This paper is primarily technical in nature. It will argue that when one begins to examine a less investigated area of the field of Byzantine Philosophy, research in the primary sources must still precede every interpretative act and critical approach. Here, research in the primary sources means:

a. The gathering of texts. This is not always an easy task, although the publication in recent decades of new critical editions of texts by Byzantine philosophers has made it more feasible.\(^1\) Older editions of Byzantine philosophers, some of which have been reprinted, also remain useful, some unexpectedly so.\(^2\)

b. The study of texts in relation to their sources. Namely, the identification of sources—distinguishing between instances of mere borrowing and instances of a more critical incorporation of such sources into Byzantine texts—the identification of original elements, of direct or indirect influences, of tendencies in the use of source materials, etc. Here, the ever-expanding secondary bibliography needs to be consulted with caution, since some studies contain errors of interpretation which may be more or less obvious.\(^3\)

This paper will, therefore, necessarily consider both the external evidence and, as far as possible, the internal evidence regarding our texts. While its nature and methods remain to be justified, this paper will have served its purpose and satisfied its writer’s aims if it stimulates an interest among new scholars in conducting research and writing about this highly productive area of Greek philosophy, one that has

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\(^1\) Benakis (1991).

\(^2\) One such is the collection of texts by Nikephoros Blemmydes edited by Dorotheos Voulismas and published in Leipzig in 1784, where the treatise *On Virtue* can be found.

\(^3\) There is, for example, the case of the article by Giocarini (1964), where Eustratios seems to be a defender of the Platonic theory of ideas, when in fact the opposite is true, as is evident from the texts cited. It is also inexcusable for A. Lloyd to speak of nominalism in Eustratios in the article cited in note 10, when he himself concludes that Eustratios’ method may be defined as a form of conceptualism!
been somewhat neglected. I am certain that they will find such research richly rewarding, whether they engage in ‘technical’ research work or a more broadly conceived examination of the most significant problems of Byzantine philosophy.

As a starting point, one ‘external’ fact of particular importance to our topic is the large number of manuscripts containing the *Nicomachean Ethics* which have been preserved from the Byzantine period. There are approximately 120 manuscripts, to which one might add 45 manuscripts of the *Major Ethics* and 25 of the *Eudemian Ethics*. In order to put these numbers into perspective I cite the corresponding numbers of manuscripts of other key works by Aristotle. There are 160 manuscripts of the *Categories* from the Byzantine period, 140 of the *De interpretatione*, 120 for the *Prior Analytics*, 120 for the *Physics*, 60 for the *Metaphysics*, 60 for the *De caelo*, and 40 for the *Poetics*. I have discussed the *Politics* elsewhere. It is, therefore, essential to consider these numbers when considering the knowledge and interest of the Byzantines in the moral-political ideas of Aristotle.

Of even greater importance is an examination of the ‘internal’ elements that constitute this interest, so that one might then understand the relation between our Byzantine authors and the political thinking of the state philosophers of antiquity. The same point can apply to the *Ethics*, where the identification of elements of Aristotle’s ‘moral’ teaching in the works of Byzantine philosophers might be considered in relation to the presence of moral problems and issues within both academic teaching and within a Byzantine *Lebensphilosophie* that was firmly embedded in Christian dogma.

There are numerous Byzantine commentaries on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. Among the earliest of these was that of Michael of Ephesus (eleventh-twelfth century), who can be found in the circle of philosophers associated with Anna Komnene and who wrote commentaries on book V and on books IX and X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. A first edition (by contemporary criteria) of these commentaries appeared in

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5 See the testimony of Adamantius Korais, who, in his *Hellenic Library* published Aristotle’s *Politics* in 1821 as the first volume of the collection. This was followed in 1822 by his publication of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He wrote the following in his prologue, claiming that *Ethics* is a part of *Politics*: “both are one and the same science, of which *Ethics* can be considered the theoretical part, and *Politics* the practical.”

6 In *EN 5* and *In EN 9–10*. For Michael, see Browning (1962).