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Medieval Hebrew Readers of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: Encounters on the Manuscript Page

1. The Study of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the Jewish Context

For centuries, for Christian, Muslim and Jewish intellectuals alike, Aristotle's ethical writings have been central in the discussion around the notion of eudaimonia and virtue and have sparked debates around the possibility of harmonizing secular and religious ethics. In addition to the medieval discussion inherited from the Arabic tradition, Jewish premodern intellectuals saw a first flourishing of ethics in the fourteenth century, when Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles translated into Hebrew Averroes' Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹ At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the *Nicomachean Ethics* saw a second flourishing within the Jewish context, and more generally within Humanism. Deeming Averroes' commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* insufficient, and having become interested in the Latin medieval tradition of Christian commentaries, Meir Alguadez (d. 1410), chief Rabbi of the Castilian Jews, translated the *Nicomachean Ethics* from Latin, making use of the translation by Robert Grosseteste (ca. 1170-1253).² Alguadez's translation was soon picked up by another Castilian

This paper is dedicated with respect and admiration to Christian Brockmann. We spent a large part of 2024 reading together Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* and have learned a lot from Christian's expertise and erudition in Greek philosophy and Greek language. An article about the Hebrew tradition of the *Eudemian Ethics* would only contain an empty page, since a tradition of this sort does not exist. However, there is a lot to be said about the Hebrew tradition of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, hence the paper offered here. The research carried out for this paper is funded by the European Union (ERC, HEPMASITE, 101041376). However, the views and opinions expressed are those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

¹ Averroes' commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, alongside Averroes' Commentary on Plato's *Republic*, also available in Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles' Hebrew translation, became a fundamental reference in the study of ethics and politics within the Jewish context. In addition, Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, also available through Averroes' short and middle commentaries translated into Hebrew by Todros Todrosi of Arles (b. 1313), contained important ethical and political elements that remained central also in the following century. For an overview see Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, 'Virtue and Happiness,' in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. by Steven Nadler and T. M. Rudavsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 707-767. On the reception of the *Ethics* in medieval Jewish thought see also Steven Harvey, 'The Sources of the Quotations from Aristotle's Ethics in the Guide of the Perplexed and Guide to the Guide,' in *Joseph Baruch Sermoneta Memorial Volume: Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 14 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998), pp. 87-102 [in Hebrew].

² The Hebrew text was printed, with commentary, by the Jewish Maskil Isaac Satanow (Berlin, 1790). A preliminary edition of Alguadez's Hebrew translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* see Chaim M. Neria, "It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir" (Job 28:16): Rabbi Joseph b. Shem Tov's

Jew, Joseph ibn Shem Tov (d. 1480), who produced a commentary on the Aristotelian text that was studied in the Iberian peninsula and later in Italy. At this stage, Alguadez's translation circulated both as part of Joseph ibn Shem Tov's commentary and on its own. Often read together with Averroes' commentary, Alguadez's translation was the most comprehensive version of the Aristotelian text ever to be available in Hebrew and contributed to the fifteenth-century popularity of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Such popularity, as shown by Marc Saperstein and Chaim Neria, went beyond the philosophical elites, and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* became one of the most quoted sources in Jewish sermons recited in fifteenth-century synagogues.³

The present article provides material evidence of the reading and notetaking practices that embody the process of harmonization between philosophical and religious sources that shaped the premodern Jewish discourse on ethics. The case in point is Ms. Parma 1939, which preserves a copy of Alguadez's translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and several marginal notes, some of which contain biblical and philosophical references. After having provided an overview of the Hebrew manuscript tradition preserving Alguadez's translation, we will focus specifically on the composition of Ms. Parma 1939 and provide a detailed analysis of the readers' engagement with the Aristotelian text.⁴

1.1 The Hebrew Manuscript Tradition

The first list of extant manuscripts of Alguadez's translation as transmitted on its own – as opposed to manuscripts in which it is embedded in Shem-Tov's commentary – was compiled by Moritz Steinschneider, who listed nine manuscripts.⁵ Lawrence Berman added four further manuscripts in his own list,⁶ to which then Chaim Neria added two.⁷ To the fifteen manuscripts listed by these scholars, we can now add seven more, arriving at a total of 22 manuscripts. The

Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. Sources and Analysis, PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2015, pp. 383-566.

³ On the popularization of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and its centrality in fifteenth century sermons see Marc Saperstein, *Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn: Themes and Texts in Traditional Jewish Preaching* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1996) and Idem, *Jewish Preaching 1200-1800: An Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). On the new 'philosophical' style of fifteenth-century Jewish preachers see also Chaim M. Neria, 'The Sermon in Late Medieval Jewish Thought as Method for Popularizing Philosophy,' in *Medieval Jewish Philosophy and Its Literary Forms*, ed. by Aaron W. Hughes and James T. Robinson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), pp. 288-312.

⁴ Another Hebrew translation of the Ethics was made by the 15th century scholar Baruch ibn Ya'ish. This translation is based on the humanist versions by Leonardo Bruni and John Argyropoulos, and survives in one manuscript (Hamburg State and University Library Carl von Ossietzky, Ms. Levy 114). See Mauro Zonta in *Hebrew Scholasticism in the Fifteenth century: A History and Source Book* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), p. 18. This translation warrants a dedicated study. Apparently, Ibn Ya'ish also taught and commented upon the text. Three manuscripts (Paris BnF 1001, 1002, 1003) preserve a commentary by his student, based on his lectures. Ibn Ya'ish also translated (from Latin) Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and Averroes's long commentary on *On the Soul*. See Michael Engel, "From Benevento to Pisa: The Hebrew Translation of Averroes' Long Commentary on the De anima" (forthcoming).

⁵ Steinschneider, *Die hebraeischen Uebersetzungen*, pp. 209-212. Steinschneider also mentions Satanow's printed edition, which he criticized heavily.

⁶ Lawrence V. Berman, "The Latin-to-Hebrew Translation of the 'Nicomachean Ethics,'" *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 7 (1988), 151.

⁷ Another manuscript that Neria ascribed to Alguadez is Hamburg State and University Library Carl von Ossietzky, Ms. Levy 114 (Neria, It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, p. 409) actually contains Baruch ibn Ya'ish's commentary (see above, n. 4).

geochronological distribution of the manuscripts is incredibly clear-cut: of the 22 manuscripts, 16 are Sephardic, copied either in the Iberian peninsula or by Sephardi scribes towards the end of the fifteenth century; 2 were copied in Italy a century later;⁸ 2 were copied in Karaite script in the 17th century;⁹ and 2 were copied in Ashkenaz (either Germany or Eastern Europe) in the 18th century.¹⁰

The tradition of the 16 Spanish manuscripts is also incredibly uniform. Most of them are about the same size, all of them contain either only the Ethics¹¹ or the Ethics copied with relevant works, and many of them show signs both of embellishment and of concentrated study. It is uncommon to see so many surviving copies of a Hebrew philosophical work, with shared practices of writing and study, that belong to a relatively short period of time and in the same area. For all practical purposes, this group of manuscripts reflects an intellectual explosion around the Ethics in the fifteenth-century Iberian Peninsula. One could only imagine how many copies were lost, and how many more copies would have been made were it not for the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. Since many of these manuscripts were copied near the time that Joseph ibn Shem Tov composed his own commentary on the Ethics (including Ms. Sutro 162, which was copied in Shem Tov's yeshiva in Segovia in 1482), there seems to be a strong connection here between production and study, which is also reinforced by the presence of complementary materials, such as a detailed index of the Ethics, which several manuscripts associate with Shem-Tov's commentary.¹² A proper tackling of all this material requires a monograph length effort that will tie all sources together, contextualize them, and highlight the Hebrew engagement with Aristotle's *Ethics* at the dawn of Jewish presence in Spain. As a modest beginning, we will analyze one manuscript as a case-study. Our discussion, as we hope to show, demonstrates that a similar approach to the corpus as a whole is a promising avenue to understand Jewish engagement with Aristotle's ethics on page level.

⁸ Oxford Bodleian, Mich. 241, was copied in 1573; the production unit in Moscow, Guenzburg 338 to which the Ethics belongs (74r–95v) is written in 16th century Italian cursive script and was first censored by Domenico Gerosolimitano in 1597 (95v).

⁹ Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 3524°28, was copied in 1692. The other manuscript (Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, C 97; 245r–265v) is incomplete (starts at 7.4 with some skips). The layout of these two manuscripts is practically identical, especially concerning the occasional incorporation of commentary material—and it is very likely that one is a direct copy of the other.

¹⁰ Berlin, The Jewish Museum Berlin, Ms. VII.5.292 (copied in 1778 by the otherwise unknown Herz Lieb Klesirt, for his own personal use. This person also copied New York, JTS 2893) and Berlin, The Jewish Museum Berlin, Ms. VII.5.293, undated but the script suggests that it is an 18th century imitation of Sephardi script. It can be no later than the 18th century because it was owned by the Jewish patron Daniel Itzig (1723–1799). This manuscript could have some relation to the printed edition of Isaac Satanow, who lists Itzig as one of his sponsors in the pleasantries section of his edition. For Satanow's interest in Ethics see Elke Morlok, 'Isaac Satanow (1732–1804) on Moral and Intellectual Perfection,' *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 14:2 (2020), pp. 300–333.

¹¹ Wrocław, Wrocław University Library, Ms. F 46901 (13); New York, JTS 2450; Parma, Palatina Library Ms. 2452; Parma, Palatina Library Ms. 1939; San Francisco State University Library, Ms. Sutro 162; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Pococke 17; Madrid, National Library of Spain, Ms. 5459; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Mich. 168; St. Petersburg EVR I 378; Rome, Vatican Library, Ms. Neof. 47.

¹² Four manuscripts add a detailed index to the Ethics: New York, JTS 2453; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Canonici Or. 9; Rome, Vatican Library, Ms. Vat. Ebr. 352; Moscow Guenzburg 264. One manuscript adds pseudo-Aristotle's *Economics* (New York, JTS 2315); One manuscript adds the index, the *Economics*, and some select ethical sayings based on the Ethics (Paris, BnF héb. 892). On the reception of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Economics* see Hanna Gentili, 'Leonardo Bruni and the Two Hebrew Translations of the pseudo-Aristotelian Economics,' (forthcoming).

1.2 Ms. Parma 1939

The present paper focuses on a manuscript that was ignored by both Berman and Neria. Its special features render it fit to serve as a case-study whose conclusions can be later expanded according to a similar analysis conducted towards its peers.

Ms. Parma 1939, 150*120 cm in size, was written on parchment in semi-cursive Spanish scripts toward the end of the 15th century, most likely in the Iberian peninsula, like several other of its exemplars, as we have seen. It has been catalogued twice; first in Tamani and Zonta's *Aristoteles Hebraicus*, which contained a detailed catalogue of all Hebrew manuscripts containing Aristotelian material in Italian libraries, and then in Richler and Beit-Arié's catalogue of the Hebrew collection of the Palatina library in Parma, which also cites Tamani and Zonta's account.¹³ As we will show, upon examination, much more elaborate information can be drawn from it, but first it is important to correct two errors both sources contain: first, the previous catalogues mention that the manuscript was copied by three hands, whereas in fact there are five. Second, the previous catalogues note that the text is incomplete and only runs until the fifteenth chapter of book 10, which has 16 chapters.¹⁴ This is incorrect. In fact, the text runs up to the end of the book, though there is a lengthy lacuna that creates the impression that it does not, as it omits the title of chapter 16. The omission occurs on f. 175v, line 8, and ranges from the middle of chapter 15 [...מעט...] to the middle of chapter 16 [חסרים וסתומים ...] with a corrupt string in the middle of line 8. The length of the omission suggests that the copyist either skipped a leaf when copying or reproduced an early skip. As the catalogues mention, Alguadez's introduction is missing. However, it cannot be said whether it was never copied or whether it copied on a separate quire that was lost.

The manuscript is composed of 22 quaternions, by five hands, according to the following distribution:

- Hand 1: quires 1–9 (1r–72v), except for leaves 65 and 72, which are the outer folio of quire 9 and copied by hand 2. We believe that the reason for this are the diagrams concerning justice on 72v; perhaps, originally, there was a folio by copyist 1, which copyist 2 decided to replace.
- Hand 2: quires 10–12 (73r–96v) + outer folio of quire 9 (leaves 65 and 72).
- Hand 3: quires 13–16 (97r–128v).
- Hand 4: first half of quire 17 (129r–132v).
- Hand 5: second half of quire 17–quire 22 (133r–176v).

All hands are in semi-cursive Spanish scripts typical of the end of the 15th century, some with more calligraphical tendencies than others. Space was often kept empty for a later addition of book and chapter headings, and most of these were added later, by several different hands (some of them not by any of the five copyists' hands). Some are left empty. Copyists 2 and 5 seems to have been responsible for some of their own headings, but not all. In most cases, the additions fall short of what would be the aesthetic expectations of the original copyists, leaving the codex in a visual no man's land, stuck between beauty and functionality. This somewhat

¹³ Giulio Tamani and Mauro Zonta, *Aristoteles Hebraicus: version, commenti e compendi del Corpus Aristotelicum nei manoscritti ebraici delle biblioteche italiane* (Venezia: Supernova, 1997), no. 48; Benjamin Richler and Malachi Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma Catalogue* (Jerusalem: Jewish National and University Library, 2001), p. 335.

¹⁴ It is important to keep in mind that the division into chapters in Alguadez's translation is different from the modern division.

grotesque state of affairs is further intensified by additional high-end and low-end factors: on the high-end, despite his best intentions, copyist 1—by far the most calligraphic—only managed to start adding decorations to quires 9 and 10, the other left untouched by all other hands; on the low-end, the codex is full of meta-content added by several different hands in several different contexts, even further undermining its museal aspirations. It is very difficult to distinguish between the hands responsible for these. In the case of corrections or recovering of omissions, an argument can sometimes be made that they belong to one of the five copyists, although the script use is more cursive. In the case of comments, interpretations, marks, and the like—there are at least three different hands, but the number could be higher. In other words, what was meant to be a beautiful, high-end parchment manuscript, ended up being compiled, retouched and ungracefully annotated by multiple hands resulting in a copy that is unbalanced but heavily used and studied.

In the following pages, we will highlight two strands of encounter with the text that are found in the margins and are philosophically significant. The first strand is a series of attempts by our readers, on the page level, to find connections between Aristotle's words and Jewish tradition. The second strand is an attempt to make sense of more technical parts of the work that are difficult to understand, and will be shown in the example of a reader's response to Aristotle's critique of Plato's forms.

2. Marginal notes about Aristotle and the Jewish Tradition

2.1 The need for a moral instruction

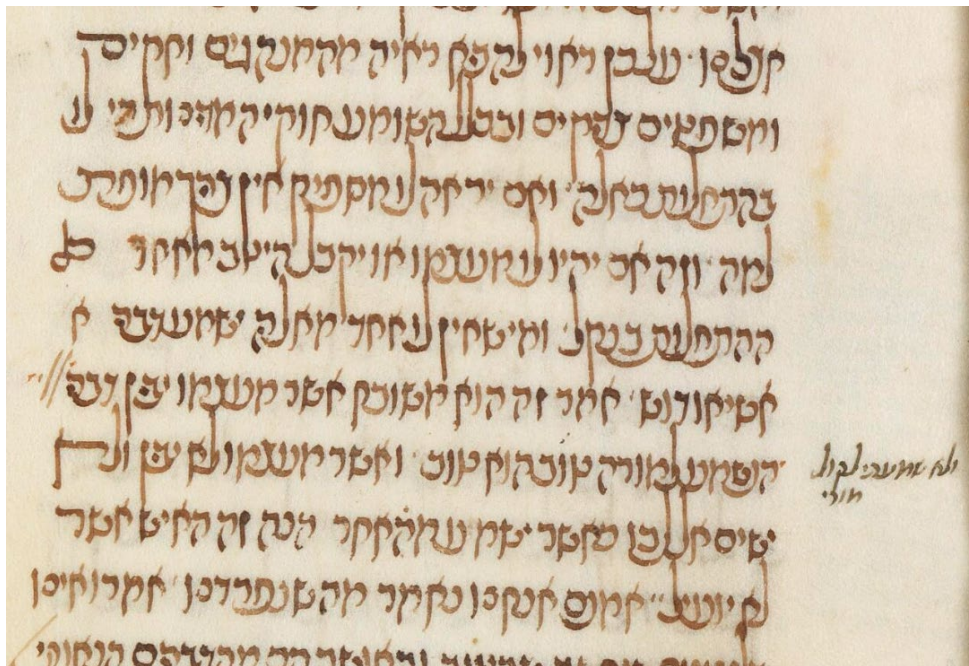
At the beginning of Book I, Aristotle had explained that both ethics and politics are based on uncertain premises and conclusions and cannot aim at the same level of exactness as the theoretical sciences. This has an impact on the way ethics and politics are taught: as this is a kind of knowledge that one acquires through life experience, young people need education and time to build moral character.¹⁵ The figure of the teacher who serves as moral example and provides guidance is central, especially while the individual creates and consolidates moral habits by performing virtuous actions. Moral education being aimed at action rather than knowledge of causes and principles, a person must know what is good, but does not necessarily have to know the reason why that is the case (*NE* II 3, 1105b 12-18; X 10, 1179a 35-b 2). To the person who does not know what the appropriate thing to do is, and neither able/willing to learn it, Aristotle directs the following reprimand from Hesiod's *Works and Days*:

Praiseworthy is the one who understands something by himself, good is the one who listens to the good teacher, and the one who himself neither understands nor pays attention when he listens to the other, this is the one who is useless.¹⁶

¹⁵ Aristotle's central notion of virtue as resulting from habituation appears in Book II, i, 1103a14-1103b, where he says 'a moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit (ethos) and has indeed derived its name from that word.' Aristotle also specifies that, since ethics and politics as based on experience of moral conduct, young people and anyone who follows feelings rather than reason, is unfit for ethics and politics. Aristotle comes back to this point also in Book X 1179b 23-27, where he says: 'the soil must have been previously tilled if it is to foster the seed, the mind of the pupil must have been prepared by the cultivation of habits, so as to like and dislike aright. For he that lives at the dictates of passion will not hear nor understand the reasoning of one who tries to dissuade him.'

¹⁶ Ms. Parma 1939, f. 4r: זה הוא משובח אשר מעצמו יבין דבר הנשמע למורה טוב הוא טוב ואשר מעצמו לא יבין ולא. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 291-295 quoted by Aristotle in *NE*, I, iv, 1095b 10-13.

At this point, next to Hesiod's verses, one of our readers adds his own authority in the margin, king Solomon, the author of the biblical Proverbs: "ולא שמעתי לקול מורי" ("I did not pay heed to my teachers' voice"; *Proverbs* 5:13).¹⁷



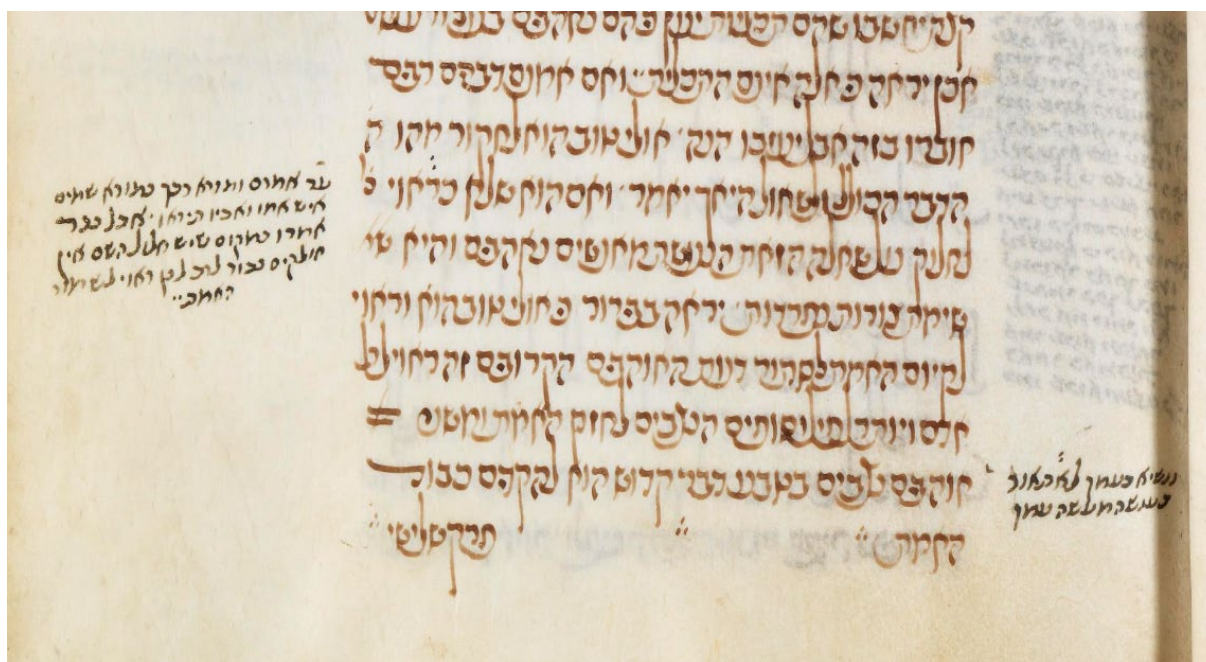
Ms. Parma 1939, f. 4r (detail)

For a Hebrew reader in the 15th century, this short four-word string is all that is needed to connote Proverbs 5, which contains a story about adultery and its disastrous consequences, all of which derive from the protagonists' refusal to obey their teacher. In fact, this Proverb equates hatred of morality with disobeying the teacher (Proverbs 5:12: "How have I hated instruction [Heb. *musar* = morality/ethics], and my heart despised reproof"; איך שנאתי מוסר ותוכחת נאץ לבי). On this occasion, we witness not only the encounter between Aristotelian and biblical morals, but also the proximity in literary formats between Greek popular wisdom in the form of Hesiod's proverbial expressions and the biblical Book of Proverbs, expression of Jewish wisdom.

2.2 Truth over Friendship

The second passage that interests our readers is Aristotle's statement regarding the necessity of safeguarding truth over friendship that precedes his refutation of Plato's Idea of a separate universal good in the first book of the *Ethics* (*NE* 1096a 11-23). Before starting with his criticism, Aristotle famously added a remark on his friendship with the supporters of the theory of ideas and his willingness to prioritise the pursuit of truth, even at the cost of refuting his friends (*NE* 1096a 11-15). Our reader engages with the Aristotelian passage by conflating it with an inner tension also found in the Jewish tradition concerning the absolute obedience one should exercise for one's rabbi, which can only be undermined by the religious decree itself. Here, he inserts two marginal notes with various biblical and midrashic quotations.

¹⁷ Ms. Parma 1939, f. 4r. The full verse in *Proverbs* 5:13 recites as follows: "ולא שמעתי בקול מורי, ולמלמדי, לא-הטיתי אזני." "I did not pay heed to my teachers' voice, or incline my ear to my instructors."



Ms. Parma 1939, f. 5r (detail)

(1) In the note on the left margin, we find: ‘and the reverence for your teacher [as dear to you] as the reverence of heaven (*Pirkei Avot* 4:12),¹⁸ you shall revere your mother and your father (*Leviticus* 19:3),¹⁹ however, He said Whenever the name of the Holy One is profaned, the honour of the scholar is not considered (*Midrash Tanchuma, Mishpatim* 6:10)²⁰ so it is appropriate to safeguard the truth.’²¹ Our reader here chooses quotations that are in line with Aristotle’s point concerning respecting authority and truth, drawing on passages that have a strong normative and ethical value. *Pirkei Avot* (‘Chapters of the Fathers’) is a tractate in the Mishnah containing a series of moral maxims attributed to rabbis and sages of the Jewish tradition which is strongly ethical and didactic in character. The fourth section, from which our reader takes the passage quoted, opens with a number of questions posed by the sage Ben Zoma regarding who is wise, rich, and honourable, to which he responds by quoting biblical passages. Ben Zoma’s sayings are followed by many other moral maxims attributed to various Jewish figures, in particular one by Ben Azzai (*Pirkei Avot* 4:2) that will recur in a later marginal note

¹⁸ *Pirkei Avot* 4:12: רבי אלעזר בן שמעון אומר, יהי כבוד תלמידך חביב עליך כשלך, וכבוד חברך כמורא רבך, ומורא רבך, כמורא שמים. Rabbi Elazar ben Shammua said: let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own, and the honor of your colleague as the reverence for your teacher, and the reverence for your teacher as the reverence of heaven.’

¹⁹ *Leviticus* 19:3: ‘You shall each revere your mother and your father, and keep My sabbaths: I YHWH am your God.’

²⁰ *Midrash Tanchuma, Mishpatim* 6:10: רב יימר הוה ידע סהדותא. והא אמר עולא, מחלקת בבעלי דינין. אבל עדים, דברי למר זוטרא. אתא לקמיה דאמימר, אותבה. אמר לה רב אשי לאמימר, והא אמר עולא, מחלקת בבעלי דינין. אבל עדים, דברי למר זוטרא. ‘Whenever the name of the Holy One is profaned, the honor of the scholar is not considered. R. Yemar possessed some testimony in behalf of Mar Zutra and appeared before Amemar. He told him to be seated. R. Ashi said to Amemar: Did not Ulla say in regard to litigants (that it is permissible to be seated), but that witnesses must testify while standing? He answered: They are both positive commandments. However, the positive commandment enjoining respect for the Torah (i.e., the scholar) is more important.’ (Translation by Samuel A. Berman).

²¹ Ms. Parma 1939, f. 5r: עד אמנם ומורא רבך כמורא שמים איש אמו ואביו תיראו. אבל כבר אמרו במקום שיש חלול. השם אין חולקים כבוד לרב ולכן ראוי לשמור האמת.

by the same reader.²² The passage quoted here from *Pirkei Avot* 4:12 is part of a maxim attributed to Rabbi Eleazar ben Shammua who says ‘Let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own, and the honor of your colleague as the reverence for your teacher, and the reverence for your teacher as the reverence of heaven.’²³ This passage is followed by a quotation from *Leviticus* 19:3 that highlights the importance of respecting the authority of one’s parents. The quotation is part of *parashat kedoshim* (*Leviticus* 19:1–20:27), which opens with God instructing Moses to speak to the whole nation (אל כל עדת בני ישראל), exhorting everyone to be holy as God is holy.²⁴ Revering one’s parents is the first of the precepts listed in the *parasha*, which include rules for the individual and the community. The marginal note is then closed by a passage from *Midrash Tanchuma* (*Mishpatim* 6:10), the point of our reader here being that one should revere and respect the authority of the teachers as well as the parents, but, above all, one should follow truth and respect the divine commandments.

(2) The second note appears on the inner margin a few lines below, next to Aristotle saying that one must favour truth over friendship. Here we find: ‘And you shall not curse a leader among your people (*Exodus* 22:27) and one who does the deeds of your people (*Bava Batra* 4a 1-2).’²⁵ The passage from *Exodus* is also dedicated to the respect of authority. It is in fact part of *parashat mishpatim* (*Exodus* 21:1-24:18), which describes, in addition to the ten commandments, the laws (*mishpatim*) that should be observed following the revelation at Mount Sinai and the receiving of the Torah. This section of the text is dedicated to civil laws based on the sages’ understanding of regulations and this specific passage is part of the dialogue between Herod and Bava ben Buta, in the context of Herod testing Bava ben Buta’s loyalty. Herod, who was responsible for Bava ben Buta’s loss of sight, had spared his life, and Bava ben Buta was the only one left among the Jewish sages. When his loyalty is tested, Bava ben Buta states that one should never curse those in power, whether that is a king, a leader or a rich person, not even when no one is listening. This episode, revolving around authority and discretion, has particular significance as it is the event preceding the rebuilding of the Second Temple. Indeed through his answer, Bava ben Buta had now conquered Herod’s trust, and suggested the rebuilding of the temple as a reparation for Herod’s great crimes as he is the one who extinguished ‘the light of the world (*Bava Batra* 4a 3)’ and should now occupy himself with reconstituting it. By referring to the episode of Bava ben Buta, our reader adds a nuance to the discussion of authority. In this case, despite the hostile context, the respect of the authority—all the more a non-Jewish authority in this case—led to a positive outcome, the rebuilding of the temple. We see how the reader connects Aristotle’s remark to a wider discussion on respecting authority on different levels.

Coming back to the context of this note, one can perhaps read it as a (perhaps superfluous) qualification of Aristotle’s message. Aristotle claims that although both friendship and truth are holy, truth is holier. Our reader reverses this, saying: even though our friends mistaken—and even though we chose truth—the friendship does not cease being holy.

²² See below.

²³ *Pirkei Avot* 4:12: רבי אלעזר בן שמוע אומר, יהי כבוד תלמידך חביב עליך כשלך, וכבוד חברך כמורא רבך, ומורא רבך כמורא שמים.

²⁴ *Leviticus* 19:1-2: וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: דבר אלי-כל-עדת בני-ישראל ואמרת אלהם קדשים תהיו כי קדוש אני יהוה. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, your God, am holy.

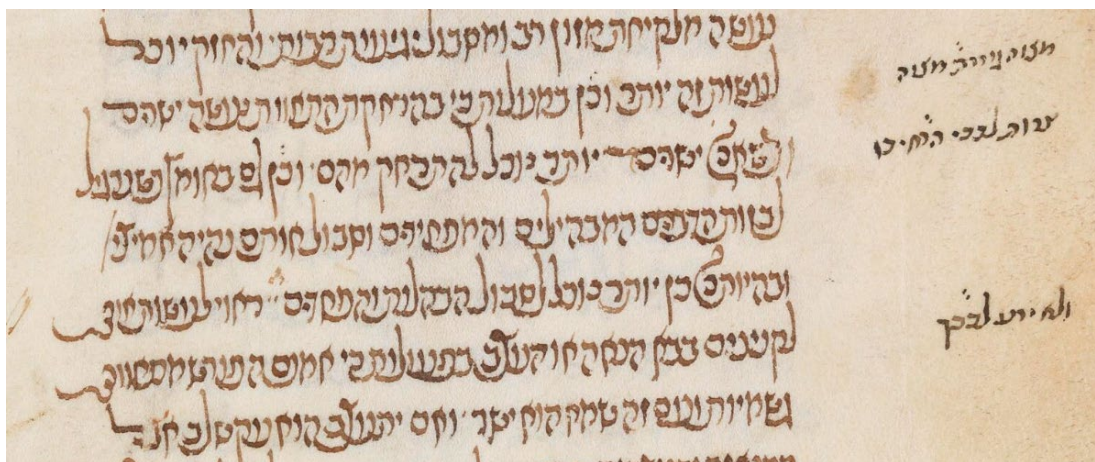
²⁵ Ms. Parma 1939, f. 5r: ונשיא בעמך לא תאור בעושה מעשה עמך.

2.3 The Habituation of Virtues

Aristotle opens the second book of the *Ethics* with the famous distinction between intellectual and moral virtues, the first developed in time through experience and instruction, the second through *ethos*, i.e. habit. Aristotle explains that virtues are produced by habit (*NE* II, i, 1103a 19-25), for as men became good or bad builders by building well or badly, so do they become temperate by learning to abstain from pleasures and brave by enduring terrors (*NE* II, ii-iii, 1104a33-1104b3). The point being that one becomes virtuous by performing virtuous acts, and not the other way around, though gradually, once the virtue is in place, it becomes the principle for action.

An important element that emerges in the discussion around the formation of the moral character and education is that passions have a fundamental role in forming virtues; only when passions are under control can the soul obey its rational part. Nature gives no more than a favourable disposition towards virtues, but virtues are habits that one acquires by acting, controlling passions through reason and choosing the right mean. What is more, in the present passage Aristotle stresses that pleasure and pain that accompany a morally correct action are an indication regarding whether or not it was done virtuously. It is not enough to perform a virtuous act; it is truly virtuous only if it is done with pleasure.

Our reader, who had already paid attention to the importance of training in ethical matters in the first passage where we find their marginal comments, here engages only with Aristotle's statement on virtues as produced by habit as we find it in book II. His notes associate Aristotle's view with the importance attributed to the performance of mitzvot in the Jewish tradition and the belief that mitzvot lead to other mitzvot, while transgression leads to transgression.



Ms. Parma 1939, f. 21v (detail)

In the margin, we find a passage from the already mentioned *Pirkei Avot* 4, where Ben Azzai says that 'One commandment leads to another (*Pirkei Avot* 4:2).'²⁶ The emphasis here is on the importance of the performance of moral actions as the way one pursues virtue. When Aristotle says that one becomes courageous by performing courageous acts,²⁷ our reader comments quoting two biblical passages. The first is a quotation from the Psalms, 'Troubles have widened my heart (*Psalms* 25:17)',²⁸ where David prays for God to show him His ways, to guide him

²⁶ *Pirkei Avot* 4:2: שמצוה גוררת מצוה, ועברה גוררת. ובורח מן העברה. שמצוה גוררת מצוה, ושכר עברה, עברה. ושכר מצוה, מצוה. ושכר עברה, עברה.

²⁷ Ms. Parma 1939, f. 21v. Aristotle dedicated a whole section on courage in Book III of the *NE*.

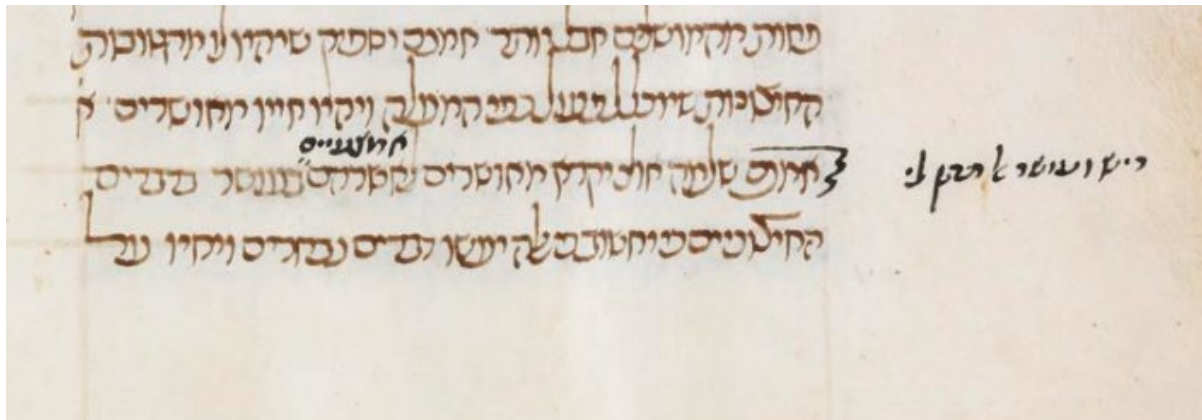
²⁸ *Psalms* 25:17: הוציאני ממצוקותי, הוציאני. 'Troubles have widened my heart; O bring me out of my distresses.'

towards the good, have mercy and forgive his sins. It is also a supplication for protection against the enemies and a reward for following God's command, which extends to a plea for redemption for the people of Israel.²⁹ The second biblical reference, 'Thy heart shall not be grieved (Deut. 15:10),'³⁰ is part of an exhortation to generosity, in this case concerning the remission of debts in the seventh year. The act of giving to the poor is a mitzvah and should be done with no pain in the heart. The passage is contained in *parashat Re'eh* (Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17), which is part of the Deuteronomic code enunciating the laws that should be followed once in the Promised Land.

In the present context, our reader reinterprets these verses to reflect Aristotle's message. "One commandment leads to another" is the Talmudic counterpart to virtuous acts leading to virtue. "Troubles have widened my heart" is a reflection of the specific example of this in the case of courage, as suffering hardships reinforces endurance. Finally, "Thy heart shall not be grieved" is understood as a reflection of Aristotle's position that one should perform virtuous acts happily, and that the pleasure which accompanies a good action is an indication that it was performed virtuously.

2.4 Neither Poverty nor Riches

Near the end of the tenth book, Aristotle asked about the amount of external goods one needs in order to live virtuously. Aristotle notes that eudaimonia does not require abundant external goods, and men are capable of virtuous acts even when they have moderate resources: 'It will suffice for the person to have enough of the external goods in order for him to act according to virtue, and he will have a happy life.'³¹ To strengthen his point, Aristotle had originally referred to Solon and Anaxagoras as examples of thinkers who described the happy individual as an individual of moderate possessions who lives a temperate life (*NE* 1179a 9-16). Interestingly, in the Hebrew translation, instead of Solon we find Solomon next to Anaxagoras.³²



Ms. Parma 1939, f. 172v (detail)

²⁹ Psalms 27: 18-22: ראה עניי ועמלי ושאל לכל־חטאתי. ראה־איבי כי־רבו ושנאת חמס שנאוני. שמרה נפשי והצילני אל־אבוש כי־חסיתי בך. תם־וישר יצוני כי קויתך. פדה אלהים את־ישראל מכל צרותיו.

³⁰ Deuteronomy 15:10: נתון תתן לו, ולא־ירע לבבך בתתך לו: כי בגלל הדבר הזה, יברכך יהוה אלהיך, בכל־מעשך, ובכל־משלה ידך. 'Thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the LORD thy God will bless thee in all thy work, and in all that thou puttest thy hand unto.'

³¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 624-627. Ms. Parma 1939, f. 172v: אמנם יספיק שיהיו לו מהטובות החיצונות שיוכל לפעול כפי המעלה, ויהיו חייו מאושרים.

³² This reading is not peculiar to Ms. Parma 1939 as it happens consistently across the manuscripts containing the Hebrew translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

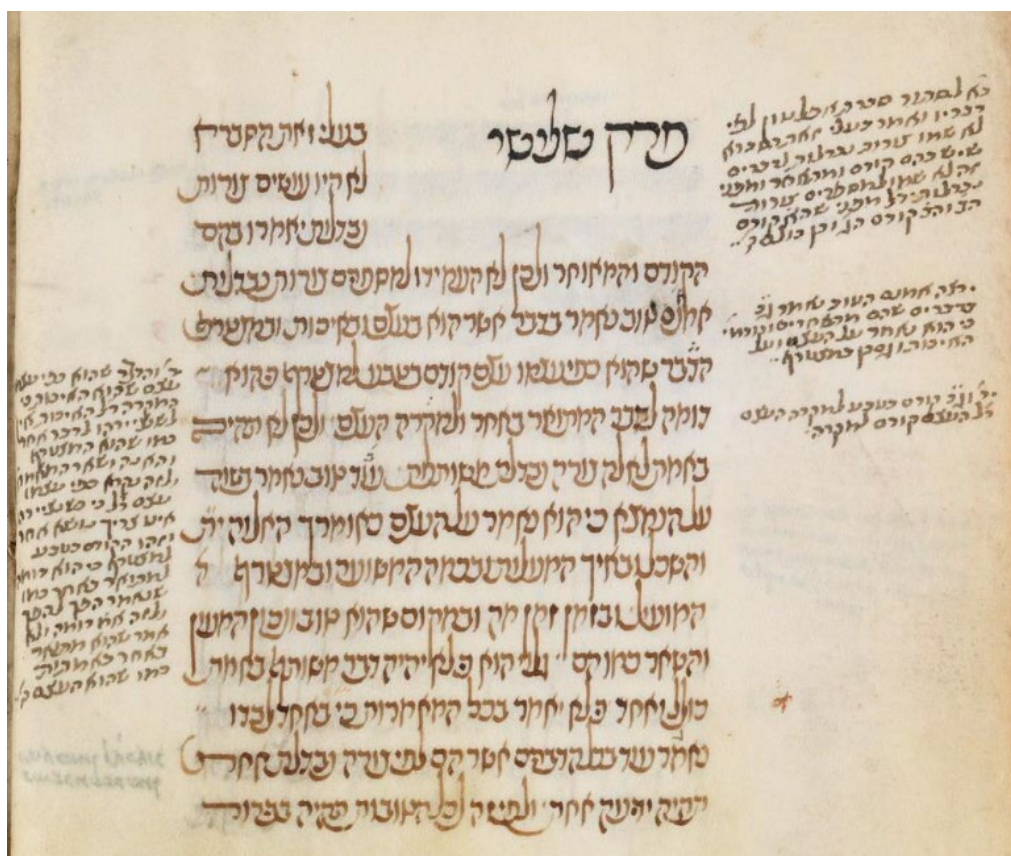
In the margin, our reader quotes a passage from chapter 30 of the Book of Proverbs, which opens with a number of statements attributed to the non-Jewish sage Agur, where he asks God to experience neither poverty or wealth, which may lead to moral infringements, but rather wishes to receive just what is sufficient to live: ‘Give me neither poverty nor riches but provide me with my daily bread (Proverbs 30:8).’³³ This reading perhaps goes too far, as it advocates for a correlation between moderate means and moral life, and implies that wealth is an impediment for virtue. Aristotle would agree that one should have at least moderate means to be happy, but for him more wealth means more leisure and occasions for more virtuous acts

3. Struggling to Understand Aristotle’s arguments against Plato

The *Nicomachean Ethics* contains relatively few technical metaphysical discussions, so it is not surprising that Aristotle’s critique of the Idea of the Good—which is difficult also for contemporary scholars of Aristotle—would be challenging to both the translator and the reader. In the following set of notes a reader attempts to make sense of the text, attempting to clarify two aspects of Aristotle’s critique.

3.1 Priority and Posteriority

The first critique is concerned with the relation between Platonic Forms and the notions of priority and posteriority:



³³ Ms. Parma 1939, f. 172v. The full passage in the Book of Proverbs recites as follows: שוא ודבר-כזב, ראש ועשר אל תתן לי הטרפני לחם חקי. 'keep lies and false words far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches; but provide me with my daily bread.'

In a nutshell, Aristotle's critique here uses the following argumentation. Those who posited separate Forms did not posit forms for things in which there exists a relationship of prior and posterior, as can be seen by the fact that they refrained from positing separate Forms for numbers. However, we find that "good" is said of things that belong to all categories. Since there is a relationship of prior and posterior within the categories, whatever is said of all categories cannot fall under one separate Form. Hence, consistency dictates that one should avoid positing a separate Form of the good.

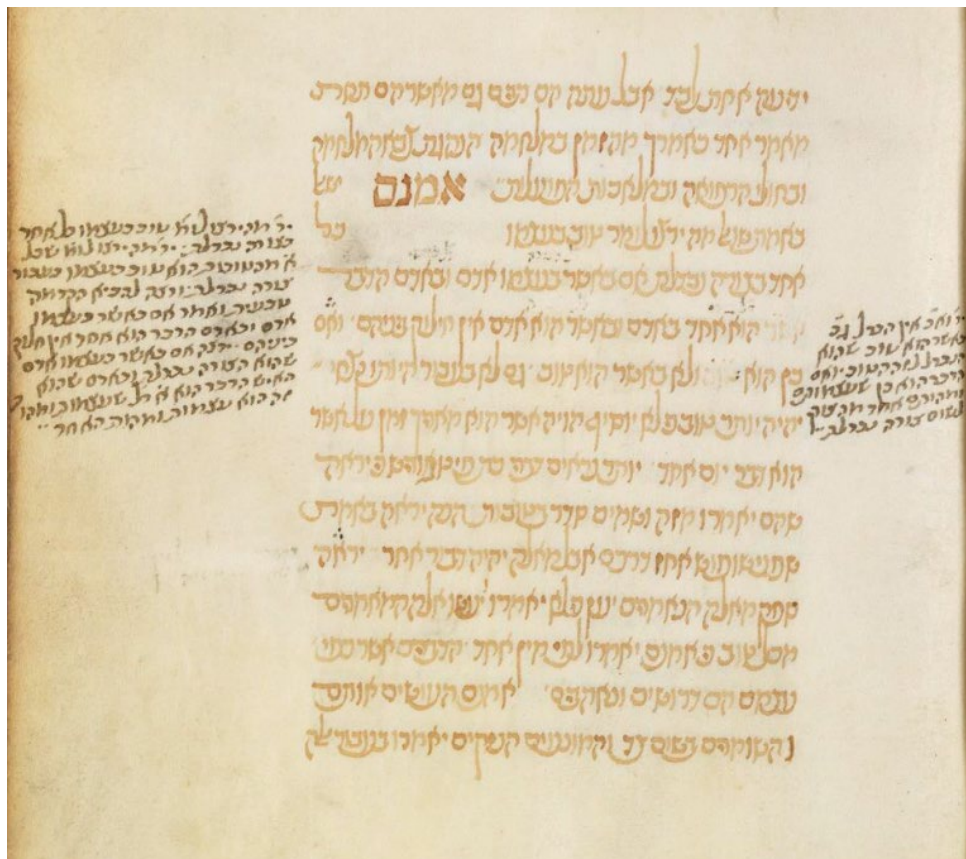
Our reader adds four comments to this passage, whose Hebrew version is incredibly difficult to understand (to the point that the English translation we bring below was heavily aided by Aristotle's original text).³⁴ The first comment on the outer margin is intended to explain the argumentative strategy of the text, which is to show that under their own criteria, the advocates of separate forms should avoid postulating a form of the good. The commentator adds an example to clarify the meaning of prior and posterior in numbers, citing the series of natural numbers in which each number comes before the next. The second comment on the outer margin explicates Aristotle's argument by explaining that the relation of prior and posterior is implied in Aristotle's list of the categories substance, quality, and relation. The third comment on the outer margin reflects and attempts to restore the meaning of a string of words that are arranged in an unnatural way in Hebrew and were misleading for the reader. While the author thinks that the point of Aristotle's expression is to show that substance is prior to predicate, Aristotle's point is in fact to explain that the category of relation is an accident of substance. Admittedly, it is incredibly hard to gather this from the Hebrew wording.

Finally, the comment on the inner margin leaves us puzzled. Its text is confused, but it seems that the reader tries to understand why in the beginning of the argument Aristotle speaks of substance, quality, and relation, but then only proceeds to compare substance and relation. The text is hard, but there are two ways to understand this comment: either the reader attempts to say that substance is prior to quality and (in turn) quality is prior to relation, or he attempts to say that quality is in some way likened to substance (but somewhat qualifies this in the end of the text). The argument that lies besides it is whether another substrate is needed in order to have sufficient predication in the case of quality as compared to relation. In order to establish the category of relation, the predicate needs two places (like, e.g., that opposition requires one thing to be opposite to another). Quality, on the other hand, only needs one substrate (e.g. 'green' only needs 'apple'). Whether Aristotle would subscribe to any of this is an open question. What matters here, is that the perplexity surrounding the Hebrew text gave rise to philosophical creativity (misled, or not).

3.2 The futility of the thing in itself

The second critique argues for the metaphysical superfluity of the idea of the Good:

³⁴ See part 2 of the Appendix.



Ms. Parma 1939, f. 6r (detail)

Aristotle argues that insofar as they are good, there is no difference between the separate form (or the “thing in itself”) and the individual, just as there is no difference between the form of man and man. The only supposed advantage is eternity, but eternal duration does not make something “more” of what it already is, implying that temporal persistence does not have bearings on a thing’s essence.

The two notes added in the margin here seem like an attempt to reinforce the philosophical ground for this argument. In the first note, our reader explains that the logic behind the argument is the premise according to which something is good “on account” of the Form of the Good, which assumes that the Form has some advantage over the individual. However, examination of this shows that the substance and essence of the thing per se and the individual is the same, there is no meaningful way to draw a distinction between them. Our author maintains that this premise is “physical,” i.e., is taken from natural philosophy, though we must admit we are unsure what he means by this. What can be said, however, is that the note grounds Aristotle’s discussion in the scope of substantiality and essence, something that is not explicated in this portion of Aristotle’s text.

Conclusion

Ms. Parma 1939 embodies the diverse reading practices that shaped the transmission of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the Hebrew tradition, offering a glimpse into the encounter between the philosophical and religious interpretation on the manuscript level. The presence of multiple hands and rich marginal annotations preserved on the page—that is also apparent in other manuscripts of the *Nicomachean Ethics* of the time—reveals a moment of intense popularity and engagement with this work. Alguadez’s new translation from Latin, alongside Joseph ibn Shem Tov’s popular commentary, Baruch ibn Ya’ish’s second translation of the Ethics (alongside his teaching activity), related texts, indices and, overall, the densely annotated nature of the manuscript tradition, bear witness to the cultural ferment around the Ethics that characterised the fifteenth-century Jewish context, especially in the Iberian Peninsula. By examining case studies like Ms. Parma 1939, we gain deeper insight into how philosophical texts were copied, studied, and commented upon. In the case of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, what emerges is the communal nature of the copying and study of the Aristotelian text, where multiple hands often worked together. Looking ahead, further manuscript-based case studies will allow us to truly immerse ourselves in a fifteenth-century Aristotelian study group and gradually reconstruct the intellectual circle behind it.

APPENDIX

a. Passages with marginalia referring to biblical and rabbinical sources.

	Ms. Parma 1939 - Body text	English translation of the body text	Ms. Parma 1939 - Marginal Notes (with translation)
ff. 3v-4r I, iv (1095b 10-13)	<p>והנה גם אפלטון נסתפק בזה ושאל האם בחיים החקירה מן ההתחלות או אל ההתחלות כאשר היה הליכת הפרסאות [4א] מטאלוטיש³⁵ אל הגבול או אל ההפך ע"כ ראוי להתחיל מהיותר ידוע וזה יהיה בשני צדדין האחד ידוע אצלנו והשני ידוע במוחלט ועל כן ראוי לנו להתחיל מהידוע אצלנו על כן ראוי להביא ראיה מהמנהגים וחקים ומשפטים צדיקים ובכלל השומע חוקי המדינות די לו בהתחלות כאלה ואם יראה לו מספיק אין צריך מופת למה וזה אם יהיו לו מעצמו או יקבל היטב מאחר כל ההתחלות בנקל ומי שאין לו אחת מאלה ישמע דברי אשיאודוש אמר</p> <p>זה הוא משובח אשר מעצמו יבין דבר הנשמע למורה טוב הוא טוב ואשר מעצמו לא יבין ולא ישים אל לבו כאשר ישמע מאחר הנה זה האיש אשר לא יועיל</p>	<p>Plato too pondered over this and asked whether the investigation in life should proceed from the principles or toward the principles, like if the traversing of parasangs should take place from <i>Talutish</i> to the end point or vice versa. Therefore, one should start from what is better known, and this in two ways: one is what is known to us, and the second is what is known absolutely. Therefore, we should start from what is known to us and take example from righteous customs, laws, and convictions. In general, these principles are sufficient for whoever observes the laws of the cities, and if they seem convincing to him, he will not need a demonstration why [they are principles]. And this is either because he will possess them by himself or because he will easily and properly receive all the principles from another. The one who can do neither [i.e. neither knows or has the ability to learn the first principles] should observe the words of Hesiod. He said:</p> <p>‘Praiseworthy is the one who understands something by himself, good is the one who listens to the good teacher, and the one who neither understands by himself nor takes heed when he hears from another, this is the one who is useless.’</p>	<p>ולא שמעתי לקול מורי</p> <p>‘I did not pay heed to my teachers’ voice (Proverbs 5:13)’</p>

³⁵ Either the copyist or the translator here do not seem to understand the reference to the Greek word for ‘judges,’ transcribed in Latin as ‘athlotetis,’ and simply transcribed it into Hebrew. Referring to this word, a reader adds in the margin ‘שם מקום,’ meaning ‘name of a place,’ confirming that its real meaning was not understood. In his commentary, Joseph ibn Shem tov also writes that it is a name of a place.

<p>f. 5r</p> <p>I, vi (1096a 11-15)</p>	<p>אולי טוב הוא לחקור מהו הדבר הכולל ולשאול היאך יאמר ואם הוא שלא כראוי לחלוק על שאלה הזאת הנעשת מאנשים נאהבים והיא שימת צורות נפרדות יראה בבירור כי אולי טוב הוא וראוי לקיום האמת לסתור דעת האוהבים הקרובים זה ראוי לכל אדם ויותר לפילוסופים הנצבים לחזק האמת ומשני אוהבים נצבים בטבע דבר קדוש הוא להקדים כבוד האמת</p>	<p>Perhaps it is good to investigate what is the universal thing and ask how it is said, and whether it is inappropriate to disagree on this question as dealt with by people beloved to us who posited separate forms. It seems apparent that perhaps it is good and appropriate to refute the opinion of close loved ones in order to establish the truth. This is appropriate for all men and all the more so for philosophers, who stand to strengthen the truth. Between the two naturally loved things in front of us, it is a sacred thing to prioritize the honour for truth.</p>	<p>ע"ד אמרם ומורא רבך כמורא שמים איש אמו ואביו תיראו. אבל כבר אמרו במקום שיש חלול השם אין חולקים כבוד לרב לכן ראוי לשמור האמת.</p> <p>In the manner of their saying: 'And the reverence for your teacher is as the reverence of heaven (Pirkei Avot 4:12); you shall revere your mother and your father (Leviticus 19:3). However, it has already been said that 'Whenever the name of the Holy One is profaned, the honor of the scholar is not considered (Midrash Tanchuma, Mishpatim 6:10). Therefore, one should safeguard the truth</p> <p>ונשיא בעמך לא תאור בעושה מעשה עמך</p> <p>'And you shall not curse a leader among your people and one who does the deeds of your people (Bava Batra 4a1-2, following Exodus 22:27)</p>
<p>f. 21v</p> <p>II, ii-iii (1104a 35-1104b 3)</p>	<p>וכן במעלות כי בהרחקת התאוה נעשה ישרים וכשאנו ישרים יותר נוכל להתרחק מהם וכן</p>	<p>[In many cases, the activity produces the quality, and, in turn, the quality produces the activity]</p> <p>The same holds for virtues, for by steering away from passions we become temperate, and when we are temperate we can better steer away</p>	<p>מצוה גוררת מצוה.</p> <p>'One commandment leads to another (Pirkei Avot 4:2)'</p>

	<p>גם באומץ כשנרגיל לכזות הדברים המבהילים והמפחדים וסבול אותם נהיה אמיץ' ובהיותנו כן יותר נוכל לסבול הבהלות והפחדים.</p> <p>ראוי לעשות אות לקנינים בבא הנאה או העצב בפעולות כי אמנם הפורש מתאוות גשמיות ועם זה שמח הוא ישר ואם יתעצב הוא עקש לב אצל ההנאות והעצבים תהיה מעלת המדות כי הסובל התלאות והוא שמח אמיץ והנעצב רך הלבב</p>	<p>from them. The same holds for courage; when we become accustomed to deriding things that are terrifying and scary, and endure them, we become brave. And being so, we can better endure terrors and fears.</p> <p>One should consider pleasure and sorrow which accompany actions as an indication of the possession [of virtue]. For the one who abstains from bodily passions and still happy is temperate, while if he is sad, he is intemperate. Virtue concerns pleasures and sorrows, for the one who encounters hardship is brave if he is happy, soft hearted if he is sad.</p>	<p>צרות לבבי הרחיבו. 'Troubles have widened my heart (Psalms 25:17)' ולא ירע לבבך. 'Thy heart shall not be grieved (Deut. 15:10)'</p>
<p>f. 172v X, viii (1179a 1- 19)</p>	<p>אמנם להיות האדם מאושר צריך אל הצלחה חיצונית כי לא יהיה מספיק בעצמו בטבע אל העיון אבל צריך שיהיה גופו בריא ושיהיה לו מזון ושיהיו לו שאר הדברים הצריכים לשרתו אמנם אין ראוי לחשוב כי להיות מאושר צריך לדברים רבים וגדולים לא יקרה שיהיה מאושר עם דברים טובים חיצוניי' כי בהעדפה לא יהיה לו לבדו מספיק מבלי משפט ומעשה אמנם הוא אפשרי כי אינם גדולים הארץ הם יעשו דברים טובים כי אמנם אשר הם אמצעיים בהון יוכלו לעשות כפי המעלה אמנם זה יראה מפורסם כי ההדיוטים יעשו דברים מעולים לא פחות מהמושלים אבל יותר אמנם יספיק שיהיו לו מהטובות החיצונות שיוכל לפעול כפי</p>	<p>In order to be happy, a person needs external success, since he is not naturally self-sufficient for contemplation. For he also needs his body to be healthy, and to have food and the rest of the things needed to support it. However, one should not think that in order to be happy one must have many and great possessions, for one will not be happy due to external goods, since superabundance, by itself, is insufficient, unless [accompanied by] judgment and act. Indeed, it is possible for those who are not the greats of the land to do good things, for those who have moderate wealth can act according to virtue [too]. This is apparent from the fact that laymen do not perform less excellent actions than those who rule, but more. It will suffice for a person to have enough of the external goods in order to act according to virtue, and his life will be happy.</p>	<p>ריש ועושר אל תתן לי 'Give me neither poverty nor riches (Proverbs 30:8).'</p>

	<p>המעלה, ויהיו חייו מאושרים.</p> <p>אמנם שלמה אולי יקרא מאושרים לאשר הם אמצעיים בעושר בדברים החיצוניים כי יחשוב כי אלה יעשו דברים נבחרים ויחיו על [173א] יושר כי יקרה כי אשר יהיו להם דברים אמצעיים יעשו הראוי ואמנם יראה כי גם אנקאשגוריש אומר כי אין לחשוב כי העשיר ולא המושל הוא מאושר ואין לתמוה אם זה יראה לרבים בלתי ראוי כי אלה אמנם ישפטו הדברים אשר מחוץ כי זה לבדו הם יודעים הנה יראה אשר יסכימו סברות החכמים עם הדברים הראויים וע"כ יראה שיהיה בהם קצת אמונה</p>	<p>Maybe Solomon[!] called 'happy' those who have a moderate amount of wealth in external goods because he thought that they will do the choiceworthy things and live correctly, for they will do the appropriate thing because they have moderate means. It seems that Anaxagoras too said that one should not think that the rich or the ruler is happy, and one should not be surprised if the majority thinks that this is inappropriate, since they judge according to external things, for this is what they know. Here the views of the wise ones agree with the appropriate things, and if this is the case, there seem to be some conviction in them.</p>	
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- b. Passages with marginalia on Aristotle's refutation of Plato's theory of ideas, Ms. Parma 1939, ff. 5v-6r:

Ms. Parma 1939 - Body text	English translation of the body text	Ms. Parma 1939 - Marginal Notes	English translation of the marginal notes
<p>בעלי זאת הסברא לא היו עושים צורות נבדלות יאמרו בהם הקודם והמאוחר ולכן לא העמידו למספרים צורות נבדלות אמנם טוב נאמר בדבר אשר הוא בעצם ובאיכות ומצטרף הדבר שהוא כפי עצמו עצם קודם בטבע למצטרף כי הוא דומה לדבר המתואר באחר ולמקרה העצם</p>	<p>Those who hold this opinion did not make separate forms about which 'prior' and 'posterior' are said. For this reason they did not postulate separate forms for numbers. Indeed, 'good' is said of something that is in substance, quality, and relation. The thing that is in itself is a substance that is prior by nature to relation, because it [i.e., relation] is</p>	<p>נא' לסתור סברת אפלטון לפי דבריו ואמר בעלי זאת הסברא לא שמו צורות נבדלות לדברים שיש בהם קודם ומתאחר ומפני זה לא שמו למספרים צורות נבדלות. ר"ל מפני שהא' קודם הב' והב' קודם הג' וכן כולם ד'</p>	<p>This is said to refute the opinion of Plato according to his own words. He said: "Those who hold this opinion did not postulate separate Forms for things that have a 'prior' and 'posterior,' and that is why they did not postulate separate Forms for numbers." Namely since one is prior to two, two is</p>

<p>ולכן לא תהיה באמת לאלה צורה נבדלת משותפת</p>	<p>similar to a thing of which something else is predicated, and to an accident of a substance. Therefore these do not truly have a shared separate form.</p>	<p>ירצה אמנם הטוב נאמר ג"כ בדברים שהם מתאחרים וקודמי' כי הוא נאמר על העצם ועל האיכות וגם כן במצטרף</p> <p>יר' והדבר שהוא כפי עצמו עצם שהוא האיכות כי המקרה ר"ל האיכות אין לשנציירהו לדבר אחר כמו שהוא המצטרף והאנה ושאר המאמרו' ולזה נקרא כפי עצמו עצם ר"ל כי כשציירהו אינו צריך נושא אחר וזהו הקודם בטבע למצטרף כי הוא דומה למתואר באחר כמו שנאמר הפך להפך ולזה אמ' דומה ולא אמר שהוא מתואר באחר באמתות כמו שהוא העצם בו</p> <p>יר' וג"כ קודם בטבע למקרה העצם ר"ל העצם קודם למקרה</p>	<p>prior to three, and they are all [prior to] four.</p> <p>He means that 'good', indeed, is also said of things that are prior and posterior, since it is said of substance, quality, and also relation.</p> <p>[By] 'the thing that is in itself is a substance' that is a quality, since [this] accident, i.e., quality, does not need something else for its conceptualization, as is the case in relation, place, and the other categories. This is why it is called substance in itself, meaning that when it is conceptualized, it does not need another subject. This is prior by nature to the relative, for the latter is similar to that which is predicated by another, like saying of an opposite that it an opposite [of something]. He did not say that it is <i>truly</i> predicated by another, which is the case with the substance.</p> <p>[By the words העצם ולמקרה] he means that the substance is also prior by nature to accident; namely that substance is prior to accident.</p>
<p>אמנם ישאל באמת שואל מה ירצו לומר טוב בעצמו כל אחד בצורה נבדלת אם באשר בעצמו אדם ובאדם הדבר הוא אחד באדם ובאשר הוא אדם אין חילוק</p>	<p>One may truly ask what they meant by saying 'good in itself' of each separate form, whether regarding that which is man in itself or a [particular] man. The manner is the same in man and in that which is man</p>	<p>יר' מה ירצו לומר טוב בעצמו כל אחד בצורה נבדלת. יר' מה ירצו לומר שכל א' מהטובות הוא טוב בעצמו בעבור צורה נבדלת ורצה להביא הקדמה טבעית ואמר אם באשר בעצמו</p>	<p>By "what they meant by saying 'good in itself' of each he means [to ask] what they meant by saying that each [individual] good is itself good on account of a separate form. He meant to bring a physical premise</p>

<p>ביניהם ואם כן הוא ולא באשר הוא טוב גם לא בעבור היותו נצחי יהיה יותר טוב כי לא יוסיף הויה אשר הוא מאריך זמן על אשר הוא דבר יום אחד</p>	<p>[i.e., man per se]—there is no difference between them. If this is the case, it [i.e., the good per se] will not be better insofar as it is good, and neither insofar as it is eternal. For that which lasts longer does not have more 'beingness' compared to that which lasts one day.</p>	<p>אדם ובאדם הדבר הוא אחד אין חלוק ביניהם. ירצה אם באשר בעצמו אדם שהוא הצורה נבדלת ובאדם שהוא האיש הדבר הוא א' ר"ל שעצמות ומהות זה הוא עצמות ומהות האחר.</p> <p>יר' וא"כ אין הבדל ג"כ כאשר הוא טוב שהוא הנבדל לזה הטוב. ואם הדבר הוא כן שעצמותם ומהותם אחד מה צורך לשום צורה נבדלת.</p>	<p>and said: 'the manner is the same in man and in that which is man [i.e., man per se]—there is no difference between them.' By 'that which is itself man' he means the separate form, and by 'man' he means the particular. By 'are one' he means that the substance and essence of the one is substance and essence of the other.</p> <p>He means that therefore, there is no difference, insofar as it is good, [between] that is separate to <i>this</i> [i.e., particular] good. And if indeed it is the case that they are the same in substance and essence, what need it there to postulate a separate form?</p>
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