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Mirjam E. Kotwick, *Alexander of Aphrodisias and the Text of Aristotle's 'Metaphysics'*.
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Kotwick's dense, highly technical book—the revised version of her doctoral dissertation—is an exhaustive philological investigation into all preserved parts of Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on the *Metaphysics* as a witness to the transmission and textual history of this work of Aristotle's in antiquity.¹

Since the book has numerous subdivisions and each step of the investigation relies upon extensive and detailed philological discussion that does not allow summarized simplifications, this review will provide only a description of its contents and results. I urge the reader to access the free online version of the book in order to follow Kotwick's demonstrations.

After the introductory chapters on the textual history of the *Metaphysics* and of Alexander's commentary and the scope and methodology of the investigation (pp. 1-32), three long and complex chapters delineate the importance of Alexander's commentary for the understanding of the transmission of the *Metaphysics* text. In the third chapter (pp. 33-98), studying the evidence in the lemmata, quotations, paraphrases and critical discussion, Kotwick shows how Alexander's text can give access to a much older and more authentic version of the *Metaphysics* than the version accepted by the direct transmission. Determining that the text used by Alexander and the ancestor of the direct transmission are two independent witnesses to the *Metaphysics* is a decisive step leading to this conclusion. Before turning to the analysis of the errors that separate

Alexander's text and the ancestor of α and β in the next chapter, Kotwick studies Alexander's reports of variant readings. Among the variant readings known to Alexander are *corrupt* readings that are the same as readings found in the ancestor of α and β . The author's conclusion is that Alexander knew of a few readings that differ from his own text and that stem from other versions of the *Metaphysics*. However, it is important to stress, Alexander knows about these variant readings from earlier scholars and commentators such as Aspasius or from notes in the margins or between the lines of the text he uses. On the basis of this, Kotwick proves that Alexander's access to the ancestor of α and β was limited and confined to occasional variant readings (pp. 70-89).

The relation between the text used by Alexander and the ancestor of α and β is developed in the fourth chapter (pp. 99- 178). Examining the peculiar errors that these different versions of the *Metaphysics* share or do not share, Kotwick is able to display the independence of Alexander's text. She first examines separative errors present in the ancestor of α and β that are not shared by Alexander's text to confirm that the latter is not a copy of the first (pp. 99-124). Next, she analyzes separative errors present in Alexander's text of the *Metaphysics* that are not shared by the ancestor α and β , and so she is able to assert that the latter is not a descendent of the first (pp. 124-138). Further, in the fourth chapter, Kotwick establishes that Alexander's text is a criterion for priority in the cases in which the readings of α and β diverge from one another. She first studies examples of separative errors present in α that β and Alexander's text do not share (pp. 140-157), and, then, examples of separative errors in β that α and Alexander's text do not share (pp. 157-167). The reason for this is that the agreement of Alexander's text with one of the two readings of α or β is a crucial criterion for identifying the older reading that has been given in the ancestor of α and β . Kotwick thus finds out which of the two divergent readings of α and β is confirmed by the evidence in Alexander's commentary to be the reading of the ancestor of α and β , and then shows that this is the preferable and most likely correct reading.

While the previous chapter studied the relation between the *text* of the *Metaphysics* used by Alexander (which can be reconstructed through his quotations, paraphrases and comments) and the transmission of this work of Aristotle's, the fifth chapter investigates the relationship between Alexander's *commentary* and the text of the direct transmission (pp. 178-278). First, and admirably, Kotwick demonstrates that Alexander's commentary influenced the ancestor of α and β such that his reformulations or suggested corrections were incorporated into it at a point before its split into the traditions α and β (pp. 178-206). The great success of Alexander's commentary (written around 200 AD) as the principal commentary on Aristotle's work can explain the influence it had on the transmission of the *Metaphysics* text during the subsequent centuries. Such influence—which Kotwick rightly claims to be the first to trace (p. 280)—allows

her not only to rule out Werner Jaeger's assumption that Alexander already had at his disposal both versions α and β , but also to give a more precise dating of the ancestor of α and β : it must have emerged between 250 AD (the time when the importance of Alexander's commentary could first have been established) and 400 AD.

In the following pages, Kotwick turns to the influence of Alexander's commentary on traditions α and β separately. Regarding tradition β (pp. 207-241), her study allows a more comprehensible view of how the commentary shaped parts of the β -version. Oliver Primavesi (Kotwick's supervisor) has shown that words and phrases from Alexander's commentary were incorporated into the first book of the *Metaphysics* in the β -version. His study of the character of this influence led him to conclude that the inclusion of these words and phrases was the result of deliberate editorial revision of the *Metaphysics* text. Kotwick's study, in its turn, shows that such influence can be detected in several passages throughout books A- Δ . The influence Alexander had on the text of β can be connected with the revision process that this version likely underwent before 400 AD (as argued by Frede/Patzig and by Primavesi). Kotwick's study of the tradition α (pp. 241-259) also confirms that Alexander's commentary had influence even on the α -text, although the traces of contamination found in the α -text are less numerous than those found in the β -text. There are two types of contamination in this case: either Alexander's reformulations of an Aristotelian sentence were incorporated into the α -text, or his remarks about possible improvements to the *Metaphysics* text resulted in a change of the α -reading. According to the evidence found by Kotwick, the contamination of α is mainly confined to book A of the *Metaphysics*, with the exception of the contamination that occurs in Δ 10.

In addition to the short, but extremely useful, sixth chapter (pp. 279-281), in which Kotwick summarizes the results of her investigation, the book offers four appendices: i) a diagram of the ancient Greek tradition of the *Metaphysics*; ii) a list of the 296 lemmata in Alexander's commentary and the relation of each one of them to the direct transmission of the *Metaphysics* (i.e. α , β , and their common ancestor); iii) a list of 579 quotations from the *Metaphysics* text that Alexander provides in his commentary and the relation of each one of them to the direct transmission; and iv) a list of a selection of 341 paraphrases in Alexander's commentary, restricted to the passages where the readings of α and β differ substantially.

Kotwick's book is richly documented, extremely well-organized, and methodologically very solid. Without reserve, it may be said to be brilliant, a landmark for future editions and textual studies of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and Alexander's commentary. This book is indispensable for Aristotelian and Alexandrian scholars, but it will also be a source of great delight for anyone interested in philosophical philology.

Notes:

1. Some information is needed in order to assure that the rest of this review is intelligible:

1) Besides the commentary on *Met. A-Δ*, Arabic fragments of the commentary on book Λ were preserved by Averroes. The commentary on books E-N has been transmitted under Alexander's name, but he is not its author.

2) The archetype of the *Metaphysics*, containing the 14 books we now have, dates from the first century BC. The copies from it that we know of are the version Alexander used when writing his commentary *circa* 200 AD and a version from before the end of the fourth century AD. The latter version became the ancestor of the two independent families of manuscripts of the direct transmission of the *Metaphysics*, which begins in the ninth century AD.

3) Kotwick employs the sigla α and β for the hyparchetypes of these families, and I will follow her here. Manuscripts of α mentioned in the book are: Parisinus gr. 1853; Vindobonensis phil. gr. 100; Vaticanus gr. 255; Parisinus Coisl. 161. And manuscripts of β are: Parisinus Suppl. 687; Laurentianus plut. 87,12; Ambrosianus F 113 sup.; Vaticanus gr. 115; Taurinensis B VII 23; Vindobonensis phil. gr. 189.



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