lesenswerte Werk soll als ein willkommener, über lange Strecken origineller Beitrag zum Verständnis der aristophanischen Komödie begrüßt, und (mindestens) als ein religionsgeschichtlicher Kommentar zu den 'Fröschen' benutzt werden.

Der mit zahlreichen Abbildungen versehene Band, der durch einen kurzen Anhang zum Thema 'Ritual Disguise in the Greek World', ein allgemeines Register und ein auf die 'Frösche' beschränktes Stellenregister ergänzt wird, ist sorgfältig produziert und der Rez. konnte wenige corrigenda entdecken (S. 36, richtig: xiphe; S. 265, richtig: Renate; was ist S. 53 unter «Lenaean theatre of Athens» gemeint?).

Nikosia

Antonis Tsakmakis


This work consists of three 'études' and nine related appendices. Of the former, the first is devoted to the relationship between the commentaries on Aristotle's Met. by Ps.Alex. and by Syrianus. The second, to Alexander of Aphrodisias as a source of Syrianus. The third, to Alexander and Syrianus as sources of Asclepius. There follow three pages of 'conclusions', nine appendices, and four indices. Luna (= L.) reaches these main conclusions: that the commentary of Ps.Alex. on books E–N of the Met. depends on Syrianus' on books M–N and that the former was written by Michael Ephesius between 1118 and 1138. That whereas Michael knew only Alexander's commentary on A–Δ, Syrianus (V century) had access to Alexander's complete commentary on all the fourteen books of the Met. That Michael was not a forger despite his referring in the first person to Alexander's commentary on A–Δ. A study such as L.'s requires expertise in Aristotle's works, extant and fragmentary, especially in the Met., probably the most difficult work of ancient philosophy. It demands first-hand knowledge of Plato and the early Academy, of Alexander, and of the tradition of Greek philosophy from the Presocratics to the late Neoplatonists. Unfortunately, L., who worked in Paris first with I. Hadot and later with A. Segonds, is not such an expert. This is an important topic, so complex that scholars with expertise in their own field

1 The Greek commentaries on Aristotle are cited from the 'Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca' (=CAG). Those on the 'Metaphysics' (Met.) are referred to by commentator's name alone: Alexander, on A–Δ (=CAG I, 1–439); Ps. Alex., on E–N (=CAG I, 440–837); Syrianus, on B–Γ and M–N (=CAG VI. 1); Asclepius, on A–Z (=CAG VI. 2). (Unless otherwise stated all dates are A. D.)

2 Asclepius' commentary is based on the lectures of his teacher Ammonius (Δμωνίος ἀριστοτελεύς), who used Alexander's commentary on A–Δ. So did also Asclepius himself: in fact he incompetently contaminated Ammonius with Alexander. Cf. my 'Asclepius of Tralles. Commentary to Nicomachus' Introduction to Arithmetic' (Philadelphia 1969), 8 with notes 31–33.

of research still cite Ps.Alex.’s commentary as if it were by Alexander himself, and that even specialists on Alexander have not yet assimilated J. Freudenthal’s fundamental 1884 paper. He correctly argued against Bonitz that Ps.Alex. had no access to Alexander’s commentary on E–N. This he concluded on two grounds: (i) A comparison of Averroes’ citations of Alexander’s commentary on Λ and of Ps.Alex.’s on the same book makes it clear that the latter could not have known, directly or indirectly, Alexander’s work. (ii) In the case of the commentary on M–N, Ps.Alex.’s many and serious mistakes in interpreting the doctrines of Plato’s students cannot go back to Alexander, who could not have been so utterly ignorant of this aspect of Platonism. Unfortunately, Freudenthal did not carefully investigate Syrianus’ commentary on M–N from this viewpoint, but as-


2 Thus P. Moraux, Alexandre d’Aphrodise. Exégète de la Noétique d’Aristote (Liège–Paris 1942), 14–19 asserts that the commentary on E–N was probably written by Michael and rejects the evidence adduced by Freudenthal that Averroes had access to Alexander’s commentary on Λ. For his part, R. W. Sharples in a survey article on Alexander (‘Alexander of Aphrodisias: Scholasticism and Innovation’, ANRW, Teil II, 36. 2 [Berlin–New York 1987], 1176–1243, esp. 1182), like Moraux, writes as if Zahlfleisch’s article (on which cf. n. 4 infra) constituted a serious challenge to Freudenthal’s thesis.


4 Moraux’s and Sharples’ reliance (cf. n. 2 supra) on J. Zahlfleisch’s attempt to weaken, let alone refute, Freudenthal’s thesis in APh 13, 1900, 85–89 is regrettable, since that paper is nothing but special pleading, cf. L. Tarán, ‘Syrianus and Pseudo-Alexander’s Commentary on Metaph. E–N’, in: ‘Aristoteles Werk und Wirkung I’, J. Wiesner, ed. (Berlin–New York 1987) = Collected Papers (Leiden–Boston–Köln 2001), 525–543 (= Tarán), 220, n. 19 = Coll. Pap., 530, n. 19. Moreover, Zahlfleisch’s contentions that both Averroes and Ps.Alex. used Alexander’s commentary on Λ and that the differences between the Alexander of Averroes and our Ps.Alex. are to be explained by the fact that Averroes’ Alexander came to him through an Arabic translation (perhaps itself a translation of the Syriac) is pointless, since Averroes has preserved typical Alexandrian interpretations and important readings of the text of the Met. that are not in Ps.Alex. Zahlfleisch’s thesis would require exactly the opposite, the inferiority of Averroes’ Alexander vis-à-vis Ps. Alex. In any case, the latter’s mistakes throughout the commentary on E–N are themselves decisive evidence that he did not have direct or indirect access to Alexander’s work on E–N. Zahlfleisch’s confusion is due to the fact that Alexander on Λ and Ps.Alex. on Λ deal with the same text, Aristotle’s Met. A. Moraux’s contention (cf. n. 2 supra) that Averroes could not have had access to the original of Alexander which much earlier commentators did no longer possess, is simply a display of a chauvinistic attitude that one should like to see disappear once and for all from humanistic studies. Averroes says that he had access to two thirds of Alexander’s commentary on Λ and to Themistius’ paraphrase on this book, and that with these two exceptions he had access to no Greek commentary on any book of the Met. In view of this statement and of the evidence of Averroes’ whole commentary, it is irresponsible for L. to assert (Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques. Supplément [Paris 2003], 230) that Alexander’s whole commentary on the Met. was translated into Arabic from the Syriac and used by Averroes. Freudenthal has shown that Alexander’s commentary on Λ was available not only to Averroes but also to Alfarabi and to Maimonides (cf. Freudenthal, 40, 52). For English and French translations of Averroes’ commentary on Λ, cf. Tarán, 218, n. 14 = Coll. Pap., 528, n. 14. It should be said that Freudenthal’s collection of fragments of Alexander on Λ does not cover all that can be gleaned from Averroes.
sumed that Ps.Alex. depends on him, which is not the case. He also concluded that the latter was a forger. He rejected the ascription of this commentary on E–N to Michael in some manuscripts, scholia, and authors of the XIII–XIV centuries. Years later, however, K. Praechter1 argued that on syntactical and stylistic grounds the commentary on E–N must be considered the work of Michael, who was not a forger. L. is in fundamental agreement with Praechter and also accepts Freudenthal’s thesis about the relation of the commentary on M–N to Syrianus’. Her book is in great part a reaction against an article by this reviewer2 where it was argued that Ps.Alex. was a forger and that Syrianus on M–N is dependent on the former and not vice versa. L. frequently distorts my arguments. Space considerations, however, required that I shorten this review to half its original length. Thus, I am able to discuss only some of the relevant issues and to point out only samples of L.’s many blunders.

Ps.Alex.’s and Syrianus’ commentaries on M–N are linked by a great number of passages that are verbatim identical or nearly so. In addition, there are passages parallel in content. There are three possibilities: (i) both authors depend on a common source; (ii) Syrianus depends on Ps.Alex; (iii) Ps.Alex. depends on Syrianus. The first possibility must be excluded, since it is extremely improbable that the two authors happened to hit on the same passages independently of one another.3 L., as other scholars, has argued for (iii), neglecting the fact that specialists on Aristotle’s Met. like Bonitz, Ross, and Cherniss have chosen (ii). Yet the question of whether or not Syrianus had access to Alexander’s commentary on M–N can be settled independently of the relation between Syrianus and Ps.Alex. In my case, L. neglects most of the evidence I gave.4

Some remarks on Met. M–N are in order. These books are totally different from the other twelve, being wholly devoted to a sharp criticism of Platonistic doctrines of mathematics, ideas, and principles. In them Aristotle criticizes not merely Plato but also Speusippus, Xenocrates, and several other anonymous Academic doctrines. In my paper I called attention to Met. Z. 2, 1028 B 19–27, where Aristotle deals with the doctrines of Plato, Speusippus, and Xenocrates, explicitly mentioning the first two by name. He asserts that Plato, in addition to the sensibles, posits two kinds of non-sensible substance, the

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1 In his review of CAG XXII. 2 published in GGA 168, 1906, Nr. 11.
2 Cf. Tarán in p. 197 n. 4 supra.
3 Therefore it is rather astonishing to find that P. Moraux, in his posthumously published ‘Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen...’ Dritter Band: ‘Alexander von Aphrodisias’ (Berlin 2001), 423–424 with nn. 4 and 5, holds precisely this most unlikely thesis. Even in his 1942 publication (cf. p. 197 n. 2 supra) Moraux sympathized with Bonitz’s thesis. Correctly seeing the great unlikelihood that Ps.Alex. could depend on the antiaristotelian polemic of Syrianus without ever incorporating any such points to his own exposition, but persuaded, on the other hand, by Praechter’s linguistic arguments for ascribing the commentary on E–N to Michael, he has no choice but to hold that the parallel passages in Syrianus and in Ps.Alex. go back ultimately to Alexander. Bonitz thought that Ps.Alex. had had direct or indirect access to Alexander himself, that Syrianus on M–N depends on Ps.Alex., and that perhaps eventually Michael gave final form to Ps.Alex. on E–N. Ross, if we take into account what he says in I, chx, n. 2 of his commentary on Met. and his procedure in commenting on E–N, seems to have sided with Bonitz.
4 Cf. Tarán, 223 and n. 32 = Coll. Pap., 535 and n. 32. I there referred to Cherniss, Aristotle’s Crit. of Plato and the Academy (Baltimore 1944) = Aristotle on Plato, n. 77 (on 120–121) and to Tarán, Speusippus (Leiden 1981), 302–303; 304, n. 9; 306, n. 92; 308 with n. 93; 311, n. 104; 312, n. 105; 315, n. 115; 327, n. 134; 329, n. 135; 337, n. 140; 343; 347.
ideas and the mathematicals. Speusippus, beginning from the One, postulates more substances than Plato, and different principles for each kind of substance: one for numbers, another for magnitudes, and still another for soul, and in this way he multiplies the substances. Some (i.e. Xenocrates) identify the ideas and the numbers and say that the other substances come after them: lines, planes, etc. until we reach the celestial substance and the sensibles. Despite the information provided in this passage, whenever Aristotle alludes to these doctrines (except Plato’s) in M and N, both Syrianus and Ps.Alex. misinterpret his allusions and offer inconsistent and contradictory accounts (cf. (I) infra). Since in some cases Syrianus makes such mistakes referring to ‘Alexander’ as his source, clearly he used a commentary ascribed to ‘Alexander’ but which cannot have been Alexander’s genuine commentary: Alexander cannot have made such egregious mistakes and disregarded Aristotle’s explicit testimony in 1028 B 19–27. In two instances I explicitly discussed in my paper, L. admits that Syrianus is wrong. Her explanation is that he misunderstood Alexander – not a valid explanation. In his commentary on B–F Syrianus sometimes did misunderstand Alexander, yet it is absurd to suppose that he had Alexander’s commentary on M–N and misunderstood him, since there he has misunderstood throughout the Platonistic doctrines mentioned above. In short, the significant references in Syrianus M–N to ‘Alexander’, which are three and not two, must refer to Ps.Alex. Cf. (I) – (III) infra.

Two are the main reasons why so many critics have thought that it is Ps.Alex. who depends on Syrianus: (i) Ps.Alex.’s commentary on E–N is of little value for the interpretation of those books of Met. (ii) ‘The great’ Syrianus (as he was later called) could not have taken the commentary on E–N for the work of Alexander.

As to (i), the best commentators on Met. (Bonitz and Ross) have understood the value of this commentary, not on historical matters but for the literal interpretation of E–N. (Examples of this infra.) Its value from this viewpoint precludes the ascription to Michael, a mediocre compiler. As for (ii), we must distinguish the importance of Syrianus as a Neoplatonic philosopher from his uncritical attitude towards historical matters. So, for instance, he takes it for granted that the ‘Rhapsodic Theogony’ is the work of Orpheus himself (Met. 10, 43; 30; 182, 9–28) and that he is in possession of a writing by Pythagoras (10, 5; 132, 2; etc.). In 104, 33–105, 18 Syrianus contradicts the best evidence we have, including the explicit testimony of Aristotle, that it was Plato and not Socrates who first separated (or hypostatized) the universals. Against Aristotle, Syrianus contends that Socrates did so before. His evidence for Socrates is the Platonic Socrates of the ‘Phaedo’, the ‘Phaedrus’, and the tenth book of the ‘Republic’, and the assumption that Plato would not have deviated from his teacher! He asserts that Socrates was not the first to hold this theory (i.e. the theory of ideas) but that it came νοεθεν ὁπό την θουαγγέλων καὶ τῶν ἄρχειν ἐν τοῖς ἑλεατικοῖς ἀνθρωπολογοῖ, the proof being Timaeus in the ‘Timaeus’, Parmenides in the ‘Parmenides’, and the ‘Eleatic Stranger’ (in ‘Sophist’ and ‘Politics’). In 142, 10–34 he ascribes to Pythagoras himself, Philolaus, and all the Pythagoreans the distinction between separate and immanent numbers (cf. also 111, 28–36).

I review now the passages where Syrianus refers to ‘Alexander’ in his commentary on M–N. I discuss first those passages which prove that he in all probability was using the extant commentary of Ps.Alex., even in one case where ‘Alexander’ is not mentioned.

(I) In M. 6, 1086 B 14–16 Aristotle refers to Speusippus’ view that mathematical number is the only number that exists separate from the sensibles. Ps.Alex. (745, 31–34) ascribes this view to Xenocrates and his followers; Syrianus (122, 18–23) approves this ascription as coming from ‘Alexander’. He adds his usual (and mistaken) correction that the Xenocratesians did not really think that mathematical number alone is separate from the sensibles but that by means of mathematical terminology they referred also to higher numbers. To the contrary, n.b. Ps.Alex.’s correct to τοῦ ἑιδοματικοῦ (sc. ὑποδιδομένου) χαρακτηρίσεως. To answer the objection that the ‘Alexander’ here referred to cannot be the genuine Alexander, L. typically says that he must have been but that Syrianus made a mistake. Even apart from the absurd consequence mentioned above, she disregards the following facts: In reference to M. 9, 1086 A 2–5 (Speusippus’ belief in mathematical number only) Ps.Alex. (782, 31–36) ascribes it to both Xenocrates and Speusippus; when Aristotle (1086 A 5–11) refers to those who identify the ideas with mathematical numbers (the view of Xenocrates), he mentions τὸν πεπλάτωνον. Syrianus (159, 7–15), beyond these mistaken ascriptions, makes additional mistakes. He mentions no names but thinks that both views were held by Platonists. He states that οἱ μὲν (1086 A 2–5 = Speusippus), although they used mathematical terminology for it, τὸν ἑιδοματικὸν ἑυβοῦν ὀρθῶν, while οἱ δὲ (1086 A 5–11 = Xenocrates) ταῦτα πρὸς ἑνὸς ἐπιστήμης πεπλάτωνος, and adds that, while they used the same names for different things (i.e. for ideal and for mathematical numbers), nevertheless ἐπιστήμων ἑνὸς ἐπιστήμης διδόμενον. (Contrast with Ps.Alex.’s correct view that οἱ μὲν denied the separate existence of ideas and of ideal numbers.) In addition, when commenting on M. 8, 1083 A 20–B 3, Ps.Alex. (766, 4–24) ascribes to ‘some Pythagoreans’ the belief in mathematical number only, and to Speusippus and Xenocrates the identification of ideal and mathematical numbers. Syrianus (141, 23–31) gives the same account but adds his explanation that these (Speusippus and Xenocrates) used the same names but knew the distinction between the two kinds of numbers. As Cherniss’ points out, Syrianus fails to notice that this explanation should then on 119, 7–15 be assigned to οἱ μὲν (1086 A 2–5 = Speusippus), whereas he gives it to οἱ δὲ (1086 5–11 = Xenocrates). Syrianus therefore agrees with Ps.Alex. in ascribing to Speusippus and Xenocrates mistaken and contradictory theories. It is significant that Syrianus makes additional mistakes, not found in Ps.Alex., and in one instance (on 1086 B 14–16 = Speusippus) he refers the mistaken interpretation to ‘Alexander’. To these three passages added by Cherniss I add a fourth: also in M. 1, 1076 A 16–22 Aristotle refers to the views of Plato (1076 A 19–20, Xenocrates (1076 A 20–21), and Speusippus (1076 A 21–22). Ps.Alex. (723, 30–724, 4) refers first to the Pythagoreans and Plato in general and then considers the three differing views of Plato, Xenocrates, and Speusippus as three different Pythagorean views. Syrianus (81, 15ff) says nothing explicit about these three Platonic views but confines the Pythagoreans with Plato, ascribing to them Neoplatonic doctrines. There are also mistakes of the same nature in the commentaries on N. On Met. 1090 A 23–26, which refers to Speusippus (cf. Tarán, Speusippus, 316–320), Syrianus 177, 25–26 denies that anyone ever asserted this doctrine of the separate existence of mathematical number only. This mistake is not in Ps.Alex. Similarly, Aristotle mentions and attacks a Platonic doctrine asserting that the ideas exist separately while the mathematical are immanent in the sensibles (Met. 998 A 7–19; 1076 A 33–34 and A 38–B 11) and distinguishes this doctrine from the standard Pythagorean view (cf. 1080 A 37–B 3; Tarán, Speusippus, 308). According to Syrianus (177, 20–23) neither the Pythagoreans nor any Platonist held this doctrine. Another mistake that is not in Ps.Alex. These additional mistakes on the part of Syrianus and their absence from Ps.Alex. show that the latter cannot depend on the former, even apart from the fact that nothing in Ps.Alex. corresponds to Syrianus’ violent anti-Aristotelian polemics in his commentary on M–N.

(II) In N. 1, 1087 B 9–12 Aristotle criticizes Plato’s material principle: καὶ γὰρ ὁ τὸ ἄνυσιν καὶ ἐν λέγῳ τα στοιχεῖα, τὸ δ’ ἄνυσιν ἐκ μεγάλων καὶ μικρῶν διότι, οὔ ἐν ὄντα τὸ ἄνυσιν καὶ τὸ μέγα· καὶ τὸ μικρὸν λέγει καὶ οὐ διαφέρει ὁ πό λύγον ἄνυσιμα δ’ οὐ. Aris-

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1 Aristotle on Plato, n. 77 (on 120–121).
Aristotle’s objection is contained in the underlined words: Plato treated the dyad of the Great and the Small (= the Unequal) as a unit but failed to draw the distinction that it is one in definition but not in number (they are not one entity). The underlined words are the reading of the manuscripts of the Met. Now Ps. Alex.’s and Syrianus’ comments show that they had the reading οὕτω διορίζει ὅτι ἀριθμὸν λόγον δ’ οὗ. According to Ps. Alex. (797, 12–17) the point of Aristotle’s criticism is that Plato οὕτω διορίζει ὅτι τὸ μὲν ἀριθμὸν καὶ τὸ ὑποσειμένον ἐν εἰς, τὸ δὲ λόγον πολλά, ἐδεί δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ λέγοντα διορίζειν πῶς ἐν καὶ πῶς σὺν ἑν. Syrianus (166, 26–28) writes ἐδεί γὰρ, ἡ μὲν τὸν Πλάτωνα λέγειν ὅτι τεσσάρα λόγον μὲν δύο ἀριθμοὶ δ’ ἐν, ὦποτὸ γὰρ ἰδίων ἐξηγηθή γὰρ ὡς ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος ὑπέλαβεν αὐτῶν λέγειν. Freudenthal, taking for granted that Syrianus is here referring to Alexander’s commentary on 1087 B 12, draws these inferences: (i) Syrianus disagrees with Alexander, who must have had the same reading as the manuscripts of the Met.; (ii) Ps. Alex., seeing the Alexander reference, copies the passage from Syrianus without realizing that he is siding with Syrianus against the genuine Alexander. Against my objections L. simply restates Freudenthal’s interpretation. However, though Alexander must have had the same reading as the manuscripts of the Met.: οὕτω διορίζει ὅτι λόγον ἀριθμὸν δ’ οὗ, this reading cannot be inferred, pace Freudenthal, from what Syrianus says against ‘Alexander’. Alexander must have had the same text as our manuscripts because the reading of Ps. Alex. and of Syrianus (οὕτω διορίζει ὅτι ἀριθμὸν λόγον δ’ οὗ) is utter nonsense in itself and even more so if we take into account Aristotle’s objection: that the second principle, though Plato took it to be a unity of the dyad of the great and small, is in fact two entities and not one, though in definition it is one. This is clear from the words that follow: ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ τὰς ἄρχας ἀς στοιχεῖα καλοῦσαι ὦ καλὸς ἀποδιδόσαι, οὐ μὲν τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρὸν λέγοντες μετὰ τοῦ ἑνός, τοῖς ταύταις στοιχεῖοι τῶν ἀριθμῶν, τοῦ μὲν δύο ὕπληκτον τὸ δ’ ἐν τὴν μορφήν (1087 B 12–11). Therefore, even if the manuscripts of the Met. available to Alexander had had the reading of 1087 B 12 that Ps. Alex. and Syrianus exhibit, he would have emended the text, as he does when he finds impossible readings. It is highly improbable, therefore, that if the correct reading had been available to Syrianus through the genuine commentary of Alexander on N, he would have adopted the mistaken and nonsensical reading. Moreover, Syrianus’ own words, οὐτὸ γὰρ ἰδίων ἐξηγηθή γὰρ ὡς ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος ὑπέλαβεν αὐτῶν λέγειν, suggest that his disagreement with ‘Alexander’ is not about the reading but about the interpretation of Aristotle’s words. Hence the text of ‘Alexander’ and Syrianus must have had the (wrong) transposition of the words ἀριθμόν καὶ λόγον. Syrianus’ difference with ‘Alexander’ is sufficiently accounted for by Syrianus’ δύο instead of Ps. Alex.’s πολλά. The inference is that the ‘Alexander’ of Syrianus is the extant Ps. Alex. and not a different one. In any case, it cannot have been the genuine Alexander.1

(III) In N. 5, 1092 A 17–21 Aristotle attacks a theory that generates place simultaneously with the mathematical solids and that holds the mathematicales have to be in place, but fails to say what their place is. Ps. Alex. (824, 27–34) claims that the view rejected here is Plato’s. Syrianus (186, 16) says τοῦτο Ἀλέξανδρος εἰς Πλάτωνα φήσαι ὑπερφόρησε, and proceeds to Plato’s defense. According to L., since the two commentators say the same thing, this passage is not useful to determine the relationship between them. This is not so, because the ascription to Plato is a mistake and one that Alexander would hardly have made. Several scholars have recognized that, since the lines preceding this fragment (1092 A 11–17) are concerned with Speusippus, and since in the passage that follows it (1092 A 21–B 8, where 1092 A 35–B 3 refers to him) his doctrine is the butt of Aristotle’s criticism, it is more probable than not that 1092 A 17–21 refers to him. The passage cannot refer to Plato, because Plato’s space (γοῦν) is eternal (cf. ‘Timaeus’ 52 D), and his definition of τόπος is set apart from all others by Aristotle himself in ‘Physics’ 209 B 16–17: λέγειν μὲν γὰρ πάντες εἰναι τι τὸν τόπον, τι δ’ ἐστιν, οὗτος (sc. Plato) μόνος

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1 Even Ross (II, 470–471) fails to see that Ps. Alex.’s and Syrianus’ reading of 1087 B 12 is utterly impossible. He also misunderstands Ps. Alex.’s comment.
L. Tarán: Luna, La tradition des commentaires à la Métaphysique d’Ar., 403–406, in order to buttress his thesis about Aristotle of Mytilene as teacher of Alexander of Aphrodisias. Ps.Alex. uses it twice (753, 17 and 681, 34): Syrianus once in his commentary on Met. and twice in the ‘In Hermog’. Clearly the butt of Syrianus’ attack must have been that Aristotle solved the difficulty γοργῆς: this is precisely what we find in Ps.Alex. 753, 16–18. The two passages transcribed above further indicate that Syrianus depends on Ps.Alex. Surely it would be absurd to assume that Ps.Alex., seeing that Syrianus disagrees, purposely wrote his commentary and that of Ps.Alex.

Moreover, such an hypothesis would not agree with the notion that Ps.Alex. is Michael.[I] to (IV) show that Syrianus depends on Ps.Alex. and not vice versa. I go on now to the remaining passages where Syrianus refers to ‘Alexander’: (V) Syrianus, 96, 17–19: εἰ καθέπερ φησίν ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης Ἀλέξανδρος, νοητά ἀπ' ἑαυτῆς ἀνάλογα, οὐν ὠντά τῇ οἴκεια φύσει νοητά. L., following Kroll, dismisses Usener’s reference to Ps.Alex. 712, 14–20 (Bonitz) = 735, 20–38 (Hayduck) as incorrect. Kroll did not offer any reason, and L.’s brief comment (L. 45–46) is inadequate. Syrianus is here attacking Aristotle’s doctrine of mathematical objects as existing potentially in the sensibles but being actualized by abstraction in thought and as such being objects of mathematical knowledge. Syrianus, as a Platonist, attacks this doctrine on the ground that Aristotle’s mathematical objects are not by their own nature νοητά, i.e. not real truths. The exact wording of 96, 17–18 (which is not a verbatim quotation) is not in Ps.Alex. but the doctrine is there: cf. Ps.Alex. 734, 3–739, 18 and n.b. his conclusion in 739, 16–18: ὅστε ὅρθος ὁ γεωμετρίας περὶ τοῦ τοῦτον (i.e. the objects of geometrical knowledge) ἀναλύεται ὡς περὶ ὄντων ὄντα γεωμετρίας, οὐν ὡς ἐν θεῷ. ἄλλ’ ὡς ὄντα καὶ ἐνίοτε. Ps.Alex.’s doctrine of mathematical objects is basically the same as that of Aristotle and indistinguishable from Alexander’s. This passage of Syrianus, then, cannot be used one way or another to determine the relationship between his commentary and that of Ps.Alex.

(VI) The next passage L. (46) examines, Syrianus 100, 3–13 is also related to the previous one = (V). She claims that in line 4 Syrianus has a precise reference to Alexander’s commentary on M. 3, 1178 A 22–31: οὕτω γὰρ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης τοῦτο τὸ ὄντον ἔξηγεν καὶ that nothing in Ps.Alex. corresponds to this. She also thinks it significant that before and after 100, 3–13 Ps.Alex. and Syrianus have parallel passages (Ps.Alex. 99d17–21 = Syrianus 738, 24–739, 12; Syrianus 100, 15–24 = Ps.Alex. 739, 21–740, 1). Yet if Ps.Alex. is dependent on Syrianus and he is Michael, it is more than strange that he failed to copy this reference to ‘Alexander’. What is significant, however, is what Syrianus ascribes to ‘Alexander’, 100, 3–7: εἶτα <εἰ> ἐνεργεῖ μὲν ἐν τοῦ αὐθεντικός τοῦτο (i.e. geometrical objects) οὕτω γὰρ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης τοῦτο τὸ ὄντον ἔξηγεν, διά τινας καί λαμπρὰς τῶν ἐννοιας. This is followed by Syrianus’ objection: οὐδ’ ἀναγκάζεται ὡς τὸ ὄντον ἔξηγεν. It is clear that Syrianus has made a gross mistake, because the notion that the mathematical objects (especially geometricals) actually exist in the sensibles is not the doctrine of Aristotle, nor of Alexander, nor of Ps.Alex. This being so, this passage too is but another example of a mistake by Syrianus which is not in Ps.Alex.[2] Cf. also supra under (I).

1 Cf. Tarán, Speusippus, 361–365.
2 After 100, 3–7, Syrianus (100, 6–7) refers to ὁ νόητος ὁ Ἁριστοτέλης ὁ ἐξήγη τού ὄντος τοῦ φιλοσοφοῦ Ἀριστοτέλεως. P. Moraux, Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen ... Zweiter Band: Der Aristotelismus in L. und II. Jh. n. Chr. (Berlin-New York 1984), 493–496, in order to buttress his thesis about Aristotle of Mytilene as teacher of Alexander of Aphrodisias.
(VII) Syrianus 108, 25–29 (on M. 4, 1079 A 2–3). Here Syrianus objects to 'Alexander': he claims that the ideas and the particulars are synonymous, whereas Aristotle in 1079 A 2–3 καθ" ἐκοίμησεν τὴν γὰρ ὀμόσυμην τη̂τ θέτο καὶ παρὰ τὸς ὀπίσως] says more correctly that they are homonyms. Since 1079 A 2–3 is the same as 990 B 6–7, L. follows Kroll in referring to Alexander's commentary on A. 9, i.e. 77, 12. There is no parallel passage in Ps.Alex., because Ps.Alex. 741, 28–37 says he will not comment on 1078 B 34–1080 A 8, the doublet of 992 B 2–991 B 9. (Cf. X infra.) L. pays no attention to Ps.Alex.'s explanation in 741, 28–37, though it also explains why Ps.Alex.'s commentary on M is shorter than Syrianus'. In any case, as L. recognizes, this passage of Syrianus is of no use for determining his relationship to Ps.Alex.

(VIII) Syrianus 111, 33–37 (on M. 4, 1079 A 11–13). L. (47 and n. 85) would have done well to follow Kroll's reference to Alexander's commentary on A. 9 and to have dismissed this passage just as he did in (VII) with 108, 25–29. But as Syrianus says, ei δ' ὅτι συμώνημα μὲν ὁ αὐτονόηρος τοῖς τῆς, καθ" ἐκοίμησεν ἐξηγούμενον τὴν ὁπίσως ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος (111, 33–34), and as in Alexander, 83, 34–35, 12 «on ne trouve pas l'affirmation que l'homme en soi est synonyme des hommes d'ici-bas. L. thinks it more probable that here Syrianus is citing Alexander's lost commentary on M. 4. L., as often, fails to understand the implications of the evidence. At 83, 34 Alexander says: ὅ δὲ λόγος ὁ τῶν τριῶν ἄνθρωπον εἰσόγονος, and the 'third man' argument is based on the assumption that the idea and its related particulars are synonyma in Aristotle's sense. Syrianus is of course aware of that and in 108, 25–29 (VII) has criticized Alexander for thinking that idea and particulars are synonyma. Syrianus' ὄφεις has, as often in Greek, the sense of 'implies'. His 111, 33–37 should therefore be dismissed from consideration.

(IX) Syrianus 166, 6–9 (on M. 9, 1086 A 21). Syrianus says that 'some' maintain that book M ends at 1086 A 21, whereas in the majority of manuscripts M ends later according to Alexander's division, i.e. in 1087 A 21. L. (48) recognizes that since Ps.Alex. has this last division, this passage of Syrianus cannot be taken into consideration for our purposes. Similarly, Syrianus 165, 22–23 (probably not by Syrianus) should be left aside because it merely reports that 'Alexander' ended book M here.


There is a similar passage at the end of M. 1, 1080 A 9–11: ἀλλὰ περὶ μὲν τῶν ἰδεῶν καὶ τούτον τῶν τριῶν καὶ διὰ λογικοτέρον καὶ ἀφαιρετέρον λόγον ἐστὶ πολλὰ συμβαίνοντα ὑπὲρ τῆς τεθεωρημένης. Syrianus comments on it in 120, 33–121, 4 that Aristotle does not have any additional arguments about the ideas, as shown by the first book of the Met. (A) καὶ τὰ περὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν οὕτω περιγράφεται ὡς βιβλικά, i.e. 'De Ideis.' L. says that this is 'a citation' from 'De Ideis' which Syrianus could not have taken from Ps.Alex., since the latter has no comment on this passage. As for Syrianus 195, 10–16, comparing it with Ps.Alex. 816, 34–817, 3 she concludes that his reference to 'Alexander' comes from Alexander; that what Syrianus says about 'De Ideis' cannot derive from Ps.Alex.: the former claims the objections against Pythagoreans and Platonists in Met. A and M (and N) are the same as those in 'De Ideis', while according to Ps.Alex. they are disians, emends the text and tries unsuccessfully to distinguish between ὁ Ἀριστοτέλεως and the 'new Aristotle'. Such a distinction is not possible, as E. Zeller, Philos. d. Griechen III, i' (Leipzig 1923), 805, n. 2 (on 829) saw long ago and as P. Accattino, Enchinos 6, 1985, 67–74 has reasserted against Moraux. The latter is certainly mistaken in his ascription of the doctrine of 100, 3–5 to Alexander's commentary on M, for how could Alexander have held the doctrine, emphatically rejected by Aristotle and by Alexander himself, that the mathematical objects actually exist in the sensibles? Accattino's attempt to read the passage as a whole as a polemical reductio by 'the Aphrodisian' himself is impossible in view of Syrianus' οὕτω γὰρ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλεως τούτω τῷ ἐφίσημον ἐξηγεῖται. It is noteworthy that a Platonistic doctrine asserted that the ideas exist separately but that the mathematical objects are immanent in the sensibles (see supra under (I), sub fin.). Aristotle refutes this doctrine and so does Alexander (200, 35–201, 37).
additional objections. To begin with the last point, Ps.Alex. 837, 1–3: 'καὶ ἐπὶ πλείον
τούτων συνεχθὲν; (1093 B 55), τὰ περὶ τῶν εἰδῶν γραφέντα εἰστὶ διόνυσία, ἀλλὰ ὅταν
παρὰ τὸ M καὶ N, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς Metὰ τὸ φασικὰ συντάξεις, means only that the
two books of ‘De Ideis’ constitute a different work from M and N and are not part of the
Met. In any case, neither Syrianus nor Ps.Alex. had direct access to ‘De Ideis’; what they
knew came from Alexander’s commentary on A. It is Syrianus’ apologetic purpose to
claim he has answered all of Aristotle’s objections; and Ps.Alex. typically supports Aris-
totle’s statements. In fact, there were in ‘De Ideis’ arguments which do not occur in A or
M–N.1 L.’s objection is irrelevant. However, the case stands otherwise with Syrianus’ re-
ference to ‘Alexander’ in 195, 10–12: τοῦτα ἐστὶν ἃ ἐν τούτῳ αὐτὸς τῶν Πνευματικῶν καὶ
Πλατωνικῶν ἀναφορὰς θεωρεῖ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης: ἃ δὴ περιέχει καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ μὲν τῶν A ἔνθεν,
ὡς καὶ ὁ ὑπομνηματικὸς Ἀλεξάνδρου ὑπομνηματικὸς. The underlined words, as Kroll saw, are a reference to Ps.Alex. 741, 28–37, where he states that
as 1078 B 34–1080 A 8 (with the exception of 1079 B 3–11, which is not in A) is a doublet
of A, 9, 996 B 2–991 B 9, he will not comment on the former passage but for that refers to
the commentary on A, which of course is by Alexander. It is to this passage of Ps.Alex.
that Syrianus refers in 195, 11–12 (underlined above). L. (44, n. 82) desperately tries to
deny this, arguing that in that case Syrianus would have taken the reference to A from
Ps.Alex. on M and the reference to ‘De Ideis’ from Ps.Alex. on N, which she considers too
complicated. Too complicated for her but not for Syrianus. It is noteworthy that Ps.Alex.
in 741, 28–37 does not mention ‘De Ideis’ explicitly, because he is aware that of Aristotle’s
objections in 990 B 2–991 B 9 = 1078 B 34–1080 A 8 only some come from ‘De Ideis’. It is
therefore intelligible why Ps.Alex. has no comment on 1080 A 9–11: he has no comment
on the preceding passage (cf. supra). Hence Syrianus’ reference to ‘De Ideis’ in 120, 34–
121, 1 is of no consequence for the point at issue here. Moreover, L. becomes confused be-
cause of her own loose use of the word ‘citation’. Neither in 120, 34–121, 4 nor in 195, 14–
16 is there any citation or quotation. Both are simply references to ‘De Ideis’ in general as
a work where Aristotle advanced arguments against the Ideas, etc. In short, Syrianus 195,
10–12 is in all probability evidence of his dependence on Ps.Alex. and not vice versa.

Earlier in her book L. (3ff) discusses a series of passages that seem to her to prove the
dependence of Ps.Alex. on Syrianus.

She first (L., 3–6) compares Syrianus 149, 26–150, 4 with Ps.Alex. 771, 19–772, 2 (she
should have considered also 772, 2–10). While recognizing that the two commentators are
not at all parallel, L. thinks that Ps.Alex. betrays his dependence on Syrianus because of his
use of the ‘Iamblichean’ expression παράδειγμα κενοῦ (which Syrianus uses citing Iambli-
chus), a use in Ps.Alex. contrary to Iamblichus and Syrianus, to assert the existence of
the void in numbers. Yet L.’s main point, that Ps.Alex. could not have used παράδειγμα
κενοῦ independently of Syrianus and Iamblichus, is an ‘argumentum ex ignorantia’; for
only ignorance can lead to the belief that παράδειγμα κενοῦ was invented by Iamblichus.
Παράδειγμα in the sense of ‘model’, ‘pattern’, etc. is very common since the time of Plato
and Aristotle. Ps.Alex. uses παράδειγμα κενοῦ, παράδειγμα ἀναλογίας, παράδειγμα
περιττοῦ simply because this is what Aristotle implicitly ascribes to the Platonistic theory
he is describing: the existence of τὸ κενὸν, ἀναλογία καὶ τὸ περιττὸν within the decade. I
mention some additional serious mistakes: (i) the theory Aristotle is describing and reject-
ing (comprised in 1084 A 29–B 2) is the theory of Xenocrates.2 L. should not write as if
the theory of τὸ κενὸν here were Aristotle’s own, who in fact did not admit the existence of
the void in any sense whatsoever. (ii) Syrianus’ comment is completely inadequate; he
simply reacts against the existence of the void from the point of view of Neoplatonic
dogma. (iii) The explanation of Ps.Alex., though not entirely correct, is a step in the right

2 Cf. Cherniss, AJPh 68, 1947, 244, n. 86 (on 244–246) = Selected Papers, L. Tarán ed.,
195–197.
direction. (iv) In Ps.Alex. 771, 24–772, 10 L. mistranslates étoin as 'image', whereas it means 'model'. This use is unusual and, so far as I know, does not occur in Neoplatonic texts. It occurs in Plutarch, Quaest. Conviv. 718 F; Timaeus Locrus 99 D; Lucian, Vit. Auctio # 18; Theo Smyr., 100, 21–22; 101, 11 (Hiller); Philo, Leg. Alleg. I, 33; 42; 53; III, 96; De Somn. I, 79; II, 45–46. (It appears in Alexander, p. 83, 16, but is contrary to Alexander’s usage and impossible in context. However, it is not to be emended or excised, since it is one more indication that Alexander 82, 11–83, 17 has been tampered with. 1) All this takes us back to a Neopythagorean, not a Neoplatonic influence on Ps.Alex.

The second argument L. presents in favor of her interpretation is the parallel between Syrianus 182, 9–28 and Ps.Alex. 821, 11–20. She claims: (i) that Syrianus would have realized that Ps.Alex. could not be Alexander because of the former’s quotation from the 'Rhapsodic Theogony'; (ii) that Ps.Alex.’s citation of that work is shorter than Syrianus' and was taken from the latter, for this is the only citation of that work by Ps.Alex., whereas Syrianus has many more; (iii) that Ps.Alex.’s quotation is incomplete because he cites only the succession 1) Erikepiaos, 2) Night, 3) Ouranos, and even so less completely than Syrianus. As to (i), it was pointed out above that Aristotle thought that this work goes back to Orpheus or in any case is a work of great antiquity; and he would not have seen anything unseemly in the great Aristotelian commentator’s citation of what Syrianus considers a fundamental work of (according to him and other Neoplatonists) the great tradition. L. follows Brisson in dating the ‘Rhapsodic Theogony’ to the end of the II century A.D. (in fact, it is probably earlier), so that Alexander could well have known it, even supposing that the unhistorical Syrianus had paid any attention to chronology. (ii) L. does not realize that Ps.Alex. cites the ‘Rhapsodic Theogony’ only when he shifts his comment to 1091 B 7 (διὰ τὸ μετεξώλειν), because he had no texts to support his wrong interpretation of the succession he ascribes to the divinities Aristotle mentions in Met. 1091 B 4–6. Apart from that Ps.Alex. is not interested, as Syrianus is, in the ‘Rhapsodic Theogony’. This also answers point (iii). Thus, nothing can be concluded from these passages of Syrianus and Ps.Alex. about the relationship between the two. Once more, however, L.’s blunders here are serious. (a) Syrianus’ passage as a comment on Aristotle is inept, though praised by L.; for he ‘corrects’ Aristotle’s account about the theologians taking as Aristotle’s opinion what in reality Aristotle rejects and is probably the opinion of Speusippus. (b) L. misunderstands the order of the Orphic divinities in Syrianus. This is what she considers it to be: 1) Erikepiaos (= Phanes); 2) Night; 3) Ouranos; (4) Chaos); 5) Zeus. She is quite wrong about Chaos, for Chaos is not fourth nor is it here simply identified with the dyad; nor is Chaos simply ‘au-delà de la royauté’, as L. (87) says: this last expression even fails to render τὸ δὲ χάος ὑπὸ τὴν τοῦ βασιλείαντος ἐστὶ σχέσιν (Syrianus 182, 18). If we take into account what Syrianus says in 182, 9–28 we get the following: 1) Erikepiaos (= ἡ πρώτητα άρχη ἐν καὶ τάξινθ;); 2) Night and Ouranos = Chaos and Aither (= ἡ δυτικῆ ἱερήτων τοῦ βασιλείαντος); 3) τὰ πρώτα ταῦτα καὶ ἄρχητα τῶν θεῶν γένη; 4) Phanes (ἐὰν’ ἄρ γὰρ ὁ πρῶτος ἀναπομνής τῶν ἄλοιπων πατὴρ καὶ βασιλεῖς, ἐν διά τοῦτο Φάννητα προοιμίζεται); 5) Zeus. (c) L. does not realize that Syrianus’ denial of the succession of divinities is based on the identification of the Orphic divinities with the Neoplatonic hypostases (so that the apparent ‘successions’ can be explained as ‘procession’), and that no Neoplatonist suc-

1 This commentator ranges the series of even numbers separately from that of odd numbers and so postulates the void both between the even and the odd numbers. Xenocrates, since he believed in incomparable numbers such that the units of each number are comparable with one another but incomparable with the units of any other number, most probably must have postulated an ideal void separating the numbers from each other, and perhaps also between the component units of each number. On Xenocrates’ numbers cf. Tarán, Speusippus, 17–19 with nn. 84–86; 328–310.

2 Cf. L., 5 with n. 10: «le vide qui existe dans le nombre est l’image et le modèle du vide.»
ceeded in avoiding inconsistency in this attempt.\(^1\) (d) L. denies the fact that in early Orphic texts going back at least to the V and IV centuries B.C., Chaos is the primordial divinity, and she is mistaken in thinking that in no Orphic texts does Okeanos occur early.\(^2\) It is obvious that for her Orphism is limited to the ‘Rhapsodic Theogony’.

Immediately after the two ‘parallel’ passages just discussed, L. gives a series of parallels between Syrianus and Ps. Alex. to show that the texts of Ps. Alex. are incompetent re-elaborations of Syrianus’ respective texts (L., 12–32). Here she is assuming her thesis and arguing in a circle, besides making serious mistakes. Due to space limitations I give only two examples.

She compares (L., 13–15) Syrianus 129, 15–25 with Ps. Alex. 752, 33–753, 8 and claims that Syrianus exhibits perfect grammar ( dét + infinitive, followed by μὴ ... δὲ), but Ps. Alex. ruins the structure of his sentence by interrupting it with the words τοῦτον ἃς ὁ φιλόσοφος τῷ τόμῳ Πλάτωνος ἔχει χάος, ὡς φαίνει, ἐπὶ τὸ γόνιον τῶν λόγων καὶ τὸν γόνιον, ἀλλὰ κατὰ προσθέτουν ὅστε ἁ νεργάζοντο (Ps. Alex. 753, 1–3). L.’s whole construction collapses when one notices that in 753, 1–3 (the words underlined supra) Ps. Alex. is quoting, and shifting his comment to Met. 1081 B 17–18, while in 712, 33–753, 1 he was commenting on 1081 B 10–17. L. has not noticed this, for she says that the whole passage τοῦτον ... ἁνεργάζοντο (753, 1–3, see above) belongs to Ps. Alex. (L., 13 ‘la présence des mots τοῦτον ... ἁνεργάζοντο ... qui lui sont propres’).

L. next compares Syrianus 154, 32–155, 5 = Ps. Alex. 778, 8–15 (L., 15–18). She claims that while Syrianus answers the aporia raised by Aristotle in 1085 A 19–20 (τί δὲ γονίον καὶ ομοίωσι καὶ τὰ τούτα πῶς ἀποδοθήκηται), Ps. Alex., which is here almost verbatim identical with Syrianus, presents it as the opinion of the Platonists. Once more, she believes, Ps. Alex. has misunderstood Syrianus and also what Aristotle says in 1085 A 9–19. Unfortunately, L. has misunderstood Aristotle just as both Syrianus and Ps. Alex. do. The relevant passage in Aristotle is 1085 A 7–23. Pace L., the theory Aristotle is describing and attacking is not Plato’s theory of the One and the Indefinite Dyad as the principles of number, magnitudes, and sensibles. The theory in question here is a Platonistic theory that postulates different material principles for numbers and for each kind of magnitude, namely, it derives lines from the ‘long and short’, planes from the ‘broad and narrow’, and solids from the ‘deep and shallow’. These may be ‘species of the great and small’, as Aristotle says, but even if they are, this is not Plato’s theory despite the fact that Ross and others have ascribed it to him; for Met. 1001 B 19–23 and Alexander’s comment on it (Alexander 228, 10–28) make it clear that Aristotle ascribes to Plato only one material principle for numbers, magnitudes, and sensibles.\(^3\) Aristotle’s specific objections in 1085 A 7–23 are: (i) if the three material principles of magnitudes are independent of one another, then the geometrical classes (sc. lines, planes, solids) are severed from one another; (ii) but if the three material principles are implied in one another so that the ‘broad and narrow’ is also ‘long and short’, then the plane will be a line and the solid a plane. Moreover, how will

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1 Cf. L. Brisson, Proclus et l’Orphisme, in: ‘Proclus. Lecteur et interprète des Anciens’. Colloques internationaux du C.N.R.S. (Paris 1987), 43–104, included in Brisson’s ‘Orphée et l’Orphisme dans l’Antiquité gréco-romaine’ (‘Variorum’ 1955), V. This is a useful study, but its interpretations suffer from Proclus’ not fully analyzing all the related texts and from an apologetic attitude that does not take account of Syrianus’s and Proclus’ failure, despite all their ingenuity, to adapt consistently the ‘theogony’ to the Neoplatonic ‘procession’. Cf. e.g. Proclus, In Timaeum I, 336, 5–26 (Diehl).


angles and shapes and such things be explained? The parallel passages of Syrianus and Ps. Alex. deal with this last objection; but either as answer to Aristotle (Syrianus) or as a reconstruction of what the Platonists meant (Ps. Alex.), what the two commentators say is utterly wrong and irrelevant. For example: both commentators relate the ‘right angle’ to the monad; but Aristotle’s objection here is not to the derivation of angles and shapes from the One or the monad, which is the formal principle, but to their derivation from the three different material principles. This being the case, it is wrong to infer from the two parallel passages L. singles out that either commentator depends on the other.

L.’s remaining arguments are: (i) Ps. Alex. uses several technical Neoplatonic expressions which do not occur before Syrianus; and so, if Ps. Alex. lived before Syrianus, he would be the inventor of such terminology. However, a lot of Neoplatonic literature earlier than Syrianus is no longer extant. (ii) Stereotyped expressions common to Ps. Alex. and Michael show that the latter is the author of the commentary on E–N. Yet stylistic grounds never suffice to ascribe a work to an author, least of all in the case of a philosophical commentary on Aristotle. Moreover, since Michael doubtless had access to Ps. Alex. on E–N, Praechter’s and L.’s arguments are pointless. (N.b. that Praechter admits that such expressions occur less often in Ps. Alex. than in Michael.) (iii) There is external evidence for ascribing this commentary to Michael. In the XIII–XIV centuries some people ascribed the commentary to Michael, and two XIV century manuscripts do so as well.

Of these, Cod. Paris. Gr. 1876 was corrected by a learned Byzantine scribe; but that scribe’s authority cannot override the evidence that Syrianus made use of Ps. Alex. and not vice versa. In any case, there is no such ascription in other manuscripts, including the oldest, Laurenzianus 87. 12 (XI or early XII century). Finally, at the end of Michael’s commentary on the ‘Parva Naturalia’, he adds a list of the commentaries he has already composed: Περὶ ζῴου μορίου καὶ πορείας, Περὶ μονής καὶ ἕναμονής, Περὶ ζῴου κανήν, Περὶ ζῴου γενέσεως, Περὶ μακροβιότητος καὶ βραχυβιότητος καὶ σὺν τούτων τὰ περί γῆς καὶ νεώτητος. The text then continues: οὕτως ἐξαιτεῖναι κατὰ δύναμιν. Ποιεῖται δὲ τοῖς ἐννοιαζόντοις, εἰ μὲν εὐθεῖαι τινὲς ἐκ τούτων ὄρθως, πολλὰ ἐγεί κάρων εἰ δ’ οὐ, ἀλλὰ γε οὐδέ βλέπῃ τις αὐτῶσ ἐκ τούτων γενηστῶς. Μενούσαι δὲ μιᾷ καὶ εἰς τὴν Μετὰ τὰ διός εἰς τούτοι τῶν ζητεῖν τὸν τό. Λοιπὸν δ’ ἔσται τὸ Περὶ χρωμάτων, ὅπερ ἦν δοξή θεός, ὁπ’ ἄλλας ἀρχῆς συγκαθάρθηκεν. I submit that the statement on the Met. is suspect. It is noteworthy that Michael has given his preceding commentaries in the order of their composition (cf. P. Wendland’s preface, CAG 22, 1, p. v) and that he tries in the following sentences to stress the modesty of his accomplishment. He does the same thing with his future work on the related Περὶ χρωμάτων. But the commentary on Met. Z–N, which is so different from and far superior to his other short and mediocre works, has no qualification whatever and seems to be referred to as an aside, not to mention the unnecessary αὕτω and the need to emend ζ to Ε. Moreover, the commentary on Met. interrupts the chronological order; or must we believe that after the six works enumerated, and before the related one on the Περὶ χρωμάτων, Michael composed the commentary on Met. E–N?

It is likely that it was from this list that XIV century scholars got their information about Michael’s authorship. Yet the statement on the Met. is probably an interpolation. If it is not, then either Michael wrote a commentary on Z–N which...
is apparently not extant or he was dishonest, since he cannot have been the author of the commentary on E–N.

There are then substantial reasons for thinking that in his commentary on Met. M–N Syratus made use of Ps. Alex. (cf. sections (I)–(IV) and (X) supra). The two commentators share a fundamental shortcoming: utter failure to understand the several doctrines of Plato’s students which are an essential part of Aristotle’s attack in Met. M–N. It is clear then that neither had direct or indirect access to Alexander’s commentary on Met. E–N. It has also been pointed out that Syratus, while making the same or similar mistakes as those of Ps. Alex., added errors of his own, not found in Ps. Alex. Moreover, Ps. Alex.’s commentary on M–N is an important contribution to the literal interpretation of the Met., something well understood by the two best modern commentators of that work, Bonitz and Ross (cf. p. 198 n. 3 supra). It is also noteworthy that there are instances where Syratus has given a mistaken interpretation, whereas Ps. Alex. has the correct one, and that sometimes the latter offers the right interpretation in cases in which modern interpreters do not. All this is incompatible with Ps. Alex.’s alleged dependence on Syratus. The latter, for his part, is mainly interested in answering Aristotle’s objections to Platonists and Pythagoreans and also to what he sees as incompatible with Neoplatonic dogma; he is not interested in the literal interpretation of the Met. as such; hence it is intelligible that he neglects what in

1 Cf. supra under (I).

2 Cf. (I) supra and n.b. that Syratus 181, 20–21, in his commentary on Met. 1091 A 21–24 (τοῦ μὲν οὖν περὶ τούτου γένεσιν οὖν φασιν, ὡς δηλοῦσθαι τοῦ ἄστιν οὖν γενέσθαι,), takes the Aristotelian statement as referring to Pythagoreans (cf. Syratus 181, 9–18 on 1091 A 13f). But Aristotle has dismissed the Pythagoreans in 1091 A 20 and has turned to τοῦ ... ἐν τοῖς ἄστιν ... ἄρχει (cf. 1091 A 20–22). And so in 1091 A 23f he is not talking of Pythagoreans but of Platonists: n.b. 1091 A 24–25: τὸν δ’ ἀρχαὶ πρῶτον ἐξ ἄνωθεν τινὶς κατασκευαζόμενον τοῦ ἀμύνου καὶ μαρτινοῦ ὀφθήντον. However, it is noteworthy that Ps. Alex. (819, 26–820, 7) correctly sees that 1091 A 23f refers to Platonists and he explicitly mentions Xenocrates’ defense of Plato.

3 Cf., e.g., Ps. Alex. 814, 37–38: the commentator correctly sees that in Met. 1090 B 2 ὁ ἐναντιώμενος λόγος τάς τάναται ἢντι represents Aristotle’s own opinion as stated in 1090 A 28–29 and not the Pythagorean argument as Ross (II, 481 on 1090 B 2) and others suppose. Similarly, Ps. Alex. 815, 14–16 correctly sees that 1090 B 11–13 is a reference to 1090 B 5–7. Again, in 1090 B 32–33 ὁ δ’ ἀρχαὶ δύο τοῖς ὁμοίως παραστατεῖται, τὸν τε τὸν ἐδόχω καὶ τὸν μαθηματικόν, Ps. Alex. 817, 1–5 correctly construes this as but the first (so of those who posited ideas), having distinguished two kinds of numbers (so also Cherniss and Tricot), whereas Ross and others translate «those who first posited two kinds of numbers». None of these explanations by Ps. Alex. are in Syratus. But let us turn to earlier books of the Met. In his commentary on Met. Z. 3, 1029 B 1–7 Ps. Alex. gives the best explanation of it and of the difficult ἐγὼν of 1029 B 5, which many modern translators and commentators miss (cf. Ps. Alex. 461, 29–466, 18). The difficult passage Met. Θ. 8, 1050 B 34–1051 A 3, generally misunderstood by modern translators and commentators, is rendered intelligible by Ps. Alex.’s explanation (191, 22–31). Finally, W. Kranz, in an addendum to p. 292, 27 (Empedocles) of ‘Frag. d. Vorsokr.’ Γ (499, 4–7) adds Aristotle, ‘De Caelo’ 284 A 24–26 but, following Jaeger, he inserts εἶπεν before τής οἰκείας δοτῆς. This is impossible, however, since the theory in question is described by Aristotle as holding that the heavenly bodies remain (sc. in orbit) because their motion is swifter than their tendency to fall: cf. Met. 1050 B 22–24 with Ps. Alex. 599, 31–32: ταῖς ἐνεργείας καὶ ἁπάντως καὶ αἵλην, καὶ οὐ φοβηθόν, ὡς Ἐμπέδωκλης καὶ οἱ περὶ αὐτῶν οἴονται, μή τοι ποτε οὕτω. Cf. Cherniss, AJPh 60, 1939, 233 = Sel. Pap., 94.
Ps. Alex. is not related to his interest in Met. M–N. In fact, he does not even comment on parts of the text. For similar reasons to those summarized in this paragraph, it is impossible to ascribe Ps. Alex. on E–N to Michael Ephesius, who composed his Aristotelian commentaries between 1118 and 1138. In any case, the detailed nature and the importance of Ps. Alex.’s commentary on E–N cannot even begin to be compared with Michael’s mediocre commentaries. Ps. Alex.’s commentary on E–N was probably written in the second half of the IV century or at the latest early in the V. Despite the great contributions of Bonitz and Ross, further study of this commentary will still illuminate the understanding of those books of the ‘Metaphysics’. 

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