

1911 Encyclopædia Britannica, Volume 1 — Alexander of Aphrodisias



Exported from Wikisource on July 9, 2024

ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS, pupil of Aristocles of Messene, the most celebrated of the Greek commentators on the writings of Aristotle, and styled, by way of pre-eminence, ὁ ἐξηγητής (“the expositor”), was a native of Aphrodisias in Caria. He came to Athens towards the end of the 2nd century A.D., became head of the Lyceum and lectured on peripatetic philosophy. The object of his work was to free the doctrine from the syncretism of Ammonius and to reproduce the pure doctrine of Aristotle. Commentaries by Alexander on the following works of Aristotle are still extant:—the *Analytica Priora*, i.; the *Topica*; the *Meteorologica*; the *De Sensu*; and the *Metaphysica*, i.-v., together with an abridgment of what he wrote on the remaining books of the *Metaphysica*. His commentaries were greatly esteemed among the Arabians, who translated many of them. There are also several original writings by Alexander still extant. The most important of these are a work *On Fate*, in which he argues against the Stoic doctrine of necessity; and one *On the Soul*, in which he contends that the undeveloped reason in man is material (νοῦς ὑλικός) and inseparable from the body. He argued strongly against the doctrine of immortality. He identified the active intellect (νοῦς ποιητικός), through whose agency the potential intellect in man becomes actual, with God. Several of Alexander’s works were published in the Aldine edition of Aristotle, Venice, 1495–1498; his *De Fato* and *De Anima* were printed along with the works of Themistius at Venice (1534); the former work, which has

been translated into Latin by Grotius and also by Schulthess, was edited by J. C. Orelli, Zürich, 1824; and his commentaries on the *Metaphysica* by H. Bonitz, Berlin, 1847. J. Nourisson has treated of his doctrine of fate (*De la liberté et du hazard*, Paris, 1870). In the early Renaissance his doctrine of the soul's mortality was adopted by P. Pomponazzi against the Thomists and the Averroists.

See [PERIPATETICS](#) (*ad fin.*); [ALEXANDRISTS](#); [POMPONAZZI, PIETRO](#); also A. Apelt, "Die schrift d. Alex. v. Aphr.," *Philologus*, xlv., 1886; C. Ruelle, "Alex. d'Aphr. et le prétendu Alex. d'Alexandrie," *Rev. des études grecques*, v., 1892; E. Zeller's *Outlines of Gk. Phil.* (Eng. trans., ed. 1905, p.296).

About this digital edition

This e-book comes from the online library [Wikisource](#). This multilingual digital library, built by volunteers, is committed to developing a free accessible collection of publications of every kind: novels, poems, magazines, letters...

We distribute our books for free, starting from works not copyrighted or published under a free license. You are free to use our e-books for any purpose (including commercial exploitation), under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 Unported](#) license or, at your choice, those of the [GNU FDL](#).

Wikisource is constantly looking for new members. During the transcription and proofreading of this book, it's possible that we made some errors. You can report them at [this page](#).

The following users contributed to this book:

- Xover
- Slowking4
- DivermanAU
- Matancha~enwikisource
- Suslindisambiguator
- CalendulaAsteraceae