THE ARISTOTELIAN COMMENTATORS:
A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE

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I. Introduction

In what follows I offer a bibliographical guide to the ancient commentators on Aristotle, outlining where one may find texts, translations, studies, and more detailed bibliographies containing further references. It is designed to supplement the existing bibliography in: [1] R. Sorabji, ed., Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence (London: Duckworth, 1990), 485-524.

The focus here is on the ancient commentators, but reference will also be made to Byzantine commentators. For a list of around 300 commentators on Aristotle – ancient, Byzantine, Islamic, medieval, and renaissance – see the final pages of: [2] Operum Aristotelis Stagiritae Philosophorum Omnium, ed. I. Casaubon (Lugduni, apud Guillelmum Laemarium, 1590). This list is followed by a detailed inventory of individual commentaries arranged by the Aristotelian text upon which they comment. This very useful second list is reprinted in: [3] Aristotelis Opera Omnia quae extant Uno Volumine Comprehensa, ed. C. H. Weise (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1843), 1013-18. Note also the more recent list of ancient commentators by R. Goulet in DPhA 1,437-41 (1993), now supplemented by M. Chase in DPhA Suppl., 113-21 (2003).

II. Texts and Translations


* This is a bibliographical guide, not a complete bibliography, and it makes no claim to being comprehensive (it should be supplemented with the bibliographies to the various contributions to this volume and its companion). The aim is to provide a survey of recent work and references to more complete bibliographies where they already exist. There seemed little point in reproducing in extenso lists of references already published elsewhere. Throughout, publication information has been kept simple: only one publisher is cited for works published by more than one; usually only one place of publication is given even where the publisher has more than one; the details of series in which books have appeared have been omitted; articles that have appeared in more than one place are often cited in only one location. Unpublished dissertations are not included. Any Greek or Arabic words in the titles of works have been transliterated. While I have physically consulted the vast majority of items listed here, a few items have been beyond my reach and are reported on the authority of others (and in a few of these cases I have been unable to specify publisher or pagination details). Beyond the abbreviations explained en route, note also the following: ANRW = Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt, ed. W. Haase, H. Temporini (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972-); DPhA = Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques, ed. R. Goulet (Paris: CNRS, 1989-).
commentaries into English under the editorship of Richard Sorabji, the *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle*, has to date seen 59 volumes published or sent to press:

Fallacies

6.1 Aristotle, may these Graecorum translations due 2004); vol. 1 Psychology, vol. 2 Physics, vol. 3 Logic and Metaphysics. of Aristotle

III. General Studies

For a general introduction to the ancient commentary tradition a good place to start is Silvia Fazzo’s ‘Aristotelianism as a Commentary Tradition’ in the present volume. For a bibliography of general studies on the commentators up to 1990 see [1] 485-524. This impressive collection of references remains an essential point of reference. It may now be supplemented with the following general works:

[85] C. Luna, Trois études sur la tradition des commentaires anciens à la Métaphysique d’Aristote (Leiden: Brill, 2001)

To these one can add a number of recent studies devoted to the philosophical commentary as a genre, its origins, and its form:
The principal recent contributions are:


Recently the debate surrounding the fate of the last Neoplatonists after the closure of the philosophical schools in Athens by Justinian in AD 529 has attracted much speculation. The principal recent contributions are:

[104] P. Foulkes, ‘Where was Simplicius?’, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 112 (1992), 143
[107] I. Hadot, ‘The Life and Work of Simplicius in Greek and Arabic Sources’, in [1], 275-303
IV. Individual Commentators: Alexander to Themistius

The following sections on individual commentators do not pretend to offer a full publishing history for their works. In particular little mention will be made of editions predating the CAG. However, full details of earlier editions may be found in: [116] J. W. Moss, *A Manual of Classical Bibliography*, 2 vols (London: Bohn, 1837), 1,151-75. More often than not, the first printed editions of the commentaries were – like the works of Aristotle himself – published by Aldus Manutius and his successors. Full details of the Aldine editions may be found in: [117] A. A. Renouard, *Annales de l’Imprimerie des Alde*, 3rd edn (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1834; also in a number of later facsimile reprints). For further discussion of Aldus and the commentators see the Appendix below.

The commentaries of *Alexander of Aphrodisias* (*in Metaph.*, *in An. Pr.*, *in Top.*, *in Sens.*, *in Meteor.*) may be found in CAG vols 1-3. His other, non-commentary, works (*DA, Mant., Quaest., Fat., Mixt.*) may be found in the CAG supplement, vol. 2. Note also the Latin edition of *in Meteor.* in *CLCAG* 4. There also exists [118] a more recent Budé edition of *Fat.* by P. Thillet (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984); a new edition of *Mant.* is currently being prepared for the same series by R. W. Sharples. A fuller list of Alexander’s works, including lost and spurious texts, may be found in [124] below, 1182-99; see also the entry by R. Goulet and M. Aouad in *DPhA* 1,125-39, along with S. Fazzo in *DPhA Suppl.*, 61-70.

For translations of Alexander’s commentaries see [5-14]. For his non-commentary works see [15-18] plus:


Note also [376] below for a text preserved only in the Arabic tradition (and see also Fazzo 1999b in Fazzo’s contribution to this volume). For studies of Alexander, a good first port of call is: [124] R. W. Sharples, ‘Alexander of Aphrodisias: Scholasticism and Innovation’, ANRW II 36.2 (1987), 1176-1243. A recent very important publication dealing with Alexander is: [125] P. Moraux, Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen: III. Alexander von Aphrodisias (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001). This contains a recently compiled and extremely comprehensive bibliography on Alexander by R. W. Sharples, pp. 621-50, that makes any attempt to collect together references here superfluous. Note, however, the following not recorded in [125] (and see also DPhA Suppl. 61-70):


The commentaries of Ammonius (in Porph. Isag., in Cat., in Int., in An. Pr.) are all in CAG vol. 4. Ammonius’ in Int. is also preserved in a Latin edition, in CLCAC 2. Note also Asclepius’ in Metaph. (CAG vol. 6.2), which is reported to be based upon the lectures of Ammonius. It may be possible to obtain further material about Ammonius from the dialogue entitled Ammonius by Zacharias (PG 85,1011-1144).

For translations of in Cat. and in Int. see [19-21]. For studies beyond those in [1] 489-90 see:

As has just been mentioned, the in Metaph. by Asclepius (in CAG vol. 6.2) is reported to follow the lectures of Ammonius. Thus to whom its contents should be attributed is unclear. Asclepius also produced a commentary on Nicomachus which may be found in:

[152] L. Tarán, Asclepius of Tralles, Commentary to Nicomachus’ Introduction to Arithmetic = Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 59.4 (1969). There are few studies of Asclepius, but see:


Aspasius is credited with being the author of the earliest extant commentary on Aristotle, in EN, which may be found in CAG vol. 19.1. There is a partial Latin version in CLCAG 6.3 [= 68]. Part has also been translated into English in [22], and a complete translation has been commissioned for the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle series.

The most important recent work on Aspasius may be found in: [155] A. Alberi, R. W. Sharples, eds, Aspasius: The Earliest Extant Commentary on Aristotle’s Ethics (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999). This volume also includes a bibliography by G. Tausch-Pebody and J. Barnes, 191-94, that records everything of note prior to 1999. But note the following items not included:

The commentaries and related logical works by Boethius (including in Cat., in Int.1, in Int.2) are gathered together in PL 64. His translations of Aristotle into Latin, along with a number of glosses, may be found in: [161] Aristoteles Latinus, ed. L. Minio-Paluello (Leiden: Brill etc, 1961-). More recent editions exist for some of his logical works, including:


For a fuller list of Boethius’ works see DPhA 2,117-22. Parts of in Int.1 and in Int.2 are translated into English in [21]. Also note (along with [165] above):


For an up to date general bibliography on Boethius see the following recent study: [171] J. Marenbon, Boethius (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 219-35. Other general studies of Boethius worthy of note include:


an Aristotelian Scholar’, in [1] 373-91. Note also the following studies, primarily concerned with Boethius’ engagement with logic, beyond those in [1] 491-93:


David produced a Prolegomena and a commentary on Porphyry’s Isagoge, both in CAG vol. 18.2. The commentary on the Categories attributed to Elias has also been attributed to David. A number of works also survive in Armenian, and David is known in the Armenian tradition as ‘David the Invincible’. For references to David’s works in Armenian see DPhA 2,614-15, and [185] A. K. Sanjian, ed., David Anhaght: The ‘Invincible’ Philosopher (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 119-23. For translations into English see:


For references to further secondary literature – much of which is in Armenian or Russian – see [185] 124-46.
The commentator **Dexippus** produced only one commentary, on the *Categories*, which may be found in *CAG* vol. 4.2. This is translated in [23]. A handful of items of secondary literature are listed in [1] 494.


The commentaries by **Olympiodorus** cover works by both Plato and Aristotle. His Aristotelian commentaries (*Proleg., in Cat., in Meteor.*) are in *CAG* vol. 12. Anonymous scholia on *Int.* have also been credited to him; see [196] L. Tarán, *Anonymous Commentary on Aristotle’s De Interpretatione* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1978). For his Platonic commentaries see:


Some older studies are referred to in [1] 496-97. See also:


[212] De Aeternitate Mundi contra Proclum, ed. H. Rabe (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899)
[213] De Opificio Mundi, ed. W. Reichardt (Leipzig: Teubner, 1897)

For translations into English see [24-36] above. For a general introduction to Philoponus see [217] R. Sorabji, ‘John Philoponus’, in [211] 1-40, along with the other papers in [211]. Bibliographies of work on Philoponus may be found in [1] 497-99 and [211] 236-45. Beyond the items listed there, see also:

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Tradition on Aristotle’s De Generatione et Corruptione (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 21-46


[231] U. M. Lang, John Philoponus and the Controversies over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century: A Study and Translation of the Arbiter (Leuven: Peeters, 2001)


The surviving commentary works by Porphyry – the Isagoge and in Cat. – are in CAG vol. 4.1. The surviving remains of his commentary on Plato’s Timaeus are in: [242] Porphyrii in Platonis Timaeum Commentariorum Fragmenta, ed. A. R. Sodano (Naples, 1964). The remains of Porphyry’s other commentaries on Plato and Aristotle are gathered together in: [243] A. Smith, Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1993). However, many of these lost works are known only via a handful of testimonia. The works with the most substantial remains are a longer commentary on the Categories (mainly from Simplicius in Cat.; see [243] 35-59), in Phys. (mainly from Simplicius in Phys.; see [243] 120-59), and in Int. (from Boethius in Int. and Ammonius in Int.; see [243] 59-112). For a guide to Porphyry’s other works not mentioned here see: [244] J. Barnes, Porphyry, Introduction (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 367-71.

Porphyry’s in Cat. is translated in [37]. His Isagoge has recently been translated with commentary in [244] above; note also:


[247] Isagoge, in P. V. Spade, Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 1-19


**Priscian** is recorded as the author of a commentary on Theophrastus and series of responses to questions by the Persian king Chosroes, both in *CAG* suppl. vol. 1.2. He has also been put forward as the author of *in DA* traditionally attributed to Simplicius (in *CAG* vol. 11), most famously in: [259] F. Bossier, C. Steel, ‘Priscianus Lydus en de in *De Anima* van Pseudo(?)-Simplicius’, *Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 34 (1972), 761-822; represented in English by Steel in [39] 105-40. His commentary on Theophrastus is translated in [39]. For studies of Priscian see:


See also [268] below which discuss further the authorship of Simplicius *in DA* and its attribution to Priscian.


A number of items primarily dealing with Simplicius’ biography have already been listed above [104, 107, 112-115]. An important collection of papers on Simplicius is:
I. Hadot, ed., *Simplicius, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa survie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987). For further studies see the following along with those listed in [1] 500-02:


[269] K. Bormann, ‘The Interpretation of Parmenides by the Neoplatonist Simplicius’, *Monist* 62 (1979), 30-42


J. M. Narbonne, ‘Definition et Description: Le problème de la saisie des genres premiers et des individus chez Aristote dans l’exégèse de Simplicius’, *Archives de Philosophie* 50 (1987), 529-54


**Stephanus** is credited with a commentary on *Int.* (in *CAG* vol. 18.3) and on *Rhet.* (in *CAG* vol. 21.2). He has also been put forward as the author of *DA 3* attributed to Philoponus. For translations into English of *Int.* and *DA 3* see [27-28]. For studies see those listed in [1] 502-03 plus:


**Syrianus** produced a commentary on *Metaph.* in *CAG* 6.1. Note also: [293] *Syriani in Hermogenem Commentaria*, ed. H. Rabe, 2 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1892-93). Extracts of the former were translated into English by Thomas Taylor and are reprinted in vol. 5 of [64]. For studies of Syrianus see those listed in [1] 503 plus:


C. Luna, ‘Syrianus dans la tradition exégétique de la *Méthaphysique* d’Aristote, I: Syrianus entre Alexandre d’Aphrodise et Asclépius’, in [93] 301-09


The paraphrase commentaries of Themistius (in An. Post., in Phys., in DA, in Cael., in Metaph., in Parv.) may all be found in CAG vol. 5. Of these, in Cael. and in Metaph. survive in Hebrew and Latin versions only. There also exists a Latin version of in DA, which may be found in CLAG 1. Note also the in An. Pr. in CAG vol. 23.3. It may also be useful to note a pre-CAG collected edition: [304] Themistii Paraphrases Aristotelis Librorum Quae Supersunt, ed. L. Spengel, 2 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1866). For translations into English see [62-63] plus [123].


For studies of Themistius see the following along with those listed in [1] 503-04:


Beyond the various commentaries that have been mentioned so far, there also exist a number of anonymous or unattributed commentaries and collections of scholia. Among these, note the following:

[321] Scholia in Aristotelem, ed. C. A. Brandis (Berlin: Reimer, 1836; new edn, de Gruyter, 1961) = vol. 4 of I. Bekker’s Aristotelis Opera
[322] Scholia Graeca in Aristotelis Metaphysica, ed. C. A. Brandis (Berlin: Reimer, 1837)
[323] Anonymi in Aristotelis Categorias Paraphrasis, ed. M. Hayduck, CAG 23.2 (1883)
Broader in scope, but no less useful, are:


The anonymous scholia on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in their medieval Latin translation are in *CLCAG* 6.1 (see [70] above). The anonymous paraphrase of *EN* attributed to Heliodorus in *CAG* (vol. 19.2) was for some time attributed to Andronicus of Rhodes, while Olympiodorus is also named as its author in one MS. Bridgman suggested that it might be by the 15th century Andronicus Callistus (see [328] below), while more recently Benakis [332] has suggested the 14th century Constantinos Palaeokappas. However, earlier editions of the text (1607, 1617, 1679, 1809) were all under the name of Andronicus (see *CAG* vol. 19.2, p. vii). The entire commentary has been translated in:


More recently, an extract has been translated in [22].

V. The Later Commentary Tradition: Byzantine, Arabic, Syriac, Latin

Those wishing to familiarise themselves with the Byzantine commentary tradition will find much of use in three publications by Benakis:


Broader in scope, but no less useful, are:


Many Byzantine commentaries on Aristotle remain unedited or only available in Renaissance editions. Commentaries by *Eustratius* include in *An. Post.* (in *CAG* vol. 21.1) and in *EN* (in *CAG* vol. 20; see also *CLCAG* vols 6.1, 6.3).

Works by *Michael of Ephesus* include in *Parv.* (in *CAG* vol. 22.1), in *EN* (in *CAG* vol. 22.3; see also *CAG* vol. 20; part in English in [22]), and a number of commentaries on Aristotle’s biological works in *CAG* vol. 22.2. Some of the latter are translated into English in: [337] *Aristotle and Michael of Ephesus on the Movement and Progression of Animals*, trans. A. Preuss (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1981). A number of other commentaries with disputed authorship have been attributed to Michael; see e.g. *CAG* vols 1,440-837 (in *Metaph.* 6-14), 2.3 (in *SE*), 14.3 (in *GA*). Scholia on Aristotle’s *Pol.* that have been attributed to Michael of Ephesus are printed as [338] ‘Scholia et Glossae’ in *Aristotelis Politica*, ed. O. Immisch (Leipzig: Teubner, 1909), and translated into English in [339] E. Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 136-41.


The following is merely a selection of work on the Byzantine commentary tradition and should be supplemented with those listed in [1] 519-20:


Further references may be found in the substantial bibliography in [335] 266-417.


The majority of the following references deal with the reception of the ancient commentators and supplement those in [1] 517-19:


At this point it might also be appropriate to note a handful of items dealing with the Syriac tradition:


As with the Arabic tradition, the following references dealing with the Latin commentary tradition focus upon the reception of the ancient commentators rather than with the later Latin commentary tradition itself. Nevertheless it may be of interest at this point to note:

‘Medieval Latin Aristotle Commentaries’ in Traditio, vols 23 (1967); 24 (1968); 26 (1970); 27 (1971); 28 (1972); 29 (1973).

The following entries deal with the reception of the ancient commentators in the Latin West up to and including the Renaissance. The pervasive influence of Boethius on the Latin West naturally means that the literature dealing with his impact is vast and is not adequately covered here. Add to these the items listed in [1] 521-23:


[417] N. J. Green-Pedersen, The Tradition of the Topics in the Middle Ages: The Commentaries on Aristotle’s and Boethius’s Topics (Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 1984)


[427] L. G. Westerink, ‘Ficino’s Marginal Notes On Olympiodorus In Riccardi Greek Ms 37’, Traditio 24 (1968), 351-78

VI. In Sum

The references here, along with the bibliographies in [1], [125] (for Alexander), [155] (for Aspasius), [171] (for Boethius), [211] (for Philoponus), [248] (for Porphyry), and [330] (for the Byzantine tradition), should give one a good overview of the nature and range of work that has been done and is now currently being done on the ancient commentators.  

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Appendix: Aldus Manutius and the Aristotelian Commentators

In the Preface to his *Thesaurus Cornucopiae* of 1496 (Ren. 9) the famous Venetian printer Aldus Manutius announced that people would “see shortly all of Aristotle’s works which have been extant for a long time, printed on our press”. It has been claimed that this was the first announcement of the monumental Aldine edition of Aristotle published in five folio volumes. In fact the first volume had been published nine months earlier, in November 1495, containing Aristotle’s logical works (the *Organon*) along with Porphyry’s *Introduction* (Ren. 7). But of particular interest in the present context is Aldus’ promise in the following line of the same Preface that “the commentaries to his [Aristotle’s] books will be set in type too, since I was able to collect almost all of them”. And Aldus’ interest in the commentators was evident in the very book in which he wrote this, for among other things it itself contained ‘ex scriptis Ioannis Grammatici de idiomatibus’.

Before turning to consider Aldus’ plans for these commentaries, it might be appropriate to say a little more about the man himself. Aldus Manutius was born around 1451 not far south of Rome. He studied in Rome and later became a tutor himself. In the late 1480s Aldus moved to Venice where he founded the printing firm for which he became world famous. His fame rests on a number of important achievements. He introduced the italic typeface for the first time, combining this with the octavo format to produce a series of compact pocketbooks that could be taken and read almost anywhere, allowing learning to escape from the confines of the medieval library. He published the amazing *Hyperperotomachia Poliphili*, ‘The Strife of Love in a Dream’, by Francesco Colonna (Ren. 21), often and justly described as the most beautiful illustrated book of the fifteenth century. But his legacy is perhaps greatest as a publisher of Greek texts. From Aldus’ press were issued the first printed editions of Herodotus, Thucydides, Aeschylus, ...

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2 This Preface is reproduced and translated in A. Lemke, *Aldus Manutius and his Thesaurus Cornucopiae of 1496* (Syracuse 1958). Both this and the following quotation are from p. 11.
3 See the Introduction by D. P. Bean in Lemke (above n. 2), p. 5.
8 See Davies (n. 4 above), p. 42.
Sophocles, Aristophanes, Plutarch’s *Moralia*, Plato, and, perhaps most importantly of all in the present context, the first printed edition of the works of Aristotle.

The Aristotle edition, described as “the greatest publishing venture of the fifteenth century”, was issued in 5 folio volumes between 1495 and 1498. Yet it was not strictly speaking an edition of Aristotle, as it lacked the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, and included a number of works by other authors, principally Theophrastus. However the omission of the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* – due simply to the fact that Aldus had been unable to obtain copies of these works – was made good later when he published their first editions in 1508 (Ren. 54). And the inclusion of material not by Aristotle is especially relevant here because Aldus’ printing of Porphyry’s *Isagoge* in the first volume of 1495 appears to be the earliest edition of the Greek text of a work by one of Aristotle’s commentators, even if it is not strictly speaking a commentary itself (see the cover image on this volume).

Aldus did indeed go on to try to fulfil his earlier promise to set in type the Aristotelian commentaries. During his lifetime he issued three editions. The first of these was of Ammonius’ commentary on *De Interpretatione*, supplemented with Leo Magentinos on the same, published in June 1503 (Ren. 40). Although not announced on the titlepage, this edition also included Michael Psellos on *De Interpretatione* and ‘Ammonius’ on the *Categories* (actually by Philoponus). March of the following year saw the issue of John Philoponus’ commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, supplemented with an anonymous commentary on the same (Ren. 45). Aldus’ third issue contained Alexander of Aphrodisias’ commentary on the *Topics*, edited by Marcus Musurus, and dated September 1513 in the colophon (Ren. 62). The interval of around a decade between the second and third of these volumes suggests that practical problems may have diverted Aldus from his original intentions, not least the Venetian economic crisis brought on by military campaigns against the French. However he did reaffirm in the Preface to his Alexander volume that he planned to continue with his series of texts devoted to the commentators. But it was not to be, and Aldus died in 1515. The only other commentary that he issued was a Latin edition of Averroes’ comments on the *Prior Analytics*, published much earlier, in 1497.

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10 Davies (n. 4 above), p. 20.
11 For discussion see Lowry (n. 7 above), pp. 234-37, who explicitly draws upon the work of Sicherl; see M. Sicherl, ‘Handschriftliche Vorlagen der Editio princeps des Aristoteles’, repr. in his *Griechische Erstausgaben des Aldus Manutius* (Paderborn 1997), pp. 31-113.
12 But also works by Alexander and Galen, as well as Porphyry’s *Isagoge*.
13 Of course, commentaries had already been published in Latin translation, the first being Themistius’ paraphrases of the *Posterior Analytics*, *Physics*, and *De Anima*, translated by Ermolao Barbaro, in 1481; see Lohr (n. 4 above), p. 25.
14 For comments on the former, see K. Ierodiaconou, ‘Psellos’ Paraphrasis on Aristotle’s *De interpretatione*’, in K. Ierodiaconou, ed., *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources* (Oxford 2002), pp. 157-81, esp. 161-63. For the authorship of the latter see the preface to CAG 13.1.
16 The Preface has the date February 1514, and Aldus may have delayed publication for whatever reasons.
17 See Lowry (n. 7 above), pp. 128-29, 149; Wilson (n. 7 above), p. 145.
18 See Wilson (n. 7 above), p. 152.
19 *Quaestio Averrois in Librum Priorum traducta par Heliam Hebraeum* (Venice 1497), Ren. 14.
Aldus’ publication of Aristotle, the ancient commentators, and ‘the Commentator’ Averroes should be placed within the context of the debates concerning Aristotelianism then taking place at the University of Padua, only twenty miles or so from Venice, and an established market for Venetian publishers of academic books. Padua was, of course, a renowned centre of Latin Averroism. Nicoletto Vernia was the Averroist professor of philosophy there from 1465 to 1499, and was succeeded by Pietro Pomponazzi, who held the chair from 1499 to 1509. Pomponazzi – along with others – had advocated a return to Aristotle free from Averroism, and he drew upon Alexander of Aphrodisias to assist him in his task. It was within this context that in 1497 the Arts Faculty at Padua petitioned the Senate of Venice for a chair devoted to the teaching of Aristotle in Greek. The request was granted, and the position was at one point held by Aldus’ friend Musurus. Thus students at Padua could learn to read Aristotle in Greek, going back to the man himself, free from Averroistic interpretations (ironically, Averroes had intended to do the same, namely, return to Aristotle himself, free from Neoplatonic interpretations). Aldus’ publishing activities were no doubt connected to these events in Padua in an interactive way, with Aldus supplying texts currently in highest demand in Padua, but also making available key texts that would shape the future development of the controversy. It should be noted that the ancient commentators formed a key influence on the Paduan debates concerning Aristotle at this time.

Despite his great achievements, Aldus was not in fact the first person to publish an Aristotelian commentary in Greek. His editions of Ammonius, Philoponus, and Alexander were predated by an edition of Simplicius’ commentary on the Categories and Ammonius’ commentary on Porphyry, issued in October 1499 and May 1500 respectively, by Zacharias Callierges. Callierges was a Cretan scribe turned printer who may have later worked for Aldus. It is unclear to what extent Callierges was a competitor or a collaborator at this point – he was certainly friends with Musurus,

21 See Lowry (n. 7 above), p. 23.
22 However, Vernia later attacked Averroism, turning instead for inspiration to the ancient commentators; see B. P. Copenhaver & C. B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford 1992), pp. 69-70.
24 However, Randall (n. 23 above), p. 270, questions of extent of Alexander’s influence on Pomponazzi. See also Douglas (n. 23 above), pp. 62-66.
25 See n. 15 above.
26 So, one might ask whether a renewed interest in reading Aristotle in Greek led Aldus to publish his famous edition, or whether the appearance of his edition fuelled interest in reading Aristotle in Greek by making the texts more readily available.
27 And it was at Padua, around a century later, that Galileo developed his impetus theory, influenced by Philoponus, either directly or via secondary sources. See C. B. Schmitt, ‘Philoponus’ Commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics* in the 16th Century’, in Sorabji (n. 5 above), pp. 210-30, esp. pp. 225-26.
28 For the details of these publications see Legrand (n. 15 above), no. 24 (vol. 1, p. 62) and no. 27 (vol. 1, p. 72) respectively.
29 For more on Callierges and Vlastos, see R. Proctor, *The Printing of Greek in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford 1900), pp. 117-26; Geanakoplos (n. 15 above), pp. 201-22; Firmin-Didot (n. 7 above), pp. 544-78; Legrand (n. 15 above), vol. 1, pp. cxxv-cxxx.
30 See Lowry (n. 7 above), p. 126; Geanakoplos (n. 15 above), p. 207.
Aldus’ Greek editor 31 (but may also have seen him as a serious rival) 32 – but it is interesting to note that both of these commentary publications were included by Aldus in his own catalogues of 1503 and 1513 (Ren. 334, 338). This might suggest that Aldus welcomed these publications as a contribution to his own project of making available all of the Aristotelian commentaries. However, Proctor reports that Nicolaus Vlastos – Callierges’ business partner and financial backer – applied for a privilege in November 1498 for the exclusive right to publish the Aristotelian commentaries for the next twenty years; 33 presumably in an attempt to undermine Aldus’ project of printing the commentators that, as we have seen, he had already announced in his prefaces of 1495 and 1496. But Aldus soon gained the upper hand when, after printing only the two volumes, Callierges and Vlastos went bankrupt. 34 Aldus bought up their unsold stock when the business went into liquidation, adding it to his own list of titles for sale. 35 The Venetian economic crisis of the first decade of the sixteenth century that held up Aldus’ plans finished off many of his competitors.

Fortunately Aldus’ plans to publish the commentators did not die with him and his successors issued a number of editions, presumably at least some of which would have been based on the manuscripts that Aldus’ had announced that he had been collecting for the task. In total, Aldus and his successors issued 17 volumes of Greek commentaries on Aristotle, containing 23 commentaries (depending upon how one counts) plus a number of related works, the vast majority of which were the first printed editions. The details for these publications are listed below, in chronological order.

Editions Published by Aldus himself before 1515

2. Ioannis Grammatici in Posteriora Resolutoria Aristotelis commentaria. 1504 (Ren. 45)
3. Alexandri Aphrodisiei in Topica Aristotelis, commentarii. 1513 (Ren. 62)

Editions published by Aldus’ successors after 1515

4. Alexandri Aphrodisiensis, in Priora Analytica Aristotelis, commentaria. 1520 (Ren. 89)
5. Alexandri Aphrodisiensis, in Sophisticos Aristotelis Elenchos, commentaria. 1520 (Ren. 89)
6. Simplicii commentariorum in octo Aristotelis Physicae auscultationis libros cum ipso Aristotelis textu. 1526 (Ren. 102)
7. Simplicii commentariorum in quatuor Aristotelis libros De Coelo, cum textu eiusdem. 1526 (Ren. 102)
8. Simplicii commentariorum in tres libros Aristotelis De Anima. Alexandri Aphrodisiei commentaria in librum De Sensu, & Sensibili. Michaelis Ephesii annotations in

31 See Geanakoplos (n. 15 above), p. 211; Proctor (n. 29 above), p. 8.
32 See Proctor (n. 29 above), p. 117.
33 See Proctor (n. 29 above), p. 120.
34 See Lowry (n. 7 above), pp. 127-29. However Callierges did start printing again, much later; see Geanakoplos (n. 15 above), pp. 211-12.
35 See Proctor (n. 29 above), p. 117.


10. Omnia Themistii Opera, hoc est Paraphrases, et Orationes, Alexandri Aphrodisiensis libri duo De Anima, et De Fato unus. 1534 (Ren. 111)

11. Ioannes Grammatici in Posteriora Resolutoria Aristotelis, commentarium. Incerti authoris in eadem. Eustratii in eadem. 1534 (Ren. 113)

12. Ioannes Philoponi Grammatici commentaria in primos quatuor Aristotelis libros De Naturali auscultatione. 1535 (Ren. 114)

13. Eustratii et aliorum insignium peripateticorum commentaria in libros decem Aristotelis De Moribus ad Nicomachum, una cum textu suis in locis adiecto. 1536 (Ren. 116)

14. Ammonii Hermiae in Quinque Voces Porphyrii commentarius, correctionibus quamplurimus, & locorum imaginibus illustratus. 1546 (Ren. 135)

15. Ammonii Hermiae in Praedicamenta Aristotelis commentarius. Aristotelis vita. 1546 (Ren. 135)

16. Ammonii Hermiae in Aristotelis De Interpretatione librum commentarius. 1546 (Ren. 135)

17. Olymпиодori Philosophi Alexandrini in Meteora Aristotelis commentariae. Ioannis Grammatici Philoponi scholia in primum Meteorum Aristotelis. 1551 (Ren. 151)

This, then, is the contribution of Aldus and his heirs to the dissemination of the Aristotelian commentators. Beyond the two earlier publications by Callierges, Renouard notes just two other publications of ancient commentaries at this time. Thus the Aldine Press was responsible for issuing the first editions of the contents of well over half of the CAG, not to mention a number of shorter pieces by Alexander that appear in the CAG Suppl. and a number of Byzantine commentaries not in CAG at all. Aldus and his heirs also published in anthologies a number of other minor pieces by Alexander (Ren. 11, 45, 65), Ammonius (Ren. 13, 99), Philoponus (Ren. 9, 58, 99), Porphyry (Ren. 13, 77, 91), and Priscian (Ren. 13, 77, 97, 103).

Of course none of these editions stand up to the scrutiny to which one might subject a modern critical edition. As one authority has put it (with regard to the edition of

36 A reissue of the 1504 edition, but supplemented with the commentary by Eustratius.

37 This volume may not have been by Aldus, but by Zanetti, but it is listed in Renouard’s catalogue.

38 Previously issued by Callierges in 1500.


40 Also previously printed in Aldus’ 1503 edition.

41 These are Philoponus in De Anima (1535) and Philoponus in Priora Analytica (1536), but note also Philoponus Contra Proclum (1535) and Alexander Quaestiones (1536); see Ren. 114-115. A further possibility is noted at Ren. 102.


Aristotle), ‘Aldine editorship was more like an academic wheel of fortune than a controlled system of scholarly criticism’. However, it would be unfair to judge Aldus’ efforts by the standards of modern scholarship, as this would devalue his incredible achievement of publishing such a large corpus of works for the very first time. This achievement places all those who are interested in Aristotle and the Aristotelian commentary tradition permanently in his debt.

^4^ Lowry (n. 7 above), p. 237. For critical comments on an Aldine edition from the perspective of modern scholarship see Ierodiakonou (n. 14 above), pp. 161-63.