

Divna Manolova

**SOPHONIAS THE PHILOSOPHER. A PREFACE OF AN
ARISTOTELIAN COMMENTARY: STRUCTURE, INTENTION,
AND AUDIENCE**

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

Budapest

May 2008

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(Bulgaria)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

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I, the undersigned, **Divna Manolova**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 26 May 2008

Signature

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would not be possible to complete this study without the care and the support of several friends to whom I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation. First, let me thank to my supervisors György Geréby and Niels Gaul for their patience during the numerous revisions of this text and for all the little words of encouragement they have said. Then, I would like to thank to Oleg Popov and Anna Somfai for their suggestions and the attention they have paid to my work. Finally, I thank to The Family: Edina, Özden, Seda, Goran, Luka, and Ünige – for the midnight coffee-breaks, the midday coffee-breaks, and for their friendship.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>An.Post</i>	<i>Analytica Posteriora</i>
BAV	Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
<i>CAG</i>	<i>Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca</i>
<i>Cat</i>	<i>Categoriae</i>
<i>DA</i>	<i>De Anima</i>
Laur.	Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana
<i>PLP</i>	<i>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</i>
<i>REB</i>	<i>Revue des Études Byzantines</i>
<i>SE</i>	<i>Sophistici Elenchi</i>
UU	Uppsala, Universitetsbibliotek

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the thirteenth century Sophonias the Philosopher wrote a paraphrasis of Aristotle's treatise *De Anima* [On the Soul]. This exegetical work is accompanied by a methodological preface which presents a discussion on the approaches of previous commentators followed by a description of Sophonias' own method. This preface and its various aspects constitute the core of this study. Through the analysis of this introductory part of Sophonias' paraphrasis I will elucidate puzzling questions concerning the purpose, audience, and intention of the treatise, its place in the whole corpus of Sophonias' paraphrases, and its contribution to the tradition of Aristotelian commentary. I will also address several general topics such as the essence of the commentary and the relation between an exegetical text and its preface.

The present study comprises three main sections. The first one presents a prosopographical reconstruction based on the extant evidence about Sophonias' life and activities. The objective of this chapter is not only to present an overview of the available biographical information, but also to provide the necessary basis for a historical contextualization of Sophonias' paraphrasis. The result will be employed in the subsequent discussion of purpose and audience of the text.

In the second chapter I will present the main part of my research, namely, an analysis of Sophonias' preface of his paraphrasis of *De Anima*. Before focusing only on the preface, I will establish the general textual framework in which it needs to be considered, taking both aspects of the history of Byzantine scholarship and textual aspects into account. In order to do that, I will first discuss the way in which Sophonias' paraphrasis places itself in the commentary tradition. Secondly, I will distinguish its relation to the other paraphrases written by Sophonias regarding the

characteristics of their prefaces. Finally, by narrowing the focus of analysis I will explore the interrelation between the preface and the main exposition and the way these distinct parts of the same treatise address its audience.

After having established the theoretical context of the preface through this hierarchically organized procedure (from the general framework to the individual case), I will discuss its main features in detail. I will address Sophonias' "innovation" of the method of commenting on Aristotle's works in a separate subchapter. Finally, regarding all the conclusions reached at this stage of the inquiry, I will propose a hypothesis for the probable intention and audience of the preface and the following paraphrasis on *De Anima*.

The third section of this inquiry approaches Sophonias' preface differently. It presents a comparative analysis of three prefaces attached to different commentaries of *De Anima*, composed by Sophonias, Thomas Aquinas, and Themistius. While the previous chapter placed Sophonias' preface in the general scheme of the commentary tradition, here the inquiry addresses a restricted group of texts which all belong to the same category. The juxtaposition and comparison between the three prefaces are based on three criteria – relation to the previous tradition, methodology of commenting, and terminology. The final section of the study will present conclusions.

Several appendices accompany this inquiry. On the one hand, I provide a full English translation of Sophonias' preface in Appendix I in order to facilitate the following of the relevant argumentation. Secondly, the comparison presented in the third chapter is illustrated with the help of the table in Appendix II. A Greek-English index of Sophonias' terminology complements these.

Hereafter I will use "Sophonias' preface" to indicate Sophonias' preface of the paraphrasis of *De Anima* unless indicated differently in the footnotes. In the same way

“Sophonias’ paraphrasis” will refer to his paraphrasis of *De Anima*, unless specified differently. Finally, Aristotle’s treatise *De Anima* will be hereafter abbreviated as *DA*.

I. LIFE, POLITICAL AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY

A prosopographical reconstruction

Three different identifications for the historical figure which we know under the name of Sophonias (or Sophronias/Sophronios), who lived and worked at the end of the thirteenth/beginning of the fourteenth century, have been suggested. First, an ambassador of Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282—1328) named Sophonias took part in the negotiations between the Byzantine imperial family and the house of Montferrat. Second, Sophonias the commentator wrote several paraphrases of Aristotle's treatises. Finally, there was a conspirator against the rule of Andronikos II – a certain Sophronios¹ who conducted a secret correspondence with Charles of Valois (1270—1325) together with John Monomachos, the latter's brother Constantine, Constantine Limpidaris, and another associate whose name is unknown.² To my knowledge, the possible identification of Sophonias the ambassador and the monk Sophronios presented recently (2007) by Dimiter Angelov is the one least discussed in the secondary literature and perhaps the most difficult to be proved. Angeliki Laiou, who gives a much more detailed account than Angelov of the exchange of letters between 1307 and 1310 between Charles of Valois and his Byzantine supporters, mentions a certain monk Sophronias and discusses the content of his letter and the probability of his identification with the ambassador Sophonias.³ The latter has still not been satisfactorily identified although some details of his letter to Charles of Valois seem to support the hypothesis of a similar biographical background as the one of Sophonias the philosopher, if not the same.

¹ Dimiter Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium (1204-1330)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 131 (hereafter: Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*).

² Angeliki E. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins: the Foreign Policy of Andronicus II, 1282-1328* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 212 (hereafter: Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*).

³ *Ibid.*, 215-216.

According to Laiou's interpretation of Sophronias' letter⁴, compared to the letters of John Monomachos and Constantine Limpidaris addressed to Charles of Valois and Catherine of Courtenay respectively, it "was more flattering than those of the other two, and sounds less sincere; this was probably the result of his florid monastic style."⁵ In addition Sophronias wrote in a much more familiar manner than Monomachos and Limpidaris; unlike them he did not have to introduce himself and confirm his dedication to the Valois cause. On the contrary, his letter functioned as a kind of guarantee of the trustworthiness of the other two. Final argument for the plausible identification of Sophronias with Sophonias the Byzantine ambassador from 1294 is the remark of the author of the letter concerning the possibility of meeting Charles of Valois in France, "as if he were accustomed to such trips."⁶ On the basis of this evidence Laiou concludes that Sophonias and Sophronias might have been the same person and that the difference in the names could be caused by reasons of discreteness, or that these two might be the secular and the monastic version of the same name.⁷ However, it is hard to prove or disprove this hypothesis.

Marie-Hélène Congourdeau,⁸ while discussing the correspondence between Simon of Constantinople (ca. 1235—ca. 1325) and Sophonias, based on the analysis of *Tractatus de Objectionibus Graecorum contra Processionem Spiritus Sancti a Filio*⁹ also suggests the possibility that Sophonias was the author of the letter to

⁴ For the publication of this collection of letters, see Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 213, footnote 54.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ M.-H. Congourdeau, "Frère Simon Le Constantinopolitain, O.P. (1235 ?-1325 ?)," *REB* 45 (1987): 165-174 (hereafter: Congourdeau: "Frère Simon Le Constantinopolitain").

⁹ *Ibid.*, footnote 22.

Charles of Valois written in 1310,¹⁰ in which the latter is addressed as “emperor of the Romans.”¹¹

On the other hand, Sophonias the ambassador and the commentator of Aristotle are almost unanimously identified as the same person in the secondary literature.¹² Some scholars have raised certain doubts regarding this identification based on the dating of the manuscripts of the paraphrases ascribed to him. Michael Hayduck in the preface of his critical edition of *Sophonias in libros Aristotelis De Anima paraphrasis* claims that the codex A, Florence, Laur. MS Gr 7. 35 on which his critical edition was mainly based, was written far too early to be from the hand of the same person who was sent to Apulia in 1294.¹³ However, his opinion has not found much support so far and as Sten Ebbesen pointed out “at the present stage of research it still looks probable that Sophonias composed all the paraphrases normally attributed to him, and that he did so towards the end of the thirteenth century.”¹⁴ In any case, Hayduck’s dating of the manuscript urgently needs to be revisited.

Based on the identification accepted by the majority of the scholars working on the early Palaeologan period, one can differentiate several principal events in Sophonias’ biography: the dispute and following correspondence with Simon of Constantinople, O.P., the embassy to Italy between 1294—1296, the probable negotiations with Frederick III (1296—1337), and the later conversion to Catholicism.

¹⁰ In “Note sur les Dominicains de Constantinople au début du 14e siècle,” *REB* 45 (1987): 175-181, Congourdeau gives different dating to the same letter: 1306 or 1307.

¹¹ Congourdeau: “Frère Simon Le Constantinopolitain.” 169.

¹² See Congourdeau: “Frère Simon Le Constantinopolitain.” 168; M.-H. Congourdeau “Note sur les Dominicains de Constantinople au début du 14e siècle.” *REB* 45 (1987): 180 (hereafter: Congourdeau: “Note sur les Dominicains;” Henry J. Blumenthal, “Sophonias’ Commentary on Aristotle’s *De Anima*,” *Néoplatonisme et philosophie médiévale* 6 (1997): 309 (hereafter: Blumenthal: “Sophonias’ Commentary”); Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 131; Sten Ebbesen, *Commentators and Commentaries on Aristotle’s “Sophistici Elenchi”* 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 333 (hereafter: Ebbesen, *Commentators*).

¹³ Michael Hayduck, “Preface to *Sophonias in libros Aristotelis De Anima paraphrasis*, by Sophonias,” in *CAG* 23, 1, ed. Michael Hayduck (Berlin: Berolini, 1883), v, footnote 2 (Hereafter: Hayduck, “Preface.”) The problem of dating the time of composition of the *De Anima Paraphrasis* is

Sophonias (before 1294—1351)¹⁵ was a Byzantine scholar and a learned monk, who lived during the rule of Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos. He was a contemporary and friend of Joseph the Philosopher (ca. 1280—1330).¹⁶ There is no direct evidence for his provenance. If one accepts that the figure of Sophonias is identical with Sophronios or Sophronias, the monk who wrote to Charles of Valois,¹⁷ the conclusion reached by Angeliki Laiou that he came from Asia Minor can be introduced here. Although not stated explicitly, this information is suggested by the letter to Charles while describing the invasion of the “barbarians” and the destruction they brought to “cities, forts, and lands.”¹⁸ Laiou points out that this may refer to the conditions in Byzantium as a whole. However, she argues that it is much more logical that the monk speaks about Asia Minor where the Turks were mostly active in 1307. This being so, the particular concern of Sophronias for the situation in this region of the Empire must be interpreted as the preoccupation for the state of the affairs in his homeland.¹⁹

The correspondence with Simon of Constantinople. Sophonias’ Conversion

As was mentioned above, Sophonias corresponded with the Dominican Simon of Constantinople (ca. 1235—ca. 1325).²⁰ A letter that Simon wrote to Sophonias²¹ has been preserved, and though still not edited, it has been discussed by Marie-Hélène

discussed in Chapter II. One has to take in consideration that in the late 1800s Greek palaeography was still not a very advanced discipline.

¹⁴ Ebbesen, *Commentators*, 333.

¹⁵ Erich Trapp, Rainer Walther, and Hans-Veit Beyer, *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976-1983), entry 26424 (hereafter: Trapp, Walther, and Beyer, *Prosopographisches Lexikon*).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* See also Basile Tatakis, *La Philosophie Byzantine*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949), 246 (hereafter: Tatakis, *La Philosophie Byzantine*).

¹⁷ See the discussion above.

¹⁸ Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 215.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 216.

²⁰ See also Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 51 and 126; Hayduck, “Preface,” v, footnote 2.

²¹ Cf. Vatican City, BAV MS Gr 1104, f.23-46v.

Congourdeau in her brief study on Simon and his correspondence.²² The letter recalls a theological discussion Simon and Sophonias had in the Dominican monastery in Euripos, where Simon resided from the age of twenty-six to the age of sixty-four.²³ Congourdeau points out that this dispute was used by Sophonias as preparation for his future negotiations with the pope in Rome.²⁴ Therefore, as Congourdeau concludes, the letter was written after 1294.²⁵ At the same time, it must have been written earlier than 1305, as in the letter Simon addresses Sophonias as a friend to be convinced regarding the Latin position on the *filioque*²⁶ and it is known that Sophonias had converted to Catholicism by 1305.²⁷ Although Congourdeau does not discuss the content of the letter in detail, she mentions that in this particular text Simon made extensive use of Aristotle, whom he did not apply in the rest of his correspondence. Therefore, Congourdeau argues that Simon's addressee, Sophonias, ambassador of Andronikos II, is identical with Sophonias, commentator on Aristotle.²⁸

The embassy

In 1294 Sophonias was sent to Italy to the court of Charles II d'Anjou (1254—1309) in Naples, to negotiate a marriage between Andronikos' son, Michael IX Doukas Angelos Komnenos Palaiologos (r. 1294—1320) with Charles' niece

²² Congourdeau, "Frère Simon Le Constantinopolitain:" 165-174; and idem, "Note sur les Dominicains:" 175-181.

²³ Congourdeau, "Frère Simon Le Constantinopolitain:" 166.

²⁴ Congourdeau, "Note sur les Dominicains:" 180.

²⁵ Ibid., 181.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Sophonias' conversion is attested by the Toulousain preacher Guillaume Bernard de Gaillac in his tract preserved in the Uppsala, MS UU 55. Congourdeau argues that Gaillac must have written it later than 1307 in Pera. This conclusion is based on the mention of Maximos Planoudes' death. The Toulousain describes the events in Constantinople between 1305 and 1307. There he mentions the complaints of a certain Greek monk, Sophonias, provoked by his persecution on behalf of the Greeks because of his conversion to the true faith. Therefore, by the time of these events Sophonias had already converted to the Catholic faith.

I base the information introduced here on Congourdeau, "Note sur les Dominicains," 176-178.

²⁸ Congourdeau, "Note sur les Dominicains," 180 and footnote 25.

Catherine of Courtenay (1274—1307/8).²⁹ After that he was sent to pope Boniface VIII (1294—1303) in Rome. This embassy was part of the marriage negotiations, which Andronikos II started in 1288, when Michael IX was eleven years old. The marriage to Catherine of Courtenay was perceived as a diplomatic maneuver, as she had inherited the title of titular empress of Constantinople.³⁰ A successful ending of the negotiations would have meant a Byzantine triumph against the Western claims towards the restored empire. Nevertheless, the dowry of Catherine of Courtenay was strongly desired not only by Andronikos II, but also from behalf of the house of Aragon and the French court.³¹ Andronikos' renunciation of the union of the churches formed another obstacle for the accomplishment of his intentions.

Sophonias' embassy was described by George Pachymeres in his *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι*.³² According to Laiou “the embassy of Sophonias points up once again the need for the Byzantines to reconcile themselves with the papacy before the marriage negotiations could be concluded.”³³ Pachymeres comments that Sophonias was sent as a personal emissary of Andronikos in order to avoid the writing of an official letter according to the protocol. Namely, “in such letter it would have been necessary to address the pope as ‘most Holy,’ which would have been the greatest crime in the

²⁹ George Pachymeres, *Georgii Pachymeris de Michaele et Andronico Palaeologis libri tredecim*, ed. I. Bekker, 2, *Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae* (Bonn: Weber, 1835): 3-652 (hereafter: Pachymeres, *Historiae*).

³⁰ Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 49.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Pachymeres, *Historiae*, 202.8-203.3: Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς πρόποντα γάμον τῷ παιδί παρεσκεύαζε. καὶ τὸν μὲν ἱερομόναχον Σοφονίαν, ἄνδρα σοφόν τε καὶ συνετόν, ἀποπέμπει πρὸς Πουλίαν τὸ κινούμενον κῆδος διαπρεσβεύσεσθαι. ὡς δ' ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ ἀπελθῶν περιήργει (ἐδέησε γὰρ καὶ εἰς πάπαν ἐκεῖνον γενέσθαι, κὰν οὐκὶ πρὸς ἐκεῖνον γράμμασιν ἱκανοῦτο τοῖς ἐκ βασιλείως, οἷς ἔδει ἀγιώτατον γράφειν τὸν πάπαν καὶ κρῖμα τὸ μέγιστον γίνεσθαι, ὡς τοῖς ἀσφαλέσι τὴν πίστιν ἐδόκει), πολλοὶ δ' ἦσαν οἱ προσλιπαροῦντες ἄλλοθεν, ἔνθεν μὲν ἐκ τοῦ ἐν τῇ Κύπρῳ ῥηγὸς ἔνθεν δὲ καὶ ἐξ Ἀρμενίων, τὰ ἐν χερσὶ τῶν προσδοκωμένων ποιούμενος περὶ πλείονος, καὶ ἄλλως τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ πάπα τῆς Ῥώμης ὑπειδόμενος ὑπερηφανίαν, τῆς φροντίδος ἐκείνης ἀπαλλαγεῖς ἔγνω ἐπὶ θατέρῳ τῶν ἀξιούτων τὰ τοῦ κήδους συστήσασθαι.

³³ Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 50.

estimation of those secure in the [Orthodox] faith.”³⁴ Based on this evidence, Laiou argues that the choice of a monk as ambassador was not incidental: “such a man might more easily than a layman deal with the probable overtures of the papacy.”³⁵

Sophonias’ embassy, however, did not succeed and therefore, he returned to Constantinople in March 1296. As far as the marriage of Michael IX is concerned, he finally married Rita-Maria of Armenia.³⁶

Negotiations with Frederick III

Possibly, during his staying in Italy he also discussed a Byzantine-Aragonese marriage with the king of Aragon and Sicily Frederick III (r. 1296—1337) as suggested by Laiou,³⁷ who presents an account on Frederick’s letter to his brother James II, in which he announces his coronation as king of Sicily. In the letter he announces his intention to turn to the Byzantine-Aragonese alliance in order to assure help for his hold on the island. The aid was expected as a result of negotiations for the marriage of Frederick’s sister Yolanda to Michael IX. Based on the fact that by the time the letter was written (April 3, 1296), Michael was already married (an event apparently unknown to Frederick), Laiou argues that Frederick must have held these negotiations not with Andronikos II, but with some accredited Byzantine residing at that time in Italy. Therefore, she suggests that probably the Byzantine in question is Sophonias, and perhaps his return to Constantinople in March 1296 was connected with these discussions.

³⁴ Ibid., 202.11-14, tr. Laiou: ἐδέησε γὰρ καὶ εἰς πάπαν ἐκεῖνον γενέσθαι, καὶ οὐχὶ πρὸς ἐκεῖνον γράμμασιν ἱκανοῦτο τοῖς ἐκ βασιλείως, οἷς ἔδει ἀγιώτατον γράφειν τὸν πάπαν καὶ κρῖμα τὸ μέγιστον γίνεσθαι, ὡς τοῖς ἀσφαλέσι τὴν πίστιν ἐδόκει.

³⁵ Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 50.

³⁶ Ibid., 51.

³⁷ Ibid., 56.

Educational background

There is no evidence concerning the educational background of Sophonias; he must have received a thorough rhetorical as well as philosophical education though.³⁸ One might infer based on his writings, the kinds of sources he knew and had access to. According to Sten Ebbesen in his account of *Sophistici Elenchi*,³⁹ Sophonias was acquainted with Nikephoros Blemmydes' compendium of logic and with the *scholia* of Leo the Magentine. Sophonias uses these two sources, as well as Michael of Ephesus' commentary, in his paraphrase of *Sophistici Elenchi*. The main sources for the *De Anima Paraphrasis*, as has been shown by Henry Blumenthal were the texts of Iamblichus and John Philoponus.⁴⁰ Hayduck points out in his preface to the critical edition of Sophonias' paraphrase that he also used Aristotle's *De Sensu et Sensibilia* [*Sense and Sensibilia*].⁴¹

As C. N. Constantinides observes, Sophonias' paraphrases suggest that he used them for teaching activities, but there is no extant evidence confirming that assumption.⁴² Where and with whom Sophonias received his education and what scholarly circle(s) he participated in are likewise unknown. Although one may offer hypotheses concerning Sophonias' acquaintances (e.g., the fact that George Pachymeres mentions his embassy to Italy together with their common interest in Aristotle might suggest they knew each other), such a reconstruction is beyond the focus of this study.

³⁸ On late Byzantine education in general see C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries (1204—ca. 1310)*, (Nikosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1982), 125 (hereafter: Constantinides, *Higher Education*), Sophia Mergiali, *L'enseignement et les lettrés pendant l'époque des Paléologues* (Athens: Kentron Ereunes Byzantiou, 1996), and E. Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance*, (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

³⁹ Ebbesen, *Commentators and Commentaries*, 333.

⁴⁰ Blumenthal: "Sophonias' Commentary:" 310.

Works, editions, translations

Sophonias wrote paraphrases of several of Aristotle's treatises: *Categoriae* [Categories], *Parva Naturalia*, *Sophistici Elenchi* [Sophistical Refutations], *De Anima* [On the Soul], *Analytica Priora* and *Analytica Posteriora* [Prior and Posterior Analytics].⁴³ Critical editions of most of Sophonias' paraphrases are published in the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*,⁴⁴ namely the paraphrases of the *Categoriae*,⁴⁵ *Sophistici Elenchi*,⁴⁶ *De Anima*,⁴⁷ *Parva naturalia*,⁴⁸ and *Analytica Priora*.⁴⁹ Those on the *Analytica Priora* and *Parva Naturalia* were edited under the name of Themistius, those on the *Categoriae* and *Sophistici Elenchi* as anonymous. The authorship of Sophonias, however, is discussed by Michael Hayduck in the respective prefaces. The present study and the accompanying translations from Sophonias' paraphrasis on *DA* are based on the edition describe above.

I limit this study to the published material, namely the paraphrases of the *Categoriae*, *Sophistici Elenchi*, *De Anima*, *Parva naturalia*, and *Analytica Priora*. Only the first three of them are accompanied by a preface. The focus of this inquiry, however, is the preface of the *De Anima Paraphrasis* and its rather different character compared to the other two. This discussion is presented in the following chapter.

So far, the *De Anima Paraphrasis* has not been translated. There are, however, several partial translations of its preface, as well as a few paraphrases of its content.

⁴¹ Hayduck, "Preface," v, footnote 3.

⁴² Constantinides, *Higher Education*, 125.

⁴³ Blumenthal: "Sophonias' Commentary:" 309. Interestingly Constantinides attributes to Sophonias three paraphrases more: of *Ethica Nicomachia*, *Physica* and *Metaphysica* (in *Higher Education*, 125). I have not found, however, evidence supporting that statement.

⁴⁴ Namely, in *CAG*, 23, ed. Michael Hayduck, (Berlin: Berolini, 1883) (hereafter: *CAG*, 23) and *CAG*, 5, 6, ed. Paul Wendland, G. Reimer (Berlin: Berolini, 1903) (hereafter: *CAG*, 5, 6).

⁴⁵ *Anonymi in Aristotelis Categoriae Paraphrasis*, in *CAG*, 23, 2, 1-87.

⁴⁶ *Anonymi in Aristotelis Sophisticos Elenchos Paraphrasis*, in *CAG*, 23, 4, 1-68.

⁴⁷ Sophonias, *Sophonias De Anima Paraphrasis*, in *CAG*, 23, 1, 1-175.

⁴⁸ Themistius, *Themistii (Sophoniae) In Parva naturalia*, in *CAG*, 5, 6, 1-44.

⁴⁹ Idem, *Themistii Quae Fertur in Aristotelis Analyticorum Priorum Librum I Paraphrasis*, in *CAG*, 23, 3, 1-164.

Most recently, Pantelis Golitsis has published a French translation of 1.4-22.⁵⁰ Börje Bydén has translated into English lines 1.5-8, 1.11-19, 1.22-2.3 and Sophonias' paraphrase on *DA* 2.1, 412a3-11, though his essay has been published only in Greek.⁵¹ Karl Praechter quotes a passage from the paraphrasis and translates it originally into German; later on it is retranslated into English by the translator of Praechter's article: lines 1.11-14.⁵² Katerina Ierodiakonou,⁵³ Basile Tatakis⁵⁴ and Henry Blumenthal⁵⁵ have paraphrased the preface. For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to provide a full translation of Sophonias' preface which is placed in Appendix I.

⁵⁰ Pantelis Golitsis, "Un commentaire perpétuel de Georges Pachymérés", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 100, 2 (2007): 637-676 (hereafter: Golitsis: "Un commentaire perpétuel.")

⁵¹ Börje Bydén, "Literary Innovation in the Early Palaeologan Commentaries on Aristotle's *De Anima*," *Hypomnema* 4 (2006): 221-251 (hereafter: Bydén: "Literary Innovation.") The essay is published in Greek only. With the help of Katerina Ierodiakonou, I have used the author's English translation. Hereafter I will refer to the page numbers of the unpublished manuscript I used.

⁵² Karl Praechter, "Review of the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*," in *Aristotle Transformed. The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, ed. Richard Sorabji, (London: Cornell University Press, 1990): 49, footnote 61.

⁵³ Katerina Ierodiakonou, "Psellos' Paraphrasis on Aristotle's *De interpretatione*," in *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, ed. Katerina Ierodiakonou, (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2002): 157-181 (hereafter: Ierodiakonou: "Psellos' Paraphrasis.")

⁵⁴ Tatakis, *La Philosophie Byzantine*, 246.

II. CONTEXTUALIZATION OF SOPHONIAS' PARAPHRASIS AND ITS PREFACE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ARISTOTELIAN COMMENTARIES

Scholars generally do not classify Sophonias' achievements in commentating as outstanding, novel or even interesting.⁵⁶ In the process of research, I have found only two accounts which analyse in detail Sophonias' paraphrases, those of Sten Ebbesen⁵⁷ and Henry Blumenthal.⁵⁸ Börje Bydén has demonstrated a different approach closely analyzing Sophonias' preface and his paraphrase on *DA* 2.1.⁵⁹ The focus of his brief study, however, is not Sophonias' work by itself, but rather the approach of early Palaeologan commentators in general towards the *DA*. Consequently, Bydén discusses the fragments taken from Sophonias in comparison with George Pachymeres' and Theodore Metochites' interpretation of the same passage. Other scholars have limited their comments exclusively to the preface of the paraphrasis.⁶⁰

Analyzing the sources used by Sophonias in his *Paraphrasis in Sophisticos Elenchos*,⁶¹ Ebbesen claims that his interpretation of the text is standard. Blumenthal nevertheless was quite intrigued by Sophonias' paraphrasis on the *DA* and defended its importance. In his brief study, he based his discussion on two main questions. "The one is to see how it compares in method and approach with the early Byzantine

⁵⁵ Blumenthal: "Sophonias' Commentary:" 307-317.

⁵⁶ See Tatakis, *La Philosophie Byzantine*, Ebbesen, *Commentators and Commentaries*, and Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 51, footnote 73, where Sophonias' commentary as described as "dull."

⁵⁷ Ebbesen, *Commentators and Commentaries*, 333-341.

⁵⁸ Blumenthal: "Sophonias' Commentary:" 307-317.

⁵⁹ Bydén: "Literary Innovation:" 14-18.

⁶⁰ See Ierodiakonou: "Psellos' Paraphrasis:" 164-166, Golitsis: "Un commentaire perpetuel:" 641, and Tatakis, *La Philosophie Byzantine*, 246.

⁶¹ *Anonymi in Aristotelis Sophisticos Elenchos Paraphrasis*, in *CAG*, 23, 4, 1-68.

commentaries, the other to look at the interpretations it offers on a few key points of Aristotle's treatise...."⁶²

Following the direction indicated by Blumenthal, in my study I aim to discuss Sophonias' understanding of the type of commentary referred to as paraphrasis,⁶³ the possible reasons for his choice of type of commentary, and the peculiarities in applying it. I am mostly interested in his methodology, but in a slightly different way than Blumenthal. By analyzing the preface of the paraphrasis of the *DA*, his aim is to better distinguish Sophonias' place in the tradition of Aristotle's commentators through the description and understanding of his methodology. My objective in the present chapter is to offer an accurate understanding of Sophonias' "novel" exegetic approach. This implies, on the one hand, a detailed description and analysis of the preface to the *De Anima Paraphrasis*, especially of the classification of the previous commentators placed there. On the other hand, the results of the inquiry will be integrated in the general discussion about the nature of the commentary and of the paraphrasis in particular. An additional aim of the present chapter is to offer a solution to the puzzling problem concerning the purposes and the audience of Sophonias' treatise.

In his preface, Sophonias provides a classification of the types of Aristotelian commentary and therefore methods for interpretation and clarification of the *DA* used before him in the Greek tradition. He explains the characteristics of the paraphrasis compared to the 'proper' commentary,⁶⁴ and finally, he introduces his own way of

⁶² Blumenthal: "Sophonias' Commentary:" 308.

⁶³ I prefer to use the term 'paraphrasis' instead of the anglicized version 'paraphrase', because the latter has different connotations related for instance to the theory of music, and also to the field of rhetoric.

⁶⁴ These two technical terms are discussed thoroughly after the introduction to the present chapter. Sophonias differentiates two groups of Aristotelian commentary in his preface: 'proper' commentary and paraphrasis. Generally speaking by 'proper' commentary he refers to the *scholia* written to different treatises of Aristotle. If one considers, however, that Sophonias' main source is the lemmatic commentary produced by John Philoponus, then it is more specific to refer to the 'proper' commentary as 'lemmatic'. Hereafter I will refer to it using both expressions: 'lemmatic' or 'proper' commentary.

writing a commentary as a separate type. Blumenthal does not discuss this self-reflection on the method in depth. According to him, as Sophonias sees himself unable to add anything new to the ‘proper’ commentary and paraphrasis in the way they were applied before, he defines his own method as a combination of both, which employs their most useful features.⁶⁵ The character of Sophonias’ exegetic approach will be discussed in detail later on within the present chapter. For the moment, it is enough to mention that Sophonias’ intention of elaborating the genre of Aristotelian commentary needs to be analyzed in the context of the purposes of his text and for its accurate understanding it is not enough only to summarize his claims in the preface.

Before proceeding to the analysis of Sophonias’ preface itself, it is necessary to define what is to be understood under the labels of “proper commentary” and “paraphrasis”. In her case study of Michael Psellos’ paraphrasis of *De Interpretatione* Katerina Ierodiakonou⁶⁶ explores the question of whether there is a difference between the commentary (the *scholia*) and the paraphrasis.⁶⁷ To answer it she uses Sophonias’ preface to the *De Anima Paraphrasis* in order to extract conclusions as a list of criteria, which distinguish the paraphrasis from the *scholia*. That is, Ierodiakonou accepts Sophonias’ understanding of the differences between the two approaches to Aristotle’s texts and reapplies it to the Psellos’ paraphrasis.

Despite the anachronistic nature of her approach and the fact that she does not address the problem whether a paraphrasis is a type of commentary or a separate genre, the question she raises is important. In this study, I am applying the term “commentary” as a collective denomination for the class of exegetic texts as a whole. Its subdivisions, such as *synopsis*, *eisagogē*, *epitomē*, *stoicheiōsis*, paraphrasis or

To refer to its practitioners I will appropriate the Greek term used by Sophonias in opposition to ‘paraphrasts’, namely ‘exegetes’.

⁶⁵ Blumenthal: “Sophonias’ Commentary:” 312.

⁶⁶ Ierodiakonou: “Psellos’ Paraphrasis:” 157-181.

lemmatic commentary I am addressing as subgenres classified under the genre of commentary. Although it is not in the focus of the main discussion, it can be specified that the first three types of commentary mentioned above (*eisagogē*, *epitomē*, *stoicheiōsis*) function mainly as summary and introduction to Aristotle's theory regarding a certain subject. The lemmatic commentary functions as a reference to a particular statement within the text. Unlike the paraphrasis it is clearly distinguished from the main exposition. As the lemmatic commentary and the paraphrasis are the subject of the main discussion in Sophonias' own methodological reflection they deserve a separate and more thorough explanation.

The paraphrasis as a type of commentary is first attested in the works of Themistius (ca. 317–338). He composed paraphrases of several of Aristotle's treatises: *Analytica Posteriora* [Posterior Analytics], *Physica* [Physics], *De Anima* [On the Soul], *De Memoria* [On Memory], *De Somno* [On Sleep], *De insomniis* [On Dreams] and *De Divinatione per somnum* [On Divination in Sleep]. The lemmatic commentary coexisted with the paraphrasis and from the evidence of the extant texts it appears to have been more widespread. Both types of commentary were applied to Aristotle's texts in order to provide explanations and better understanding of the theoretical matter. This need was provoked by the various difficulties which one encounters in Aristotle's treatises – unclear diction or unclear argumentation.

Commentary: a definition

It is not an aim of this study to give an account of the development of the two commentary types (lemmatic commentary and paraphrasis), their origin and specifics, for what matters ultimately is Sophonias' distinction between the two and the importance of making this distinction in his preface. A discussion of the essence and

⁶⁷ Ibid. 164.

function of the commentary in general, however, will provide an additional insight into the problem of identifying the intention, the audience and the motivation behind Sophonias' paraphrasis.

John Dillon, in his case study on the Neoplatonic exegesis of the *prooimia* of Plato's dialogues, discusses two possible basic impulses for the composition of a commentary:⁶⁸

The first is the straightforward scholarly desire to explain obscurities in diction or reference in a source work, and this leads naturally to a commentary of the philological and antiquarian type...The second impulse is one afflicting in particular persons of a philosophical or theological disposition, which seeks to explain away inconsistencies or inconsequentialities in, or unworthy aspects of, an otherwise enormously respected work, by showing that the author did not intend a given passage to be taken literally, or that two apparently inconsistent or even contradictory passages can be reconciled by taking them to refer, say, to two different stages of a given process, or to the same phenomenon at two different levels of reality.⁶⁹

Dillon discusses how the personality of the commentator relates to the type of commentary he/she produces. One could certainly argue that Sophonias' paraphrasis belongs to the second type of exegetical texts described above and therefore one can conclude that Sophonias is a person "of a philosophical or theological disposition," which is obviously supported by his biography as well. It is not the task, however, to rediscover Sophonias' personality, but rather to use Dillon's statement as a basis for the discussion of the relation between a commentator and a commentary. Based on the general assumption that a text is intended to a certain audience, I have reconstructed the historical context of Sophonias' paraphrasis in order to identify its probable target. That is, by defining the areas of Sophonias' activity (diplomacy, teaching, theology) I aim to explore whether the paraphrasis and specifically its preface can function within

⁶⁸ John Dillon, "A Case-Study in Commentary: the Neoplatonic Exegesis of the *Prooimia* of Plato's Dialogues," in *Commentaries – Kommentare*, ed. Glenn W. Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999): 206-223.

some of them. The paraphrasis, however, can also address its own author. That is, an exegetical text is also a result of one's attempt to clarify a certain problem for him/herself. In the case of Sophonias' preface and the presentation of Sophonias' 'novel' methodology of commenting one could argue that the justification he is offering is intended not only for his audience, but it is also a self-reflection on the motivation for writing on a subject so much discussed before.

Dillon's rather expanded "definition" of the types of commentators and commentaries provides some additional information concerning two of the main aspects of the essence of the commentary. First, a commentary is dependent and preconditioned by the text upon which the interpretation is produced. As Glenn Most points out⁷⁰ "there is nothing natural about the general form of the commentary itself."⁷¹ That is, the commentary arises from the text; it accompanies it in its functioning as a reference, clarification or expansion tool.

The appearance and the existence of a commentary prove, on the one hand, that the text itself is not self-explanatory.⁷² On the other hand, it states and confirms the authority of the treatise commented on.⁷³ The fact that a commentary is always produced on a respected, well-known significant work is the second aspect suggested by Dillon's definition cited above.

The "relatedness" of the commentary constructs it as an entity without an independent existence and function: the commentary's nature is inevitably characterized by a certain "secondariness."⁷⁴ Therefore it is always dependent on certain preconditions, such as the availability and accessibility of the original text and

⁶⁹ Ibid., 206.

⁷⁰ Glenn Most, "Preface," in *Commentaries – Kommentare*, ed. Glenn W. Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999): vii-xv (hereafter: Most, "Preface.")

⁷¹ Ibid., viii.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

the cultural and institutional context that created the importance of the commented text and its authority.⁷⁵ Furthermore, a commentary does not only demonstrate the importance of the treatise commented on, but also shows that its authority is “no longer entirely self-evident”⁷⁶ and therefore, it needs to be re-confirmed, re-distributed and re-imposed within a certain social context.⁷⁷ In some cases, however, a commentary is provoked not by the need of re-establishing the authority of the text, but by the commentator’s intention to partake in the scholarly tradition on the subject, and therefore, to (re-) establish his/her own authority.

Finally, in order to conclude the overall discussion of the commentary genre, what is left is only to mention its aim and some of its functional aspects. The reason behind the commentary is the text commented on; hence, the commentary is chronologically posterior. Nevertheless, its aim is to overcome the time distance and to re-establish the meaning of the original in its initial integrity.⁷⁸ Thus, it proceeds in the same way as the primary exposition, in some cases preserving its structure, in other cases not. A commentary, however, is always provoked by some sort of deficiency in the understanding of the original. The meaning has been either lost or become unclear, either the reasons for its importance are forgotten and need to be re-confirmed or the perception of the text is no longer functional anymore in its respective context. Therefore, the task of the commentator is to transmit the meaning of the original in such a way so that it is perceived by the reader as coherent. To state it concisely – the commentary’s purpose and intention is to interpret, summarize or paraphrase the original text, so that it makes sense again. It has to be noted, however, that the “deficiency” in the understanding of the original text, unless it is due to

⁷⁴ Ibid., vii.

⁷⁵ Ibid., viii-ix.

⁷⁶ Ibid., x.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

damage to the material, which physically contains the exposition, is not inherent, but coming from the contemporary perception of that work. That is to say, in different contexts different theses from the same treatise are perceived as problematic, unclear, and therefore in need of additional explanation. Consequently, the solutions of the interpreters change according to the shift in the problematic places.⁷⁹

The conclusions for the nature and purposes of the commentary in general presented in this subchapter serve as a conceptual framework in which Sophonias' paraphrasis is placed. That is, the Aristotelian commentaries (like the commentary in general) aim to provide understanding of texts which either contain difficult arguments or lack enough explanation for someone less knowledgeable in philosophy.⁸⁰ After having established the conceptual context of Sophonias' paraphrasis, it is necessary to distinguish its place on a more concrete level, namely among the other treatises written by the Byzantine monk. As the focus of this study is Sophonias' preface of the *De Anima Paraphrasis*, in the next subchapter I will juxtapose it with the other prefaces he composed.

Prefaces to Sophonias' other paraphrases: *In Aristotelis Sophisticos Elenchos* and *In Aristotelis Categoriae*

Sophonias complemented only three of his paraphrases with prefaces:⁸¹ the paraphrases on the *DA*, *Sophistici Elenchi*,⁸² and *Categoriae*.⁸³ These three treatises address quite different subjects; while the *DA* is concerned with problems of

⁷⁸ By 'integrity' here I refer to the coherence of the meaning of the text commented on.

⁷⁹ Most, "Preface," xiii: "But problems are not an inherent aspect of a text: they are created by a reading which asks questions of the text to which the text only partially responds. Hence the kinds of problems a commentator will discover in his text are at least in part a result of the approach he takes to it. What counts as a problem in different periods? How do different kinds of commentaries try to solve these problems? What counts as a solution? Under what circumstances can the commentator admit that he cannot find a solution?"

⁸⁰ See Sophonias' preface in Appendix I, where he describes the "obscure phrasing" of Aristotle and the "forcefulness of his message (for what was intellectual to him is great and intense)".

⁸¹ I refer to the published material only.

⁸² Hereafter I refer to *Sophistici Elenchi* as *SE*.

⁸³ Hereafter I refer to *Categoriae* as *Cat*.

psychology and biology, the other two deal with logical matters. Their respective prefaces also differ. The prefaces of the paraphrases of *SE* and *Cat* are much shorter than the preface of the *De Anima Paraphrasis*: they extend respectively to 24 and 18 lines in print, while the preface of the *De Anima Paraphrasis* extends to 79. Secondly, the subject they address is entirely different, namely, they present a summary of Aristotle's theory which will be explained in detail in the main text of the paraphrasis. At the same time, Sophonias' preface of the *De Anima Paraphrasis* does not deal with Aristotle's psychological theory at all: it is dedicated to a discussion of the different exegetical approaches to *DA*. Based on this comparison it is plausible to draw a conclusion about the "uniqueness" of Sophonias' preface. Nevertheless, one has to consider, first, that not all of Sophonias' paraphrases are published (the paraphrasis on *Analytica Posteriora* has not been published so far), and second, that his authorship of the *SE* paraphrasis and the *Cat* paraphrasis has been postulated but not yet been fully proved, but has been argued as a hypothesis based on the stylistic similarities between the three texts. Therefore, I prefer to analyse Sophonias' preface independently.

Consequently, I will deal with the specifics of Sophonias' preface, that is, with his own classification of the explanatory texts related to the works of Aristotle, the description of his own method of commenting and its 'novelty', and finally I will discuss the possible purposes and audience of the text.

Sophonias' preface within the *De Anima Paraphrasis*

Categorization of the previous commentators according to their methodology

As I have mentioned above, Sophonias' preface to his paraphrasis on *DA* extends to 79⁸⁴ lines in print and is considered the most “profitable” part of the text for the identification of its peculiarities. Sophonias does not give any personal information at the beginning of the paraphrasis, nor does he specify the motivation for and the audience of his work. This particular piece of the text, however, is the one that says the most about the author's intention and purposes.

The preface contains a categorization of the preceding Greek commentary tradition. Straightforwardly, Sophonias describes what, in his understanding, are the distinctive features of a ‘proper’ commentary and a paraphrasis, and then he enumerates what he considers to be the most prominent representatives of the two types of exegetic writing on Aristotle's texts. His predecessors have accomplished the task of commentating in two different ways and that divides them into two groups according to their methodologies. The first group, the so-called ‘proper’ commentators⁸⁵ (*οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦτο ἐξηγηταί*),⁸⁶ is characterized by keeping the original diction of Aristotle in the lemmas and clarifying it by attaching the interpretation bit after bit to the main text. They preserve the diction (*λέξις*) of Aristotle as it is, that is they transmit the text in its original form. The clarifying interpretation is attached as a separate unit – both spatially and conceptually:

For the ones, who were proper commentators, expounding the text in individual manner and in its specifics, attached the interpretation. Observing the diction of the Philosopher sound as well as [at the same

⁸⁴ Sophonias, *Sophonias in libros Aristotelis De Anima paraphrasis*, in *CAG* 23, 1 (hereafter: Sophonias, *De Anima*,) 1-186.

⁸⁵ Throughout this study I choose to refer to the “proper commentators” either as to ‘exegetes’ by appropriating the Greek term *ἐξηγηταί*, or as to ‘scholiasts’ when relevant.

⁸⁶ Sophonias, *De Anima*, 1.5.

time] in division, they also brought forth their own explanation for the sake of clarity [of the original].⁸⁷

If one compares this final remark regarding the clarification of “their own explanation”⁸⁸ with the description of the paraphrastic methodology which follows (through which [methodology] the diction is not united or complemented by the proper comments of the commentator⁸⁹), that suggests a certain conclusion about Sophonias’ opinion of the role of the individuality of both the exegetes (*ἐξηγηταί*) and the paraphrasts (*παραφρασταί*). According to Sophonias’ description the ‘proper’ commentary is delivered from the name of its author, while the paraphrasis is composed as if it were Aristotle explaining.

The ‘proper’ commentary seems to intend an interpretation, which has the status of an independent text with parallel content related to the main exposition. Most importantly, it is a product with clearly distinguished authorship. The exegete is an author in his own right – presenting a style and argumentation that support and explain Aristotle’s theory. Such commentators are Alexander of Aphrodisias, Simplicius, Ammonius, and John Philoponus.

The second group includes the so-called paraphrasts. Unlike the ‘proper’ commentary, a paraphrasis is embedded in the main body of the exposition, which makes it easier to read and therefore understand the passage. Unlike the exegetes, the paraphrasts do not keep the original diction of Aristotle, that is, the primary form of the text, because their method of clarification consists mainly of extending it by using

⁸⁷ Ibid. 1.5-8: *οἱ μὲν γάρ, ὅσοιπερ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐξηγηταί, ἰδίως ἐκθέμενοι καὶ κατὰ μέρος τὸ κείμενον τὴν ἐρμηνείαν ἐπισυνῆψαν, σώαν τε καὶ τῇ διαιρέσει τὴν λέξιν τοῦ φιλοσόφου τηρήσαντες καὶ τὰ παρ’ ἑαυτῶν προσέφερον εἰς σαφήνειαν.* [emphasis mine]

⁸⁸ Ibid. 1.8: *καὶ τὰ παρ’ ἑαυτῶν προσέφερον εἰς σαφήνειαν.*

⁸⁹ Ibid. 1.13-14: *τὴν μὲν λέξιν παρήκαν αὐτήν, οὔτε διηρημένην οὔθ’ ἠνωμένην τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι συνταξάμενοι.*

rhetorical figures or by inserting proper sentences in order to unfold the concise meaning and to clear the reasoning.⁹⁰

A second feature of the paraphrasis is the so-called *αὐταγγελία*,⁹¹ namely, as Sophonias formulates it to put on the garment of Aristotle (*αὐτὸν γὰρ ὑποδύντες Ἀριστοτέλην*) and to make use of the mask of speaking from Aristotle's mask (*καὶ τῷ τῆς αὐταγγελίας προσχρησάμενοι προσωπείω*), that is, to keep the exposition in the first person singular as if the author of the paraphrasis were Aristotle himself.⁹² A situation is simulated as if it were Aristotle himself who clarifies his theory. In such a way, the reasoning of Aristotle is perfected, that is completed. It seems as though the paraphrast does not leave traces and marks of his own individuality as a thinker, at least as far as Sophonias' description of the paraphrastic method suggests. Perhaps this is the reason for the general perception of paraphrases as compiled texts without particular originality meant to serve the needs of a relatively elementary instruction in the philosophical matters.⁹³ Such a general conclusion, however, should be avoided as it has been disproved by research on individual cases (e.g. Themistius, Michael Psellos).⁹⁴

The preservation of the diction, the *αὐταγγελία*, and the completion of the primary text contribute to the easier comprehensibility of the paraphrasis and the knowledge it delivers. By adding some insights, which they found as the most useful achievements within the topic and by bringing forward a multitude of theories connected to each chapter, the paraphrasts emphasized the most important arguments

⁹⁰ Ibid. 1.14-17: *μόνον δὲ τὸν νοῦν συνεσταλμένον τῇ τοῦ ἀνδρός περινοίᾳ ἣν ποῦ καὶ τῇ περὶ τὴν λέξιν ἀσαφείᾳ καὶ τῇ τῆς ἀπαγγελίας δεινότητι (πολὺ γὰρ τὸ νοεῖν αὐτῷ καὶ γοργόν) ἐξαπλώσαντες καὶ καθάραντες καὶ σχήμασι καὶ περιόδοις κοσμήσαντες.*

⁹¹ I choose to preserve the Greek term without translating it. I provide its meaning immediately after its mentioning.

⁹² For similar usage of the *αὐταγγελία*, see Ierodiakonou: "Psellos' Paraphrasis:" 165 and Sten Ebbesen, *Commentators and Commentaries on Aristotle's "Sophistici Elenchi"* 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 64-82.

⁹³ Ierodiakonou: "Psellos' Paraphrasis:" 164 and 166.

and enriched the knowledge available for those who study philosophy.⁹⁵ By doing so, they have demonstrated their scholarly excellence.⁹⁶

Sophonias seems to imply that although both the lemmatic commentary and the paraphrasis have the goal of making the text clearer and explaining the difficult passages, the paraphrasis is much more successful as an instrument of education. That is illustrated by his claim that its usage leaves the road to philosophy “easy to follow” (*εὐπορον*).⁹⁷ That expression, in my opinion, leads in at least two directions. On the one hand, it marks the general statement that the lemmatic commentary and the paraphrasis are considered philosophical enterprises. On the other hand, they are both preparatory for dealing with philosophy *per se*, namely, with Aristotle’s theory. In that sense, both types of commentary could have had a propaedeutic function – to make one able to deal with the proper matters of philosophy. Therefore, how each of these two prepares the “apprentice” is important. The lemmatic commentary, situated physically beside or below the main text, or interspersed, exists on its own as a separate text with individual style. It presents an independent explanation, sometimes a complementary, but distinct, theory. As it is distinguished from the main text, it is perceived as a reference tool. In contrast, the paraphrasis, a periphrastic exposition, not only presents the meaning of the text, but also shows ways of constructing a treatise, methodology, and way of expression. Therefore, it succeeds both in transmitting knowledge and in introducing the language and rhetorical techniques of

⁹⁴ Robert Todd, “Introduction” in Themisius, *On Aristotle On the Soul*, tr. Robert B. Todd, London (Duckworth, 1996), 1-13 (hereafter: Todd, “Introduction;” Ierodiakonou: “Psellos’ Paraphrasis.”)

⁹⁵ Sophonias, *De Anima*, 1.23-27: οἱ δὲ καὶ ἐπιστάσις καὶ ἐπιβολάς, ἃς ἐφεῦρον, τὰς χρησιμωτάτας ἐπισυνήψαν καὶ θεωρημάτων πλήθος ἐκάστω τῶν κεφαλαίων προσέφερον, τῆς τε ἐπιστημονικῆς αὐτῶν ἕξως ἔλεγχον τοῦ τε πολυμαθοῦς καὶ τῆς διὰ πάντων ἀκρότητος, εὐπορον ἐντεῦθεν τὴν εἰς φιλοσοφίαν ὁδὸν τοῖς μετ’ αὐτοῦς ὑπολείποντες. [emphasis mine]

⁹⁶ Ibid., 1.25-28: τῆς τε ἐπιστημονικῆς αὐτῶν ἕξως ἔλεγχον τοῦ τε πολυμαθοῦς καὶ τῆς διὰ πάντων ἀκρότητος, εὐπορον ἐντεῦθεν τὴν εἰς φιλοσοφίαν ὁδὸν τοῖς μετ’ αὐτοῦς ὑπολείποντες, ταῖς τε ἀνακντούσαις ἀπορίαις γενναιοτάτας τὰς λύσεις ἐπήνεγκαν. [emphasis mine]

⁹⁷ Ibid., 1.26-27: καὶ τῆς διὰ πάντων ἀκρότητος, εὐπορον ἐντεῦθεν τὴν εἰς φιλοσοφίαν ὁδὸν τοῖς μετ’ αὐτοῦς ὑπολείποντες. [emphasis mine]

philosophy in an easy and fluent way to the reader. Thus, a paraphrasis appears to be an educational tool intended mainly for the initial levels of the studies of philosophy.

Finally, at the end of the revision of the preceding commentary tradition Sophonias gives some examples from the authors of paraphrases. According to him, that sort of exegetic work was done first by Themistius, and then by others, the latest of which was Michael Psellos.⁹⁸ Here is the place to mention that the “catalogue” of Aristotelian commentators presented in Sophonias’ preface includes all the commentators of *DA*, chronologically earlier than Sophonias’, known to us today, and although one should take this evidence as partial, it can be concluded that Sophonias was indeed well-acquainted with the commentary tradition before him.⁹⁹

Limitations and rules of both exegesis and paraphrasis

Sophonias continues clarifying the difference between the two groups, while criticizing the weaknesses of both methods of commenting:

And those [the exegetes] were induced only to show the content and to clarify the meaning, as far as the phrasing permitted, thoroughly following the systematical method once for all: the others [the paraphrasts] added some most useful (authoritative) observations and considerations, which they had discovered, and brought forward a multitude of theoretical insights regarding each chapter, proof of their scholarly skill, their knowledge and their excellence in all [regards]; leaving the path to philosophy easy to follow from that point on for those [who came] after them, they offered most noble solutions to the difficulties which had emerged. So, to say it all in a conclusion pertaining to all, each of them approached his task in his own way.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ For analysis of one of Psellos’ paraphrases (of *De Interpretatione*) see Ierodiakonou: “Psellos’ Paraphrasis.”

⁹⁹ See *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle* in Guide to the CAG Edition of the Ancient Commentators, with Project Volumes Arranged Accordingly ed. Richard Sorabji [pdf file]; available from <http://www.umds.ac.uk/kis/schools/hums/philosophy/aca/cag-guide.pdf>; Internet; (accessed 24 May 2008).

¹⁰⁰ Sophonias, *De Anima*, 1.23 -2.4: *καὶ οἱ μὲν μόνον σαφηνίσαι τὸ κείμενον καὶ τὸν νοῦν ἐκφάναι προήχθησαν, ὅσον ἢ λέξις ἐχώρησε, τῷ τεχνικῷ καθάπαξ ἐπόμενοι· οἱ δὲ καὶ ἐπιστάσις καὶ ἐπιβολάς, ὡς εὐεῦρον, τὰς χρησιμωτάτας ἐπισυνήψαν καὶ θεωρημάτων πλήθος ἐκάστω τῶν κεφαλαίων προσέφερον, τῆς τε ἐπιστημονικῆς αὐτῶν ἕξεως ἔλεγχον τοῦ τε πολυμαθοῦς καὶ τῆς διὰ πάντων ἀκρότητος, εὐπορον ἐντεῦθεν τὴν εἰς φιλοσοφίαν ὁδὸν τοῖς μετ’ αὐτοῦς ὑπολείποντες, ταῖς τε ἀνακνυτούσαις ἀπορίας γενναιοτάτας τὰς λύσεις ἐπήνεγκαν· καὶ τὸ ὅλον ὑπὲρ ἀπάντων εἶπεῖν, οἰκείως τῇ ἑαυτοῦ προδέσει ἀπήντησεν ἕκαστος.*

Sophonias appropriates as a main source for his paraphrasis John Philoponus' commentary on *DA*.¹⁰¹ As he himself states in the preface “following the exegetes in the majority and especially Philoponus, we inserted whole sections into ours, as they were phrased with those verbally.”¹⁰² Sophonias classifies the commentary approach of Philoponus as representative of the methodology of the exegetes. The structure of Philoponus' text is the structure of a lemmatic commentary, namely the body of the primary text is divided into separate content units (*lemmas*). Each of them is stated and followed by the interpretation of the author. Sophonias criticizes such methodology of exegesis first for the discontinuity of the original diction. Then he points out that an exposition with such a structure is not easy to follow and the reader can easily lose track of the line of reasoning. Finally, Sophonias claims that the exegetes do not properly use the “conjunctions, additionally the occasional transposition of whole colons and the addition or omission and exchange of periods against order [literally, in order].”¹⁰³ At the same time, they were much occupied “proffering problems and solutions, so that [...] it was not easy for some to observe the continuity.”¹⁰⁴ Sophonias concludes that the result of applying the lemmatic commentary can be to forget the beginning of the exposition or to approach what follows in a confused manner.¹⁰⁵ Although the exegetes seem to have chosen a not-so-“appropriate” form of interpreting the reasoning of Aristotle, however, they have offered a lot in order to resolve the difficulties, which arise from the text itself. By

¹⁰¹ Philoponus' *De Intellectu* (Book III of his *De Anima* commentary) is partially preserved in Sophonias' paraphrasis. For a detailed study on this subject see S. van Riet, “Fragments de l' Original Grec du *De intellectu* de Philopon dans une Compilation de Sophonias”, in *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 63 (1965): 5-40.

¹⁰² Sophonias, *De Anima*, 3.3-4: *καὶ τοῖς ἐξηγηταῖς ἐπόμενοι κἂν τοῖς πλείοσι καὶ μάλιστα Φιλοπόνῳ ὅλας περικοπᾶς, ὡς κατὰ λέξιν εἶχεν ἐκείνοις, τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἐνέθεμεν.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 2.15-16: *συνδέσμων ἀκαιρίαν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ κώλων ἔστιν ὅτε μεταθέσεις ὅλων καὶ προσθήκην ἢ ἔλλειψιν καὶ περιόδων κατὰ τάξιν ὑπαλλαγήν.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.17-19: *τῇ τε τῶν ἀποριῶν ἐπεισαγωγῇ καὶ τῶν λύσεων πολλὰ κατατρίβουσιν, ὡς μὴ εὐχερῆς τισιν εἶναι [...] τὸ συνεχῆς ἔχειν.*

comparison, the paraphrastic method offers to the one who uses it an elegant solution for the problem of making the interpretation easier to comprehend. It results in a continuous exposition with unified diction and a homogenous style.

From the discussion so far, it appears natural that Sophonias chose to deal with the text of *DA* through the technical *instrumentarium* of the paraphrasis. Whatever hypothesis about the audience and the purposes of this work one might hold, to prefer a type of commentary which leaves “the path to philosophy easy to follow from that point on for those [who came] after them”¹⁰⁶ is a justified motivation.

On the other hand, although the paraphrasts had “offered most noble solutions to the difficulties which had emerged,”¹⁰⁷ Sophonias claims that he does not prefer “and I do not like to be content with the latter [paraphrasts] if it is not also possible to profit from the [results of the] first group [the exegetes].”¹⁰⁸ One’s first impression is that Sophonias is inconsistent in his claims and – even more – he contradicts them in his own statements. A second consideration of this difficulty gives a more satisfactory explanation. Sophonias has structured his treatise using the continuous and fluent form of the paraphrasis and at the same time including the exegesis offered by John Philoponus in his lemmatic commentary. The lemmas from Philoponus’ text are followed by excerpts from his interpretation, sometimes revised and significantly shortened by Sophonias. The punctuation of Aristotle’s passages is altered as well: the longer sentences are often divided into several shorter ones, therefore, the phases of the argument become easier to distinguish. The word order is sometimes corrected as

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 2.19-20: ἀλλὰ κινδυνεύειν ἐπιλελῆσθαι τῇ μεταξυλογίᾳ καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ τοῖς ἐξῆς συγκεχυμένως προσφέρεσθαι.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 1.26-27: εὐπορον ἐντεῦθεν τὴν εἰς φιλοσοφίαν ὁδὸν τοῖς μετ’ αὐτοὺς ὑπολείποντες.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 1.27-28: ταῖς τε ἀνακνυτούσαις ἀπορίαις γενναιοτάτας τὰς λύσεις ἐπήνεγκαν·

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. οὐδὲ ἀγαπᾶμεν ἀρκεῖσθαι τοῖς παρ’ ἐκείνων, εἰ μὴ καὶ τῶν πρώτων ἐξέσται τυχεῖν.

well.¹⁰⁹ The second part of the question, namely, why did Sophonias choose not to refer to some of the paraphrasts (e.g. to Themistius) as far as the interpretation goes instead to Philoponus, must be related to the intention of his treatise. Both types of commentary allow the development of the exegesis of philosophical significance. Therefore, the choice of source must be dictated not by the efficiency of the approach, but by the content of the argumentation and the theoretical platform it creates. The question of how Philoponus' theory of the soul and intellect could serve the possible purposes of Sophonias' paraphrasis, however, requires a separate comparative study of both texts, which cannot be completed in the limits of the present research.

Description of Sophonias' method. 'Innovation'

Finally, it is left to discuss Sophonias' own methodology of commenting. In his account of Sophonias' exegetical methodology in the paraphrasis of the *SE*,¹¹⁰ Sten Ebbesen distinguishes altogether four constitutive characteristics, very similar to the features of the scholiastic exegesis. The first is the addition of glosses in the main exposition. The second is the substitution of synonyms for single words in otherwise unchanged sentences. The third is the replacement of imprecise or difficult phrases by means of clearer ones. The last is the addition of examples.¹¹¹ Ebbesen also points the insertion of an excerpt from a commentary on *De Interpretatione*, "though none of the *Elenchi Scholia* that I knew have it."¹¹² He does not specify which commentary is used by Sophonias, and although it is probable that the latter was acquainted with

¹⁰⁹ Example for the change of word order and the substitution of some conjunctions one can find for instance in the paraphrase of *DA* 413^b24. Aristotle's texts reads as follows: "καθάπερ τὸ αἰδίων τοῦ φθαρτοῦ." Sophonias paraphrases: "ὡσπερ τοῦ φθαρτοῦ τὸ αἰδίων." Another example is the paraphrase of *DA* 415^b8. Aristotle states: "ἔστι δὲ ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ ζῶντος σώματος αἰτία καὶ ἀρχή," while Sophonias changes it to "Ἔστι δὲ ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ ζῶντος σώματος ἀρχὴ καὶ αἰτία." Aristotle's text is quoted according to the edition of W.D. Ross, *Aristotle. De anima* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

¹¹⁰ Ebbesen, "Commentators and Commentaries:" 333-341.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 335.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 338.

Michael Psellos' paraphrasis on the treatise,¹¹³ at the present stage of this study such a connection can hardly be made. This summary of Ebbesen's description of Sophonias' exegetic methodology provides a paradigm useful for the analysis of his approach to the text of *DA*.

Sophonias' preface gives an account of the previous Greek commentary tradition according to methodological criteria and provides a categorization and explanation of its divisions. He does not comment on Aristotle's method, however, as the different ways of approaching a philosophical text stand in the main focus and not the different ways of approaching a philosophical problem by itself. The structure of Sophonias' preface to some extent, however, reflects and repeats Aristotle's methodological enterprise in *DA*. On the one hand, Aristotle is revising the previous theories on the essence of the soul and then trying to develop a universal method of inquiry about the essence – of the soul first – then, eventually, of the essence of every single being, and finally of the essence itself. Sophonias' preface has the same characteristics – a revision of the previous methodological approach and the development of a new one that overcomes the disadvantages of the former – in his preface. “Following the exegetes,”¹¹⁴ but borrowing the form of paraphrasis, he aims to provide sufficient explanation, that is, to keep up to the standards of the others, and in addition to offer something **new** and to some extent **useful** in the studies of Aristotle [emphasis mine].¹¹⁵

Sophonias twice refers to his approach as “novel” (*τι καινόν*) in the preface.¹¹⁶

It is important to interpret his claim for innovation both in the context of the purposes

¹¹³ Sophonias refers to Psellos as a representative of the group of the paraphrasts in his preface to the *De Anima Paraphrasis*.

¹¹⁴ Sophonias, *De Anima*, 3.3-4: *καὶ τοῖς ἐξηγηταῖς ἐπόμενοι κἂν τοῖς πλείοσι καὶ μάλιστα Φιλοπόνῳ ὅλας περικοπᾶς, ὡς κατὰ λέξιν εἶχεν ἐκείνοις, τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἐνέθεμεν*. [emphasis mine]

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.34: *τάχ' ἄν τι καινὸν ἡμῖν ἐν τοῖς Ἀριστοτελικοῖς καταλείψειε*. [emphasis mine]

of his text and in the general context of the notion of “Byzantine originality” or *καινοτομία*. The latter has been the subject of continuous discussion in the scholarship.¹¹⁷ Whether the Byzantines strove conservatively to preserve their Hellenic and Roman heritage, or transformed it significantly is not the subject of the present study; ; *in the present late thirteenth/early fourteenth century context it may suffice to refer to a famous letter written by Manuel Moschopoulos (while imprisoned) defending himself against the accusation of “innovation.”*¹¹⁸ The dichotomy of imitation or innovation,¹¹⁹ however, influences the understanding of Sophonias’ place in the tradition of Aristotelian commentary. He claims the invention of a different methodology which, however, produces a rather standard commentary. Then where is the novelty? I would argue that Sophonias’ claim for “originality” should not be taken as a statement of revolutionizing the exegetical methodology. It should be understood as its “improvement.” Sophonias is not denying the preceding tradition; he analyses it and complements it in order to offer a more profitable approach. Therefore, his “innovation” is an improvement by rearranging the already existing material, that is, the approaches of the exegetes and the paraphrasts. The result of this process is a third type of methodology which is added to the previous two. It complements the already existing tradition of commenting without altering it essentially.

Börje Bydén proposes an additional aspect of Sophonias claim for “novelty”:

...in the Early Palaeologan Aristotelian commentaries...literary innovation served as an excuse for writing and publishing commentaries at a time when hardly anybody had the ability to offer

¹¹⁶ The second occurrence is *ibid.*, 2.6: *καὶ εἰ μὴ καινόν τι τὸ παρ’ ἐμοῦ, καὶ τί που καὶ συνεισφέρων χάρισμον.* [emphasis mine]

¹¹⁷ See the overview of this discussion by Alexander P. Kazhdan, “Innovation in Byzantium”, in *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music*, ed. A. R. Littlewood (Oxbow Books: Oxford, 1995), 1-17 (hereafter: Kazhdan: “Innovation in Byzantium.”)

¹¹⁸ See L. Levi, “Cinque lettere inedite di Manuele Moscopulo” in *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica* 10 (1902): 55-72.

¹¹⁹ Kazhdan: “Innovation in Byzantium:” 11.

significant new philological or philosophical insights, but many people wished they had had.¹²⁰

The discussion above contextualized Sophonias' preface on several levels, namely, (1) within the general framework of the commentary, (2) within the group of Sophonias' other prefaces, (3) and finally within the *De Anima Paraphrasis*. The following section of this study inquires about the audience and purposes of the preface involving the conclusions from the previous analysis.

Audience and purposes of the commentary

Because evidence about Sophonias' life and activities is rather scarce and to a certain extent hypothetical, it is difficult to determine what his motives were for composing the *De Anima Paraphrasis*, what the purpose of writing it was, and even what his intended audience was. In such a case, the analysis of several overlapping factors concerning the text and its author can serve as tools for reconstructing the most probable context and function of his treatise.

The starting point for such an analysis is as simple as asking the questions: who? when? where? how? and finally, why? Sophonias is believed to have been a monk, but there is no evidence of the monastery he belonged to or when he entered it. In addition, it is not clear to what extent he was devoted to the pursuit of a monastic life. His origins and family connections are also unknown. The only evidence for his character comes from the correspondence he engaged in with the Dominican, Simon of Constantinople¹²¹ and from the account given by George Pachymeres of Sophonias' embassy to Italy.¹²² Pachymeres describes Sophonias as a wise and reasonable man. Simon apparently held him in great respect as well, after their dispute

¹²⁰ Bydén: "Literary Innovation:"33.

¹²¹ Congourdeau: "Note sur les Dominicains:" 178.

on the matters of the procession of the Holy Spirit in 1294 while Sophonias was going to Italy. An important part of the discussion was based on the usage of patristic citations; even more, Sophonias himself brought to Simon a book which contained a passage from Basil the Great apparently useful for the purposes of Simon's argumentation.¹²³ Congourdeau interprets the theological discussion between the two as a possible indication that Sophonias was preparing himself among the Dominicans in Euripos for the forthcoming negotiations with the Pope.¹²⁴

From this evidence one can easily draw some conclusions concerning Sophonias' education. Apparently he obtained a theological education; from the paraphrases he wrote it appears that he knew the Aristotelian corpus and the commentary tradition as well (Themistius, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Ammonius, Simplicius, John Philoponus, Michael Psellos).¹²⁵ From these, I argue that he certainly was acquainted and had access at least to Philoponus' commentary as this was the main source for his paraphrase of *DA*. In his paraphrase on the *Sophistici Elenchi*, Sophonias made use of Nikephoros Blemmydes' compendium of logic and of the *scholia* of Leo the Magentine.¹²⁶ Hayduck points out that he used Iamblichus as well in the composition of the *De Anima Paraphrasis*.¹²⁷ Sophonias' knowledge of Latin is

¹²² Pachymeres, *Historiae*, 202.8-10: Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς πρέποντα γάμον τῷ παιδί παρεσκεύαζε. καὶ τὸν μὲν ἱερομόναχον Σοφονίαν, ἄνδρα σοφὸν τε καὶ συνετόν, ἀποπέμπει πρὸς Πουλίαν τὸ κινούμενον κῆδος διαπρεσβεύσεσθαι. [emphasis mine]

¹²³ Cf. Vatican City, BAV MS Gr 1104, f.23, tr. Congourdeau in Congourdeau "Frère Simon Le Constantinopolitain:" footnotes 9 and 20: "Je me souviens que lorsque ta sainteté fut envoyée par le trios fois grand empereur des Romains comme ambassadeur auprès du très glorieux roi de Sicile, et qu'à cette occasion tu passas par Euripos, **tu me remis en mains un volume dans lequel se trouvait une citation du grand saint Basile continue dans un de ses discours à son frère Grégoire de Nysse**, celui sur la différence entre *ousia* et *hypostasis*, de sorte qu'après l'avoir examinée je connusse dans la mesure de mes possibilités sa signification à tes yeux ; il te semblait en effet que par cette citation le grand Basile, à ce que tu me disais, affirmait que l' *ousia* du Père est la seule cause de l'Esprit, et pas le Fils, comme disent ceux qui affirment que l'Esprit est produit par les deux." [emphasis mine]

¹²⁴ Congourdeau: "Frère Simon Le Constantinopolitain:" 169.

¹²⁵ See the translation of Sophonias' preface in Appendix I.

¹²⁶ See footnote 38.

¹²⁷ See Hayduck, "Preface," footnote 3.

attested by Guillaume Bernard de Gaillac.¹²⁸ All this, combined with the delicate diplomatic task entrusted to him by Andronikos II¹²⁹ demonstrate that Sophonias was a highly educated member of the Byzantine elite.

Taking into consideration the summary of the available information on Sophonias, I propose four hypotheses for the purposes and possible audience of the paraphrasis on *DA*. The first and safest, and perhaps most acknowledged in the scholarship sees the treatise as an educational text (1). In his short account of Sophonias' place among the representatives of Byzantine philosophical thought during the last three centuries of the empire, Tatakis sees this idea as self-evident.¹³⁰ The reason behind Sophonias' scholarly activity was the intention to facilitate the study of Aristotle's philosophy.¹³¹ The passages that Tatakis has dedicated to the monk are a mere paraphrase of the preface of Sophonias' paraphrasis on *DA*¹³² and based on them he has drawn this general conclusion towards his exegetical texts as a whole.

This hypothesis can be confirmed to some extent by a close reading of the aforementioned preface. While describing the advantages of the method of commenting he proposes, Sophonias identifies the audience of his works, in terms of those who would appropriate his methodology, as the ones who would come "to a certain easiness to the effort regarding the reading".¹³³ Another indication that the text is meant to be transmitted, and it is not a product of an isolated scholarly enterprise, is the claim for its usefulness: "If hence I myself have made the choice of adducing

¹²⁸ Uppsala, MS UU 55 342. "Ut reverendus vir dominus Sophonias, graecus kalogerus (...) sive monachus, sciens graecam litteram et latinam..." in Congourdeau: "Note sur les Dominicains," footnote 14.

¹²⁹ See footnote 34.

¹³⁰ Tatakis, *Histoire de la Philosophie*, 246.

¹³¹ Ibid.: "...Sophonias, qui a paraphrasé plusieurs ouvrages d'Aristote, dans l'intention de faciliter l'étude de ce philosophe."

¹³² Sophonias, *De Anima*. See Appendix I.

¹³³ Sophonias, *De Anima*, 2.34-35: *καὶ ὁμαστώνην τινὰ τῆ ἐπὶ τῆ ἀναγνώσει ὀρέξει σπουδῆ.*

something I would seem superfluous not proffering a sufficient justification if that which is [coming] from me is not something new and in a certain degree introducing **something useful** [emphasis mine].”¹³⁴ The final remark that suggests the instructional intention of Sophonias’ paraphrasis in fact comes together with his complaints concerning the effort he has put in studying the tradition before him: “And because of having endured them [the exegetes] (because I spent a lot of time troubling myself with the exegetes) it occurred to my mind to show kindness towards others.”¹³⁵ From what was stated above, it seems quite appropriate to attribute the function of an educational tool to Sophonias’ paraphrasis. It remains unclear, however, who were the apprentices this text was directed to. Representatives of the “scholarly circle” he was probably part of could have formed the audience of his paraphrases.

The remaining hypotheses concerning the audience of the treatise discussed here can so far only be proposed as ideas and can hardly be supported by extant evidence. If one takes into consideration the political activity of Sophonias, his role in the negotiations for the marriage of Michael IX to Catherine of Courtenay, and his (Sophonias’) later conversion to Catholicism, one can consider the possibility that his treatises were meant to be involved somehow as a tool in his career as a high official in the court of Andronikos II. On the one hand, if the paraphrasis on *DA* was composed before the embassy of 1294, it could have served either as a preparation for the forthcoming discussions (2), or as means of self-representation (3). Finally, the composition of the paraphrasis can be a result of Sophonias’ personal interest in the subject (4). The theological dispute that Sophonias entered in with Simon of Constantinople as a preparation for the future negotiations with the pope has already

¹³⁴ Ibid., 2.4-7: *εἰ δὲ τούτων ὄντων καὶ αὐτός τι συμβαλέσθαι προήρημαι, περιττός ἂν δόξαιμι, μὴ ἀποχωρῶσαν τὴν ἀπολογία ἐύρων, καὶ εἰ μὴ καινόν τι τὸ παρ’ ἐμοῦ, καὶ τί που καὶ συνεισφέρων χρήσιμον.* [emphasis mine]

been mentioned. The paraphrasis of *DA* could have been a similar exercise in philosophy. On the other hand, the reputation of being a commentator on Aristotle could have been an useful instrument in building a certain image and status during his stay in Italy.

The dating of the *De Anima Paraphrasis*

Previous research on Sophonias has not managed to establish a precise dating for the composition of his paraphrases. It has been shown¹³⁶ that they were written towards the end of the thirteenth century. With the data presently available it is impossible to make progress on this question; I will here review the evidence and add a few observations of my own. The dating of the paraphrasis on *DA* would play a significant role in the establishing of its probable purposes and possible audience.¹³⁷ In case that the text was written before the embassy of 1294, from the four hypotheses discussed in the previous subchapter the second (the *De Anima Paraphrasis* was part of Sophonias' preparation for the negotiations in Italy (2)) would have to be rejected. The remaining three options (the paraphrasis was written either as a propaedeutical text (1), or it was employed for self-representation (3), or it was written because of personal interest in the topic (4)) will adopt considerably different meaning if their chronological frame is changed.

However, I argue that the paraphrasis of *DA* was most probably composed before the diplomatic mission to the court of Naples. I base this statement on Hayduck's description of the oldest manuscript of the *De Anima Paraphrasis* – Florence, Laur. MS Gr 7. 35. The codex is dated to the end of the thirteenth/beginning

¹³⁵ Ibid., 3.6-8: *καὶ τῷ παθεῖν αὐτούς (πολὺν γὰρ ἐτρίβομεν χρόνον τοῖς ἐξηγηταῖς προσταλαιπωρούμενοι) τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐπ' ἧμι φιλανθρωπεύσασθαι.*

¹³⁶ See Hayduck, "Preface" and Ebbesen, *Commentators and Commentaries*.

¹³⁷ Indeed the dating of the paraphrasis is important, but one has to consider that it is highly problematic and possibly even imprecise.

of the fourteenth century (but this date needs to be treated with some care). Sophonias' paraphrasis was copied in the thirteenth century with the exception of one folio, which belongs to a more recent hand.¹³⁸ Hayduck is convinced that this manuscript is not the archetype, and therefore he doubts the authorship of Sophonias (before 1294 – 1351).¹³⁹ However, his objection suggests only that the dating of the codex proposed by Bandini and Vitelli¹⁴⁰ does not support the identification of Sophonias the philosopher with Sophonias the ambassador. In addition to that, Hayduck informs us about this discrepancy briefly in a footnote without further discussion of the issue. Also, he does not specify how much earlier he assumes the text to have been copied. He points out that the manuscript that transmits the paraphrasis on *DA* differs from the manuscripts transmitting the other paraphrases attributed to Sophonias as being much earlier.¹⁴¹ The oldest manuscripts of the other treatises date back to the fourteenth century. Nevertheless, they are all together attributed to the same author, Sophonias, on the basis of stylistic and morphological analysis.¹⁴²

If indeed Florence, Laur. MS Gr 7. 35 is not the archetype, it must predate the extant manuscript. By how is impossible to ascertain. However, there is no reason to assume that one and the same monk Sophonias could not have been the author of the paraphrasis of *DA* and the other ones attributed to his name. The *De Anima Paraphrasis* could have been written earlier than the other treatises, but surely still within the life span of Sophonias.

¹³⁸ Hayduck, "Preface," vii.

¹³⁹ Ibid., footnote 2.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² See M. Hayduck, "Preface" in *Anonymi in Aristotelis Sophisticos Elenchos Paraphrasis*, CAG, v.

III. THE PREFACE. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The objective of the previous chapter was to provide a contextualization of Sophonias' preface. The present section of this study presents a comparative analysis of the preface with two other prefaces of the same nature, that is, prefaces of commentaries of Aristotle's *DA*.

First I discuss the preface as such and its specifics independently of the historical context in order to present a more complete understanding of its various intentions and functions. The aim is to analyze how Sophonias' preface positions itself as an individual example in the paradigmatic commentary structure after having described the general case in the previous chapter of this study. The discussion about what a preface is in general does not claim to reach universal conclusions. Second, I will illustrate various types of preface used within the commentary tradition on Aristotle by introducing comparative material. The intention here is to exemplify the conclusions made in general about the character of a preface and also to distinguish Sophonias' preface among other prefaces belonging to the same tradition of Aristotelian exegesis.

The following two subsections provide a comparative analysis of Sophonias' preface, Themistius' introduction to his *In Aristotelem De Anima paraphrasis*, and Thomas Aquinas' *Lectio Prima* of his *Sentencia libri De Anima*. On the one hand, Themistius belongs to the same Greek tradition of Aristotelian commentary, and he also employs the same exegetical type: the paraphrasis. In addition, according to the information given by Sophonias in his preface to the *De Anima Paraphrasis*, he was acquainted with Themistius' works. On the other hand, Aquinas' commentary represents the Latin commentary tradition of a period roughly contemporary to Sophonias.

In Appendix II I have presented the main elements I shall address here when discussing Sophonias' preface and comparing it with Thomas Aquinas' *Lectio Prima* and Themistius' preface. I have divided them into three categories. Under the title "Tradition" I am addressing the following three questions: How does the author relate himself and his treatise to Aristotle's *DA*, especially in terms of methodology? Does the preface include a description of the preceding commentary tradition? Does it provide a classification of previous commentaries? The section dedicated to "Methodology" deals with the author's description of his own method and with the actual utilization of this method in the main body of the treatise. Finally, under the title "Terminology" I focus on the technical terms characteristic of the 'proper' commentary and the technical terms characteristic of the paraphrasis.

A model of a preface. General framework

Whatever starting point one may choose in order to discuss the nature of a preface and its properties, inevitably the interrelatedness of the preface and the main exposition appears as a key problem. Even etymologically a preface derives from the principal text. Both the preface and the main theoretical body of a commentary interact. The preface offers the necessary methodological (and even conceptual) *instrumentarium* in order to assure the best possible grasp of the matter under study. As Gerard Genette pointed out the "the ... authorial preface... has as its chief function *to ensure that the text is read properly.*"¹⁴³ The preface can explain the commentator's approach (1), his choice for alterations from the original (2), the philosopher's methodology (3) or even the preface's own function and place in the whole of the commentary (4).

¹⁴³ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 197.

The preface clearly states the topic, also the main problems in the discussion, and the key terms. It seems then a natural assumption that a preface serves exclusively the purposes of the exposition. I argue, however, that the interrelatedness of a preface and an exposition represent only one characteristic of the former. Does a preface depend exclusively on the main unit of argumentation it introduces? Can a preface be meaningful if separated from the text it introduces? Does a preface have a topic on its own, an independent structure and an intention not related to the commentary? Finally, is it possible that the preface and the commentary operate on different levels addressing different audiences or that they approach the same audience in a different manner? The hypothesis I am advancing here proposes that the consideration of the three prefaces discussed in this chapter and the expositions they introduce, demonstrates that despite the unanimous and unifying style of the narrative, these two textual units are essentially and functionally different.

As discussed above, Sophonias' paraphrasis appears to have been written for the purposes of an initial education in the study of the Aristotelian theory of the soul. If one accepts that premise, then the leading intention behind the introduction of a new methodology of commenting is the transmission of the text in a form that is much easier to comprehend than the existing ones, and completely clear. The preface, however, does not deal with the content of *DA* at all. It represents an argumentation and justification of Sophonias' personal claim for the improvement of the commentary methodology. The 'novelty' which he introduced is contextualized carefully through the revision of the preceding tradition in this genre of exegetic writing. He analyses the methods used by the 'proper' commentators and the paraphrasts in order to outline their advantages and disadvantages. Then, the new method of commentating is described as derived from the former two, as their

perfection with respect to a certain objective, that is, the facilitation of an education in philosophy. Therefore, the aim and the main concern of Sophonias' preface are not related to Aristotle's theory of the soul or its understanding, but to the means of transmitting and studying it. Hence, what one should expect from Sophonias' paraphrase is not the development of a new philosophical argumentation, but a skillfully prepared instructional treatise, which aims to introduce more efficient ways of clarifying Aristotle's thought. Following the same line of reasoning, it can be concluded that while Sophonias' paraphrase addresses a group of disciples as its audience; at the same time its preface is directed to that part of the audience interested in the methodology of teaching.

Similar argumentation can be applied to the other two prefaces analysed here. If Sophonias teaches how one should compose a commentary, then Aquinas' *Lectio Prima* deals with the issue how to write a preface, and Themistius discusses what a definition is and how we define things.

Thomas Aquinas, *Lectio Prima*

In *Lectio Prima* of his *Sentencia libri De Anima*,¹⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274),¹⁴⁵ after discussing Aristotle's methodology as it is applied in *Metaphysica*, *De Animalibus*, and so on, pays special attention to the "preface" of *DA*. Although this "preface" is not distinguished in the text, Aquinas defines it as such and discusses it separately. What provoked his interest were Aristotle's prescriptions for what a preface should contain: "For the one who writes a preface has three objectives. In the

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Sentencia libri De anima*, in Corpus Thomisticum [database on-line], ed. Enrique Alarcón; available from <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/can1.html>; Internet; (accessed 27 January 2008) (hereafter: Aquinas, *Sentencia libri De anima*).

¹⁴⁵ For a general introduction to Aquinas' theory on the soul see Michael J. Sweeney, "Thomas Aquinas' *Quaestiones de Anima* and the Difference between a Philosophical and a Theological Approach to the Soul," *Miscellanea Medievalia* 26 (1998): 587-594; Carlos B. Bazán, "The Human Soul: Form and Substance? Thomas Aquinas' Critique of Eclectic Aristotelianism," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 64 (1997): 95-126; Leonard A. Kennedy, "A New Disputed

first place to predispose the ‘audience’ to learn. Second, to make it knowledgeable. Third, to provoke its interest.”¹⁴⁶ These three tasks are to be accomplished in the following way. First, in order to predispose the reader to learn, one should demonstrate the usefulness of this knowledge. Then, in order to prepare the “audience” for the following dialectic enterprise, the commentator should explain the contents and the division of the treatise. Finally, the author has to indicate the difficulties in a treatise of this kind in order to provoke the interest of the reader.¹⁴⁷

From this short overview of Thomas Aquinas’ preface one can easily observe that its character is quite different from that of Sophonias’. Aquinas also dedicates the introduction of his treatise to a sort of methodological discussion; the matter of discussion is rather different, though. Sophonias presents an overview of the previous commentary tradition and discusses the methods of commenting on Aristotle’s texts. Aquinas first summarizes Aristotle’s methodology itself and later transfers his interest to what a preface to any kind of tract should be like.

The comparison between the prefaces reveals two ways of perceiving not only the function of the preface itself, but moreover two ways of understanding what an exegetical work is about. Aquinas’ preface is designed to provide the necessary information for understanding the structure of the whole treatise, and it also seeks to assure that its exposition follows Aristotle’s text as strictly as possible. The preface does not express Aquinas’ own methodological preferences in any way; it reports what Aristotle has prescribed as appropriate in this case. Unlike Aristotle himself, and unlike Sophonias as well, Aquinas does not place his commentary work somewhere in

Question of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Immortality of the Soul,” *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 45 (1979): 205-223.

¹⁴⁶ Aquinas, *Sentencia libri De anima*: Lectio 1 [86462] Sentencia De anima, lib. 1 l. 1 n. 2 *Qui enim facit prooemium tria intendit. Primo enim ut auditorem reddat benevolum. Secundo ut reddat docilem. Tertio ut reddat attentum.*

the tradition established so far. There is no general scheme provided where one can distinguish Aquinas' position in comparison with others before him. Perhaps a trace of his own input in the *DA* commentary is the very beginning of *Lectio Prima*, namely, his explanation of Aristotle's general proceeding in the study of the essence of whatever being.¹⁴⁸ This very methodology is not a subject of interpretation here; it is important only in so far as its insertion into the preface is concerned. Here Aquinas discusses other treatises of Aristotle in order to contextualize the methodology used in the study of the essence of the soul. That insertion, which does not follow Aristotle's text, can be considered an indicator for Aquinas' own method of commenting. That is, the insertion of the contextualization in the first paragraph, is, in my opinion, a result of the need for clarification, which Aquinas felt Aristotle's text could make use of. One can observe that the language of Aquinas' commentary is much more simplified, the diction much clearer, the arguments transmitted explicitly and in a condensed form. This shows another commenting strategy, namely, clarification through simplification, contrasted to the one chosen by Sophonias since he aims to clarify the meaning of the text by extending it. The simplification applied by Aquinas to *DA* produces as a result a paradigmatic, or standard, commentary with a clearly comprehensible structure. Such a commentary can easily function as a model commentary, and therefore it has an instructional purpose.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.: *Benevolum quidem reddit, ostendendo utilitatem scientiae: docilem, praemittendo ordinem et distinctionem tractatus: attentum attestando difficultatem tractatus.*

¹⁴⁸ Ibid: Lectio 1 [86461] Sentencia De anima, lib. 1 l. 1 n. 1 *Sicut docet philosophus in undecimo de animalibus, in quolibet genere rerum necesse est prius considerare communia et seorsum, et postea propria unicuique illius generis: quem quidem modum Aristoteles servat in philosophia prima. In metaphysicae enim primo tractat et considerat communia entis in quantum ens, postea vero considerat propria unicuique enti. Cuius ratio est, quia nisi hoc fieret, idem diceretur frequenter. Rerum autem animatarum omnium quoddam genus est; et ideo in consideratione rerum animatarum oportet prius considerare ea quae sunt communia omnibus animatis, postmodum vero illa quae sunt propria cuilibet rei animatae. Commune autem omnibus rebus animatis est anima: in hoc enim omnia animata conveniunt. Ad tradendum igitur de rebus animatis scientiam, necessarium fuit primo tradere scientiam de anima tamquam communem eis. Aristoteles ergo volens tradere scientiam de ipsis rebus animatis,*

Themistius' preface

Themistius' preface¹⁴⁹ to his paraphrase on *DA*¹⁵⁰ has a different structure and apparently different intention than Sophonias'. According to the threefold criterion set previously and illustrated in Appendix I, Sophonias' preface offers a methodological and to some extent terminological discussion, but it does not deal with the content of Aristotle's treatise. The focus is on the introduction and justification of a new method of explaining Aristotle's theory about the soul.

Themistius' preface contains all three characteristics in a new configuration. First, the preface begins with a methodological discussion of the four types of exegesis he is employing in the paraphrase on *DA*: elucidation (*ἐκκαλύπτειν*), reconstruction (*συνίστασθαι*) analysis (*ἐπίστασθαι*), and elaboration (*ἐξεργάζεσθαι*).¹⁵¹ In the introduction to his translation of Themistius' text into English, Robert Todd comments that these terms "may well refer to overlapping procedures."¹⁵² According to him, the elucidation refers to the "restatement, enlargement and rearrangement of texts."¹⁵³ This also implies the omission of repetitions and the clarification of the terminology. The reconstruction is the presentation of Aristotle's ideas in a more schematic way than the way they are explained in the original. The analysis provides solutions to certain problems within the theoretical discussion. Finally, the elaboration points out the internal discussions, which do not repeat Aristotle's text, but are either

primo tradit scientiam de anima, postmodum vero determinat de propriis singulis animatis in sequentibus libris.

¹⁴⁹ For an overview on Themistius' rhetoric and the role of philosophy in his speeches see John Vanderspoel, *Themistius and Imperial Court: Oratory, Civic Duty, and Paideia from Constantius to Theodosius*, Ann Arbor (University of Michigan Press, 1995).

¹⁵⁰ Themistius, *In Aristotelis libros de anima paraphrasis*, CAG 5.3 (hereafter: Themistius, *DA*)

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1.2-10: *Περὶ ψυχῆς ὅσα δυνατόν σὺν ἐπιστήμῃ λαβεῖν, ἀκολουθοῦντας Ἀριστοτέλει πειρατέον ἡμῖν ἐν τῇδε τῇ πραγματείᾳ ἐκδέσθαι τῷ [καί] τὰ μὲν ἐκκαλύψαι, τοῖς δὲ συστήναι, τοῖς δὲ ἐπιστήναι, τὰ δὲ (εἰ μὴ φορτικὸν εἰπεῖν) καὶ ἐξεργάσασθαι. καὶ γὰρ πολλῶν ὄντων συνταγμάτων ἃ τις, ἂν θραυμάσειεν Ἀριστοτέλους, πάντων ἀγασθαι μᾶλλον προσήκει τὴν Περὶ ψυχῆς πραγματείαν καὶ τοῦ πλήθους ἕνεκεν τῶν προβλημάτων, ἃ μὴδὲ ἐξαριθμησασθαι μόνον οἱ πρὸ Ἀριστοτέλους ἐξίκαντο, καὶ τῆς εὐπορίας τῶν εἰς ἕκαστον ἀφορμῶν, καὶ τῶν μεθόδων ὅσας ἐνέδωκε τῇ θεωρίᾳ· δῆλον δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἔσται τῶν λεγομένων.*

¹⁵² Todd, "Introduction," 4.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4

connected with other sources introduced in the paraphrasis or deal with similar or related topics not explored in the primary text of *DA*.¹⁵⁴

Todd¹⁵⁵ and also Börje Bydén¹⁵⁶ have noticed the similar methodological description Themistius placed in the dedication to his paraphrasis on *Analitica Posteriora* [Posterior Analytics]. There the description is more detailed and also involves the motivation behind Themistius' enterprise. Similar to Sophonias, he defines his task as the elaboration of a method for a revision of Aristotle's works which would be convenient for those who fail in this task, struggling with the lengthy commentaries.¹⁵⁷ The paraphrastic method is classified as extracting the intention of the Philosopher and reporting it in a concise form. Here one should recall Sophonias' proceeding: unfolding the meaning, but restating it in a manner longer than that of the paraphrasts.¹⁵⁸

Another common feature between these commentators is the claim for innovation.¹⁵⁹ As was already shown, Sophonias attempted at developing a new type of commenting, combining the most useful elements from the methods of the exegetes and the paraphrasts. He also stated that by using his method "something novel would rapidly fall to me in the field of Aristotelian studies."¹⁶⁰ Similar to Sophonias, Themistius, in my opinion, is referring to his paraphrastic method as new only on the level of its propaedeutical function. That is why he defines it as both novel and

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵⁶ Bydén: "Literary Innovation:" 8-14.

¹⁵⁷ Themistius, *Analyticorum posteriorum paraphrasis*, CAG 5.1, 1.7-12 (hereafter: Themistius, *An. Post.*): τὸ μέντοι ἐκλαμβάνοντα τὰ βουλήματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις γεγραμμένων σὺν τάχει τε ἐξαγγέλλειν καὶ τῇ συντομίᾳ τοῦ φιλοσόφου κατὰ δύναμιν παρομαρτεῖν καινόν τε ἐδόκει καὶ τινα ὠφέλειαν παρέξουσθαι· εὐκόλον γὰρ ἔσεσθαι διὰ τοῦ τοιοῦτου τρόπου τὴν ανάμνησιν ὑπειλήφαμεν τοῖς ἅπασι μὲν τὰ Ἀριστοτέλους μεμαθηκόσιν ἀναλαμβάνειν δὲ αὐτὰ συνεχῶς τῷ μήκει τῶν ὑπομνημάτων οὐ δυναμένοις.

¹⁵⁸ See Appendix I.

¹⁵⁹ Themistius, *An. Post.*, lines 1.7-10: τὸ μέντοι ἐκλαμβάνοντα τὰ βουλήματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις γεγραμμένων σὺν τάχει τε ἐξαγγέλλειν καὶ τῇ συντομίᾳ τοῦ φιλοσόφου κατὰ δύναμιν παρομαρτεῖν **καινόν** τε ἐδόκει καὶ τινα ὠφέλειαν παρέξουσθαι· [emphasis mine]

¹⁶⁰ Sophonias, *De Anima*, 2.35: τάχ' ἂν τι **καινόν** ἡμῖν ἐν τοῖς Ἀριστοτελικοῖς καταλείψειε. [emphasis mine]

beneficial,¹⁶¹ as Sophonias hoped what was offered by him would be something novel, and to a certain degree useful.¹⁶²

It remains clear, then, that the methodological discussion at the beginning of Themistius' preface to his paraphrasis on *DA* is not complete compared to his description of the paraphrastic approach in *Analticorum Posteriorum Paraphrasis*. The four types of exegesis serve as pointers towards a previous, detailed discussion. Even from that brief exposition of his methodology, however, it remains clear how the text of *DA* is approached and what kind of alterations have been made in the original.

The second criterion of comparison between the three prefaces concerns the way the commentator relates back to the *DA* of Aristotle and to the previous commentary tradition. Unlike Sophonias, Themistius is not concerned with other commentators of the treatise. The main focus of his preface is precisely the reflection on Aristotle's theory about the soul's essence. He summarizes the main problems and distinctions made in *DA* in a rather systematic way, expanding Aristotle's reasoning where necessary.

After a brief methodological discussion in the beginning, Themistius proceeds by justifying the value of the subject matter, namely an inquiry about the soul. Of greater interest, however, is the reference at this early stage to one of the most controversial topics in *DA* – the problem of the nature of the intellect. Themistius refers to it as “either a part, or capacity of the soul, or else by being of the same kind [as the soul] can be implanted in some other way.”¹⁶³ This quotation illustrates the

¹⁶¹ Themistius, *An. Post.*, 1.9: *καινόν τε ἔδοκει καί τινα ὠφέλειαν παρέξουσθαι*. [emphasis mine]

¹⁶² Sophonias, *De Anima*, 2.6: *καὶ εἰ μὴ καινόν τι τὸ παρ' ἐμοῦ, καὶ τί που καὶ συνεισφέρων χρήσιμον*. [emphasis mine]

¹⁶³ Themistius, *On Aristotle On the Soul*, tr. Robert Todd (London: Duckworth, 1996), 15.

In Themistius, *DA*, 1.22-23: *λέγω δὲ τοῦ νοῦ, ὃς εἴτε μέρος εἴτε δύναμις ἐστὶ τῆς ψυχῆς εἴτε συγγενῆς ἄλλως καὶ ἐμφύεσθαι δυνάμενος*.

uncertainty concerning the nature of the intellect and consequently it functions as a hint towards the elaborated discussion on the problem Themistius is going to offer later on in the paraphrasis on *DA* 3.5.

In accordance with Aristotle, Themistius states that “...any truth that we might grasp about the soul could be important equipment for the journey to the whole truth. This is because [the soul] offers valuable foundations for every art of philosophy...”¹⁶⁴ That is, an inquiry about the soul aims at the elaboration of such a methodology in defining its essence, which can possibly be applied to the inquiry about whichever essence, or about the essence as such.

Defining the soul is the starting point of all demonstration.¹⁶⁵ The definitions of the soul provided at every stage of the discussion in *DA* serve as auxiliary markers. First, they help the reader distinguish between the different stages of the overall discussion. Second, they present either the conclusions demonstrated so far, or/and the premise of the argument that follows. In that sense, it is important to clarify the notion of definition as the starting point of the discussion. Its aim, and the conjunctions between its different stages depend on its correct understanding.

In order to define the soul, one has to consider several distinctions within the inquiry. On the one hand, its nature and essence have to be understood. On the other, its accidents have to be distinguished.¹⁶⁶ After this initial distinction, the inquiry proceeds to a second stage, namely understanding the essence of the soul. First, one should specify its genus. Second, “since the genus is spoken in two ways, as ‘potential’ and as ‘actual,’”¹⁶⁷ this problem concerns the following inquiry as well:

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 15. In Themistius, *DA*, 1.26-28: *εἰ δέ τι περὶ ψυχῆς ἀληθές κατανοήσαιμεν, πάμμεγα ἂν ἐφόδιον εἴη τοῦτο πρὸς σύμπασαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. πρὸς γὰρ ἅπαντα τὰ μέρη τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἀξιολόγους δίδωσιν*

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 19. In Themistius, *DA*, 5.19: *ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν πάσης ἀποδείξεως ὁ ὀρισμός.*

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 16-17.

...in which of these distinct [senses] will it [the soul] be isolated? Is it like an underlying potentiality and naturally disposed to [become] a substance, or is it more like entelechy? There is also a duality to entelechies. As primary and secondary, the *hexis* being primary, the activity of the *hexis* secondary.¹⁶⁸

Thirdly, one has to pose the question of whether the soul has parts or not. Then, finally, it has to be queried whether there is one universal soul, or are there many souls in existence: "...is there a single definition [of soul], and is the essence of the whole of soul single, or are there different definitions for the soul of a human being and that of a horse?"¹⁶⁹ This leads to the consideration of different cases such as whether one individual can have several souls or whether the soul has parts. If there are parts, in what way do they exist? Are they different in definition, but identical in substrate?¹⁷⁰

By recalling the stages of proceeding within the inquiry about the soul's essence, Themistius restates Aristotle's methodology in a systematic form and at the same time summarizes the structure of the argumentation in *DA*. An interesting difference is related to the third criterion of comparison discussed at the beginning of the present chapter, namely, the brief terminological discussion about the difference between *ἐντελέχεια* and *ἐνέργεια*. Both terms are used to express the meaning 'actuality,' while for the meaning of 'potentiality' only one term is employed – *δύναμις*. Themistius mentions briefly how "(We also say [instead of 'in actuality' (energeîai)] 'in entelechy' (entelekheîai), and why we have this way of speaking will become clear subsequently.)"¹⁷¹ He goes back to this issue at the beginning of the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 17. In Themistius, *DA*, 3.1-6: εἶπερ οὖν τὴν οὐσίαν εὐροίμεν τῆς ψυχῆς, ἐν τίνι τῶν διαφορῶν τούτων ἀποταχθήσεται, ἅρ' ὡς δύναμις ὑποκειμένη καὶ πρὸς οὐσίαν ἔχουσα εὐφυῶς, ἢ μᾶλλον ὡς ἐντελέχεια; ἔστι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἐντελεχειῶν τις διπλόη, καὶ ἢ μὲν τις πρώτη, ἢ δὲ δευτέρα· πρώτη μὲν ἢ ὡς περ ἕξις, δευτέρα δὲ ἢ τῆς ἕξεως ἐνέργεια.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 17. In Themistius, *DA*, 3.23-25: ἄρα εἷς ὁρισμὸς καὶ ἐν τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι πάσης ψυχῆς, ἢ ἄλλος μὲν τῆς ἀνθρώπου, ἄλλος δὲ τῆς ἵππου.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 17. In Themistius, *DA*, 2.41-3.1: ὅπερ λέγομεν ἐντελεχεία, διότι δὲ οὕτω λέγομεν ἐν τοῖς ἐφεξῆς ἔσται δῆλον.

paraphrasis on Book II, 412^a10-11.¹⁷² There the *έντελέχεια* is defined as “the *hexis* of the state of perfection [...] Yet ‘entelechy has two senses in the case of each [compound]: it is like knowledge (*episteme*), as well as like contemplating [what is known], the first being like a *hexis*, the second like a functioning of the *hexis*.”¹⁷³

The conclusions from the comparison presented in this chapter of the study relate back to the twofold purpose discussed at the beginning. On the one hand, through the comparative analysis based on three main criteria (previous tradition, methodology, and terminology) I have distinguished the features of Sophonias’ preface to the *De Anima Paraphrasis* and how they relate to other types of prefaces (e.g. Thomas Aquinas’ preface to his *Sentencia libri De anima* and Themistius’ preface to his *In Aristotelis Libros De Anima Paraphrasis*). Thus, the main feature of Sophonias’ preface emerges clearly. The claim for innovation of the exegetic methodology and the accompanying references to the purposes and audience of his paraphrasis as whole can be distinguished as the focus of Sophonias’ preface.

The present chapter also provides conclusions which may perhaps turn out to be useful on a more general level, namely, within the overall discussion of the commentary genre and its intention and functions. The intention of the commentary is “to open up or to close down possibilities of meaning.”¹⁷⁴ This is a result of the utilization of a certain methodological approach upon the commented text. A preface gives the necessary summary of this procedure in order to inform the reader how the explanation and the clarification of the original text are produced. As it was

¹⁷² Ibid., 56.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 56-57. In Themistius, *DA*, 39.16-22: ταύτην οὖν τὴν μορφήν καὶ τὸ εἶδος εἴ τις έντελέχειαν ὀνομάξῃ, οὐ δικαίως ἂν συσκοφαντοῖτο ὡς πάνν ξένῳ τῷ ὀνόματι κεχρημένος. εἰ γὰρ τὰ προειρημένα ἀληθῆ, καὶ ἡ τελείωσις ἐκάστῳ παρὰ τοῦ εἶδους καὶ τὸ έντελῶς ἔχειν παρὰ τῆς μορφῆς, σημαῖνοι ἂν οὐδέν ἄλλο ἢ έντελέχεια ἢ τὴν ἔξιν τῆς τελειότητος. ἀλλὰ διχῶς γε ἡ έντελέχεια ἐφ’ ἐκάστου, ἢ μὲν ὡς ἐπιστήμη, ἢ δὲ ὡς τὸ θεωρεῖν, καὶ ἔστι τὸ μὲν ὡς ἔξις, τὸ δὲ ὡς ἔργον τῆς ἔξεως.

demonstrated in the preceding discussion, however, a preface can operate on a separate, so to speak, meta-level. By offering a methodological or terminological discussion in their prefaces related to the ways of teaching Aristotle or to composing of a commentary, or by explaining the proper use of definition, the three commentators – Themistius, Thomas Aquinas, and Sophonias – functionally distinguish their prefaces from the main exposition. In the case of Sophonias, the preface deals with the question of how to teach Aristotle’s theory about the soul in the most efficient way. The exposition that follows is a demonstration of this efficiency. It reestablishes the coherence of Aristotle’s text as an inquiry on the matter of the soul’s essence.

¹⁷⁴ Most, “Preface,” ix.

CONCLUSIONS

Sophonias' preface to his paraphrasis of *De Anima* has been approached from two main perspectives in the course of the present study. First, it was contextualized within three textual frameworks: the genre of commentary (and more specifically the Aristotelian commentary), Sophonias' other prefaces, and the text of the *De Anima Paraphrasis*. Second, the preface was analyzed in comparison with two other prefaces to commentaries on *De Anima*: Themistius' and Thomas Aquinas'. Additionally, the first chapter of the inquiry offered a prosopographical reconstruction of Sophonias' activities in order to complement the contextual analysis of the preface.

The leading intention throughout this study was to explore different hypotheses about the purposes and audience of Sophonias' treatise by analyzing the features of its preface. Therefore, in the second and third chapters, I presented and analyzed its structure and content. Sophonias' categorization of the preceding Aristotelian commentary tradition and his discussion of the various methods of commentating were placed in the focus of the analysis. The description of Sophonias' own approach towards Aristotle's text as an 'innovation' was discussed separately from the other elements of the preface in order to specify the character of this 'novelty'.

As a result of the analysis described above, I argue that the most probable reason for the composition of Sophonias' paraphrasis is that it was meant to serve educational purposes, that is, to introduce certain apprentice(s) to Aristotle's theory on the soul. Sophonias developed a method different from that of the exegetes and the paraphrasts in order to deliver the subject matter in a more efficient way. That is, the 'innovative' character of his approach has to be understood as an improvement, not a

change, of the Aristotelian commentary. Sophonias' improvement is methodological and, therefore, it does not concern the elaboration of Aristotle's psychological theory. One still has to consider it, however, as an important characteristic of this late Byzantine commentary. The claim for 'novelty' is also an example of self-reflection and self-representation of the commentator. That is to say, Sophonias' justification for introducing a different approach from the previous commentators was intended to serve his audience as well as himself. Although this cannot be ascertained, it remains clear that the promotion of an 'innovative' approach within the studies of Aristotle is a key element within the inquiry about the purposes and audience of Sophonias' paraphrasis.

Finally, for the first time the present study offers a full English translation of the preface, which was written in a complicated, high-brow Greek. What remains for future research is a thorough analysis of the correspondence between the preface and the main exposition of the paraphrasis: what were the results of the usage of Sophonias' exegetic methodology and how did it improve or at least alter the Aristotelian commentary?

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APPENDIX I

Paraphrasis of *On the Soul*, by kyr Sophonias the most erudite Preface

(1.4-11)¹⁷⁵ It occurred to different commentators of Aristotle's treatises to accomplish their purpose in different ways. For the ones, who were proper commentators,¹⁷⁶ expounding the text in individual manner and in its specifics, attached the interpretation. Observing the diction of the Philosopher sound as well as [at the same time] in division, they also brought forth their own explanation for the sake of clarity [of the original]. These [commentators] are of the kind of Simplicius, Ammonius, Philoponus and previously Alexander of Aphrodisias (and many others), who left bulky works full of many good observations to Aristotle's various treatises within the whole [of his works].

(1.11-22) The others [were applying] a different method: for by donning the garment of Aristotle and by employing [the technique of] speaking through his own mask, so that it would be easily taken in by the mind and the whole would be one and not divided into sections, they disregarded the diction, adding [their own] comments to it [the *lexis*] which was not either divided or united: only unfolding and clarifying the meaning, which was contracted by the thoughtfulness of the man [Aristotle] or even (in some degree) the obscure phrasing and the forcefulness of the message (for what was intellective to him is great and intense), and adorning it with rhetorical figures and proper periods, with whatever came to their mind it was in want of, they accomplished what seemed good to them, making an effort almost as if for their own treatises, being not exegetes, but rather paraphrasts in name and deed, just as the

¹⁷⁵ The reference in bold is given to the numeration in the critical edition of Sophonias' paraphrasis: *Sophonias in libros Aristotelis De Anima paraphrasis*, in *CAG* 23, 1, 1-186.

¹⁷⁶ I will refer to this group throughout my translation as "exegetes" appropriating the respective Greek term ἐξήγηται.

eloquent Themistius had achieved for a majority of Aristotle's works, and Psellos later, imitating in the works of logic, and [also] others.

(1.22-2.4) And those [the exegetes] were induced only to show the content and to clarify the meaning, as far as the phrasing permitted, thoroughly following the systematical method once for all: the others [the paraphrasts] added some most useful (authoritative) observations and considerations, which they had discovered, and brought forward a multitude of theoretical insights regarding each chapter, proof of their scholarly skill, their knowledge and their excellence in all [regards]; leaving the path to philosophy easy to follow from that point on for those [who came] after them, they offered most noble solutions to the difficulties which had emerged. So, to say it all in a conclusion pertaining to all, each of them approached his task in his own way.

(2.4-8) If hence I myself have made the choice of adducing something I would seem superfluous not proffering a sufficient justification if that which is [coming] from me is not something new and in a certain degree introducing something useful. One ought to recognize that the combination of both [approaches] should be considered excellent.¹⁷⁷

(2.8-2.13) For even if (on the one hand) the diction was preserved in division by the exegetes, there was indeed a necessity to pull apart the meaning and not to wholly preserve the continuity. Because of the length of the explanations and the interspersed *scholia*, which the obscure diction had imposed on them as necessary, the meaning is not followed easily. For who does not know that the diction which is Aristotelian needs oracular divination everywhere, as it were?

(2.13-20) Articulating the syntax in between the lemmas, which seemed confused to some—or in a certain degree an improper use of the diction and infelicitous use of

¹⁷⁷ To be understood as 'different in a positive sense.'

conjunctions, additionally the occasional transposition of whole colons and the addition or omission and exchange of periods against order [literally, in order]—, and attaching what has been cut from them (as it were), they were much occupied with proffering problems and solutions, so that because of the additions it was not easy for some to observe the continuity, but that they risked to forget the beginning because of their writing in between [the lemmas] as well as to approach what followed in a confused manner.

(2.20-25) This, on the other hand, does not apply to the paraphrasts, who disregarded the diction once for all; but the following necessarily applies to them: for by combining his [Aristotle's] reasoning, which is intricately condensed and strung together (as was said), with their own diction and by expanding it to a certain extent towards clarity through comparisons and examples, they kept it for themselves to strive for the completion of the subject matter.

(2.25-28) For it is not enough once for all to approach this [the work of the exegetes] and to learn that [the work of the paraphrasts], and I do not like to be content with the latter [paraphrasts] if it is not also possible to profit from the [results of the] first group [the exegetes]; being devoted to the diction of the Philosopher [I do not like] therefore to be in need of an exegete and to hurry back to the same things again and [thus] bear the double effort.

(2.28-38) But it seemed [1] if an exegete, whilst avoiding intervals between his explanations, additionally managed to maintain the diction well-joint; [2] if he strove, either by mixing [elements] in a well-arranged manner or by arranging things in intervals in a different way, as those [the paraphrasts], to preserve the diction continuous with the interspersed explanations, so that it is in harmony and the whole

one by means of being arranged in a consequential manner and dependent on itself;¹⁷⁸ [3] finally, to express the treatise as if through Aristotle's own voice; something novel would rapidly fall to me in the field of Aristotelian studies. And he will offer a certain easiness to the effort regarding the reading, if indeed he will sufficiently place his approach in both, granting together with the explanation the understanding of the text, as if it were voiced at the same time, shorter than the exegetes, longer than the paraphrasts.

(2.38-3.8) Towards this my eager zeal drew me, and first in those on the *On the Soul*, [me] not forgetting my insufficiency regarding the task, yet having taken courage in the overseer and guide of our souls, the God and Word, and following the exegetes in the majority and especially Philoponus, we inserted whole sections into ours, as they were phrased with those verbally. And I have superseded the text itself in many ways—even where it featured a certain clarity—leaving everything in its place. And because of having endured them [the exegetes] (because I spent a lot of time troubling myself with the exegetes) it occurred to my mind to show kindness towards others.

(3.8-9) If something has been accomplished by me who dedicated myself to this task and chose it, such things are left to be judged to them.

¹⁷⁸ That is, 'self-explanatory'.

APPENDIX II

	Tradition			Methodology	Terminology			Translation
	Reflection on Aristotle's theory	Description	Classification of the previous commentaries	Description and usage	'Proper' Commentary	Paraphrasis	Sophonias method	
Sophonias		Previous Greek commentary tradition on Aristotle	'Proper' commentators and paraphrasts	Innovation of the commentary genre by combining the most useful elements from the 'proper' commentary and the paraphrasis	<i>ἐξήγηταί</i>	<i>παραφρασταί</i>		
	CEU eTD Collection				<i>πραγματεία</i>	<i>πραγματεία</i>	<i>πραγματεία</i>	generic commentary, treatise (...εἰς τὰς διαφορούς τῶν Ἀριστοτέλους κατέλιπον πραγματείας.)
					<i>τρόπος</i>	<i>τρόπος</i>	<i>τρόπος</i>	method
						<i>σχῆμα</i>		rhetorical figure

					<i>περίοδος</i>			completed sentence
						<i>ὑπόμνημα</i>		commentary, (observation)
						<i>αὐταγγελία</i>		writing from first person singular
						<i>σύγγραμμα</i>		treatise
							<i>καινόν</i>	something new, a novelty
Thomas Aquinas	Aristotle's methodological prescriptions described. Rational proceeding in the process of formulating a definition			3 necessary elements for each preface. Simplification.				

Themistius	Repeats and expands on Aristotle's methodology: definition of the soul, discussion of its essence and accidents; discussion of the genus and species; the soul in potentiality and in actuality; parts of the soul; one universal soul/multitude of distinct souls?			Four types of exegesis: elucidation, reconstruction, analysis, elaboration.				
						<i>ἐκκαλύπτειν</i>		elucidation
						<i>συνίστασθαι</i>		reconstruction
						<i>ἐπίσταναι</i>		analysis
						<i>ἐξεργάζεσθαι</i>		elaboration

GREEK – ENGLISH INDEX, SOPHONIAS' PREFACE

αὐταγγελία	writing from first person singular
αὐτοπροσώπως	delivering an opinion from one's authority
διάνοια	meaning
διάστασις	interval
ἔλλειψις	omission
ἐξηγηταί	'proper' commentators
ἐρμηνεία	explanation
τὸ κείμενον	subject matter, content, text, exposition
κώλων	subunit, period
λέξις	diction
λόγος	discussion
μεταθέσις	transposition
μεταξύλογια	"writing between the lines", refers to the interspersed <i>scholia</i>
νοῦς	[Aristotle's] meaning, reasoning
παρατροπή	alteration
παραφρασταί	paraphrasts
περίοδος	completed sentence
πραγματεία	generic commentary
προσθήκη	addition
σύγγραμμα	treatise
συνδεσμός	conjunction
σύνταξις	composition, writing passage
σχῆμα	rhetorical figure
τρόπος	method
ὑπαλλαγή	interchange
ὑπόμνημα	treatise, commentary, (observation)