

## Editorial *Money*

In *Imaging Aristotle: Verbal and Visual Representation in Fourteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), Claire Richter Sherman explores the integrated unity of text and illustration in Nicole Oresme’s (ca. 1320–1382) vernacular translations of Aristotle’s *Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Economics*. Dating from the 1370s, two sets of manuscripts, both from the library of King Charles V of France, contain, in her words, “the first known cycles of images to accompany the complete texts of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*”—an example of which appears on the cover of this issue (xxi). While scholars have long acknowledged the importance of Oresme’s translations as the first complete versions of Aristotle’s authoritative texts in a vernacular language, as Sherman points out, “the cycles of illustration of the king’s manuscripts have not received equal attention, particularly in relationship to the texts” (xxi).

Philosopher, mathematician, physicist, economist, and, in Pierre Duhem’s esteemed opinion, one of the principal founders of modern science, Nicole Oresme’s contribution to knowledge extends well beyond his translations of Aristotle. As the image on the cover suggests, Oresme is still remembered for his contribution to economics. His influential treatise *De moneta* (On the Debasement of the Coinage), the first medieval treatise on economics, was written under circumstances of extreme civil unrest, in which a financial crisis had been precipitated by the need to raise ransom money for the return of the French king John the Good, whose army had been defeated and captured by the English at the battle of Poitiers.

Employing arguments in *De moneta* (ca. 1355) that would eventually reverberate in the later Salamanca theologian Juan de Mariana's *Treatise on the Alteration of Money* (1609), Oresme states that coinage is not the property of the sovereign but belongs to the entire community (cf. *De moneta of Nicholas Oresme and English Mint Documents*, ed. and trans. Charles Johnson [London: Thomas Nelson, 1956], 11, 37–38). According to Oresme, regulation of minting and coining is not the prerogative of the monarch alone but of a gathering of the realm's inhabitants. Coinage, he insists, cannot be altered without the consent of the people's representatives. Sherman observes that Oresme borrows essential arguments from Aristotle's *Politics* in formulating his own position: "From the *Politics* come the distinction between tyranny and monarchy and the warning that power should not be unduly concentrated in any one segment of the community. Oresme's argument that the king's economic powers are subject to regulation by law and custom also derives from the *Politics*" (14).

The discovery of the New World, the influx of precious metals, and the opening of new markets in the Indies, led to an increasing flow of capital and to the growth of credit and speculative activity in sixteenth-century Spain, which, in turn, raised compelling issues for moral theologians such as Martín de Azpilcueta. *Markets & Morality* is pleased to present the first English-language translation of Azpilcueta's *Commentary on the Resolution of Money*, translation by Jeannine Emery, introduction by Rodrigo Muñoz. As Muñoz shows from the work of Marjorie Grice-Hutchinson, Azpilcueta contributed to the development of monetary theory in three significant ways: (1) in the formulation of a psychological theory of value that may be applied both to goods as well as to money; (2) in the formulation of a quantitative theory of money; and (3) in the formulation of a theory of foreign exchanges similar to the modern theory of the parity of buying power that is not usually acknowledged among sixteenth-century commentators.

Moreover, Azpilcueta challenged Aristotle's negative opinion on making a profit through the exchange of money without simultaneously endorsing the practice of usury. Employing the illustration of shoes as synecdoche for money, Azpilcueta responds to Aristotle's judgment that only two uses can be assigned to footwear: a natural one, as a protective shield for vulnerable feet, and an improper one as an object of exchange. "Although it is true that [money's] main and principal use and end for which it was created was as price and measure of saleable goods, its secondary and less principal use and end, which is that of making a profit with it by dealing money for money, is

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not to be price but merchandise, just as the principal use and end of shoes is to put them on and wear them, but the secondary one is to make a profit by dealing with them through buying and selling them” (CRM, par. 55).

In addition, Azpilcueta challenged the standard division of exchange into the exchanging of money and the exchanging of other natural goods. Even though it seems more conventional to think of exchanging one natural thing for another natural thing, as when one coin is exchanged for another coin, he relates, “exchanging can also be considered when one exchanges coins for coins as long as one is not given for the price of the other but in exchange of it. All things that can be sold can also be exchanged, and money can be sold as we will see later” (CRM, par. 9). It was this insight into the nature of money and the licitness of the exchanger’s occupation and remuneration that enabled Azpilcueta to discern the importance of “bills of exchange” (i.e., paper money) as alternative means of payment. Like Oresme before him and Mariana after him, scholars are finally beginning to recognize Martín de Azpilcueta’s contribution to the history of economics.

—Stephen J. Grabill, Ph.D.

*Erratum:* In a book review appearing in the previous issue (6:2), page 680, the reviewer states that John Cort died in 2003. In fact, Mr. Cort is alive and well. We apologize for the error and anticipate Mr. Cort’s ongoing scholarly contribution.