

ANONYMOUS, *Parvulus philosophiae moralis in Ethicam Aristotelis introductorius* (Little Introduction to Moral Philosophy in Aristotle's Ethics)

In Latin, manuscript on paper

Eastern Germany or Central Europe (Czech Republic?), c. 1504-1543

i + 37 + i folios on paper, watermark of a bull's head below a staff with a cross at top and snake wrapped around, Briquet 15391, Regensburg, Brno, and Russia between 1496 and 1499, modern pencil pagination in Arabic numerals at outer bottom corners 1-74, complete (collation i-iii¹⁰ iv⁸ [-8, final leaf cancelled, no text loss]), horizontal catchwords at inner lower margin, unruled but vertical bounding lines marked by folding (justification 136 x 85 mm.), main text written in dark brown ink in an informal and disconnected Germanic Semihybrida Currens in 15 long lines, several sixteenth-century glossing hands written in lighter brown ink in rapid Cursiva between lines in margins, title in red on f. 1, several spaces left for incomplete initials, numerous manculae throughout, contemporary ink blotches and fingerprints, marginal notes occasionally trimmed, minor staining at some edges, erasure rubbed through the first folio, wear and abrasion of final folio, but overall good condition. Simple twentieth-century binding with smooth brown leather covering, quires separating from spine at back but book block intact. Dimensions 199 x 148 mm.

Direct witnesses to the sixteenth-century classroom are rare, and here we have a manuscript that includes abundant annotations by at least three near-contemporary readers, so dense that they are interlinear and sometimes even upside-down and sideways. The core text is an unedited adaptation of Aristotle's Ethics that survives in relatively few manuscripts but was frequently taught in Reformation-era universities. The volume will become a fruitful source for scholars studying the rich tradition of Aristotelian philosophy.

PROVENANCE

1. Written in Eastern Germany or Central Europe (perhaps today's Czech Republic) based on the evidence of the script and watermark. Must date after 1504 (date of the printed edition this manuscript was copied from; discussed in detail below), and before 1543 (dated added on p. 2).
2. The predominant, and earliest, glossing hand in this manuscript is datable: the same hand wrote an inscription on page 2 reading "1543 Festina lente IRPD" and at the top of page 3, "dedin[us] scribendi." There are no further clues to the identity of this Dedinus, nor mention of an institution to which he may have been affiliated. The script was rapidly written and has more cursive elements than the main hand but is probably from the same region. This reader wrote in the margins, between the lines, or both, on nearly all pages, and also added the multiple *maniculae* pointing to sections of text he found noteworthy.
3. Two (or perhaps more) additional cursive hands, seemingly contemporary with one another but slightly later than the main hand and primary glossing hand, indicate additional sixteenth-century readers. They sometimes wrote on the page sideways or upside-down, perhaps to distinguish their own notes from others. These readers were probably from the same region or institution as the main scribe and glossator, and like them, leave no traces of their identities.

TEXT

p. 1, Title page, "Breviuscula facillima que commentatio in parvulum philosophiae moralis teneriori etati necessaria ad recte virtuoseque vivendum per magisterium gregorium Brehkopf de Konitz congesta";

p. 2, dated inscription, "1543 Festina lente IRPD";

The original title in black ink is rubbed out, in places right through the page, and this title written below it in red. However, this manuscript does not contain Breitkopf's commentary on the anonymous *Parvulus philosophiae moralis*, only the *Parvulus philosophiae moralis* itself. Both the title and inscription are by the same hand as most of the manuscript's glosses.

pp. 3-73, incipit, "[L]icet homo inter alia animalia magis sit erectus ...;" [p. 11] incipit, "[F]ortitudo est virtus qua quis aggreditur terribilia maxima ...;" ... [p. 69] incipit, "[S]apientia est certissima scientiarum sexto etbicorum ... Ipsius quoque nos voluit fieri heredes et sic sapienter agenites nec frivole inaniter speculantes ad Christi hereditatem secum nostrum sapientiam terminemus quod nobis concedat qui sine fine vivit et regnat. Amen. Laus deo etcetera";

Parvulus philosophie moralis in Ethicam Aristotilis introductorius, by an anonymous fifteenth-century author; Lohr, 1972, p. 354, records this under the works of Peter Gerticz de Dresden (d. 1421/5), who wrote the *Parvulus philosophiae naturalis*, but suggests this traditional attribution is "doubtful," listing five manuscripts, all in German libraries; an additional seven, not listed by Lohr, can be identified in Manuscripta mediaevalia (Online Resources); there is one manuscript in Sweden. Only one – Munich, BSB, Clm 30207 – is presently digitized. It contains only fragments of the text, and glosses which differ significantly from those found in this manuscript. There is no modern edition. Published in four editions between 1495 and 1500 in Leipzig (see the Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke, M29537-29539).

Our manuscript was copied from a printed edition of the text that also include the near-contemporary commentary by Gregor Breitkopf, as indicated by its inaccurate title on p. 1. The scribe copied only the *Parvulus philosophiae moralis*, leaving Breitkopf's commentary aside. This insight into its production is betrayed by a single line of Breitkopf's commentary copied erroneously into the manuscript at the bottom of p. 61 and top of p. 62: "ambas habere scientias secum sapientiam divinorum et prudentiam agendorum."

Remarkably, the particular printed edition from which it was copied can be identified: *Breviuscula facillimaque commentatio in Parvulum Philosophiae moralis*, Leipzig, 1504, pp. 5-45 [edition unnumbered]. An ambiguity in this edition's layout is responsible for the scribe's copying error in the manuscript. In this edition, the *Parvulus philosophie moralis* is double-spaced, interspersed with Breitkopf's commentary in single-spaced sections; the layout is used to distinguish between the texts. However, at the 1504 edition's p. 40, the layout is disrupted: the first line ("ambas habere scientias secum sapientiam divinorum et prudentiam agendorum."); see image 44 of the digitized 1504 edition), is properly the last line of the previous page's commentary. As only this one line stretches to the next page, the distinguishing spacing is lost and it is indistinct from the *Parvulus philosophie moralis* text that follows. Like the printed edition, this manuscript lacks initials at the opening of each new section (detailed above), barring one sketched brown-ink 'A' added by a later reader on p. 63. The extra spaces were instead filled with gloss.

pp. 73-74, incipit, "Magister Gregorius Gredekoph de rosnitz lectori philosophiae mora ...
Haud redeunt vite tempora nostra semel."

Gregor Breitkopf, *Breviuscula facillimaque commentatio in Parvulum Philosophiae moralis*, ed. 1505, p. 43 [edition unnumbered; final text page]. An addition, perhaps by the main text's scribe, is an ode to Breitkopf not found in the Leipzig 1504 edition from which the rest of the text is copied, but rather the Leipzig 1505 edition. The scribe misspelled "Bredkoph" as "Gredekoph" and "Konitz" as "rosnitz". That he might be wholly unaccustomed to the more decorative type he copied from is unlikely; the errors are perplexing.

p. 74, short notes and pen trials.

Added by the glossators over the end of the ode to Breitkopf are numerous small *maniculae*, looped pen trials, and notes. While the words themselves are often legible, their layering upon one another and the page's wear often makes their order and meaning indecipherable. Included, for example, are "qui dare vult aliis non debet dicere vultis," a line from a very brief poem titled "Dulcis amice, tene!" (Gibbs, 2012, p. 4, no. 13), and from Ovid's *Ars amatoriae*, "Laudatas ostendit avis lunonia pennas / Si tacitus spectes, illa recondit opes" (Book I, ll. 627-628).

The *Parvulus philosophiae moralis in Ethicam Aristotelis introductorius* is an introductory summary of Aristotle's *Ethics*. Building on the philosophies of Plato and Seneca, the *Ethics* argues that a good life is founded on the development and habitual use of social, rational, and emotional behaviors that enable one to understand and appreciate the harmony between friendship, pleasure, honor, and wealth (see Kraut, 2018). The *Parvulus philosophiae moralis* briefly and systematically outlines and describes the ethical virtues discussed in Aristotle's work. In the early Reformation period (c. 1500-1550), Central European universities grew exponentially; students seeking Protestant humanist educations flocked to Germanic centers such as Wittenberg, Leipzig, and Jena (de Ridder-Symoens, 1996, pp. 421-22). Most students aspired to theology degrees, which required a strong foundation in philosophy. Aristotle's texts were commonly used but were taught primarily through contemporary translations and commentaries that were seen to "modernize" them (Freedman, 1993, pp. 223, 235). The *Parvulus philosophiae moralis* was one such adaptation, and it attracted commentaries shortly after printing. Gregor Breitkopf's *Breviuscula facillimaque commentatio in Parvulum Philosophiae moralis* was first printed in Leipzig in 1502, and Johannes Romming's *Parvulus Philosophiae moralis, ad Philosophi aemulationem exaratus* in Nuremberg in 1516. Few examples of either work survive: six copies of Breitkopf's, and three of Romming's are found in German and Czech institutions.

Although copied from a printed edition of Breitkopf's commentary, this manuscript includes only the *Parvulus philosophiae moralis*, leaving the extensive discussion by the Leipzig master aside. As a handwritten copy of an identifiable printed edition (as demonstrated above), it is noteworthy: it suggests that the user, in this case a student, could not acquire, or perhaps afford, the printed version, that he desired the handheld format of his manuscript copy, or simply that he preferred to use a handwritten book (McKitterick, 2003, p. 47). Its impromptu notes, present on every page in the margins, between the lines, or both, indicate that they were jotted down by a student as he heard lectures on the *Parvulus philosophiae moralis*; some of the Aristotelian virtues are given more marginal dialogue than others. These glosses are likely unique. As such,

this manuscript is a remarkable testament to student interests, university curriculum, and the process of learning in Central European universities in the Reformation era.

LITERATURE

Breitkopf, Gregor. *Breviuscula facillimaque commentatio in Parvulum Philosophiae moralis*, Leipzig, 1504. Available online at <https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/item/BKNVUHNCARDALN4WM2M3ZNHICN4N6DSK>.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Briquet Online, "Briquet 15391"

http://www.ksbm.oeaw.ac.at/_scripts/php/loadRepWmark.php?rep=briquet&refnr=15391&lang=de.

Kraut, Richard. "Aristotle's Ethics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Stanford, CT.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>

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