

Byzantine Philosophy B'

Linos G. Benakis, *Byzantine Philosophy B'*, Athens 2013, pp. 544.

KATELIS S. VIGLAS / Volos /

After the publication of a volume with texts and studies on Byzantine Philosophy in 2002,¹ Prof. Dr. Linos Benakis recently published a second relevant volume. In this edition, the author treasured his experience of twelve years of writing and research from 2002 to 2013. Moreover, he presents (pp. 263–396) the main part of his Ph.D dissertation in German,² which remained unpublished because it presupposed the existence of a critical edition of Michael Psellos' unpublished *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, which was edited by the same author – “with very excusable delay” (p. 5) – in 2008.³

Volume B does not contain editions of Byzantine philosophical texts, as does volume A, but extensive Introductions to the first critical edition of two important Byzantine texts in Modern Greek: Michael Psellus' *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*,⁴ and

¹ Benakis (2002).

² Benakis (1960).

³ Michael Psellos (2008).

⁴ See note above.

Theodore of Smyrna, *Epitome of the Ancients' Discussions on Nature and its Principles* (12thcent.). Of the texts reprinted in L. Benakis' book, special importance is placed on papers and lectures that provide up-to-date information on the current situation and development in the field of Byzantine Philosophy studies.

The book is divided into five sections. The first section (*Overviews*, pp. 11–37) includes three reports of research on Byzantine Philosophy. In the second section (*Byzantium and the West*, pp. 39–58), there are also three studies: a) “Latin literature in Byzantium. The meeting point of two cultures”, b) “On Aristotle in Western Europe. A timely conversation” and c) “The Knowledge of the Sources of Byzantine Philosophy in Western Europe from the Renaissance to K. Krumbacher”. In the third section (*Plato and Aristotle in Byzantium*, pp. 59–110), the author places six texts on the presence and influence of Plato and Aristotle in Byzantium. In the fourth and most extensive of all the sections (*Special Topics*, pp. 111–146), there are eight particular texts (among them the translations in Greek of the Introductions to the major publications of Byzantine philosophical texts which have already been mentioned), a study on the influence of George Gemistos Plethon on the Neo-Hellenic thought and research, a study on the profound researcher of the work of the philosopher of Mystras, Chris Woodhouse, a study on the teaching of philosophy in the Phanar Greek Orthodox College, with emphasis on the cases of Plethon's rival George Scholarius Gennadius II and the Greek Neo-Aristotelian philosopher Theophilus Corydalleus. The attribution of the due price to the initiator of the study of Byzantine Philosophy and teacher of Linos Benakis, Basil Tatakis, is not missing here. The fifth and final section (*Entries in Dictionaries*, pp. 493–503) includes entries in dictionaries on Byzantine philosophers (Michael Psellos, Gemistos Plethon, Basilios Bessarion, Leo the Philosopher, George of Trebizond). The book closes with analytical indexes of names (pp. 505–516), the contents of the first volume of *Byzantine Philosophy* (pp. 517–520) and a detailed bibliography (and complementary bibliography 2002–2013) of the author (pp. 521–534).

The usefulness and the value of this second volume of studies lies, on the one hand, in highlighting the many faces of the field of Byzantine Philosophy, and on the other, in showing that the issues the Byzantines philosophers dealt with, are governed by certain principles and are characterized, despite their diversity, by structural and conceptual unity and cohesion. Benakis' interpretive approaches display careful and respectful handling of the sources. Yet, the bibliographic information for a field of research which the last fifty years has experienced a phenomenal boom, to which the author of this volume has contributed substantially, impresses the reader.

Comparing volume A with volume B, we find that, since volume A is divided into two main sections (a. papers dealing with the systematic side of philosophy, and b. articles on the history of philosophy), it undoubtedly contains more specialized issues, including more Byzantine philosophers and more concepts. However, volume B is supplementary to volume A, because it gives information on new research developments, while also allowing the reader to form a more complete picture of Linos Benakis' long history of engagement in this field. In addition, it strengthens the author's opinion, worded by the

him decades ago, that the time is not yet ripe for writing a new manual of Byzantine Philosophy, since much more has to be done: edition of unpublished Byzantine philosophical texts, monographs, comparative studies, etc. Nevertheless, as he puts it optimistically (p. 26), “we are very close, we are proceeding apace”.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BENAKIS, L.G., 2002, *Byzantine Philosophy. Texts and Studies*, Athens.

BENAKIS, L.G., 1960, *Studien zu den Aristoteles-Kommentaren des Michael Psellos* (Diss. Köln).

MICHAEL PSELLOS, 2008, *Kommentar zur Physik des Aristoteles*, L.G. Benakis (ed.), Athens.