negotio,

time giving it a firmer philosophical grounding. He begins by emphasizing that the subject of moral philosophy is human actions proceeding from the will according to the ordering of reason.²⁴ His strong insistence on the actions themselves provides him, unlike Eustratius, with a link to oeconomics and politics, for while ethics is concerned with the actions of the individual, the other two branches concern actions of broader groups. Thus, the *Ethics*, *Oeconomics* and *Politics* are viewed as works which deal with increasingly broader spheres of human activity and which should therefore be studied in sequence. The goal is to arrive at the *Politics*, which in Thomas's view is the crowning part of moral philosophy.

Denying that the subject of moral philosophy is the human good, or God, or happiness, or the virtues, or any other human actions, Buridan instead offers an alternative definition: 'videtur mihi, quod homo in ordine ad ea quae sibi conveniunt, ut est liber, vel homo ut est felicitabilis, hoc est quantum ad ea quae sibi conveniunt ad ducendum felicem vitam, est subiectum proprium in hac scientia'.²⁵ He thus emphasizes that ethics considers man in general, indifferently speaking—everyman—and not what one person in particular should do.²⁶ Furthermore, Buridan argues that prudence is not so much concerned with our own actions (which could be considered just as contingent as the object of the *Meteorology*), but rather with universals—more precisely, questions of the type: 'What would someone, to whom such and such a thing happened, do?' Thus, in a certain sense, our deliberations belong to science.²⁷ This view went back to Averroes and Albert the Great, who had also considered ethics to furnish the principles which would in turn be applied by oeconomics and politics.²⁸ This was the principal alternative, throughout the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, to the position held by Eustratius and Thomas.

Finally, Thomas and Buridan disagree as to the relative importance of ethics and politics. Although Thomas argues that prudence properly belongs to ethics, his view of the importance of communities leads him to give politics and oeconomics a higher place than ethics, and to consider

prudenter vivens et propriam rationem habens, irae et concupiscentiae dominans et mensuram motibus earum imponens et nequaquam concedens eis ut contingit ferri ut in tali quis habitu constituatur, ut de omni quod operatur paratus sit rationem reddere rectam ...'

²⁴ Thomas (1969), Lib. I, p. 4, ll. 39–45: 'Sic igitur moralis philosophiae ... proprium est considerare operationes humanas secundum quod sunt ordinatae ad invicem et ad finem. Dico autem operationes humanas, quae procedunt a voluntate hominis secundum ordinem rationis ...' See also his comments in *Summa theologiae*, Ia IIae, q. 1, a. 1.

²⁵ Buridan (1637), Lib. I, q. 3, p. 11; cf. *ibid.*, q. 6, p. 19: 'Ethica considerat de unoquoque homine secundum quod est felicitabilis vel meliorabilis, quemcumque gradum indifferenter obtineat in communitate domestica, vel civili.'

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Lib. I, q. 6, p. 20.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Lib. VI, q. 17, p. 544.

²⁸ Lines (2002), pp. 125–7.

legispositiva as the highest part of politics.²⁹ Thus, Thomas can freely discuss politics as the architectonic science and says (following Aristotle in the *Ethics* I.2) that under it belong arts such as oeconomics and rhetoric. But he is specific about the very limited pre-eminence of politics. Although it may dispose that geometry be taught, it cannot give orders about the conclusions of geometry. And, although it is called *principalissima*, it is so only within the sphere of the practical or active sciences; divine science must retain its place as the head of all others.³⁰ In relation to wisdom, for example, prudence does not say what people should think about divine matters, but rather shows how men may come to wisdom.³¹ Politics can sometimes use rhetoric to good effect, but the two should not be confused.³²

Partly because of his views on the subject of ethics, Buridan disagrees with Thomas about the subordination of ethics to politics (his hierarchy is ethics, oeconomics, politics),³³ although he agrees with him about the pre-eminence of the *legispositiva* in politics.³⁴ He offers especially stimulating comments on two fronts: the relationship of moral philosophy to a kind of moral dialectic, and its relationship to law. In the first case, Buridan argues that, just as the speculative sciences need another discipline (logic) which indicates how the subject should be taught and expressed, so too does moral philosophy. Such a *logica moralis* or *dialectica moralis* (to be found in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*) is necessitated by the fact that moral philosophy must not only investigate the truth, but must also dispose the appetite not to resist the intellect.³⁵ In his comments about prudence,

²⁹ Thomas (1969), Lib. VI, lec. VII, p. 357, ll. 96–102: 'quia totum principalius est parte et per consequens civitas quam domus et domus quam unus homo, oportet quod prudentia politica sit principalior quam yconomica et haec quam illa quae est sui ipsius directiva; unde et legispositiva est principalior inter partes politicae et simpliciter praecipua circa omnia agibilia humana'.

³⁰ Ibid., Lib. I, lec. II; cf. Lib. VI, lec. VI.

³¹ Ibid., Lib. VI, lec. XI.

³² Ibid., Lib. X, lec. XIV–XV.

³³ Buridan (1637), Prologue, p. 3.

³⁴ Ibid., Lib. VI, q. 18, p. 551.

³⁵ Ibid., Prologue, p. 2: 'Ipsa autem scientia, seu philosophia moralis, duas habet partes primas, unam principalem, aliam adminiculativam seu instrumentalem. Sicut enim in speculativis, haec quidem scientia naturas rerum docet, videlicet metaphysica, physica, et mathematica, illa vero modum docendi et dicendi subministrat, scilicet logica, sic in moralibus oportet hanc quidem docere moralem vitam, hanc autem illi modum docendi subministrare. Prima ergo et principalis pars, scilicet quae docet bene vivere ad salutem, traditur in libris Ethicorum, Oeconomicorum et Politicorum. Secunda vero pars quae hunc modum docendi docet, traditur in libris Rhetoricae et Poetriae. Unde scientia dictorum duorum librorum vere et proprie dicenda est non Logica simpliciter, neque moralis scientia simpliciter, sed logica moralis. ... Propter quod duplici logica, seu dialectica indigemus: una quidem quae simpliciter docet modum inveniendi dubiam veritatem, et illam vocamus logicam simpliciter, vel dialecticam; et alia contracta, quae docet modum, quo simul et dubium et verum invenitur, et appetitus sic afficitur et disponitur, ut determinet, vel non

Buridan says much more explicitly than other commentators that the habit derived from teachings contained in books of laws, decrees, and so forth pertains to prudence just like that derived from teachings in the books on morals.³⁶ In these comments, Buridan was not altogether original. Averroes, for example, had pointed out that the *prudens* should be ‘cognitor logicae particularis’.³⁷ And Giles of Rome had emphasized the need for rhetoric (a ‘grossa dialectica’) in moral philosophy.³⁸ But Buridan’s distinction between rhetoric and moral philosophy is noteworthy: although the two may work towards the same end of moral perfection, their functions should not be confused and are in no way interchangeable.

THE RECEPTION OF THOMAS AND BURIDAN IN EARLY RENAISSANCE ITALY

I would now like to address a fairly straightforward (but methodologically complicated) question: which of the two, Thomas’s *Sententia* or Buridan’s *Quaestiones*, found a greater following in Italy? Although questions of influence cannot be easily solved, I think that the criteria of evaluation employed here can at least suggest an answer. In particular, the following analysis relies on three principal considerations: the origin and diffusion of manuscripts; references made to Buridan or Thomas in *Ethics* texts or commentaries; and Renaissance libraries containing works on the *Ethics*. I shall argue that, especially in the fourteenth century, Thomas’s commentary was more widely accepted than Buridan’s, and that his interpretation largely continued to be favoured in fifteenth-century Italy as well.

impediat intellectum ad concedendum conclusum; et haec vocatur dialectica moralis, quae subest dialecticae simpliciter, sicut et subalternata ...’

³⁶ Ibid., Lib. VI, q. 17, p. 545: ‘Ulterius videtur mihi satis notum, quod in libris legum vel decretorum et in libris moralibus multae scribuntur propositiones de quolibet praedictorum generum ... videtur mihi quod habitus acquisitus ex doctrina librorum legum, decretorum, et universaliter librorum moralium pertinet ad prudentiam.’

³⁷ Averroes (1562–74), Lib. I, f. 1^v.

³⁸ Aegidius Romanus (1502), II, 2, cap. viii, f. 48^v: ‘Est autem rethorica, ut innuit philosophus in Rethoricis suis, quasi quaedam grossa dialectica. Nam sicut fiendae sunt rationes subtiles in scientiis naturalibus et in aliis scientiis speculabilibus, sic fiendae sunt rationes grossae in scientiis moralibus, quae tractant de agibilibus. Quare sicut necessaria fuit dialectica quae docet modum arguendi subtilem et violentiorem, sic necessaria fuit rethorica quae est quaedam grossa dialectica docens modum arguendi grossum et figuralem.’

Origin and diffusion

The *Ethics* commentaries by Thomas and Buridan each survive in around 100 manuscript copies.³⁹ It might thus appear that the two works were equally popular, and one might assume that this was the case in Italy as elsewhere in Europe. But an examination of the scribal hand and probable origin of these manuscripts points to a different conclusion. In the case of Thomas, Gauthier identifies the scribal hand with relative certainty in 82 cases. He finds that 15 of these manuscripts (c. 18%) were written either in Italy or by an Italian hand. By contrast, Bernd Michael's study suggests that only 10 manuscripts of Buridan's *Ethics* commentary were written either in Italy or by an Italian hand.⁴⁰ Most Buridan manuscripts were copied either in Paris or in the central European universities:

	MSS	Italian hand	MSS in Italy	Lost MSS	Ethics with annotations from
Thomas	c. 100	c. 15 of 82	25	43 (22 in Italy)	27+MSS; 11 of 16 in Ital. hand
Buridan	c. 100	c. 10	18	Unknown	Few in Italy.

We can also consider the diffusion of the two works. A study of where manuscripts are currently found shows that a fourth of the surviving *Sententia* manuscripts (and over half of the manuscripts which are known to be lost) are now housed in Italian libraries. Several Thomas manuscripts belonged to eminent Italians,⁴¹ and we know of manuscripts now elsewhere bearing indications of ownership by Italians.⁴² By contrast, less than a fifth (18) of the manuscripts of Buridan's commentary are currently known to be held in Italian libraries; and it is suspected that a number of other Buridan manuscripts (or at least *secundum Buridanum* commentaries) remain to be identified in central Europe. This would further lower the percentage of Buridan manuscripts in Italian libraries. It is true that some of the owners of these manuscripts were notable figures in the history of philosophy,⁴³ and

³⁹ For Thomas, see Gauthier (1969), pp. 1*–30*; for Buridan, see Michael (1985).

⁴⁰ Michael (1985), pp. 831–62.

⁴¹ E.g., Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter BAV), Urb. lat. 212 (s. XV) and 1366 (s. XIV), belonged to Federico II of Urbino: see Gauthier (1969), p. 14*.

⁴² E.g., Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 6457 (s. XIII/XIV): see Gauthier (1969), p. 9*.

⁴³ Padua, Biblioteca universitaria (hereafter BU) 1472 (AD 1407), item 1, ff. 1^{ra}–158^{vb}, was owned by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Cardinal Domenico Grimani, d. 1523: see Michael (1992), pp. 143 and 150, n. 46; Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (hereafter

that some of the manuscripts are clearly related to the university (although probably not to the teaching) context.⁴⁴ But, even allowing for the vagaries of fortune, the proportion of Buridan manuscripts in Italy seems very low. Nonetheless, this criterion appears to be a very crude instrument for evaluating influence. If we consider the proportion of manuscripts of *Ethics* commentaries in Italian libraries,⁴⁵ we might conclude that Walter Burley and Gerard of Odo were more important than Eustratius and Thomas, which was certainly not the case:

Averroes	70%	7/10 MSS
Walter Burley	58%	10/17 MSS
Gerard of Odo	47%	8/17 MSS
Eustratius	33%	7/22 MSS
Albertus Magnus (<i>lectura</i>)	33%	4/12 MSS
Albertus Magnus (paraphrase)	28%	7/25 MSS
Henricus de Frimaria	25%	6/21 MSS
Thomas Aquinas	25%	25/100 MSS
Albert of Saxony	25%	6/24 MSS
Buridan	18%	18/100 MSS

Even when considering the absolute number of manuscripts in Italy, we might reach the conclusion that Buridan was read more often than Eustratius. By contrast, my reading of Italian *Ethics* commentaries suggests that the most important authors in Italy were Averroes, Thomas, Eustratius and Albert the Great. It is therefore important to take other forms of evidence into consideration.

BNC) II.I.81 (s. XV), ff. 1^r–210^r, 1^r–171^v (double pagination) belonged to Donato Acciaiuoli: see Garin (1958), p. 153.

⁴⁴ Bologna, BU 366 (AD 1395), ff. 1^{ra}–182th, written in Italy, belonged in the fifteenth century to the Bolognese teacher of Arts and Medicine, Giovanni Garzoni: see Frati (1909), p. 200, no. 239, and Michael (1985), pp. 828–829; Padua, BU 1472 (AD 1407), item 1, ff. 1^{ra}–158^{vb} was written ‘ad instantiam magistri Ni[colini] ... in felicissimo studio patavino’: see Federici-Vescovini (1976), pp. 41–5; cf. Michael (1992), pp. 143 and 150, n. 46.

⁴⁵ The data for the medieval commentaries and their testimonies can be found in Lines (2002), Appendix B.

A valuable indication is furnished by printed editions. It is telling that Thomas's *Sententia* was printed at least thirteen times up to 1660 and counts as the most frequently printed of the medieval *Ethics* commentaries. Nine of these editions were printed in Italy. By contrast, Buridan's *Quaestiones* was printed five times, and none of these editions was produced in Italy. Indeed, before the seventeenth century, all of the printed editions were produced in Paris. This gives powerful support to the hypothesis of a stronger reception of Thomas's commentary in Italy.

Finally, one can turn to contemporary testimony. It seems that, around 1400, Coluccio Salutati (the chancellor of Florence) had access to a manuscript of Buridan's *Quaestiones* but was unable to secure a complete copy of the work. He apparently believed the (presumably Italian) *peritiores* in his time, who said that Buridan had written no questions after Book IX, q. 2.⁴⁶ This point seems to testify to a surprising unfamiliarity with a work which, especially in Paris and central Europe, was considered of great importance.

References and sources

Decisive evidence, which should be taken into consideration, is provided by the references made to Thomas and to Buridan by readers of the *Ethics* or by Italian commentators on the text.

The data provided by Gauthier suggests that Italians were enthusiastic students of Thomas's *Sententia*. He lists 27 manuscripts of the *Ethics* bearing notes taken from Thomas. Of the 16 cases where he identifies the annotating hand, 11 are Italian.⁴⁷ This data largely corresponds with my own findings. In a group of some 20 annotated manuscripts of the *Ethics* (in Italian libraries) for which we have reliable information, the base commentary can be discerned in all but three cases. Thomas turns out to be the exclusive source in six cases,⁴⁸ the primary source in five,⁴⁹ and one of

⁴⁶ Salutati (1891–1905), III, pp. 391–9: 'Questiones optimi Buridani, ultra duas questiones noni libri, licet Parisius super hoc scripserim, nunquam potui reperire; dicuntque peritiores eum ulterius non processisse.'

⁴⁷ Gauthier (1969), pp. 30*–36*.

⁴⁸ *Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (hereafter BLaur.), Plut. XIII Sin. Cod. 6 (s. XIII), ff. 77^r–124^v; *Cod. 11 (s. XIII), ff. 103^r–179^r; Vatican City, BAV, Ottob. lat. 2214 (s. XIV), ff. 1^r–88^v; *Pal. lat. 1012 (s. XIV/XV), ff. 1^r–57^v; 1017 (s. XIV), ff. 1^r–79^r; Urb. lat. 1325 (s. XIV), ff. 1^r–97^v (especially 1^{ra}–18th). I mark with an asterisk manuscripts I have seen; for the others I rely on the description in Gauthier (1969).

⁴⁹ *Bologna, BU 2252 (s. XIV), 109 ff.; Poppi, Biblioteca Comunale (hereafter BCom.) 14 (s. XIV in.), ff. 2^v–64^v; Siena, BCom. Intr. H.VI.1 (s. XIV ex.), ff. 1^r–86^v; H.VI.4 (s. XIV),

the main sources in five further cases.⁵⁰ In the remaining manuscript, Burley is perhaps the main source.⁵¹ These observations confirm the popularity of Thomas's *Sententia* in Italy. By contrast, it is telling that Buridan's opinions go practically unmentioned. Although it may be true that, for formal reasons, we should not expect snippets of a commentary proceeding by questions to appear in the margins of a text of the *Ethics*,⁵² we might possibly expect to find some allusions to Buridan's moral thought or cross-references to specific passages of his commentary. In my experience, however, such encounters are extremely rare. Nor do we find many heavily annotated manuscripts of Buridan's *Quaestiones* in Italy as we do of Thomas's commentary.

An examination of fourteenth-century Italian works on the *Ethics* confirms the popularity of Thomas's *Sententia*. Of the seven attributed works whose base commentary can be identified, four rely on Thomas very heavily and almost exclusively.⁵³ Bartolomeo da Santo Concordio seems to be the only one to base himself primarily on other commentators (indeed, his work is a summary of Giles of Rome).⁵⁴ The fact that Dominicans figure largely among the Italian interpreters of the *Ethics* provides a partial explanation for the success of Thomas's *Sententia* there.

We may well ask whether the situation changed in Italy during the fifteenth century. Two important features of the fifteenth-century reception of the *Ethics* in Italy are that laymen (including humanists) become increasingly active in interpreting the work and that Thomas is no longer the almost exclusive authority for commentators on the *Ethics*.⁵⁵ One would think that this increasing openness to commentators already well known in northern Europe and the apparent compatibility of Buridan's ethical theory (e.g., his stress on the freedom of the will) with some humanist emphases would have led to an increasing reception of Buridan's commentary there. This has, in fact, been argued by Bernd Michael. Although he admits that the reception of Buridan's moral philosophy in Italy does not begin to

ff. 1^{ra}–4^{vb}; Vatican City, BAV, Vat. lat. 2996 (s. XIV), ff. 1^r–58^v (especially 11^v–18^r, 24^v–25^v).

⁵⁰ *Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Fondo Parm. Palat. 65 (s. XIV), ff. 1^r–84^v; *Siena, BCom. Intronati L.III.17 (s. XIV), ff. 1^r–96^v; *Vatican City, BAV, Ottob. lat. 2524 (s. XIV), ff. 101^r–140^v; *Pal. lat. 1020 (s. XIV), ff. 2^r–118^v; and Vat. lat. 2995 (s. XIV), ff. 6^{ra}–63^{rb}.

⁵¹ *Bologna, BU 2295 (s. XIV), ff. 62^r–106^v; cf. Frati (1909), p. 456, no. 1150.

⁵² I am grateful to Christoph Flüeler for this observation.

⁵³ See the works by Giacomo da Pistoia: Lines (2002), p. 472, no. 1; Corrado d'Ascoli: *ibid.*, p. 474, no. 5; and Guido Vernani's *Lectura* and *Summa*: *ibid.*, pp. 475–6, nos. 7 and 8. Paolo Nicoletto Veneto relies on Thomas as well as on Eustratius and Albert the Great for his *compendium*: *ibid.*, pp. 479–80, no. 16.

⁵⁴ On Bartolomeo da San Concordio and his commentary, see Lines (2002), p. 478, no. 12.

⁵⁵ Lines (1999a).

compare with the Italian enthusiasm for his natural philosophy,⁵⁶ nor with the study of his moral philosophy in the universities of France and central Europe,⁵⁷ Michael suggests that Buridan was accepted more readily among the Italian humanists and in the circles of the high clergy than in the universities.⁵⁸

This does not, however, seem to be the case, at least for the humanists. As we shall see, the commentary by Niccolò Tignosi was addressed to a humanist audience; nonetheless, the work's dedication (to Piero de' Medici) makes no mention of Buridan, but only of Thomas, Eustratius, Averroes and Albert the Great.⁵⁹ Likewise, Donato Acciaiuoli's commentary draws freely from Thomas, Eustratius, Burley and Albert the Great;⁶⁰ of these, Thomas seems by far the most important.⁶¹ By contrast, he does not have complimentary things to say about Buridan;⁶² and Acciaiuoli's supposed role in studying or annotating a copy of Buridan's questions is a baseless fiction.⁶³ Numerous fifteenth-century marginalia on the *Ethics* also confirm the growing acquaintance with other commentators; nonetheless, Buridan is rarely mentioned.⁶⁴ Finally, there are simply not

⁵⁶ On this see also Garin (1958) and Federici Vescovini (1976), p. 25: it is significant that, whereas there was a great interest in Florence, c. 1396–1400, in Buridan's works on physics, psychology and logic, the same cannot be said for his moral philosophy.

⁵⁷ Michael (1992), pp. 148–51.

⁵⁸ E.g., he states, *ibid.*, p. 149: 'Während die naturwissenschaftlich, medizinisch und astrologisch orientierten italienischen Artisten und Mediziner Buridans Ethik-Kommentar im Vergleich zu seinen übrigen Werken nur ein relativ geringes Interesse entgegenbrachten, genöß derselbe Kommentar in humanistischen Kreisen Italiens seit 1400 hohes Ansehen ...'

⁵⁹ Florence, BLaur., Plut. LXXXVI, 49, f. 1^{ra-b}: 'Plures viri clarissimi libros istos commentati sunt: Eustratius, Averrois, Albertus et sanctus Thomas, quorum palma est.' On Tignosi see Lines (2002), Chapter 5.

⁶⁰ Bianchi (1990), pp. 43–51.

⁶¹ It is worth noting that Acciaiuoli's commentary seems to have been written with Thomas's *Sententia* constantly to hand. See Florence, BNC, Naz. II.I.104, in which one often reads in the margins 'S.T.' ('Sanctus Thomas'), followed by snippets from his commentary.

⁶² See Garin (1958), p. 153.

⁶³ See *ibid.* for this view, which was repeated by Michael (1992), p. 149. Florence, BNC, Naz. III.I.81 is a copy of Buridan's *Quaestiones* in two volumes (ff. 1^r–210^r and 1^r–171^v), ending with the *quaestiones longae*. The flyleaf at the beginning of the second volume does indeed indicate that the book was owned by Acciaiuoli. He did not, however, transcribe or annotate the work. The first 84 folios of the text are written and annotated by a humanist hand, but a comparison with other Acciaiuoli autographs (especially Florence, BNC, Naz. II.I.104) indicates that it is not his hand. (In any case, it is not clear that Acciaiuoli also owned the first volume; the two volumes could have been brought together and bound at a later date.) Apparently, this transcription was made in order to fill the gap in the older and rather inelegant (Gothic bookhand) copy, which starts at Lib. III, q. 5.

⁶⁴ E.g., Siena, BCom. Intronati H.VI.1 (s. XIV ex.), ff. 1^r–86^v, contains marginalia taken from Thomas, but also from Albert, Eustratius, Buridan and Burley; cf. Gauthier (1969), pp.

enough annotated manuscripts of Buridan's *Questiones* in Italy to support Michael's claim; and the evidence reported above about the diffusion of the work in manuscript and printed editions suggests instead that Buridan's work was poorly received in Italy, both inside and outside the universities.

Library catalogues

The diffusion of the commentaries by Thomas and Buridan in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italy is also illustrated by old library catalogues, whether of institutions or of individuals. As mentioned above, over half of the lost commentaries of Thomas's *Sententia* were housed in Italian libraries. This leads one to expect a predominance of Thomas's commentary on the *Ethics* over Buridan's; and that is, in fact, what one finds. Nevertheless, the proportion between copies of the two works is not quite what one might expect.

Three fifteenth-century Dominican libraries unsurprisingly favour Thomas over Buridan. The library catalogue for San Marco in Florence (from 1500) includes only one work possibly attributable to Buridan, but three copies of Thomas's *Ethics* commentary,⁶⁵ as well as copies of *Ethics* commentaries by Acciaiuoli and others.⁶⁶ Furthermore, a catalogue from Santa Maria Novella in Florence shows that, by 1489, the collection there included two copies of Thomas's *Sententia* but only one copy each of Albert's *Super Ethica* and of Buridan's commentary.⁶⁷ Also, the fifteenth-century inventories of the Dominican library in Perugia list Buridan's commentaries on treatises such as *De anima* and the *Physics*,⁶⁸ but not his work on the *Ethics*. For Thomas, instead, one finds two commentaries on the *Ethics*.⁶⁹ Given the presumed bias of Dominican libraries towards Thomas, however, it is useful to examine other library lists as well.

The fifteenth-century library of the Visconti and the Sforza families in Milan included one copy each of the *Ethics* commentaries by Thomas and Buridan,⁷⁰ in addition to the Greek commentaries and that of Gerard of Odo.⁷¹

26*–27*. Florence, BNC, Naz. II, IV, 159 (s. XIV), 112 ff., contains dense marginal notes, especially on *Nicomachean Ethics* III–X, drawing heavily on Burley and Albert the Great.

⁶⁵ Ullman and Stadter (1972), items 395, 618, 629

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, items 622, 628.

⁶⁷ Orlandi (1952), p. 42.

⁶⁸ Kaeppli (1962), C. 342; B. 346 and C. 313.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, D. 76, 290.

⁷⁰ Pellegrin (1955), respectively A. 183, p. 113 and A. 201, p. 118.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, A. 190, p. 115 and A. 127, p. 100

A list of some 800 volumes taken from Naples to Spain in the sixteenth century and subsequently dispersed includes Thomas's commentary on the *Ethics*,⁷² but nothing by Buridan. A list of over 600 manuscripts which previously belonged to the crown of Aragon in Naples (and which have now largely been identified, especially in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris) includes only the *Ethics* commentary of Thomas,⁷³ in addition to translations by Johannes Argyropoulos⁷⁴ and Leonardo Bruni.⁷⁵ A third list, of books sold in the early sixteenth century, includes Acciaiuoli's commentary on the *Ethics*;⁷⁶ again, Buridan is not mentioned.

Finally, it is fruitful to examine personal libraries as well. Judging from the numerous copies of the *Ethics* in his library, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94) had a particular interest in this work. His library did not, however, contain an especially wide range of commentaries on it: the surviving library catalogue mentions only Buridan's *Ethics* commentary,⁷⁷ as well as those by Gerard of Odo, Thomas and Burley, which were bound together in one volume.⁷⁸

Niccolò Leonicensi (1428–1524), who lectured on the *Ethics* in Ferrara around 1488, also seems to have owned only a small selection of commentaries on moral philosophy; these included the works by Eustratius, Buridan, Gerard of Odo and Argyropoulos (i.e., Acciaiuoli).⁷⁹ Strikingly, he does not seem to have owned a copy of Thomas's commentary; however, this anomaly might be explained in various ways—for example, he might have availed himself of a copy in one of the conventual libraries.

The evidence gathered above suggests, at the very least, that Buridan's *Questions* on the *Ethics* were not received with any particular enthusiasm in Italy, whereas Thomas's commentary was considered the standard interpretation which one could not do without. Although Buridan's work was doubtless present in various libraries in fifteenth-century Italy,⁸⁰ this does not prove that it was actually read or studied with any attention.

Perhaps Buridan's commentary was simply out of fashion in fifteenth-century Italy, and—even when it was studied and known—it did not seem polite to cite it or make overt reference to it. It seems to me, however, that the differences of reception experienced by the *Ethics* commentaries of Thomas and Buridan can be explained by at least three concomitant factors.

⁷² Mazzatinti (1897), p. cxxxii, no. 121.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 75, no. 205.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 138, no. 361.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. cxxiii, no. 62.

⁷⁷ Kibre (1936), p. 219, no. 746.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 147, no. 193.

⁷⁹ Mugnai Carrara (1991), pp. 179, 171, 199, 180, 178, and 171.

⁸⁰ Some further examples are noted in Michael (1992), pp. 149–50.

First, it was hard to use Buridan's questions on the *Ethics* in the universities, since disputations on moral philosophy were not the norm in Italy as they were in central Europe and elsewhere.⁸¹ Indeed, in Italy ethics was taught as a feast-day subject throughout the fifteenth century (and even later); the audience seems to have included students without training in the technical vocabulary of philosophy. This audience was probably allergic to academic exercises such as disputations, and they would doubtless have found Thomas easier to follow than Buridan. Second, since the Dominicans played such a dominant role in interpreting the *Ethics* in fourteenth-century Italy,⁸² Buridan's emphases and perspectives would have had to fight against an already established tradition which relied heavily on Thomas. Thus, it was not until the late-fifteenth and especially the sixteenth century that Buridan's commentary received more serious attention in Italy. Finally, humanists probably disliked both the form of Buridan's work and the view it promoted concerning the separation of moral philosophy and rhetoric. Many humanists seem to have appreciated Thomas's *Sententia* as a model of straightforward and clear (although not stylistically elegant) exposition. Following Petrarch's example, they may have found Buridan—like many other scholastics—to be too enamoured of questions and subtleties. This view was still being aired in 1600 by Lelio Pellegrini, a professor of moral philosophy in Rome.⁸³ But Buridan's failure to link ethics and rhetoric may have counted equally decisively against him. Indeed, although Thomas likewise—as we have seen—keeps the two subjects separate, Buridan distinguishes them even more rigorously. In line with his understanding of moral philosophy as a science, unconcerned with pleasures and pains or with the emotions, he assigns the subject a theoretical, rather than a motivating, function. Thus, although Buridan (unlike some of his contemporaries) has positive things to say about rhetoric in its proper sphere, his strict demarcation of moral philosophy and rhetoric may have contributed to making his commentary unpalatable to the Italian humanists.⁸⁴ For humanists convinced that language and moral power are inextricably intertwined, Buridan's views must have seemed very distant from their own.

⁸¹ For the lack of disputations in Italy and the general context of the teaching of moral philosophy, see Lines (2002), § 2.2.

⁸² See Lines (1999a), pp. 253–5.

⁸³ Pellegrini (1600), f. iv': 'Habentur Buridani, Burlaei aliique eiusdem farinae molitores non pauci, qui in istos de moribus libris subtiles et ad tenuissimum elimatas quaestiones ediderunt. ... At hoc praeter propositum fuerit Aristoteles, qui non semel in his libris philosophiam de moribus ait nec requirere, nec pati exquisitam nimis, elaboratamque rerum, quae sub actionem cadunt, tractationem, ac materiam, quae illi subiicitur, eiusmodi esse, ut non admitteret, ferretve demonstrationes.'

⁸⁴ On this point see above, pp. 13–14.

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The tepid reception accorded to Buridan's commentary in fifteenth-century Italy is not, however, the end of the story. I would like to conclude by giving a specific example of how the views of Thomas and Buridan were treated in the fifteenth-century *Ethics* commentary by Niccolò Tignosi. By considering how Tignosi treated some specific doctrinal issues on which the two philosophers differed, I hope to show that the way in which Thomas was interpreted seems to have changed.

A native of Foligno near Perugia, Tignosi (1402–74) was especially known as a medical doctor and was active in the University of Florence, where he taught between c. 1438 and the year of his death.⁸⁵ In addition to a commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, Tignosi wrote a full commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics*: the *Commenta in Ethicorum libros*, which is datable to c. 1460⁸⁶ and which seems to be addressed to a humanist audience, without philosophical training.⁸⁷ Nonetheless, this work is a serious philosophical exposition of Aristotle's text, buttressed by arguments taken from Augustine, Averroes and Albert the Great, but lightened too by quotations from poetry and references to historical examples. Tignosi addresses here several of the issues previously discussed by Thomas and Buridan.

Like earlier commentators, Tignosi has little trouble with Aristotle's definition of virtue as an *habitus electivus*.⁸⁸ He reinterprets, however, Aristotle's statement that moral virtue concerns pains and pleasures (*voluptates et dolores*) to mean, not that pains and pleasures are the object of virtue (each virtue has its own object—for example, courage, that which is fearsome; liberality, money), but that delight, pain and so forth follow upon a particular action, as the *consequences* of virtue.⁸⁹ In these comments, he remains close to Thomas's interpretation and wording.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Park (1980), p. 295 and passim; Davies (1998), p. 194. The university records for 1440–73 are patchy and often do not say what subjects the professors taught. For the literature on Tignosi and his commentary, see Lines (2002), pp. 490–1, no. 40.

⁸⁶ Conflicting datings are offered in Field (1988), pp. 138–58 and Kraye (1995), pp. 101–2.

⁸⁷ See Lines (1999b).

⁸⁸ Florence, BLaur., Plut. LXXVI, 49 (s. XV), Lib. VI, f. 101^v: 'Secundo volumine superioris operis habitum est quod virtus est habitus electivus in mediocritate consistens quo ad nos ratione terminata et ut sapiens terminaret'. This is the dedication copy to Piero de' Medici.

⁸⁹ Ibid., Lib. II, f. 32^{vb}: '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. 33^{vb}: 'circa omne quod