

Abstract: The anonymous Armenian commentary was transmitted together with the Armenian translation of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* (sixth century or earlier). It was composed in the Hellenising style and commonly associated with the figure of David the Invincible, a philosopher of the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria. This article presents a general structural analysis of the commentary followed by a comparative study and translation of its first chapter. It argues that the commentary was indeed written in the tradition of late antique Greek commentaries but was probably not associated with late Neoplatonism. The Armenian commentary shares many common features with Ammonius' commentary, but also departs from it on many crucial aspects. From a philosophical standpoint, it has much more in common with Boethius' and Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentaries than with those of the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria, thus suggesting an early writing date.

Keywords: Commentaries on Aristotle, *Peri Hermeneias*, *De Interpretatione*, Armenian

ON ARISTOTLE'S *PERI HERMENEIAS* 16A1–18

THE CASE OF AN ANONYMOUS ARMENIAN COMMENTARY*

Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* (also commonly known under the title *De Interpretatione*) was translated in several ancient languages, including Armenian, Latin and Syriac. The Armenian version of the text, together with a translation of the *Categories*, was formerly attributed to David the Invincible, a Neoplatonic philosopher of the Alexandrian school of Olympiodorus (sixth century) about whom very little is known. Such an attribution has since been questioned on various grounds and the Armenian translation of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* is now largely considered as an anonymous work. It was composed in the style of the so-called Hellenizing School (*Yunaban Dproc*) and described by the English scholar F.C. Conybeare as "little more than Greek written with Armenian words".¹ Although such a translation is difficult to understand without a proper grasp of Greek, it is inestimable when it comes to establishing the

* I would like to thank Katerina Ierodiakonou for having allowed me to discuss the Armenian commentary in her Master's seminar at the University of Geneva, and Valentina Calzolari for having organized an *impromptu* Armenian class at the same university. I would also like to thank Aram Topchyan for having so graciously sent me the PDF version of his edition, Adrian Pirtea for having shared with me valuable information about the Syriac translation made by George of the Arabs and Marco Della Motta for having proofread this article. Last but not least, I would like to thank Agnès Ouzounian, an amazing linguist of the Armenian language, for having accepted to work with me on this difficult text during the summer session of 2019 at the ABELAO (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium).

¹ F.C. Conybeare, *Anecdota Oxoniensia, A Collation with the Ancient Armenian Versions of the Greek Text of Aristotle's Categories and De Interpretatione* (Oxford, 1892), v.

ancient Greek text on which it is based. Indeed, the Armenian translation, which is contemporary with Boethius' translation and that by the anonymous Syriac, is older than all the medieval manuscripts that have preserved the Greek text of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*.²

In some of the most recent manuscripts, the translation of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* is followed by an entire commentary on its fourteen chapters. In the majority of manuscripts, though, the translation is divided into several parts (*lemmata*) and intertwined with the commentary so as to form a unique whole.³ Due to the style in which it was composed, it is not known with certainty if the commentary was originally written in Armenian or translated from Greek. The exact date of its redaction is also unknown. Its link with the Armenian translation of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* suggests an early date (sixth century or before), as do many other factors such as its style, the originality of its structure or the absence of any references

² The Armenian translation of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* and its commentary belong to the second group of the Hellenizing translations, which precedes the second decade of sixth century (Arevsatyan) or the first half of the seventh century (Manandean). See: V. Calzolari, 'David et la tradition arménienne' in V. Calzolari and J. Barnes (eds.), *L'œuvre de David l'Invincible, Commentaria in Aristotelem Armeniaca –Davidis Opera*, (Leiden and Boston, 2009), 16–20; B. Contin, *David l'Arménien et l'école d'Alexandrie. Recherches sur le vocabulaire épistémologique de la tradition textuelle grecque et arménienne* (Rome, 2017). A. Topchyan, *David the Invincible, Commentary on Aristotle's Prior Analytics* (Leiden, 2010), 4–5. The anonymous Syriac translation of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* has been attributed to Proba (sixth century) in one manuscript. See: H. Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque* (Paris, 2004), 11, 58 and 60.

³ F.C. Conybeare (n. 1), v. Conybeare wrongly thought that the commentary on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* was incomplete (xxv–xxvii).

suggestive of Christian authorship. Moreover, the author of the commentary is not known with certitude. Some manuscripts contain the name of David, others that of a certain “Amelaxos” (in which some scholars have seen a deformation of “Amphilochius” or “Iamblichus”),⁴ while others simply do not name the commentator. What is certain, however, is that the commentary was composed by someone who was highly familiar with Greek culture and had access, directly or indirectly, to Aristotelian treatises and Platonic dialogues that were not known to have been translated in Armenian.

As few ancient commentaries on Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias* have survived in their entirety, the anonymous Armenian commentary represents an important source of information not only for the study of ancient philosophy but also for the history of its reception. Notwithstanding this fact, the commentary has never been translated in any modern language nor studied from a philosophical point of view. In the following pages, I intend to reverse the situation by presenting a general analysis of its structure and by studying the content of its first chapter from a comparative philosophical standpoint (an original translation will also be given in an annex). My intentions are not to solve the mystery surrounding the authorship or dating of the anonymous Armenian commentary but rather to situate it within the rich ancient exegetical tradition based on Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias*. By comparing it with the other commentaries written on the subject, one will be in a better place to judge the context in which it was composed and thus its provenance. As we shall see in the following pages, the comparative analysis will reveal that the anonymous Armenian commentary was indeed written in the tradition of late antique Greek commentaries. However, its author was probably not affiliated with the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria or associated with late Neoplatonism. In fact, the anonymous commentator shared common ground with Alexander of Aphrodisias and

⁴ See: J.-P. Mahé, ‘Amelaxos’ in R. Goulet (ed.), *DPhA*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1989), 160.

Boethius (who admittedly followed Porphyry, a representative of early Neoplatonism), thus suggesting that the commentary may be older than previously thought or anterior to all the other commentaries preserved to this day.

STRUCTURE AND STYLE

In its modern edition published in 2016 by Aram Topchyan⁵, the Armenian commentary is presented in a bipartite way: the segmented translation of Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias* is first given, preceded by the term “Text” (բաճ), then an explanation of the text is provided, preceded by the term “Interpretation” (մեկնութիւն). The entire commentary—and thus, the complete translation of Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias*—is segmented into forty-one sections, called “chapters” (or “lectures” [պրաւք]). These forty-one sections are further divided into four main chapters (also called պրաւք): 1) chapter 1, separated in four parts, covers the first chapter of Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias* (16a1–18) and has no specific title; 2) chapter 2, divided in two parts, encompasses the second chapter of Aristotle’s text (16a19–16b5) and is entitled “On noun”; 3) chapter 3, separated in four parts, covers the third chapter of Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias* (16b6–25) and is entitled “On verb”; 4) finally, chapter 4, divided in thirty-two parts, encompasses chapters 4 to 14 (16b26–24b9) and is entitled “On sentences (բաճ [λόγος])”. As is clear to see, the division of the Armenian commentary is asymmetrical: the first three chapters cover the first three chapters of the Aristotelian text, whereas the last chapter encompasses no less than eleven chapters.

⁵ A. Topchyan, Յաղագս մեկնութեան՝ Պերիարմենիաս, Մեկնութիւն Ստորոգութեանցն Արիստոտէլի, Մատենագիրք հայոց, ԺԷ հատոր, ԺԱ դար, Երևան, 2016, Յաւելուած, էջ 787–979.

The division of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* in fourteen chapters is a late invention and was most likely inherited from medieval times. The Armenian commentary illustrates this aspect clearly: the way in which Aristotle's translated text is divided reveals that the medieval division of chapters 4 and 5, 5 and 6, 8 and 9, and 12 and 13 was still not fixed at the time the Armenian commentary was written or translated. Indeed, the anonymous commentator discusses 16b33–17a15 (ch. 4 and 5), 17a23–37 (ch. 5 and 6), 18a12–33 (ch. 8 and 9) and 21b33–22a31 (ch. 12 and 13) as if they were *lemmata* of a continuous text that could not be further divided. Such a segmentation, which has not been observed in other commentaries, could point to an ancient division of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* predating the Middle-Ages or even Late Antiquity.

Ammonius' commentary on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*, the oldest commentary on the subject that has been preserved in its entirety, has had a major influence on the way Aristotle's text was divided in Late Antiquity and medieval times. Ammonius dissects the *Peri Hermeneias* into five parts (κεφάλαια or τμήματα): 1) 16a1–17a37 (ch. 1–6); 2) 17a38–19b19 (ch. 6–10); 3) 19b19–21a33 (ch. 10–11); 4) 21a34–23a26 (ch. 12–13); 5) 23a27–24b9 (ch. 14). Such a division was followed not only by authors of the Alexandrian School such as Stephanus, but also by Syriac (Proba and George of the Arabs [in his translation]), Arabic (Al-Farabi) or Byzantine commentators (Psellus and Gennadius). As for the Armenian commentary, it does not follow the traditional Alexandrian division of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* into five parts, which may have originated with Ammonius⁶. This fact could indicate that the anonymous

⁶ It may also have originated with Proclus in Athens. See: L. Tarán, *Anonymous Commentary on Aristotle's De interpretation (Codex Parisinus Graecus 2064)* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1978), xvi. On the form of Proba's commentary, see: H. Hugonnard-Roche (n. 2), 61.

commentator was not affiliated with the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria or, simply, not influenced by it.

This last hypothesis is further supported by the absence of a proper “Neoplatonic” introduction in the Armenian commentary. It is firmly established that Alexandrian Neoplatonic commentators followed strict rules when it came to writing their commentary on Aristotle’s logical treatises. Indeed, commentaries pertaining to the *Categories*, *Peri Hermeneias* and *First Analytics* would normally cover six points in their introduction: they would discuss the objective of the treatise (σκοπός), its utility, its authenticity, its place in the *Organon*, its title and its division in chapters.⁷ As for the Armenian commentary, it contains a brief introduction (thirteen lines), but it is not part of an independent chapter. This brief introduction is instead presented in the discussion of the first sentence of the *Peri Hermeneias* (16a1–2) and does not address all the points normally addressed by Alexandrian Neoplatonic commentators.

It is important to note at this point that some Alexandrian Neoplatonic commentators did not always follow such strict composition rules. For instance, Stephanus’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias* has no introduction and starts abruptly with a discussion of the first sentence of Aristotle’s text. Despite this fact, Stephanus is generally considered as a member of the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria since his commentary follows not only Ammonius’ division of the treatise into five parts but also Olympiodorus’ division of lectures into λέξεις and θεωρία (a division also adopted by David, Elias and Proba—who were most likely pupils of Olympiodorus). The Armenian commentary thus resembles Stephanus’ commentary as it does not contain a separate introduction but differs from it in not following the Ammonian nor the

⁷ I. Hadot, ‘Les introductions aux commentaires exégétiques chez les auteurs néoplatoniciens et les auteurs chrétiens’ in M. Tardieu (ed.), *Les règles de l’interprétation* (Paris, 1987), 105.

Introductions to Aristotle’s *Categories* would have additional ten points.

Olympiodoran divisions so common for Alexandrian Neoplatonic commentators. This fact could again suggest the anonymous commentator was not affiliated with the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria or, simply, not influenced by its hermeneutical method.

The Armenian commentary also differs from all the other late antique Greek commentaries written on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* in one particular respect: apart from a brief mention of Alexander of Aphrodisias (20b12–30), it names no other commentators nor discusses explicitly their interpretative thesis. To a certain extent, it resembles Boethius' first commentary on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*, which mostly adhered to the λέξις of the Aristotelian text and was composed for less advanced students. Likewise, the Armenian commentary seems to be intended for a public not entirely familiar with Aristotelian logic. Its main objective is to explain the Aristotelian text and not to discuss difficult hermeneutical issues. That said, the anonymous commentator is familiar with the work of other commentators as he often follows a similar interpretative route. In other words, the Armenian commentary was not written in a cultural or intellectual vacuum. It has strong links with late antique commentaries written on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* but, because of its primary objective, which appears to be similar to modern annotated editions or commented translations intended for a general public or beginner students, it did not position itself explicitly in an interpretative debate indicative of more advanced philosophical teachings.

Unlike most commentaries written by pupils of Ammonius and Olympiodorus, the Armenian commentary does not consist of notes taken in class by students. There is no indication at the beginning of the text that it was written ἀπὸ φωνῆς (“from the voice of...”). Moreover, it does not appear to be the work of a Christian author. Contrary to commentators such as Stephanus or David, there is no indication in the text that it was written σὺν θεῷ (“with the help of God”). Unlike Proba, the anonymous commentator also never utilizes examples

from the Bible to illustrate logical points.⁸ In fact, the majority of the examples used by the anonymous commentator are taken from Greek pagan culture. These facts could suggest the Armenian commentary was the fruit of a pagan rather than a Christian author.

As stated in the introduction, it is difficult to establish with certainty whether the commentary was originally written in Greek or Armenian. The writing style of the commentary is suggestive of a translation: it is slavishly literal and resembles, to reiterate Conybeare's words, "Greek written with Armenian words". A simple example will suffice to illustrate this point. In the Armenian commentary, the author often applies a grammatical rule specific to ancient Greek. This rule, commonly illustrated by the exemplary sentence "Τὰ ζῶα τρέχει", stipulates that a verb must be conjugated in the singular if its subject is a plural neutral noun. Such a grammatical rule simply does not exist in the Armenian language and yet the anonymous commentator uses it several times. Such an example strongly suggests that the commentary was the result of a literal translation from Greek to Armenian. The issue is, however, unsettled: it is equally probable that the commentary was originally written in Armenian. For instance, in the commentary of chapter 2, the commentator uses examples from the Armenian language to illustrate the conventional character of language: "Greeks say ἄνθρωπος while Armenians say մարդ". Although such examples could also be the fruit of an interpolation made by a scribe, an assiduous reader or by the translator (if the commentary is indeed the product of a translation from Greek to Armenian), they strongly suggest the commentary was indeed written in Armenian as the commentator explicitly gave an Armenian equivalent to a Greek term. Only a thorough linguistic and philological analysis could settle this issue, which goes beyond the aim and scope of the present study.

⁸ H. Hugonnard-Roche (n. 2), 278.

The Armenian commentary on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* is thus original in many respects. The analysis of its form suggests it is probably independent from the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria. Significantly, all the extant commentaries on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* that have been preserved in Greek before the Arab conquest were linked to that particular school. As for the commentaries in other ancient languages, they were mostly tributary to the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria or influenced by it. The Armenian commentary could thus shed new light on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* and the history of its interpretation. Moreover, since the commentary does not seem to be linked with the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria, that its author does not appear to be a Christian and that it contains divisions of the Aristotelian text seemingly predating the Middle Ages or even Late Antiquity, it may therefore have been written before the fifth or sixth century, consequently preceding all the commentaries preserved to the present day. However, the commentary could not have been written before the second or third century as it discusses Alexander of Aphrodisias' interpretation of Aristotle's *Topics*.⁹ Lastly, the absence of a clear influence by the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria highly suggests that David the Invincible could not have been the author of our commentary. The commentator is anonymous and it is not known with certitude whether he was of Greek or Armenian origin.

⁹ More precisely, if the commentary was originally written in Greek, its *terminus post quem* would be the second or third century (because of the mention of Alexander of Aphrodisias). However, if it was originally composed in Armenian, its *terminus post quem* would rather be the fifth century as the Armenian alphabet was only developed around 405 by Mesrop Mashtots. The commentary, be it originally written in Greek or Armenian, could not have been composed after the thirteenth century (*terminus ante quem*), which corresponds to the date of the oldest manuscript containing it.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CHAPTER 1

Although Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* was the object of constant exegesis during Antiquity and Late Antiquity, few commentaries from that period have been preserved in Greek. The extant commentaries written by Aspasius (first or second century), Herminus (second century), Alexander of Aphrodisias (second or third century), Porphyry (third century), Iamblichus (third or fourth century), Syrianus (fifth century), Olympiodorus (sixth century) and Philoponus (sixth century) are now lost.¹⁰ Only the commentaries written by Ammonius (fifth or sixth century), Stephanus (sixth or seventh century) and the Anonymous of Tarán (sixth or seventh century?) remain in Greek, completed by the Latin commentary of Boethius (sixth century) and the Syriac commentary of Proba (sixth century)¹¹. How does the Armenian commentary compare with

¹⁰ Some fragments of these lost commentaries can however be found in other commentators. Theophrastus (fourth or third century B.C.) and Proclus (fifth century) may also have written a commentary on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*. On the question, see: M. Bonelli, 'Alexandre d'Aphrodise et le *De Interpretatione*' in S. Husson (ed.), *Interpréter le De Interpretatione* (Paris, 2009), 51–4.

¹¹ Very short commentaries or introductions written during that period have also survived in Syriac, for instance a short "explanation" from Paul the Persian (sixth century) and a brief introduction from George of the Arabs (seventh or eighth century). Only the text of Paul the Persian has been edited and translated: H. Hugonnard-Roche, 'Sur la lecture tardo-antique du *Peri Hermeneias* d'Aristote: Paul le Perse et la tradition d'Ammonius', *Studia graeco-arabica*, 3, 2013, 37–104. Numerous Arabic and Byzantine commentaries were also written on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*. Although I have consulted these commentaries as part of this research, I will not include them in the analysis as the comparative study focusses only on

them? How can it be situated within the rich ancient exegetical tradition on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*? As the reader shall see in the following pages, the Armenian commentary shares common features with commentaries written during that specific period. However, from a philosophical point of view, it departs more than once from the exegesis of Ammonius and the school of Alexandria while agreeing with Boethius and Alexander of Aphrodisias.¹² The following comparative analysis will be divided in four parts, corresponding to the four-fold division of the first chapter.

commentaries written during Late Antiquity. With regard to the Arabic or Byzantine traditions, see: F.W. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's De Interpretatione* (Oxford, 1981), lxxviii–cl; A. Benmakhlouf and S. Diebler, *Averroès Commentaire moyen sur le De Interpretatione* (Paris, 2000), 16–39; K. Ierodiakonou, 'The Byzantine reception of Aristotle's theory of meaning', *Methodos* (19), 2019, 2–4.

¹² The following comparative analysis will focus predominantly on the commentaries written by Ammonius, Stephanus and Boethius. The anonymous Greek commentary edited by L. Tarán will not be used as it only starts at chapter 2. As for Proba's commentary, it is unfortunately not available in English. In the next pages, I will use the following editions and translations: A. Busse, *Ammonius in Aristotelis de interpretatione commentaries, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 4.5* (Berlin, 1897), 1–272; D.L. Blank, *Ammonius: On Aristotle On Interpretation 1–8* (London, 2013); K. Meiser, *Anicii Manlii Severini Boetii Commentarii in librum Aristotelis, Peri hermeneias* (Lipsiae, 1877–80); A. Smith, *Boethius: On Aristotle On Interpretation 1–3* (London 2014); M. Hayduck, *Stephani in librum Aristotelis de interpretatione commentarium, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 18.3* (Berlin, 1885), 1–68; W. Charlton, *Stephanus: On Aristotle On Interpretation* (London, 2014).

*Chapter 1, section 1: Commentary on Aristotle's Peri Hermeneias 16.1–2*¹³

The first chapter begins with a short introduction in which the anonymous commentator (hereafter, the Commentator) tackles the treatise's place in the logical corpus, its objective and its division. From the first sentence on, the Commentator informs his readers that he is not a novice: he had already taught or written about logical matters (“we have said *before* that the goal of this logical discipline is to arrive at demonstrative syllogisms” [1.1.1]). Like his peers, he firmly believes that the objective of logic is to master demonstrative syllogism, which is the object of Aristotle's *Second Analytics*.

The Commentator then presents a list of subjects that any student must master in order to gain expertise in demonstrative syllogisms. This list mirrors the traditional reading order of the *Organon* preconized by ancient commentators. In order to master demonstrative syllogisms, it is necessary to acquire a knowledge of syllogism *per se* and all the existing types of syllogism. Such a knowledge will not only help to master the demonstrative syllogism but also avoid errors in reasoning. Moreover, it is necessary to learn about premises or propositions as syllogisms are composed of them. The first paragraph of the Armenian commentary suggests that the Commentator adheres to the following reading order of the *Organon*: 1) the *Peri Hermeneias*, which covers premises or propositions; 2) the *First Analytics*, which studies “what a syllogism is” and the various forms it takes; 3) the *Second Analytics*, which represents the consecration of the logical science, namely demonstration. The Commentator does not once discuss the *Categories* which, according to the traditional reading order, precedes the *Peri Hermeneias*.

¹³ See the Annex for the complete translation. The translation is presented according to a three points system: the first number refers to the chapter, the second to the section and the third one to the paragraph (thus 1.1.2 will refer to the second paragraph of the first section of chapter 1). For greater simplicity, I have used the Greek equivalent of Armenian terms whenever possible.

Such an omission could be explained by the fact that he already taught or wrote about the *Categories*, as the first sentence suggests.¹⁴

The Commentator does not explicitly present the σκοπός of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* in his introduction. However, we can infer with great confidence that he believes the objective of Aristotle's text is to teach propositions or premises (προτάσεις). He defines a πρότασις as a certain statement (λόγος) that is either affirmative or negative, thus following Aristotle's definition given in the *First Analytics* (24a16–7). However, he does not differentiate between a “proposition” (πρότασις) and an “assertion” (ἀποφαντικός λόγος). In fact, he seems to consider the “affirmation”, the “negation” and the “assertion” as three forms or components of the “proposition” (“the affirmation, the negation and the assertion, of which propositions are composed” [1.1.2]). Ammonius, for his part, considered that the σκοπός of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* was “assertions” rather than “propositions” (4,10–12).

The Commentator concludes his short introduction by dividing Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* according to two major themes. The first concerns “discourse (λόγος) and its parts” or, in other words, “what a noun, a verb and a sentence (λόγος) are”. As for the second,

¹⁴ The Armenian translation and commentary of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* has been transmitted together with an Armenian translation and commentary of Aristotle's *Categories*. Two other commentaries on the *Categories* were also transmitted in Armenian: 1) an Armenian version of David's (or Elias) commentary, originally written in Greek; 2) an anonymous commentary that was preserved in an incomplete form. Both these texts have neither been extensively studied nor translated in English. On the question, see: V. Calzolari, ‘The reception and the transmission of the Greek cultural heritage in Armenia: the Armenian translations of the Greek Neoplatonic works’ in F. Gazzano, L. Pagani and G. Traina (eds.), *Greek Texts and Armenian Traditions* (Berlin, 2016), 54–9.

it concerns “propositions” (προτάσεις), most precisely the teaching “about the affirmation, the negation and the assertion” (1.1.2). From a thematic point of view, this division corresponds *roughly* to the Commentator’s segmentation of Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias* into four main chapters or sections.¹⁵ Such a division differs from the one suggested by Ammonius (7,15–8,24).

After this short introduction of thirteen lines, the Commentator directs his attention to the first sentence of the *Peri Hermeneias* and asks the following question: “But what is the signification of the first words: *First it must be established* (Πρῶτον δεῖ θέσθαι [16a1])?” (1.1.2). He then proceeds to define each of these three terms in a manner setting him apart from all the other commentators. The Commentator first presents two definitions of the term πρῶτον by distinguishing between a particular (“for some people” [τις]) and a common (“for many people” [πολλοί]) sense. He opts for the common sense, in which πρῶτον means “first before all”. Ammonius and Boethius did not comment on the signification of the term πρῶτον. As for Stephanus, he gave five different definitions based on chapter 12 of Aristotle’s *Categories*. None of the meanings given by the Commentator correspond explicitly to Stephanus’ definitions, which are more technical in nature.

The Commentator next defines the verb δεῖ as “it is appropriate” and distinguishes between two modes of saying, one according to necessity, the other according to utility. In his opinion, δεῖ must be understood according to necessity. Neither Ammonius, Stephanus nor Boethius had bothered analysing this last term. By defining the verb δεῖ, the Commentator

¹⁵ More precisely, the section about “discourse (λόγος) and its parts” would correspond to chapters 1 to 3 (and, perhaps, to the beginning of chapter 4) (16a1–16b25) and the section about “propositions” (πρότασις), to chapter 4 (16b26–end).

demonstrated that he was not only interested in categorematic terms, but also—like contemporary scholars—in syncategorematic terms.¹⁶

The Commentator lastly proceeds to define the term θέσθαι. Predictably, he opts for the same definition as Ammonius and Stephanus (“to define”), a definition that will be generally accepted by posterior commentators. However, contrary to Ammonius and Stephanus, he does not use the same list of definitions.¹⁷ Ammonius and Stephanus present a list of six definitions, five of them being identical. As for the Commentator, he presents a list of only three definitions: “the term θέσθαι is said in three ways: [first] when we talk about a place, for instance *in this human world* or *on earth*; [second] when we give a noun, since θέσις is also said of the act of naming; [third] when we give a definition” (1.1.4). The first two definitions are original and cannot be located in other commentaries. In this passage, the Commentator seems to ignore Ammonius’ commentary (on which Stephanus depends) and privileges common definitions over the technical variety. The Commentator concludes this section of the text by reformulating the first part of the Aristotelian sentence according to the results of his linguistic analysis, substituting every term of the sentence by the words he used to define them: “We claim that instead of saying *first it must be established ...*, it is obvious [that Aristotle seeks to say]: *first before all, it is necessary to define...*” (1.1.4).

After this linguistic excursus, the Commentator tackles a problem also raised by Ammonius, Stephanus and Boethius. This problem concerns the second part of the first

¹⁶ Contrary to Ammonius, as J. Brunschwig emphasized. See: J. Brunschwig, ‘Le chapitre 1 du *De Interpretatione*: Aristote, Ammonius et nous’, *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 64(1), 2008, 40.

¹⁷ Boethius also used θέσθαι in the sense of “to define” but did not present any other definitions (14,1–2).

Aristotelian sentence: why has Aristotle disposed “negation” (ἀπόφασις), “affirmation” (κατάφασις) and “assertion” (ἀπόφανσις) before “sentence” (λόγος) while he observes a different order later in his book? The Commentator replies by giving two original answers, neither of which is found in the other commentaries. First, in presenting the aforementioned elements of the first sentence, Aristotle had a pedagogical aim in mind: he disposed the elements to which we are most accustomed (because of their familiar nouns: ὄνομα, ῥῆμα and λόγος) at the extreme parts of the enumeration while inserting the most difficult ones (because of their confused nomenclature: ἀπόφασις, κατάφασις and ἀπόφανσις) in the middle. Thus, “by the knowledge of the extremes (ἄκρα), he sought to demonstrate the ignorance of the mean (μέσον)” (1.1.4). Contrary to Ammonius and Stephanus, the Commentator does not imply Aristotle followed a certain order in his text, for instance, one that would proceed “from the worse to the better”. In fact, as his second answer indicates, he believes Aristotle intended not to follow any order at all “but that he has only acted according to utility” (1.1.4). To support his thesis, he only gives one explanation: “it is very clear that the terms used here are not in order because Aristotle has put the negation before the affirmation” (1.1.4). Such an answer presupposes that, like Alexander of Aphrodisias or Porphyry, the Commentator shares the view that affirmation is prior to negation. However, he does not elaborate why this is the case.

The Commentator concludes the study of the first Aristotelian *lemma* by asking a similar question posed by Ammonius (11,1–3), Boethius (14,9–11) and Stephanus (3,13–14): why does Aristotle only mention the “noun” and the “verb” while keeping silent about the other parts of the sentence (μέρη τοῦ λόγου)? By “parts of the sentence”, the Commentator refers to the eight grammatical components of a sentence which, according to Ammonius, were “infamous” in his time, namely (besides noun and verb) participle, pronoun, adverb, conjunction, preposition and

article.¹⁸ The answer given by the Commentator is concordant with that of Ammonius and Stephanus: Aristotle has proceeded in this manner because “the noun and the verb are the only and principal parts of the sentence (λόγος)” (1.1.5). However, he distinguishes himself from both these authors in a surprising fashion. Indeed, the Commentator contends that some parts of the sentence fall under the noun, others under the verb. For instance, “pronoun or adverb falls under the noun, *as anyone will find on examination*, and participle falls under the verb...” (1.1.5). The fact that the Commentator believes that adverbs fall under the noun sets him apart from Ammonius and Stephanus. In Ammonius’ opinion, although the adverb can indicate a certain relation of the predicate toward the subject, it cannot act as a noun. In other words, adverbs are not authentic parts of the λόγος. The Commentator does not share Ammonius’ or Stephanus’ opinion but rather partakes a similar point of view to Alexander of Aphrodisias and Boethius. We know from Ammonius’ commentary that Alexander thought “that adverbs too are nouns, and that the same also holds for pronouns” (13,19–20). More precisely, Alexander believed that adverbs could act as nouns as they are constructed from them. As for Boethius (who is perhaps following Porphyry here),¹⁹ he assumed that adverbs “are to be considered as nouns because they signify something defined where no affection or activity is meant” (15,3–5). The Commentator does not state why he believes that adverbs fall under nouns: he simply

¹⁸ This is the canonic list. See: Dionysius Thrax, *Ars grammatical* 23,1–3 and Apollonius Dyscolus, *De constructione* 15,6–27,16. Boethius and Proba do not discuss the article (ἄρθρον) in their commentary as it does not exist in Latin or Syriac. Strangely enough, the anonymous Commentator also does not mention the article in this section of the commentary, even though it is a grammatical component of the Armenian language.

¹⁹ J. Shiel, ‘Boethius’ commentaries on Aristotle’ in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed* (Ithaca, 1990), 357.

presents this fact as obvious (“as anyone will find on examination”). He also seems not to be aware of Ammonius’ lengthy discussion on the adverb nor of the debate surrounding it.²⁰ This aspect is another illuminating example of the Commentator’s independence from Ammonius.

To demonstrate that the other parts of the λόγος²¹ are not *real* parts of it, the Commentator employs a nautical metaphor also found in Ammonius (12,25–13,2) and Stephanus (3,35–38): “for instance, in a ship, we use among other things glue and linen to bind, nails to consolidate or a red hue to enhance its beauty. None of these are said to be parts of the ship, but—because of utility—they are considered as the *ship*” (1.1.5). Conjunctions are used to “bind and consolidate the parts of the sentence”, whereas prepositions “complement them” (1.1.6). This metaphor, which is used by Ammonius and Stephanus in order to establish a distinction between “parts of λόγος” and “parts of λέξις”, has a Peripatetic origin and was already known by the grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus in the early second century and, “in all probability, to his source, the first century B.C. grammarian Trypho”.²² Although the Commentator discriminates between real parts of the λόγος (noun, verb, pronoun, adverb and participle) and inauthentic parts of it (conjunction and preposition), he never uses the distinction between “parts of λόγος” and “parts of λέξις”. According to D. Blank, such a distinction “cannot be traced back further than Porphyry”.²³

²⁰ On Ammonius’ take on adverbs, see: J. Barnes, ‘Ammonius and adverbs’ in H. Blumenthal & H. Robinson (eds.), *Aristotle and the Later Tradition* (Oxford, 1991), 145–63.

²¹ I.e. conjunction and preposition.

²² S. Ebbesen, ‘Porphyry’s legacy to logic: a reconstruction’ in R. Sorabji (n. 19), 157. See also: D. Blank (note 12), 140. Contrary to what has been suggested, Boethius did not use the same metaphor in his second commentary on Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias*.

²³ D. Blank (n. 12), 140.

Chapter 1, section 2: Commentary on Aristotle's Peri Hermeneias 16.3–9

The second section of the anonymous Armenian commentary opens with a translation of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* 16.3–9, a passage containing textual variants that were frequently discussed in later Antiquity. In 16a6–8, the Aristotelian text contains four ΤΑΥΤΑ, and ancient exegetes debated over which were used as a marker of identity (ταύτά) or as a simple demonstrative (ταῦτα). The Armenian translator agrees with Ammonius in reading the first and third ΤΑΥΤΑ as demonstratives and the second and fourth as markers of identity. The Armenian translation contains however an additional ΤΑΥΤΑ between the second and the third, which was not taken into account by L. Minio-Paluello in his edition: “the first things of which these (ταῦτα [n. 1]) are signs are the same (ταύτά [n. 2]) for all, namely the **same affections** (ταύτά [additional]) of the soul. And that of which these (ταῦτα [n. 3]) are likenesses—actual things—are also the same (ταύτά [n. 4])”. Interestingly, this additional ΤΑΥΤΑ corresponds to Alexander of Aphrodisias' reading of the passage, as reported by Boethius (37,30–38,3): “Now what these (ταῦτα [n. 1]) are in the first place signs of—affections of the soul—are the same (ταύτά [n. 2]) for all men and what the **same affections** (ταύτά [n. 3]) are likenesses of—actual things—are also the same (ταύτά [n. 4])”.²⁴ It is thus possible that the additional ΤΑΥΤΑ contained in the Armenian translation of 16a6–8 was added to reflect Alexander's interpretation. Moreover, in 16a6, the Armenian translator read the genitive plural adjective πρώτων like Boethius and not the adverb πρώτως like Ammonius

²⁴ More precisely, Alexander reads the third ΤΑΥΤΑ as ταύτά: “what the same [affections] are likenesses of...”. The Armenian reads it as a demonstrative (“that of which these [ταῦτα] are likenesses...”), but “these” (ταῦτα) refers to “the same (ταύτά) affections of the soul”, hence the interpretation of Alexander.

and Stephanus.²⁵ Lastly, like Boethius, the Armenian translator did not translate the terms σύμβολα and σημεῖα with two different words, despite their existence in Armenian. The synonymy between σύμβολον and σημεῖον, which is also present in the commentary, appeared as very old²⁶ and was likewise accepted by Ammonius and Stephanus.

The Commentator begins the second part of his commentary on chapter 1 by stating that Aristotle’s aim is to examine four specific elements—things (πράγματα), thought (νόημα), vocal sound (φωνή) and letter (γράμμα)—and to determine which are by nature or by convention. By presenting these four elements, the Commentator does not distinguish himself from Boethius (42,27–43,2), Ammonius (18,23–19,34) and Stephanus (5,22–6). However, contrary to them, he never discusses the linguistic difference between τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ and αἱ φωναί and τὰ γραφόμενα and τὰ γράμματα. In fact, he constantly employs αἱ φωναί instead of τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ and often shifts from τὰ γραφόμενα to τὰ γράμματα as if there were no differences between them.

Like Boethius, Ammonius and Stephanus, the Commentator contends that things and thoughts are by nature, and vocal sounds and letters/writings are by convention (they “come afterward”). To determine which elements are by nature or not, he argues that Aristotle followed one simple rule, which consists in holding that “what is by nature is the same for all” (1.2.2).

²⁵ It is possible that πρῶτως appeared in manuscripts as a consequence of Ammonius’ interpretation. On the question, see: E. Montanari, *La sezione linguistica del Peri Hermeneias di Aristotele* (Firenze, 1984), 126–32.

²⁶ According to J. Pépin, who inferred the ancientness of such a synonymy by the fact that Boethius did not discuss other significations in Aspasius, Herminus, Alexander or Porphyry. See: J. Pépin, ‘*Sumbola, Sêmeia, Homoiômata: A propos de De Interpretatione I, 16a3–8 et Politique VIII 5, 1340a6–39*’ in J. Wiesner, *Aristoteles. Werk und Wirkung* (Berlin, 1985), 35.

Thus, things and thoughts are by nature because they are the same for all, whereas vocal sounds and letters/writings are by convention because they differ according to different groups. To illustrate this last point, the commentator gives a specific example: as “the Greeks and the Romans do not have the same letters and the same vocal sounds”, “it will therefore be said that [letters and vocal sounds] are not by nature” (1.2.2). The fact that the Commentator did not use “Greeks and Armenians” but “Greeks and Romans” as an example of linguistic differences is quite astonishing. In comparison, Ammonius, who was living in Alexandria, used the example of “Greeks, Egyptians and Phoenicians” (19,14–15). Stephanus, also living in Alexandria, talked about “Greeks and Egyptians” (7,19–20) and Boethius, about “Latins and Barbarians” (38,22–4). The reference to “Romans” may hint at the fact that the Commentator was living in the Roman Empire or, possibly, in the Byzantine Empire (Byzantines calling themselves Ῥωμαῖοι) at the time he wrote his commentary.

The Commentator presents another argument to defend the thesis according to which things and thoughts are by nature. He succinctly suggests that thoughts are indeed natural for they are parts of things, which are natural: “[Aristotle] shows that things and thoughts are not in the soul, but thoughts are in things” (1.2.2). As we know from Boethius (39,25–40,9), the “natural status” of thoughts was contested by Herminus on the basis that thoughts were not the same for all. The Commentator’s argument, undetectable in other commentaries on Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias*, seems to answer this last argument.

Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias* 16.3–9 is famous for its description of the inner workings of meaning and has been the object of ample commentaries from Antiquity to the present. The Commentator discusses Aristotle’s semantic theory in only two short paragraphs. He first assimilates things (πράγματα) to original models (πρωτότυποι): they are at the basis of the signification process. As for affections or thoughts, they are imprints (τύποι) of these original models. In other words, “all that is seized and thought in the same way will receive the same

imprint (τύπος)—[namely] affections—from the original model (πρωτότυπος)” (1.2.3). The relation between things and thoughts is not one of similitude but one of impression (or marking). To put it in Peircean terms, it is more an indexical relation than an iconic relation (for example, the relation between things and thoughts would resemble more that of a foot and its trace in the sand than Socrates and its representation on a painting). As for vocal sounds and writings, they are symbols or signs (σύμβολα or σημεῖα) of these *first* things, namely affections or thoughts. As affections or thoughts are *in* things, it appears they can also be symbols or signs of things. The Commentator’s exegesis of 16.3–9 differs from all the extant commentaries on Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias*. Although he later recognizes that “thoughts are likenesses” (1.2.5), the Commentator is unique in his discussing the relation between things and thoughts from an indexical rather than an iconic perspective. He is also unique in his suggestion that it is possible to have symbols or signs of things: “symbols/signs are really *of* things, thoughts or vocal sounds” (1.2.3). Unfortunately, these two paragraphs are too succinct to draw definitive conclusions on the Commentator’s full understanding of the workings of meaning.

The second section of the anonymous Armenian commentary ends in an original fashion. The last sentence of the *lemma* (16a8–9) raises two specific questions left unanswered by Boethius, Ammonius and Stephanus: 1) What are those “subjects [that] have already been treated” in the “treatise on the soul”?; 2) Which specific passage Aristotle is referring to?²⁷ The Commentator answers these two questions in a straightforward manner: Aristotle’s “full teaching on the subject, [namely] how thoughts are likenesses, is comprised in the third book on the soul” (1.2.5). The Commentator also adds one important piece of information, again missing from the other commentators: the specific discipline to which questions about the soul

²⁷ C.W.A. Whitaker, *Aristotle’s De Interpretatione, Contradiction and Dialectic* (Oxford, 1996), 13–15.

belong is physics (for the Peripatetics) or theology (for the Platonicians) (1.2.6). The fact that Ammonius had not discussed this last issue prompted J. Brunschwig to hypothesize that he did not read ἄλλης γὰρ πραγματείας in 16a9.²⁸ Indisputably, the Commentator reads ἄλλης γὰρ πραγματείας in the text he is commenting (be it in Greek or in Armenian).

Chapter 1, section 3: Commentary on Aristotle's Peri Hermeneias 16.9–13

Contrary to Ammonius and Boethius, the anonymous Commentator deemed it necessary to separate 16.9–13 from 16.13–18. His analysis of *lemma* 16.9–13 concentrates predominantly on the similarities between thoughts and vocal sounds. In his view, vocal sounds are signs/symbols of thought as they share important common elements. Indeed, both of them can be simple or complex and, dependently, have an identical truth value. Thoughts are simple “when their parts—even though they signify something—are neither true nor false” (1.3.1). Similarly, vocal sounds are simple when uttered separately (when a noun is uttered separately from a verb). In that case, they are neither true nor false (1.3.1–2). This analogy between thoughts and vocal sounds can be located in all the commentaries on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*. However, only Ammonius and Stephanus designated it explicitly an ἀναλογία.

Truth and falsehood arise from combination (σύνθεσις) and division (διαίρεσις). Combination is the result of associating simple elements together, for instance a noun and a verb. As for division, it is the result of denying something of another thing (“by denying this thing that is”) (1.3.4–6). The resemblance between division and the act of denying prompted many commentators to assimilate division with negation and, consequently, combination with affirmation. For example, in his commentary, Ammonius states that Aristotle “called (...) denial *division*, since it separates the predicate from the subject by means of the negative

²⁸ J. Brunschwig (n. 16), 77–8.

particle”, adding few sentences later that Aristotle “call[s] affirmation *combination* and negation *division*” (27,1–8).²⁹ As for the Commentator, he departs completely from Ammonius and presents a subtler analysis. In his view, it is vain to believe—“as some have thought” (1.3.4)—that affirmations are combinations and negations are divisions: “just as in an affirmation, there is a combination of a noun and a verb, likewise in the negation” (1.3.4). In other words, for the anonymous Commentator, negation does not consist solely in a division: it is rather a division of a combination (“by denying this thing that is, he divides the content of combination of one with the other” [1.3.6]). Once again, the Commentator diverges from the accepted interpretation of the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria and shares a similar position to Alexander of Aphrodisias. Indeed, Alexander believed every negation is not only a division but *a sort* of division (“*quaedam negation*”). What did Alexander mean by *a sort* of division? According to Boethius, it appears he meant the exact same thing as the Commentator: “division is *of what* is combined and joined together” (47,13–14).³⁰ Alexander’ analysis of negation as a “sort of division”, namely a division of a combination, is situated in a passage where Boethius presents Alexander’s arguments regarding the priority of affirmation. Alexander considered affirmation to be prior to negation because it was the result of a combination, whereas negation was the result of a combination and *then* of a division. As we have seen in 1.1.4, the Commentator also shares Alexander’s view about the priority of the affirmation on the negation.

²⁹ In his own commentary on 16a12–13, Stephanus follows Ammonius almost word for word (6,23–5).

³⁰ 47,13–14 : “*Divisio igitur quaedam negatio est, coniunctio adfirmatio. Compositi autem est coniunctique divisio*”. On the idea that negations are also combinations, see: C.W.A. Whitaker (n. 27), 29.

Chapter 1, section 4: Commentary on Aristotle's Peri Hermeneias 16.13–18

In the last section of chapter 1, the Commentator continues discussing the similarity between vocal sounds and thoughts, then defines the different senses of ἀπλῶς and κατὰ χρόνον. Like all the other commentators, he links simple vocal sounds with simple thoughts and specifies that none of them can be true or false for they are “separated from each other” (1.4.1). Indeed, truth and falsehood arise from combination, for instance of a noun and a verb, and can be found in affirmations and negations. However, not every compound vocal sound can be true or false. A noun such as “goat-stag” (τραγέλαφος), despite combining two elements (“the substance of the stag and the goat”), cannot be true or false (1.4.2). An example of a valid compound vocal expression would be the sentence “[A] man runs”, which combines the noun “man” or “human being” (ἄνθρωπος) with the verb “to run” (τρέχειν). Compound thoughts are formed like compound vocal sounds: they consist in a combination and can be true or false.

The Commentator’s discussion of the similarity between vocal sounds and thoughts is not original in itself: it has strong links with all the other commentaries written on Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias*. The Commentator’s discussion of the different senses of expressions like “simply” (ἀπλῶς) and “with reference to time” (κατὰ χρόνον) is more innovative as it contains elements undiscussed by all commentators. Contrary to Ammonius and Stephanus—who single out only one definition—but similarly to Boethius, the Commentator presents three different significations of ἀπλῶς and κατὰ χρόνον. First, ἀπλῶς signifies the present, while κατὰ χρόνον refers to the past or the future (1.4.2). This first definition of ἀπλῶς and κατὰ χρόνον is also given by Boethius (51,19) and Stephanus (6,30–2). However, only the Commentator and Boethius discuss what they mean by “present” and offer a similar explanation: present is not a time but a certain limit. Second, ἀπλῶς is said to signify the substance of things, for instance “Socrates is”, while κατὰ χρόνον signifies substance together with time, such as “Socrates is today” (1.4.3). This last definition is absent from Ammonius

and Stephanus, yet present in Boethius (51,3–16). Thirdly, ἀπλῶς is said of verbs because verbs only express the present, whereas κατὰ χρόνον is said of inflexions of verbs, namely of past or future (1.4.4). This last definition, resembling the first which focusses on the “present”,³¹ is not given by any other authors. Finally, the Commentator mentions nothing regarding an explanation presented by both Boethius (51,30–52,3) and Ammonius (29,12–17) according to which ἀπλῶς expresses time in an indeterminate way, for example “there is a goat-stag”, “there was a goat-stag” or “there will be a goat-stag”. In presenting this explanation, both Ammonius and Boethius used the same examples.

The Commentator’s discussion of the signification of ἀπλῶς and κατὰ χρόνον shares many common features with Boethius. Their interpretation of the term “present” is similar and cannot be located in other commentators. Additionally, only they discuss the fact that ἀπλῶς signifies the substance of things. It nevertheless remains impossible to infer from this that the Commentator was dependent on Boethius. The Commentator and Boethius do, in fact, diverge from each other as they give a different third explanation of ἀπλῶς: the explanation given by

³¹ In fact, definition 1 and 3 seem contradictory. According to definition 1, ἀπλῶς expresses the present, but the present is *not a time* but “a small [period of time], namely the beginning or the end of a period” (1.4.2). As for definition 3, ἀπλῶς expresses the present, which in turn *expresses time* (for a verb is “what additionally signifies time” [16b6]). However, it is possible the first definition refers to a “timeless or momentary present” (ἀκαριαῖος), whereas the third refers to the “extended present” (ἐν πλάτει) (see Ammonius, *In De Int.*, 51.17–25). D. Blank (n. 12, 152) hypothesizes that an objection was raised in Ammonius’ time about Aristotle’s use of the expression ὁ παρῶν χρόνος, prompting him to distinguish between these two types of present in his commentary of chapter 3. The Commentator did not consider it necessary to make such a distinction in chapter 1.

the Commentator is original whereas that given by Boethius is also present in Ammonius. Indeed, the most prudent hypothesis would be to suppose they had access to the same original source.

The first chapter of the Armenian commentary on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* concludes with a brief ontological remark on the unchangeable character of things (πράγματα)³² and a reference to a passage of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, unidentifiable with any certainty (perhaps the Commentator is referring to a commentary on the *Metaphysics* rather than to the *Metaphysics* itself). What is certain, though, is the Commentator's familiarity with ontological theses and his eagerness to present them, albeit in too concise a way.

CONCLUSION

The Armenian commentary was undeniably written in the tradition of late antique Greek commentaries.³³ The Commentator raises the same questions as Ammonius and Stephanus, and sometimes uses similar examples. However, contrary to Stephanus (or, in subsequent chapters, to the Anonymous of Tarán), he does not follow Ammonius subserviently. In fact, despite commonalities shared with Ammonius, he often ignores his interpretation (discussion about

³² Unfortunately, the Commentator's remark is vague and cannot be clearly understood with the aid of the surrounding text.

³³ Such a resemblance is even stronger when we compare the Armenian commentary with those in Arabic. For instance, in his commentary of chapter 1, Al-Farabi does not once ask why Aristotle disposed the elements of 16a1–2 in a different order than in the rest of the text or why Aristotle mentioned only the noun and the verb but not the other parts of the sentence. Al-Farabi also does not use the metaphor of the ship, nor does he attempt to define Πρῶτον δεῖ θέσθαι. See: Zimmermann (n. 11), 10–15.

adverbs) or his list of definitions (θέσθαι) and, more importantly, has different opinions on many subjects (σκοπός, adverbs or negation). The Commentator also shares considerable common ground with Boethius, in fact much more than with Ammonius (adverbs as nouns, negation as a division of a combination, etc.). Nevertheless, he does not follow him obediently, ignoring some of his interpretations and not seeming to be aware of some of his definitions (ἀπλῶς and κατὰ χρόνον). The Commentator may have had access to the same sources as Boethius, for instance Porphyry (on which Boethius depends) and Alexander of Aphrodisias (whom Porphyry criticizes at length in his lost commentary). In fact, this study has highlighted that the Commentator shares many common features with Alexander (the only exegete he cites by name). Therefore, it would not be imprudent to presume the Commentator has much more in common with the Peripatetics or early Neoplatonists than with the late Neoplatonists. Given that he ignores the Ammonian division of the *Peri Hermeneias* in five τμήματα—which had a tremendous influence on members of the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria and posterior commentators like Al-Farabi, Gennadius or Psellus—this suggests an early writing date, that is, a date concomitant with Ammonius and Boethius or even earlier. Although the results of the comparative analysis are provisional as they only pertain to the first chapter, they do confirm the results of the structural analysis, thus providing a foundation for further research and investigation.

ANNEX

Anonymous Armenian Commentary on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*

Chapter 1

[1.1]³⁴

16a1–2: First it must be established what a noun is and what a verb is, then what a negation, an affirmation, an assertion and a sentence are.

[1.1.1] We have said before that the goal of this logical discipline (λογικὴ πραγματεία) is to arrive at demonstrative syllogisms. Since there are many errors in syllogisms, it is necessary to know each of them. Indeed, we discover the demonstrative syllogism by the knowledge of other forms [of syllogisms]. Now, it is not possible to know each of the said syllogisms if we do not first learn what a syllogism is. You³⁵ say that a syllogism itself cannot be [formed] without propositions or premises. A proposition is either affirmative or negative and is a certain statement (λόγος).

[1.1.2] It would be convenient to first teach about the discourse and its parts, then to pass to the teaching of propositions. [This is what Aristotle] does in this treatise. Indeed, defining what a noun, a verb and a sentence (λόγος) are, he then proceeds to teach about the

³⁴ Conybeare translated in English the first section of chapter 1. My translation departs from his on many aspects as he did not have access to the same edition. See: Conybeare (note 1), xv-xvii.

³⁵ The use of the second person singular, which is also observable in subsequent chapters, could suggest that the Armenian commentary was intended to a particular student or reader.

affirmation, the negation and the assertion, of which propositions are composed. But what is the signification of the first words: “First it must be established” (Πρῶτον δεῖ θεῖσθαι [16a1])? We know that the term “first” (πρῶτον) is said in two ways: for some people, [when they say]: “it is necessary to first read the poems, then to look at their meaning”; for many people, [when they say]: “first before all it is necessary to acquire the poems of Homer and, after that, [the poems of] all the others [poets] who follow”. The term “first” is used here in the latter case, that is, “first before all”.

[1.1.3] “It must” (δεῖ) means “it is appropriate”. It is said in two ways: according to necessity or according to utility. Here, it is said according to the former: “it is necessary”.

[1.1.4] As for the term “establish” (θεῖσθαι), it is said in three ways: [first] when we talk about a place, for instance, “in this human world” or “on earth”; [second] when we give a noun, since θεῖσις is also said of the act of naming; [third] when we give a definition. This last sense is the one that the Ancients used the most, and it is the one that the Philosopher³⁶ uses here, that is, “to define”. Gathering everything together, let us now see what the result of our interpretation is. We claim that instead of saying “first it must be established”, it is obvious [that Aristotle seeks to say]: “first before all, it is necessary to define what a noun, a verb and each of the other [elements] are”. For a knowledge of all these by means of a definition will also help us in our research on propositions. Still, why has he disposed [these elements] in this way while he later observes a different [order] in his teaching? It is perhaps not according to their order that he has here disposed the statement (ἀπόφανσις), the affirmation (κατάφασις) and the negation

³⁶ The expression “the Philosopher” was not only used by Neoplatonists but also by Aristotelian commentators, for instance Alexander of Aphrodisias in *Mixt.* 228.10 See: Chiaradonna, R., Rashed, M. and Sedley, D., ‘A Rediscovered *Categories* Commentary: Porphyry (?) with fragments of Boethus’ in Sorabji, R; (ed.), *Aristotle Re-interpreted* (London, 2016), n. 14, 235.

(ἀπόφασις) before the sentence (λόγος). Indeed, because their confused [nomenclature] is for us a source of ignorance, he has directed us towards familiar nouns to which we are accustomed, for instance “sentence” (λόγος), “noun” (ὄνομα) or “verb” (ῥῆμα), and by the knowledge of the extremes, he has wanted to demonstrate the ignorance of the mean. It is very clear that the terms used here are not in order: because [Aristotle] has put the negation (ἀπόφασις) before the affirmation (κατάφασις), we [should] not suppose that he followed any order but that he has only acted according to utility.

[1.1.5] If someone ask why [Aristotle] only mentions the noun and the verb and not the other parts of the sentence, it must be answered that the noun and the verb are the only and principal parts of the sentence. As for the other so-called [parts of the sentence] that are used to teach the youngest³⁷, some fall under the noun, others under the verb. Pronoun or adverb falls under the noun, as anyone will find on examination. Participle falls under the verb while all the rest has other uses. For instance, in a ship, we use among other things glue and linen to bind, nails to consolidate or a red hue to enhance its beauty. None of these are said to be parts of the ship, but –because of utility– they are considered as the “ship”.

[1.1.6] Now, it is the same thing for the sentence. Some [elements] such as conjunctions bind and consolidate the parts of the sentence; others like prepositions complement them (not so as to improve them, but in order to embellish them and make them shine). As for the other [parts], each has its use in the sentence, but they are not said parts [of it].

[1.2]

³⁷ I.e. grammar.

16a3–9: Now, what is in the vocal sound are symbols (σύμβολα) of affections of the soul and writings are [symbols] of what is in the vocal sound. And just as letters are not the same for all, so are the sounds. On the other hand, the first things (πρώτων) of which these (ταῦτα) are signs (σημεῖα) are the same (ταύτά) for all, namely the same (ταύτά)³⁸ affections of the soul. And that of which these (ταῦτα) are likenesses—actual things—are also the same (ταύτά)³⁹. Such subjects have already been treated in the treatise on the soul. Indeed, they belong to another domain [of research].

[1.2.1] [Aristotle] took care in the previous passage to discuss the usefulness of his remarks. Upon reaching this section (τόπος), however, he takes some precaution to avoid mistakes. [Aristotle now] examines vocal sounds and affections that are in the soul, namely thoughts. Of four elements—things (πράγματα), thought (νόημα), vocal sound (φωνή) and letter (γράμμα)—he examines which are by nature and which come afterward.

[1.2.2] How are thoughts, which he has called affections, signs/symbols⁴⁰ of things? How are vocal sounds signs/symbols of thoughts and writings, signs/symbols of vocal sounds? Are all these by nature or not? [Aristotle] shows that things and thoughts are not in the soul, but thoughts are in things. [Things and thoughts] are both by nature and vocal sounds and letters come after them. From here, the whole argument [of Aristotle is to show] that what is by nature is the same for all. Now, what is the same for all is by nature, for example, things and thoughts of things. Indeed, nature is not divided according to vocal sounds and letters. It is obvious that what is not the same for all is not by nature, such as vocal sounds and writings. Thus, the Greeks

³⁸ The Armenian translator reads an additional ταύτά.

³⁹ Manuscripts B, D, E and V have also ταῦτα (Topchyan [n. 5], 10).

⁴⁰ The Armenian word նշանակ is used indifferently to translate σύμβολον and σημεῖον.

and the Romans do not have the same letters and the same vocal sounds. It will therefore be said that [letters and vocal sounds] are not by nature.

[1.2.3] Having said once more (πάλιν) that signs/symbols really [relates] to things, thoughts or vocal sounds⁴¹, he returns to the beginnings [and asserts] that they⁴² are signs/symbols of these first (πρώτων), namely affections of the soul themselves. Thus, all that is seized and thought in the same way will receive the same imprint (τύπος)—[namely] affections—from the original model (πρωτότυπος).

[1.2.4] Mulling over his argument (λόγος) once more, [he says that] all that has the same imprint (τύπος) and thoughts [has] for everyone the same original model (πρωτότυπος), namely things. So, thoughts and things, which may be the same for all, will be said “by nature”. However, it is impossible that vocal sounds and writings (γραφόμενα) are the same for all. This subject will be discussed later [in the text].

[1.2.5] Although it is not the place here to talk about thoughts, [Aristotle] had to slightly address [this issue] for it was useful for his analysis. However, his full teaching on the subject, [namely] how thoughts are likenesses, is comprised in the third book on the soul.

[1.2.6] The Peripatetics [address the topic of the soul] in their physics, the Platonicians in their theology. Such a study, however, does not fall within the scope of the present inquiry.

[1.3]

⁴¹ Or, literally: “Having said once again concerning signs/symbols that they are really *of* things, thoughts or vocal sounds...”.

⁴² I.e. vocal sounds.

16a9–13: Just as in the soul there is a thought without truth or falsehood, and [one] that is necessarily true or false, so too in the vocal sound.⁴³ For truth and falsehood⁴⁴ are concerned with combination (σύνθεσις) and division (διαρρησις).

[1.3.1] Aristotle shows in the following way that vocal sounds are signs/symbols of thought: just as thoughts are sometimes simple, sometimes complex, vocal sounds receive the same form: they are sometimes simple, sometimes complex. Thoughts are simple when their parts—even though they signify something—are neither true nor false. They are complex when they are necessarily one or the other.⁴⁵

[1.3.2] It is the same for the vocal sound. When the noun and the verb, which are parts of the uttered speech, are uttered separately from one another, they do not appear to be true or false. However, [when they] are combined together and thus form a sentence (λόγος), they are necessarily true or false.

[1.3.3] Are vocal sounds really said [to be] signs/symbols of thought since the uttered speech (προφορικὸς λόγος) reveals what is in the mind⁴⁶ and displays what kind of opinion

⁴³ The Armenian translation does not have ὅτε μὲν ... ὅτε δέ. The last part of the sentence (ὅτι ἀνάγκη τούτων ὑπάρχειν θάτερον) is translated in an overtly literal way and is incomprehensible in Armenian without the aid of Greek.

⁴⁴ Like Ammonius, but contrary to Stephanus and Boethius, the Armenian translator inverts “truth” and “falsehood”.

⁴⁵ I.e. true or false.

⁴⁶ To talk about “thoughts”, the Commentator previously used a specific word: ἡμῶν ἡμῶν (νόημα or νόησις). He uses here a different term: ἡμῶν ἡμῶν (λογισμός, διαλογισμός, νόημα, ἔννοια, βουλή or φρόνημα). As 1.3.6 shows, the idea is however the same: “Just as negation

someone has? In fact, notions are known through such a speech (προφορικὸς λόγος), if they are true or false, for an individual to form an opinion.

[1.3.4] And that the parts of thoughts and uttered vocal sounds are neither true nor false, [Aristotle] shows it himself [by saying] that truth and falsehood have to do with a combination and a division. What has not yet been combined nor divided does not signify either truth or falsehood. Indeed, combination is the result of associating together simple elements, as [Aristotle] has said about the noun and the verb. Being in themselves neither true nor false, the noun and the verb do become true or false by their interweaving. However, combination and division are not, as some have thought, affirmations and negations. For, just as in an affirmation, there is a combination of a noun and a verb, likewise in the negation. Consequently, it is vain to believe that these nouns⁴⁷ refer to affirmation and negation.

[1.3.5] But it is clear that [Aristotle] wanted to show that discourse (λόγος) is in the mind when [he says that] just as in the vocal sound there are affirmations, so too in the mind there is something that gives evidence. We gather parts of discourse and combine them, so that truth and falsehood necessarily follow.

[1.3.6] Just as negation is in the vocal sound, so too division is in the mind. Indeed, by denying this thing that is, he divides the content of combination of one with the other, and again truth or falsehood [arise]. Just as in the vocal sound affirmation or negation necessarily reveals

is in the vocal sound, so too division is in the mind (ἰνὴ ἰνρηνηρη). (...) Just as in the vocal sound affirmation or negation necessarily reveals truth and falsehood, so too in thought (ἡνἰαγνἰνἰν) combination and division necessarily reveal truth or falsehood.” I have translated the term ἰνρηνηρη by “notion” and the expression ἡν ἰνρηνηρηνἰνἰν by “in the mind”.

⁴⁷ I.e. combination and division.

truth and falsehood, so too in thought combination and division necessarily reveal truth or falsehood.

[1.4]

16a13–18: Thus, nouns and verbs in themselves appear⁴⁸ as thoughts without combination or division, for example “man” or “white”, when nothing further is added: they are not yet false⁴⁹ nor true. A proof of that: even “goat-stag” signifies something, but it is not yet true nor false, unless “to be” or “not to be” is added, either simply or with reference to time.

[1.4.1] [Aristotle] adds these words in order to show that vocal sounds derived from thoughts—and as we have thoughts, it is necessary that [there be] vocal sounds. Having separated the discourse (λόγος) in the mind, he says that some [of it] is by combination, other by division. He calls “simple thoughts” parts [that are] separated from each other. He states that, just as in the act of pronunciation, the discourse [uttered] is a sign/symbol of that discourse [in the mind], so too the parts of this [uttered] discourse are parts of that discourse that is in the mind. As [Aristotle] says it himself, [simple vocal sounds] are similar to simple thoughts: just as simple thoughts are neither true nor false, so also nouns and verbs uttered separately are neither true nor false; just as simple thoughts can be combined, so also [simple vocal sounds]. Indeed, when combined, the noun and the verb [help us] distinguish the truth, and are said according to affirmation or negation.

⁴⁸ The Armenian verb corresponds to φαίνει and not ἔοικε.

⁴⁹ Contrary to Boethius, but similarly to Ammonius, the Armenian translator does not invert “falsehood” and “truth”.

[1.4.2] It seems that “*human being* or *white*” (τὸ ἄνθρωπος ἢ λευκόν [16a14-15]) expresses substance (τὸ ὄν). Thus, when someone says “human being” (ἄνθρωπος), it seems that this vocal sound is true, even though it is not the case. Even a different noun formed by opinion and [pronounced] externally that is not simple but compound has the substance of a certain being. Indeed, the goat-stag (τραγέλαφος) has the substance of the stag and the goat, but expresses neither truth nor falsehood. For if the compound noun seems to be a sign/symbol of something, it is still neither true nor false. As for simple nouns, they will be very far from meaning something true or false. Aristotle has said earlier in the *Categories* that the combination (συμπλοκή) of substances, for example, “human being” (ἄνθρωπος) and “to run” (τρέχειν), makes truth or falsehood.⁵⁰ This is why he adds here “unless *to be* or *not to be* is added, either simply or with reference to time” (ἐὰν μὴ τὸ εἶναι ἢ μὴ εἶναι προστεθῆ ἢ ἀπλῶς ἢ κατὰ χρόνον [16a17–18]). “Simply” (ἀπλῶς) seems to me to signify the present. Indeed, the present [refers] to a small [period of time], namely to the beginning or the end of a period, but is not a time, while “with reference to time” (κατὰ χρόνον) has to do with the past and the future.

[1.4.3] [Secondly], “simply” is said when the verb is added to the noun: it will signify only the substance of things but not the time. For example, “Socrates is” only means that Socrates is. However, when you add to Socrates “is today”, “is this month” or “is this year”, the substance is signified together with time.

[1.4.4] Third, as he himself says [in this treatise] when he teaches us about the verb, the verb only expresses the present.⁵¹ As for the past and the future, they are not verbs, but inflexions of verbs. [Aristotle] says that inflexions of verbs, namely past and future, [are] “with

⁵⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Categories*, 1a17–18, 2a8–10 and 13b10–13.

⁵¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Peri Hermeneias* 16b17–18.

reference to time”, but that the verb in the present tense is “simply”. For other times, it is necessary to add the past or the future.

[1.4.5] Since his research focusses on the truth or falsehood of parts of speech (λόγος), it also deals with thoughts and vocal sounds. [Aristotle] says not only here, but also in the *Metaphysics* (ἐν τοῖς μετὰ τὰ φυσικά), that truth and falsehood have their origin in thoughts and then appear in vocal sounds.⁵² Indeed, it is impossible that things (πράγματα) are unsettled by what is also such: at all times, the one (τὸ ἓν) is⁵³ unmoved (ἀκινήτως), ordaining this (τοῦτο) by itself.⁵⁴ Thus, truth and falsehood arise in composition, but not in simple vocal sounds. After that, [Aristotle] goes on to teach about the noun, the verb and all the other subjects he mentioned.

University of Ghent

GENEVIÈVE LACHANCE

⁵² Passage unknown, perhaps *Metaphysics* E4 or Θ10. All the passages of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* containing the term φωνή are not related to the present discussion.

⁵³ Reading $\eta\lambda\eta\eta$ (manuscripts B and E).

⁵⁴ The sense of this sentence is uncertain. It contains many variants and could also be translated in the following manner: “Indeed, it is impossible that things are unsettled by what is also theirs ($\omega\eta\eta\eta\eta\eta\eta$): at all times, they have ($\eta\eta\eta$) the one that is unmoved, ordaining this by themselves”.