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ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in the Latin translation of Leonardo Bruni
In Latin, manuscript on paper
France, Carpentras, signed and dated 1488

163 leaves, on paper (Briquet "colonne et croix," close to no. 4361, Carpentras and Southern France, 1483-1491) the first leaf blank (i-x¹¹, xi¹⁶⁻¹² [first 6 leaves missing, last 6 canceled]), original foliation in lower-case Roman numerals, repeats "lxxij," modern foliation in pencil, used here, original leaf signatures, ruled in leadpoint (sometimes brown) for 18 well-spaced lines of text per page (justification c.205 x 125 mm.), written "above top line," in a semi cursive Gothic script, the first words at the start of chapters and books written in double-sized more formal script, some headings in red (other spaces for rubrics left blank), capitals touched with yellow wash, paragraphs in red on the first few leaves, two-line initials in red at the start of chapters, LARGE DIVIDED INITIALS IN RED AND BLUE, WITH BLACK AND RED PENWORK FLOURISHING at the start of books, the start of the text with a LARGE FOLIATE INITIAL PAINTED IN YELLOW, BLUE, AND SHADES OF RED, perhaps a somewhat later embellishment, the paper generally of good quality but with some water-staining, especially on the final leaves, the first pages also rather darkened. Modern calf binding over wood board, the spine lettered in blind-stamped capitals "Ethique/d'Aristote/1488." Dimensions c.300 x 210 mm.

Signed and dated by an unrecorded scribe, the present manuscript offers an elegantly written, richly decorated, grand folio copy of Leonardo Bruni's popular translation of Aristotle's *Ethics*. It is uncommon to find manuscripts of Bruni's translation—the most famous of all the translations and the earliest to be printed—produced outside Italy. This manuscript thus witnesses the growth of Italian humanism in France, where Bruni's version of the *Ethics* was already taught in a provincial grammar school.

PROVENANCE

1. Signed and dated by the scribe at Carpentras in 1488. At the end of the text is the colophon: [f. 163] "Aristotelis Ethicorum libri finiuntur. Ex Carpentorate luce xvij mensis maij circa quintam horam. A[nn]o D[omi]ni M[illesimo] iiiiclxxxvij [1488] sub eximio Jordano Fricano audivi prescripta Ethica. hoc in ludo litterario predictae civitatis. Nomen scriptoris rape [f.163v:] Guillermus Henricus Ebredunensis civis." (Here end the books of Aristotle's *Ethics*. From the light of Carpentras on 17 May, at about the fifth hour, 1488. I heard the above *Ethics* here under the eminent Jordanus Fricanus in

the grammar school of the aforesaid town. Be aware of the name of the scribe: Guillaume-Henri, citizen of Embrun). The name of the month in the colophon has been partially erased and rewritten, and above the colophon has been added in red ink, now partially erased "[...]16 kl marcii" (16 kalends of March, i.e. 16 February). Embrun is less than 100 miles north-west of Carpentras.

2. J. R. Ritman, *The Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica*, Amsterdam, his sale, London, Sotheby's, 19 June 2001 (*A Second Selection of Illuminated Manuscripts from c. 1000 to c. 1522*), lot 30.
3. Private Collection.

TEXT

ff. 1r-163r, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in the Latin translation of Leonardo Bruni, but without his preface or dedicatory letter to Pope Martin V, incipit, "Omnis ars et omnis doctrina... legibus et moribus," but with extensive marginal and interlinear glosses, the first apparently starting "Iuxta sententiam antiquorum expositiorum qui libros Aristotelis super ethicorum..."; explicit, "... status sit optimus et quomodo una quaque res pro constituta sit et quibus legibus et moribus".

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, written in Greek and based on lectures he gave in Athens in the fourth century B.C., concerns the end to which human behavior should be directed. He accepts "happiness" (doing well, making a success of life) as this end, and attempts to show how it can be achieved. For a person to be happy, he says, they must not simply pursue pleasure, but do well those things which are distinctly human, namely the exercise of intellectual abilities. But, as he also explains, virtue is not solely intellectual, and mankind has a moral aspect as well.

The text was first translated into Latin by Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253), bishop of Lincoln, one of the most learned men of the Middle Ages. His translation was not superseded until the fifteenth century, when in 1419 the early humanist Leonardo Bruni (1396-1444), dedicated a new translation to Martin V (Pope 1417-31). An astute scholar of Greek and Latin and the first Florentine scholar to use the word "humanitas" as a term for literary studies, Bruni made some of the earliest idiomatic translations of Greek literature, including works by Homer, Aristophanes, Demosthenes, and Plato. He followed his translation of the *Ethics* with a translation of Aristotle's *Politics* in 1437, undertaken at the request of Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester.

Bruni's translation became the first of Aristotle's works to appear in print (at Strasbourg by Johann Mentelin, before 10 April 1469, Goff A-983). Copies of humanist texts produced outside Italy are scarce, and of the dozen or so copies of Bruni's translation of Aristotle's *Ethics* in North American collections (De Ricci and Bond), none were transcribed in France. The text was most recently edited by Crisp and translated by Broadie and Rowe. For a detailed discussion of this translation, see also Franceschini. See Hankins, pp. 253-254, for list of manuscripts containing the Bruni translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

LITERATURE

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