

Text, Reception, and Translations of the *Magna Moralia* in the Greek, Latin, and Arabic Traditions

November 21–22, 2025

Neues Institutsgebäude (NIG), Hörsaal 3 D
Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Wien

Zoom link:

<https://univienne.zoom.us/j/65593817537?pwd=tI3LuC8DUivZAWjAr8t1Zm8aEMiEBh.1>

Programme

Friday 21.11.2025

• Introduction

09:00 – *Croissants*

09:30 – Welcome address by George KARAMANOLIS and Solmeng-Jonas HIRSCHI

• Session 1: Greek Tradition - Chair Bernardo BALLESTEROS PETRELLA

09:45 – Adrien LECERF: “Nature et forme des *Magna Moralia*”

10:45 – Tiziano DORANDI: “Momenti della trasmissione del testo del '*De virtute*' pseudo-aristotelico: la testimonianza della '*Antologia*' di Giovanni Stobeo”

11:45 – *break*

12:15 – Sophia XENOPHONTOS: “The reception of Aristotle’s ethical works in Byzantium, with special emphasis on the *Magna Moralia*”

Lunch at Michl’s (Reichsratsstraße 11, 1010 Wien)

• Session 2: Arabic Tradition – Chair Adrian C. PIRTEA

15:00 – Solmeng-Jonas HIRSCHI: “Arabische Spuren der *Magna Moralia*: Stematologisches und Überlieferungsgeschichtliches”

16:00 – Elvira WAKELNIG: “Ibn al-Ṭayyib and Aristotelian Ethics”

• **Keynote lecture** - Chair George KARAMANOLIS

18:30 – Oliver PRIMAVESI: “Zur Rezeption des *Corpus Aristotelicum* am Ende des 1. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.”

Dinner at Giorgina (Bankgasse 2, 1010 Wien)

Saturday 22.11.2025

• **Session 3: Latin Tradition** – Chair Lisa DEVRIESE

09:00 – George KARAMANOLIS: “Cicero on Aristotle’s Ethics”

10:00 – Valérie CORDONIER: “The three medieval redactions of *MM* 1206b30–07b19: a comparative study”

11:00 – *break*

11:30 – Nena BOBOVNIK: “From *cataplexis* to *stupor*: *Magna Moralia* between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance”

• **Conclusions** – Chair Solmeng-Jonas HIRSCHI

12:30 – Hugh M. JOHNSTONE: Remarks on editing the *Magna Moralia*

12:45 – *final discussion*

Lunch at the Café Français (Währinger Str. 6-8, 1090 Wien)

Abstracts

Nature et forme des *Magna Moralia*

Adrien LECERF – CNRS, Centre Léon Robin

Building on first results communicated sooner this year (please see www.youtube.com/watch?v=hduuylrPpu4), I intend to propose hypotheses on the nature of the *Magna Moralia*. First I will add further arguments confirming the idea that the *Magna Moralia* are of an "oral" nature, that is, that they contain a variety of elements best or even solely explained by oral speech, such as repetitions, arguments presented in the form of questions and answers, disjointed syntax etc. Those elements do not only differentiate the *Magna Moralia* from the other two *Ethics* but also from the vast majority of Greek texts which

are, as a general rule, the result of a conscious act of writing. I then hypothesise that the *Magna Moralia* are the transcript of a lesson given by a Peripatetic teacher, and try to go further into determining what that means for the text's history and meaning, as well as for its relationship with the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*.

Momenti della trasmissione del testo del ‘*De virtute*’ pseudo-aristotelico: la testimonianza della ‘*Antologia*’ di Giovanni Stobeo

Tiziano DORANDI – CNRS, Centre Jean Pépin

Il trattatello attribuito a Aristotele e intitolato comunemente *περὶ ἀρετῆς* ha goduto di una tradizione molto ampia. Esso è stato trasmesso non solo da settanta manoscritti greci, ma anche da una larga tradizione 'indiretta' sia in greco che in lingue orientali e in latino. La maggior parte di questo materiale non è stato ancora studiato e indagato. Fa eccezione la traduzione medievale latina di Roberto Grossatesta di una fase della tradizione 'indiretta' dell'opuscolo. Nel mio intervento, intendo studiare in particolare il contributo che può derivare alla constitutio textus del *περὶ ἀρετῆς* dalla nuova edizione della citazione completa che di essa fece Giovanni Stobeo nel terzo libro della sua *Antologia*.

The reception of Aristotle’s ethical works in Byzantium, with special emphasis on the *Magna Moralia*

Sophia XENOPHONTOS - Academy of Athens

This paper examines the reception of Aristotle’s ethical writings in Byzantium, with particular attention to the *Magna Moralia*. It begins with the well-established commentary tradition on the *Nicomachean Ethics* before shifting to the more marginal role of the *Magna Moralia*. A detailed survey of sources ranging from commentaries and scholia to pedagogical epitomes and letters reveals that the *Magna Moralia*, though seldom cited, was neither unknown nor dismissed. It appears in the ethical writings of Nikephoros Blemmydes, in Michael of Ephesus’ commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and in scholia that draw on its precise ethical distinctions. These instances show that the *Magna Moralia* served as both exegetical aid and didactic supplement to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, valued for its conceptual clarity on practical wisdom, friendship, and justice. The paper concludes by tracing the work’s late Byzantine and early humanist afterlives. Evidence from figures such as Francesco Filelfo and Constantine Laskaris attests that the *Magna Moralia* retained some presence in the work of humanist scholars who sought to promote the revival of Greek learning in Renaissance Italy.

Arabische Spuren der *Magna Moralia*: Stemmatologisches und Überlieferungsgeschichtliches

Solmeng-Jonas HIRSCHI – Universität Wien

Lange Zeit wurde angenommen, dass die frühe arabischsprachige Gelehrtenwelt keine starke, direkte Rezeption der aristotelischen Ethik erfahren habe. Dies trifft immer noch weitgehend zu, wenn man sich auf die kanonischen Werke in ihrer Buchform beschränkt. Wenn man jedoch die Kategorien von Authentizität und Standardform etwas lockert und Kompendien, doxographische Hypomnemata und Pseudepigrapha mit einbezieht, sieht die Lage viel dynamischer aus (vgl. z.B. die *Summa Alexandrinorum* oder die Hinzufügung eines apokryphen elften Buches zur *Nikomachischen Ethik*). In diesem Beitrag werde ich mich insbesondere auf die umstrittene Frage des griechischen Quellentextes für den zentralen Teil eines Kompendiums der aristotelischen Ethik konzentrieren, das zweimal ins Arabische übersetzt wurde – durch Theodor Abū Qurra (fl. spätes 8. bis frühes 9. Jh. n. Chr.) und noch einmal durch Ibn al-Ṭayyib (fl. frühes 10. Jh. n. Chr.) – und Exzerpte aus der *Magna Moralia* enthält. Ich werde deren stemmatologische Position, z. T. auf Grundlage meiner Kollation mit den unabhängigen Zeugen der *Magna Moralia* näher bestimmen. Bei der Bewertung der möglichen (Un)abhängigkeit der Exzerpte werde ich übrigens die Rolle von Stobaios und Arius Didymos näher untersuchen. Dadurch wird der vermittelte Zugang zu den ethischen Texten des Aristoteles (insb. in ihrer arabischen Rezeption) thematisiert.

Ibn al-Ṭayyib and Aristotelian Ethics

Elvira WAKELNIG – Universität Wien

Ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. 1043) was a commentator of Aristotle, Galen and the Bible living in Baghdad. He also translated the treatise *On Virtue* (*Fī l-Faḍīla*) based on the pseudo-Aristotelian writings *On Virtues and Vices* and *On Divisions* as well as on genuine material from Aristotle's ethics. As his translation is independent from the earlier Arabic translation of the same treatise by Theodor Abū Qurra (d. around 825), one wonders whether he did not know of or did not have access to it in 10th/11th-century Baghdad. If this were case, a possible incentive for his translation could have been the interest in ethics in the circle of the Baghdad Aristotelians to which he belonged. The founding figure of this circle, Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī (d. 974), and Miskawayh (d. 1030), a contemporary of Ibn al-Ṭayyib, both composed treatises entitled *Refinement of Character* (*Tahḍīb al-Aḥlāq*) which contain substantial amounts of Aristotelian material. In my contribution, I will present Ibn al-Ṭayyib's translation, its relation to Ibn al-Ṭayyib's oeuvre and the historico-philosophical context in which it was done.

Zur Rezeption des Corpus Aristotelicum am Ende des 1. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.

Oliver PRIMAVERSI – Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

Ein frühes Zeugnis dafür, wie sich die Rezeption des *Corpus Aristotelicum* in dessen handschriftlicher Überlieferung niedergeschlagen hat, bieten die auf Platon und die Pythagoreer bezogenen Eingriffe in den Text des Buches Großalpha der *Metaphysik*. Während die Mehrzahl dieser Interventionen nur vom Hyparchetypus α unserer Überlieferung in den Text aufgenommen wurde („ α -Supplements“), fand eine Umformulierung, die Alexander von Aphrodisias im Kommentar dem Eudoros von Alexandria (2. Hälfte 1. Jh. v. Chr.) zuschreibt, ihren Weg bereits in den Archetypus (ω_1). Eudoros verfolgt mit seiner Umformulierung den Zweck, das entscheidende Zeugnis des Aristoteles über Platons Prinzipienlehre vor einem systematisch folgenschweren Missverständnis zu schützen.

Cicero on Aristotle's Ethics

George KARAMANOLIS – Universität Wien

The aim of this paper is to show that in his works Cicero exhibits quite some knowledge of Aristotle's ethics but he never commits himself to it. More precisely, I argue that despite the fact that Cicero always refers to Aristotle and especially his ethics with approval and he systematically uses Aristotle's ethics dialectically for assessing the ethical views of Epicureans and Stoics, especially in *De finibus*, he never sides with Antiochus in approving of Aristotle's ethics. Cicero's non-committal attitude may be a reason for not citing or paraphrasing from philosophers he sympathizes with, like Aristotle, while he refers to and presumably knows specific ethical works of Aristotle, such as the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Cicero's scepticism, I argue, shapes not only his philosophical profile but also the handling of his sources. For Cicero Aristotle's ethics appears to be good guide in ethics but not the end of the inquiry, which he, as an academic sceptic, wants to pursue further, as he does in the *Tusculanae* and in *De officiis*.

The three medieval redactions of MM 1206b30–07b19: a comparative study

Valérie CORDONIER – CNRS, Laboratoire SPHERE

The early Latin tradition of *Magna Moralia* is formed of two versions: the complete translation by Bartholomew of Messina, and the partial translation by Wilhelm of Moerbeke which formed the first part of '*Liber de Bona Fortuna*' (LdBF), a compilation of *Magna Moralia* 1206b30–07b19 and *Eudemian Ethics* 1246b37–48b11. Although these versions began to circulate contemporarily, they show no signs of dependence, and were translated on the basis of different Greek models: while Bartholomew used ÖNB, phil. gr. 315, Moerbeke used a better quality manuscript (Cordonier 2014). The LdBF stands out by its wide distribution between scholastic

and humanist culture, but also by the fact that it has undergone the most “redactions”. There are three of these, the first two of which were listed in the *Aristoteles Latinus* catalogue, while the third was brought to light later (Cordonier 2010). In this paper, I first show how these three redactions are to be distinguished from other types of re-elaboration (such as Cronisbenus’ compendium), and then I compare them from the point of view of their origin, style and relationship to the Greek.

From *cataplexis* to *stupor*: *Magna Moralia* between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance

Nena BOBOVNIK – KU Leuven

The Aristotelian treatise *Magna Moralia* was a “Johnny come lately” in the reception history of the Aristotelian ethics. Although translated into Latin around 1260 by Bartholomew of Messina, it did not receive its first commentary until the sixteenth century. In this paper, I present my work on a critical edition of the medieval Latin translation, tracing its manuscript tradition and reception history. The translation survives today in fifty-seven manuscripts. While only a few are of superior quality, the majority belong to the university tradition in Paris, where the *Magna Moralia* circulated within the *pecia*-system. I will discuss the relevance of these witnesses for reconstructing Bartholomew’s original translation and highlight cases of direct reception in medieval authors such as James of Viterbo, Albertino Mussato, and John Buridan, as well as in Johannes Cronisbenus’ paraphrase of the Latin text. In the second part of the paper, I offer a panoramic view of the treatise’s reception in the Renaissance, with special attention to Giannozzo Manetti’s humanist translation and his engagement with Bartholomew’s medieval version.

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