

Rashed, Marwan. *Alexandre d'Aphrodise, Commentaire perdu à la Physique d'Aristote (Livres IV-VIII): Les scholies byzantines. Édition, traduction et commentaire*. In *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina, Quellen und Studien Herausgegeben von Dieter Harlfinger, Christof Rapp, Marwan Rashed, Diether R. Reinsch*. Vol. 1. De Gruyter: Berlin, 2011.

After a brief preface (pp. V-VI), this volume is divided into several parts. The first provides a history of the text of Alexander presented here (pp. 1-29), followed by an introduction to Alexander's treatment and interpretation of Aristotle's *Physics* (pp. 33-165); the heart of this work is constituted by the text itself of Alexander with a translation and commentary as well as texts from Simplicius that bear witness to Alexander's commentary (pp. 171-644). An Index nominum et verborum (pp. 645-660) completes the volume.

As the title of the work indicates, Alexander's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* has been lost. What we do possess is a text of Aristotle's *Physics* (currently found in the National Library of France in Paris) that presents in the margins 826 "scholies". Some of these, either altered or not, are also found in a second Parisian manuscript. They are for the first time edited, translated, and placed into a systematic relation with the commentary of Simplicius, when it bears witness to them; brief comments on the texts are also added. Each entry is numbered, with the Greek appearing first, followed immediately below by its translation into French; the testimony of Simplicius, when available, follows below the translation and notes by Rashed follow below Simplicius. The resulting volume could not be better organized, more useful, or more compelling in its claim to represent the lost work of Alexander. It is an astonishing work of scholarship that will be of use to specialists on Aristotle, Alexander, Simplicius, and the broader spectrum of philosophical interests from late Hellenism, especially Stoicism and Epicureanism, through the Greek commentators.

In the Preface, Rashed explains that his work has three goals (p. V). The first he calls "archeological", to establish a critical edition of this lost work. A photograph (p. 5) gives the reader some notion of the work involved here. The second he calls "historical", to understand each of the notes in relation to the text of the *Physics* and in the dynamic of the commentary of Alexander. The third he calls "systematic", to restore in its unity and specificity the sense in which Alexander was a philosopher. Any one of these goals would make this work worthwhile. Together they form a volume that provides at once an important, indeed exciting, primary source for the first time and a powerful interpretation of that source.

The first section of the introductory material, entitled "History of the texts" (pp. 1-29) breaks into two parts, the two manuscripts with which Rashed works and a textual analysis of the "scholies" themselves, as from Alexander's lost

commentary, evidence about their dates, and the project of Simplicius' own commentary as it refers to and provides evidence for Alexander. Rashed not only provides overwhelming evidence that these notes are from Alexander, he also compares them to other commentators, primarily Philoponus and Simplicius, in ways that provide compelling interpretations of all the commentators cited. As a result, this introduction is of interest not only for what it proves about Alexander and this text but for the interpretation of his interlocutors and finally the entire school at Alexandria.

The second part of the introductory material, entitled "Doctrinal Introduction" (pp. 33-165) turns to the content of Alexander's commentary and his interpretation of Aristotle's *Physics*. A brief summary of what is argued at length here may be found in the Preface (pp. V-VI). For Alexander, the *Physics* develops two complementary lines of argument at once: (1) it explicates the general structure of the sensible and (2) it has a cosmological goal, namely as a whole it is designed to prove a first mover. Thus the *Physics* has both individual treatises with their own topics and as a whole presents a thesis, the necessity of a first mover, extended over all the books. Alexander finds a unity in the *Physics* that had never before been proposed, namely that the study of place and time in *Physics* IV leads to the demonstration of the first mover in *Physics* VIII. So for example, Rashed argues (p. 38) that for Alexander place plays a double role in the *Physics*, i.e., it is both a condition of movement (as defined in *Physics* III) and a condition of the realization of being (as the account of the elements in *Physics* VIII, 4 makes clear). In short, the historical introduction to Alexander's interpretation of Aristotle's *Physics* (pp. 33-165) makes the case for his initial claim (p. V) that Alexander is the "grand initiator" of an essentialist reading of Aristotle that diminished the role of matter to emphasize form as at the very heart of substantiality. Consequently, Rashed concludes, Alexander develops a "sophisticated neo-aristotelian" system using concepts that he finds latent in Aristotle (p. VI). It may perhaps be a minor quibble about an excellent, indeed impressive, volume, but the notion of a "neo-aristotelian" system may not be either clear or helpful. There turn out to be as many "neo-aristotelians" as there are readers of Aristotle, each presenting a different "neo-aristotelianism".

Alexander, according to Rashed, makes his case by threading his way between Epicurean atomism and Stoic holism (pp. V-VI; 33-165). He identifies ancient opponents of Aristotle, e.g., Zeno in his own opposition to the Pythagoreans (p. 38) and reads this history as an anticipation of the later quarrel between the Epicureans and Stoics (pp. 39-40). Thus the stage is set for seeing Alexander as opposed to these views and representing Aristotle as opposed to them as well (pp. 41ff.). Quite aside from what one makes of Alexander's reading of Aristotle, this introduction explicates what Alexander took to be the central tenants of these alternate views as well as suggesting how they continued to be read and remained influential as