
MELPOMENI VOGIATZI, *Byzantine Commentaries on Aristotle’s Rhetoric. Anonymous and Stephanus*, In *Artem Rhetoricam Commentaria (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina 8)*. Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter 2019. 268 pp. – ISBN: 978-3-11-062675-9 (€ 109.95)

- JOSÉ MAKSIMCZUK, University of Hamburg
(jose.maksimczuk@uni-hamburg.de)

Byzantine Commentaries has the enormous merit of offering the first major (comparative) study of two 12th-century Greek commentaries on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, namely Anonymous and Stephanus, *In Artem rhetoricam Commentaria* (CAG 21,2).¹

The contents of the book is as follows: 1. Introduction (pp. 1–34); 2. Rhetorical Arguments in the *Commentaries to the Rhetoric* (pp. 35–79); 3. Topoi of Fallacious Arguments in the *Commentaries on Rhetoric* II.24 (pp. 80–142); 4. Ethical Definitions in the *Commentaries to the Rhetoric* (pp. 143–174); 5. Emotions in the *Commentaries to the Rhetoric* (pp. 175–216); 6. The Account of the Style in the *Commentaries on Rhetoric* III (pp. 217–254); 7. Conclusions (pp. 255–257). A list of the quoted literature (pp. 257–265) and an index of names and terms complete the volume (pp. 267–268).

The first chapter focuses on the general characteristics of both commentaries. Here, VOGIATZI proposes numerous innovative views of the cultural setting in which the commentaries were produced. Arguably, the most significant contribution in the introductory section is the discussion of An.’s identity. In pp. 18–31, VOGIATZI argues extensively against Michael of Ephesus as being An.’s identity, and proposes an alternative view, that An. is the same (anonymous) scholar who wrote a commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* VII. VOGIATZI supports her hypothesis convincingly with a comparative analysis of the style and format in which the two commentaries were written. Importantly, VOGIATZI also adduces evidence that An. had “an exceptional knowledge” of *Nicomachean Ethics* VII. Significant for the general understanding of the two treatises is VOGIATZI’s demonstration of their intellectual purpose (rather than practical), countering previous scholarly views (pp. 5–6). VOGIATZI’s argument is compelling: the

1. In the following I will refer to the Anonymous as An. and Stephanus as St. In turn, I will use *An. comm.* and *St. comm.* for their works.

“constant references to Aristotelian works” (p. 6) betray a readership with expertise in philosophy, rather than an addressee merely interested in practical rhetoric. Overall, the introduction is very detailed and well-structured. From my perspective, the only missing points are a discussion on the number of manuscripts in which the *Commentaries on the Rhetoric* are transmitted and a more detailed description of the state (of incompleteness) in which the works, especially that by St., have come down to us. A study of the manuscript transmission of both works might give the reader an idea of the popularity of both commentaries in the Middle Ages. Moreover, it might shed some light on the way the commentaries were used and read over time.

In chapters 2–6, VOGIATZI first exposes the main concepts to be studied in each chapter (or subsection) as they are presented by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* and other treatises of the *Corpus Aristotelicum* (especially in those that are part of the *Organon*). VOGIATZI does not limit her task to a mere presentation and comparison of such topics, but provides a detailed discussion based on Late Antique, Byzantine, and modern interpretations of the *loci* in question. Consideration of the Aristotelian passages is followed by an exposition of their interpretations in both commentaries. Here, VOGIATZI proceeds always in the same way, namely, placing the interpretation in *An. comm.* first, and *St. comm.* second.² The decision of starting with *An. comm.* makes perfect sense, for *St. comm.* omits the discussion of several points of the *Rhetoric* that are part of the study in *An. comm.* Moreover, as VOGIATZI argues, St. read and commented upon *An. comm.* (p. 17).

One of the most significant aggregated values of the book is the comparison, or rather “dialogue” (p. 34), between Late Antique, Byzantine, and moderns interpretations of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, which is a feature that makes VOGIATZI’s contribution profitable not only for Byzantinists but also for scholars studying the reception of (Aristotelian) rhetoric beyond the time and spatial boundaries of the Byzantine Empire. Importantly, VOGIATZI provides English translations in the body of the text for all the passages she discusses, with the Greek text quoted in footnotes. This makes the book accessible and useful for scholars with a limited understanding of Greek. Translations of excerpts from *St.* and *An. commentaries* are VO-

2. An exception is ch. 5, where VOGIATZI discusses Stephanus’ work before Anonymous’. However, this structure is justified: Stephanus barely touched upon the topic of emotions.

GIATZI's; for those from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* the author relies mostly on KENNEDY's translation. Importantly, VOGIATZI's method of quoting is not just a mechanical transcription from RABE's edition or KENNEDY's translation. It improves on the *CAG* printed text on several occasions by reference to the manuscripts in which the treatises are contained (e.g., p. 44 n. 23, p. 70 n. 68), or through her own (or someone else's suggested) conjectures (e.g., p. 72 n. 71). This is similar to the translation of the *Rhetoric*, for VOGIATZI discussed some points of KENNEDY's version and offers a different interpretation that can be given to the Greek text (e.g., p. 168 n. 58).

Byzantine Commentaries is a well-documented, reader-friendly book. VOGIATZI's analysis of *An. comm.* and *St. comm.* is a contribution of outstanding quality, which will become essential for an understanding of the reception of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in Byzantium and beyond and, hopefully, stimulate further research.

Keywords

Aristotle; commentary; rhetoric; Stephanos