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Cover

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḍawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

Y. Meyrav, *Themistius' Paraphrase of Aristotle's Metaphysics 12. A Critical Hebrew-Arabic Edition of the Surviving Textual Evidence, with an Introduction, Preliminary Studies, and a Commentary*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2019 (Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus, 25), XVIII+650 pp..

In his edition of the Hebrew text of Themistius' paraphrase of Book *Lambda* from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Yoav Meyrav provides us with a long-awaited critical edition of the Arabic and Hebrew translations of this work which is lost in Greek. This significant contribution to the field deserves to be gratefully acknowledged.

As mentioned above, the paraphrase is lost in Greek. It was translated into Arabic at the beginning of the 10th century and has survived in part. In 1255 a translation from Arabic into Hebrew was carried out by Moshe ibn Tibbon (d. ca. 1283) and later, in 1558, from Hebrew into Latin by the translator Moshe Finzi. Both the Hebrew and the Latin versions are extant in their entirety and it is to this convoluted tradition that Meyrav's volume is devoted. It consists of seven main parts: an Introduction, two chapters which discuss respectively the "Textual Tradition" and the "Historical and Methodological Aspects of Themistius as a Paraphrast of *Metaph.* 12", the edition of the Hebrew and Arabic versions of the paraphrase, and three Appendices. A very useful Hebrew-Arabic Lexicon (pp. 541-627) concludes the volume, together with the bibliography (pp. 628-42), and the index of names, places, and subjects (pp. 643-50). An index of the passages quoted in the volume would have been helpful.

In his Introduction Meyrav offers a short survey of the reception of Aristotle's 'theology' from the early Peripatos to Themistius (pp. 1-7). He then presents the data about the paraphrase and its versions (pp. 7-13), and outlines its influence on the Arabic and Hebrew traditions of thought (pp. 13-20).

Chapter 1 is devoted to "all the surviving material in Arabic and Hebrew. Each source is contextualized and evaluated concerning its contribution to the study of the text, along with an explanation if and how it is used in the critical edition" (p. 24); a helpful table of the history of the translations of Themistius' paraphrase is included (p. 25). Meyrav goes on to discuss the textual tradition of the Arabic (pp. 24-65) and Hebrew versions (pp. 65-109), not without acknowledging the "pioneering efforts of Badawī, Frank and Brague, who first detected and gathered the information about the various sources" (p. 27).

The Arabic version is attested by (1) the part of the paraphrase which is extant in MS Damascus, *Zābiriyya* 4871, ff. 38r-39v. These two pages contain only a small portion of it, namely that which corresponds to Chapter 1 and the beginning of Chapter 2 of *Metaph.* XII; this is "the only surviving evidence for the complete standalone [Arabic] translation, not as quoted from another source" (p. 32); (2) quotations from and allusions to the paraphrase in (Pseudo) al-'Amirī, *Book of Happiness and Causing Happiness* and in an anonymous doxography of the 11th century,¹ as well as in Avicenna's commentary on *Metaph.* XII, 6-10;² and in Šahrastānī's *Book of Religions and Sects*. These quotations feature "in the critical apparatus, when they contribute to the understanding of the transmission process" (p. 65); (3) lengthy quotations preserved in Averroes' *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*,³

¹ Edited by E. Wakelnig, *A Philosophy Reader from the Circle of Miskawayh*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2014.

² Edited by M. Geoffroy – J. Janssens – M. Sebti, Avicenne (Ibn Sīnā), *Commentaire sur le livre Lambda de la Métaphysique d'Aristote (chapitres 6-10), Édition critique, traduction et notes*, Vrin, Paris 2014 (Études Musulmanes, 43).

³ As Averroes' quotations cover Themistius' paraphrase of *Metaph.* XII 1, 3, and 7, Meyrav is right when he argues that they come from the full version (p. 39), of which the Arabic manuscript in our possession preserves a different portion. Hence, Averroes' quotations feature in the text of the critical edition.

in ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī’s *Book on the Science of Metaphysics*,⁴ and in Ibn Taymiyya’s *Way of the Prophetic Tradition* which contains extracts from a section covering Chapters 4 and 5 and which is “the same text that Moshe ibn Tibbon translated into Hebrew. Accordingly, it is included in its entirety in the present edition” (p. 48); (4) an abridgement of the paraphrase of Chapters 6-9 preserved in MS Cairo, *Hikma* 6, ff. 206v16-210r7 (pp. 48-65). Meyrav raises two main problems: (i) the identity of the Arabic translator; (ii) the relationship between the Arabic full version and the abridgement which survives in MS Cairo, *Hikma* 6. After a survey of the various views expressed in the scholarship (pp. 29-31, 48-50), he comes to the conclusion that “all the fragments which contain direct quotations of the work ultimately come from the original complete Arabic translation, probably the work of Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn, and plausibly revised by Ṭābit ibn Qurra. On the basis of the complete translation, an abridgment of chapters 6-9 was composed and circulated within the Avicennian school. There is no need to assume the involvement of any other version of the translation (or the Greek) for this process” (p. 65). As for point (ii), Meyrav sides with D. Gutas⁵ in crediting the lesser-known Ibn Zayla (d. ca. 1048) with a lost compilation on metaphysics of which Themistius’ paraphrase was part and parcel: “it should not be ruled out that Ibn Zayla is in fact responsible for the abridgment” (p. 62).

The subsequent section is devoted to the textual tradition of the Hebrew version (pp. 65-109). As mentioned above, the translation was carried out by Moshe ibn Tibbon; it is preserved in its entirety and is attested by 10 manuscripts (pp. 66-74). According to Meyrav, “three slightly different versions of the Hebrew translation are reflected in the manuscript tradition: an early version, a revised version, and a further light revision” (p. 65, details at pp. 77-94). The question of the authorship and scope of each version is tentatively addressed as follows: “Judging from the manuscripts themselves, a natural explanation would be that Version I is a preliminary or draft translation – or perhaps a ‘work in progress’ – and Version II is a thorough revision which has more of a mark of an ‘official’ translation (...). Theoretically, he [Moshe ibn Tibbon] could have been responsible for all three versions; alternatively, it is also possible that he is only responsible for Version I and that all the revisions were made by someone else (...). This all depends on an adequate conception of Moshe as a translator, as well as on understanding his methodology. But at present, these are insufficiently studied, nor could they be studied without a cumulative systematic analysis of the manuscripts of his entire translation corpus” (p. 96). Meyrav works on the assumption that “due to the large amount of ‘contamination’ characteristic of medieval Hebrew manuscripts, it is virtually impossible to create a stemma in the traditional sense without, sooner or later, moving in circles. However, analysis of the manuscripts using a more relaxed approach can result in an effective description of their family relations and inform us about translation and copying procedures. (...) The critical editions of medieval Hebrew translations published in recent years reflect these concerns; many of them are eclectic, and stemmas are becoming less frequent, replaced by a less strict – although by no means less careful – analysis” (p. 75, with n. 111).

To discuss this claim would exceed the limits of a review as it would involve a comparison with the textual tradition of other translations. A long-debated issue in the relevant scholarship is that of the various possible approaches to textual analysis. In particular, scepticism has been expressed about the classical approach consisting in the construction of a family tree, when applied to medieval works.⁶

⁴ Meyrav has recourse to print in different colors: “whenever al-Baġdādī is used in the body of the edition, the text is printed in red to underscore al-Baġdādī’s distance from the text he is using” (p. 48).

⁵ D. Gutas, “Notes and Texts from Cairo Manuscripts, II: Texts from Avicenna’s Library in a Copy by ‘Abd-ar-Razzāq aṣ-Ṣiġnāhī”, *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 2 (1987), pp. 8-17, in part. pp. 13-14.

⁶ The main problem here is that in the textual transmission of one and the same work the family trees can multiply.

Some basic notions like ‘archetype’ or even ‘error’ have been refined and to some extent revised against this background: their explanatory value remains, but a problem arises about the exact meaning of ‘original’ in the medieval context. This is due chiefly to the chronological distance between the original and the beginning of the textual tradition, which is evident and enormous in the case of classical works, but in the case of medieval works can be even very short. In addition, in the case of the Arabic-into-Hebrew translations it might prove to be difficult to single out the gaps which usually allow the editor to keep clearly apart the “original” and the subsequent stages in the transmission of the text. The author of the translation himself at times kept a copy of his work and did not refrain from making corrections and additions which make sometimes very difficult to distinguish between authorial changes and errors properly speaking. All this ends in complicating the task to reconstruct a family tree, even though not necessarily in making it impossible.⁷ It is not unusual in medieval texts that an editor has reworked by innovating – independently and in a recognizable way – the pre-existing materials. When the differences and the timeframe between the work of author A and that of editor B of one and the same translation are difficult to grasp, it seems to be wiser to renounce labelling author A the ‘author’ of the translation, and author B its ‘reviser’. This is for Meyrav the case with the Hebrew version of Themistius’ paraphrase of *Metaphysics* XII. My main perplexity consists in that there is in his book no systematic analysis of the textual tradition, thus making impossible to understand which are the relationships between the manuscripts.⁸ Many differences labelled as authorial changes seems to be errors occurred in the textual transmission as well.

Other Hebrew materials used in establishing the text of the Hebrew version are: (i) three passages quoted by Falaquera’s *Guide of the Guide*, i.e. Maimonides’ *Guide of the Perplexed* (p. 99); (ii) several passages extant in the Hebrew translation of Averroes’ *Long Commentary* on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. A lengthy passage from Moshe ibn Tibbon’s translation quoted by Gersonides in his *Wars of the Lord* is deliberately disregarded (p. 104), as well as Moshe Finzi’s Hebrew-into-Latin translation as the latter was “not made according to any of the known manuscripts, and it was probably based on a relatively late manuscript containing elements from all the manuscript traditions, except for T (= Version III)”. As such, it “rarely adds information for the establishment of the text and is of a very free style, so it was mostly disregarded in the editorial process” (p. 106).

Chapter 2 (pp. 110-47) aims to explore “the origin, aim, scope, and methodology of Themistius’ paraphrasing project and how they are reflected in the paraphrase of *Metaph.* 12” (p. 110). Meyrav illustrates some features of Themistius’ approach in the belief⁹ that “an adequate understanding

This is especially true in the textual transmission of works circulating in the universities. The main case study is represented by the Prefaces of the critical edition of Thomas Aquinas’ works edited within the context the *Commissio Leonina*: see on this C. Luna, “L’édition léonine de saint Thomas d’Aquin: vers une méthode de critique textuelle et d’écodotique”, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 89 (2005), pp. 31-110. Another case study is represented by the critical edition of the medieval translations of Aristotle’s works edited within the context of the *Aristoteles Latinus*, and in particular the editions of the various Latin versions of the *Metaphysics* (*Metaphysica. Recensio et translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka*, edidit G. Vuillemin-Diem, Brill, Leiden-New York-Köln 1995 [AL XXV 3.1-2] and of the *Meteorology* (*Meteorologica. Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka*, edidit G. Vuillemin-Diem, Brepols 2008 [AL X 2.1-2]).

⁷ E.g. M. Zonta, “*Hebraica Veritas*: Themistio, parafrasi del *De Coelo*”, *Athenaeum* 82 (1994), pp. 403-28, provides a stemma.

⁸ See e.g. p. 75, where Meyrav states that “The case of manuscripts B and R (the latter not recorded by Landauer) is somewhat similar; they both belong (independently of each other) to the same tradition, and there is no reason to use both, or prefer one over the other. I decided to continue Landauer’s path and focus on B, but occasionally added marginal corrections in R from two different hands (R¹ and R², respectively), when they shed light on the textual transmission”.

⁹ There is a general scholarly agreement that the *paideia* advocated by Themistius is the key to understanding his thought, cf. G. Downey, “Education and Public Problems as Seen by Themistius”, *Transactions and Proceedings of the*

of Themistius' paraphrasing techniques is an important aid for understanding how he read and interpreted Aristotle, as well as for identifying instances where Themistius the philosopher emerges from Themistius the paraphrast" (p. 147).¹⁰ As for Themistius' philosophical stance in commenting upon *Metaphysics* XII, Meyrav sides with Guldentops¹¹ when he claims that "Themistius' paraphrase of *Metaphysics* 12 ends up as his most political paraphrase, and perhaps the ultimate philosophical justification to the course of life he had chosen" (*ibid.*, p. 507).

The core of the volume is represented by the parallel editions of the Hebrew and Arabic versions of Themistius' paraphrase. "For orientation toward the text" (p. 107), it has been subdivided into ten chapters, corresponding to those of *Metaph.* XII. The division of Aristotle's works into chapters is late and clearly this subdivision is not present in Themistius' text, but is added by Meyrav.¹² Even though there is no *apparatus fontium*, references to the parallel passages in Aristotle are *grosso modo* indicated in the left margin in the Hebrew version, and a number of sources are discussed in the commentary. The latter (pp. 325-501) is divided into 10 chapters according to the subdivision of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* XII. Each chapter is in turn subdivided into four sections: "Aristotle" contains a summary of the key topics of the *Metaphysics*, "Themistius" examines his paraphrastic procedures, the "Note on Sources" discusses the respective value of the testimonies which feature in

American Philological Association 86 (1955), pp. 291-307; B. Colpi, *Die Paideia des Themistios. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Bildung im vierten Jahrhundert nach Christus*, P. Lang, Frankfurt 1987; R.J. Penella, "Plato (and Others) in the Orations of Themistius", in R.C. Fowler, *Plato in the Third Sophistic*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2014 (Millennium Studies in the Culture and History of the First Millennium CE, 50), pp. 145-61.

¹⁰ The question of Themistius' philosophical allegiance has long been debated. According to some, his work unquestionably belongs to the Neoplatonic tradition, cf. I. Hadot, *Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonism and the Harmonization of Aristotle and Plato*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2015 (Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition, 18), with reference to previous scholarship, and p. 75 for the assessment of Themistius' Neoplatonism – Meyrav disagrees with her analysis (cf. *Introduction*, p. 13 in the volume reviewed here). For others, Themistius' exegeses fully belong to the Aristotelian and Peripatetic tradition: cf. H.J. Blumenthal, "Photius on Themistius (*Cod.* 74): Did Themistius Write Commentaries on Aristotle?", *Hermes* 107 (1979), pp. 168-82; J. Vanderspoel, "The Themistius' Collection of Commentaries on Plato and Aristotle", *Phoenix* 43 (1989), pp. 162-4; D.J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis. Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2003, 20052, esp. pp. 206-8. Meyrav sides with R.B. Todd and claims that "Themistius is a part of an idiosyncratic legacy which had no formal ties to any of the established schools" (*Introduction*, p. 8-9, and fn. 27 in the volume reviewed here; Meyrav's reference is to F.M. Schroeder – R.B. Todd, *Two Greek Aristotelian Commentators on the Intellect*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto 1990, p. 34).

¹¹ G. Guldentops, "La science suprême selon Thémistius", *Revue de philosophie ancienne* 19/1 (2001), pp. 99-120, suggests that Themistius credits Aristotle with his own idea that the highest science is 'wisdom' and 'theology' at one and the same time: "la métaphysique est la science suprême pour une double raison: *primo*, parce qu'elle contemple les principes suprêmes, *secundo*, parce que c'est précisément grâce à sa connaissance du Principe Premier qu'elle domine la philosophie morale et la vie politique" (p. 119). Scholars have differently interpreted Themistius' conception of the political engagement of the philosopher, whether or not it is the same as that of the later Neoplatonic philosophers – for ex. D.J. O'Meara disagrees with this, cf. his *Platonopolis* (above, n. 10), esp. p. 208. In the opinion of the present writer it is fair to say that, for Themistius, if the philosopher holds a position apt to influence the lawgiver, the philosophical ideals can be transformed into concrete rules for social life (E. Coda, "Divine Providence and Human Logos in Themistius. Some Philosophical Sources of *Discourse* 6", *Studia graeco-arabica* 7 (2017), pp. 67-84, esp. p. 70-4).

¹² A subdivision into ten chapters, i.e. those of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* XII, has been adopted also by Brague, *Thémistius. Paraphrase de la Métaphysique (livre Lambda)*, Vrin, Paris 1999, p. 41. On the contrary, in Landauer's edition (*Themistii in Aristotelis Metaphysicorum librum A paraphrasis hebraice et latine*, Reimer, Berlin 1903 [CAG V.5]) there are no subsets. Other paraphrases by Themistius which are extant in Greek, e.g. that of the *De Anima*, are subdivided into "discussions" (*logoï*) which do not correspond to the books of Aristotle's work. In the case of the paraphrase of the *De Anima*, the subdivision in seven discussions that is echoed in its Arabic version, can be attributed to Themistius himself, cf. *Themistii In libros Aristotelis De Anima paraphrasis*, ed. R. Heinze, Reimer, Berlin 1899 (CAG V), p. VI.

the critical apparatus, and finally a “Running Commentary” explains the variant readings which are accepted or rejected.

Appendix A deals with “Ishāq ibn Hunayn’s Arabic Translation of *Metaphysics* 2 and its Abridgment in MS *Hikma* 6” (pp. 509-13). Appendix B, “Two Versions of the Hebrew Translation of the Themistius Quotations in Averroes’ *Long Commentary* on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. A Preliminary Edition” (pp. 514-26) provides the facing texts of the “early” and “revised” versions¹³ of the quotations from Themistius’ paraphrase of *Metaphysics* XII included in the Hebrew translation of Averroes’ *Long Commentary* on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. Meyrav quotes each fragment “three times: the right column includes the text from the early version of the Hebrew translation of Averroes’ commentary; the middle column includes the text of Moshe ibn Tibbon’s Hebrew translation [as preserved in Themistius’ paraphrase]...; and the left column features the revised version of the Hebrew translation of Averroes’ commentary” (p. 514). The rationale for this comparison is that “examining the fragments side by side from right to left sheds light on how Moshe ibn Tibbon’s translation bridges the gap between the earlier and later versions of the Hebrew translation of Averroes’ quotations from Themistius’ paraphrase” (p. 515). Finally, Appendix C “Matter and Element. Case Study” discusses the terms “matter” and “element” in the Arabic and Hebrew versions of Themistius’ paraphrase of *Metaph.* XII.

Since Meyrav’s main focus is the text – and *pour cause*, given the intricacies that we have just seen – I deem it useful to mention, albeit briefly, a preliminary question: that of the nature of this work. Indeed, it is a unicum in Themistius’ literary output (which consists of the paraphrases and of a corpus of *Orationes*) as no other selective paraphrase exists by him, in any language. Thus, we are entitled to raise first of all the question of the attribution of this work to Themistius, also in consideration of the fact that the Greek original is lost and, as we shall see below, it seems to have left few if no traces in the Greek readership.

As a complement to Meyrav’s analysis, let me mention that the attribution to Themistius features in the title of the manuscript Damascus, *Zābirīyya* 4871, f. 38r1 (= p. 153.1 Meyrav) which contains the (partial) Arabic translation. In addition, the title and *explicit* of nine of the ten manuscripts of the Hebrew version mention Themistius as the author, and there is no compelling reason to disavow the Arabic and Hebrew piece of information, as the Islamic elements which it features¹⁴ can be accounted for as coming from the translator’s pen, and does not impact on the authenticity of the original text in any way. The trouble is that, unlike other Themistian paraphrases,¹⁵ subsequent Greek commentators of Aristotle seem to be unaware of this particular one. The importance of

¹³ According to Meyrav (p. 514), the author of the first version of the Hebrew translation of Averroes’ *Long Commentary* translated anew the quotations from Themistius’ paraphrase of *Metaphysics* XII found in Averroes’ commentary, because he was unaware – or not in possession – of Moshe ibn Tibbon’s translation. The reviser of the Hebrew translation of Averroes’ *Long Commentary* corrected the quotations from Themistius’ paraphrase of *Metaph.* XII found in the version of Averroes’ commentary he was revising on the basis of Moshe ibn Tibbon’s translation of Themistius’ paraphrase. On the Hebrew translation of Averroes’ *Long Commentary* on the *Metaphysics* Meyrav follows Y. Halper, “Averroes on Metaphysical Terminology: An Analysis and Critical Edition of the *Long Commentary* on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Δ” (PhD Diss. Bar Ilan University 2010) who argued for the existence of two versions of the Hebrew translation of Averroes’ *Long Commentary* on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, both from the 14th century.

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. p. 255.29 (Arabic, doxology), p. 186.12 Meyrav (Heb., name of Abraham’s father “Terah”). A list of the doxologies would have been helpful together with an explanation of the reason why the doxologies are not systematically indicated in the text (nor in the apparatus), e.g. p. 263.24-25 = Brague, *Thémistius*, p. 95, n. 3.

¹⁵ An example is represented by Simplicius’ quotations from the paraphrase of Aristotle’s *De Caelo* (Simpl., *In De Cael.*, p. 62.12 Heiberg (*CAG* VII); pp. 63.19; 68.5-7; 70.5; 70.9; 71.20; 131.21; 131.22; 131.24; 176.28; 177.1; 177.9; 177.12; 188.6; 188.26; 188.30; 189.2).

this fact, which is *prima facie* highly significant, should however be weighted against another well-known fact: of the few ancient commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, only one and a part of another are posterior to Themistius.¹⁶ A paraphrase by Themistius on the *Metaphysics* is not mentioned by Photius,¹⁷ nor in the *Suda*.¹⁸

¹⁶ Cf. C. Luna, “Les commentaires grecs à la *Métaphysique*”, in R. Goulet, *Dictionnaire des Philosophes antiques*, *Supplément*, CNRS-Éditions, Paris 2003, pp. 249-58 (henceforth *DPhA*). The Greek commentaries on the *Metaphysics* which have (in part or in their entirety) come down to us are: (1) Alexander of Aphrodisias, Books A-Δ (ed. M. Hayduck [*CAG* I, 1891], p. 1-439). The following passages of Alexander’s commentary are extant in the indirect tradition: 3 fragments of Book Z are quoted by Asclepius (Ascl., *In Met.*, p. 408.5-7 and 20-22, p. 428.13-20 Hayduck), 36 fragments of Book Λ survive in Arabic in Averroes (cf. J. Freudenthal, *Die durch Averroes erhaltenen Fragmente Alexanders zur Metaphysik des Aristoteles*, Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin 1885, repr. Garland Publishing 1987), and 10 fragments of books M-N are quoted by Syrianus: see C. Luna, *Trois études sur la tradition des commentaires anciens à la Métaphysique d’Aristote*, Brill, Leiden 2001, pp. 45-50; (2) Syrianus, Books Β Γ Μ Ν (ed. W. Kroll [*CAG* VI 1, 1902]; according to Luna, *DPhA*, p. 252, the fact that only these four books are commented upon does not depend upon a loss in the textual tradition: it was Syrianus’ decision to comment only on them; (3) Asclepius of Tralles, Books A-Z (i.e. the edition of Ammonius’ course, ed. M. Hayduck [*CAG* VI 2, 1888]); this commentary is based on Alexander and Syrianus (Luna, *Trois études*, pp. 107-75); (4) Ps. Alexander (Michael of Ephesus), Books E-N (ed. M. Hayduck [*CAG* I], p. 440-837). Commentaries not extant, but attested in Greek are the following: (1) Nicolaus of Damascus (ed. H.J. Drossaart Lulofs, *Nicolaus Damascenus. On the Philosophy of Aristotle. Fragments of the First Five Books Translated from the Syriac with an Introduction and Commentary*, Brill, Leiden 1965 [*Philosophia Antiqua*, 13], pp. 27-34, 74-81, 134-52 [cf. Luna, *DPhA*, p. 249-250]); (2) Aspasius (three fragments survive in Alexander’s commentary of book A 5, A 6, and Δ 9); (3) Aristotle of Mytilene (a fragment is quoted by Syrianus through Alexander (Syr., *In Met.*, pp. 99.17-100.13 Kroll); (4) Porphyry (two fragments on book Λ are quoted by Simpl., *In De Caelo*, pp. 503.22-35, 506.8-16 Heiberg). According to Luna (*DPhA*, p. 252), there is no reason to doubt the existence of Porphyry’s commentary, as does H.-J. Blumenthal, “Did Iamblichus Write a Commentary on the *De Anima*?”, *Hermes* 102/4 (1974), pp. 540-6; (5) “Simplicius” (two self-quotations from a commentary on the *Metaphysics* are preserved in Simpl. (?), *In De An.*, ed. Hayduck, *CAG* XI [1882], pp. 28.19-20 [I 2, 404 b 19-21], 217.23-29 [III 4, 419 a 10-11]). The attribution of this commentary is debated: cf. Luna, *DPhA*, p. 256; (6) Ps. Philoponus (13-14th cent.): the sources of this commentary are Alexander [books A-Δ] and Michael of Ephesus [books E-N]); (7) Ps. Herennius (15th cent.): this commentary was edited by Angelo Mai (*Classicum auctorum e Vaticanis codicibus editorum*, t. IX, Rome 1837, pp. 513-93).

¹⁷ Photius, *Bibl.*, *Cod.* 74, 52a15-21 Bekker: Τούτου τοῦ Θεμιστίου εἰς πάντα τὰ Ἀριστοτελικά φέρονται ὑπομνήματα· οὐ μόνον δὲ ἀλλὰ καὶ μεταφράσεις αὐτοῦ εἶδομεν, εἰς τὸ χρήσιμον ἐπιτετηγμένας τῶν τε ἀναλυτικῶν καὶ τῶν περὶ ψυχῆς βιβλίων καὶ τῶν τῆς φυσικῆς ἀκροάσεως καὶ ἐτέρων τοιούτων. Εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ εἰς τὰ Πλατωνικά αὐτοῦ ἐξηγητικοὶ πόνοι, καὶ ἀπλῶς ἐραστής ἐστι καὶ σπουδαστὴς φιλοσοφίας (“Of this Themistius we have seen his commentaries on all the works of Aristotle, and concise and useful paraphrases of the *Analytics*, the *Soul*, the *Physics*, and similar works. He also did something for the interpretation of Plato, and, in fact, was a lover and student of philosophy”, trans. J.H. Freese, *The Library of Photius*, Vol. I, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge – Macmillan Co., London – New York 1920, n° LXXIV, p. 124 modif. Note, incidentally, that in his translation Henry (vol. I, p. 153) renders erroneously τῶν τῆς φυσικῆς ἀκροάσεως by “*Métaphysique*”). C. Steel, “Des commentaires d’Aristote par Thémistius?”, *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 71 (1973), pp. 669-80, argues that, besides the paraphrases, Themistius also wrote commentaries on Aristotle and Plato. Meyrav (p. 8, n. 24) sides with those scholars who challenge this idea: H.-J. Blumenthal, “Photius on Themistius (*Cod.* 74)” (above, n. 10), and J. Vanderspoel, “The Themistius’ Collection of Commentaries on Plato and Aristotle”, *Phoenix* 43 [1989], pp. 162-4. See also above, n. 8.

¹⁸ See *Suidae Lexicon*, ed. A. Adler, Teubner, Leipzig 1931, Θ 122, vol. II, pp. 690.28-691.3: Γέγραφε δὲ τῆς Ἀριστοτέλους Φυσικῆς ἀκροάσεως παράφρασιν ἐν βιβλίῳ η΄, Παράφρασιν τῶν Ἀναλυτικῶν ἐν βιβλίῳ β΄, τῶν Ἀποδεικτικῶν ἐν βιβλίῳ β΄, τοῦ Περὶ ψυχῆς ἐν βιβλίῳ ζ΄· ἐν δὲ τούτῳ καὶ ἴδια παρεισηγάγε περι τοῦ σκοποῦ καὶ τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς τῶν Κατηγοριῶν ἐν βιβλίῳ ἐνί· καὶ Διαλέξεις (“He wrote a paraphrase of the teaching of Aristotle’s *Physics* in 8 books, a paraphrase of the [Aristotelian] *Analytics* in 2 books, of the *Apodeictics* in 2 books, of the [treatise] *On the Soul* in 7 books (in this he also introduced specifics about the aim and the ascription of the *Categories* in a single book); and *Discourses*”, trans. by D. Whitehead in the frame of the project *Suda-On-Line* <www.stoa.org/sol> – last consulted on 2020-10-20). On the lack of mentions of a paraphrase by Themistius of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* by Byzantine sources see the Introduction by R. Brague, *Thémistius* (above, n. 12), pp. 15-16.

It is true that Themistius never says he wrote anything about the *Metaphysics*. He obviously refers to the *Metaphysics*; the following passages are some examples:

– *In De An.* (referring to II 4, 415 b 8-12), p. 50.28 Heinze: ἐν τοῖς περὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν (“in the [treatise] *On the First Principles*”). According to Heinze, Themistius refers here to *Metaph.* V 2, 1013 a 26 – b 3. Todd (*Themistius’ On Aristotle’s On the Soul*, Cornell U.P., Ithaca 1996, p. 172, n. 7) believes that the reference is to the *Physics: Phys.* II 3, 194 b 26-195 a 3.

– *In De An.* (referring to III 5, 430 a 23), p. 103.12-13 Heinze: ἐν τῇ συντάξει τῆ μετὰ τὰ Φυσικὰ (“in his systematic treatise ‘the *Metaphysics*’”). According to Heinze, Themistius refers here to *Metaph.* XII 7, 1073 a 3 – b 16.

– *In De Cael.* (referring to I 8, 277 a 20-32), p. 34.4-18 Landauer: “from the [work] *On First Philosophy*, called *Metaphysics*” (מן הפילוסופיה הראשונה כלומר מספר מה שאחר הטבע), where Themistius explains Aristotle’s δὲ τῶν ἐκ τῆς πρώτης φιλοσοφίας λόγων (277 a 10) as a reference to *Metaph.* XII 8, 1074 a 16-32.

– *In Metaph.* p. 6.17-27 Meyrav (cf. XII 3, 1070 a 27-30) contains an argument based on *Metaph.* XII 8 and 9 (cf. Y. Meyrav, “‘Spontaneous Generation’, and its *Metaphysics* in Themistius’ *Paraphrase* of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 12”, in R. Sorabji [ed.], *Aristotle Re-interpreted*, Bloomsbury, London 2016, pp. 195-210, part. pp. 198-208, and the commentary, p. 365).

Of course, we should not conclude that these few passages alone bear witness to Themistius’ acquaintance with the *Metaphysics*; however, an exhaustive survey of this point, comparable with what has been done apropos of Plato’s dialogues¹⁹ is yet to be carried out. In any case, that Themistius is familiar with the doctrines of the *Metaphysics* and in particular with those of Book *Lambda* is otherwise well documented. The passages in the paraphrase of the *De An.* which deal with intellection show beyond doubt his acquaintance with *Metaph.* XII 7-9 (in part. pp. 100.4-10, 114.36-115.9 Heinze) as his ideas about divine intellection are shaped by these chapters and, from Shlomo Pines onwards,²⁰ this point is established in the scholarship. Furthermore, in his paraphrase of the *De Caelo*, Themistius describes the heavens as ensouled and explains their movements as caused by their souls’ desire to imitate the immobility of the First Cause-God, thus aligning the *De Caelo* with the Book *Lambda* of the *Metaphysics*.²¹

¹⁹ The knowledge of Plato’s dialogues has left deep marks in Themistius’ *Orations*. Cf. e.g. R. Maisano, “La *paideia* del logos nell’opera oratoria di Temistio”, *Koinonia* 10 (1986), pp. 29-47, who discusses some of the circa 344 references to the dialogues in Themistius’ *Orations* which were listed by J.A. Brons, *De woordkeuze in Themistius’ redevoeringen: Bijdrage tot het onderzoek naar Themistius’ bronnen en modellen*, Dekker & Van de Veegt, Nijmegen 1948, pp. 75-126 (*non vidi*; quoted by Maisano, p. 29 fn. 3).

²⁰ Cf. S. Pines, “Les limites de la métaphysique selon al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja et Maïmonide: sources et antithèses de ces doctrines chez Alexandre d’Aphrodise et chez Thémistius”, in W. Kluxen (ed.), *Sprache und Erkenntnis im Mittelalter*, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York, pp. 211-25; Id., “Some Distinctive Metaphysical Conceptions in Themistius’ Commentary on Book *Lambda* and their Place in the History of Philosophy”, in J. Wiesner (ed.), *Aristoteles Werk und Wirkung* II, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 1987, pp. 177-204 (repr. in *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*, Vol. III [1996], pp. 267-94). Meyrav, pp. 8-13 discusses the studies by E. Berti, “The Program of *Metaphysics Lambda* (Chapter 1)”, in Ch. Horn (ed.), *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Lambda: New Essays*, De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2016, pp. 67-86; C. Fraenkel, “Maimonides’ God and Spinoza’s *Deus sive Natura*”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44/ 2 (2006), pp. 169-215; G. Guldentops, “Themistius on Evil”, *Phronesis* 46/2 (2001), pp. 189-208, and “La science suprême selon Thémistius” (above, n. 10); D. Henry, “Themistius and the Problem of Spontaneous Generation”, in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Re-interpreted*, pp. 179-94; and D. Twetten, “Aristotelian Cosmology and Causality in Classical Arabic Philosophy and Its Greek Background”, in D. Janos, *Ideas in Motion in Baghdad and Beyond*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2016, pp. 312-433.

²¹ Themistius’ picture of the universe as it emerges from the paraphrase of the *De Caelo* supplemented by that of *Metaph.* 12, was that of the late Antique exegesis of Aristotle’s cosmology, with its hierarchical order depending on and

All this, coupled with the witnesses of the Arabic and Hebrew versions, tips the scale towards the attribution of this work to Themistius. Hence, the question is: did he write a paraphrase of the whole *Metaphysics* although it was only that of Book *Lambda* which survived? If so, why? Or did he select only Book *Lambda* for his paraphrase? If so, why? In both cases there are far-reaching consequences for the history of the reception of Aristotle.

This point is raised by Rémi Brague, who considers that Themistius follows in the footsteps of a well-established tradition to conceive of Book *Lambda* as the climactic point of the *Metaphysics*: “tout se passe donc comme si le livre *Lambda*, à une certaine époque de l’histoire de la réception d’Aristote, avait fait figure de compendium de la vision aristotélicienne du monde, ce qui lui permettait d’être considéré pour lui-même, et commenté comme tel” (p. 24). Following this lead, the most promising reference is Porphyry. As we have just seen,²² Simplicius quotes two passages where Porphyry comments upon *Metaphysics* XII. Once again, this does not rule out the possibility that Porphyry also commented upon other parts of Aristotle’s work. However, if the two passages quoted by Simplicius point to a work by Porphyry devoted to *Metaphysics* XII, this counts as an interesting model of Themistius’ own work and as a hint towards the identification of Brague’s “moment de l’histoire de la réception d’Aristote”, which antedates Themistius. That Themistius is conversant with the Neoplatonic interpretation of Aristotle is suggested by several aspects of his thought, and this might point more specifically to Porphyry and the exegetical tradition he inaugurated. As far as the understanding of the *Metaphysics* is concerned, and more specifically that of Book *Lambda*, albeit with a tiny amount of data, one is tempted to speak of an exegetical tradition inaugurated by Porphyry. This point has been highlighted by Pierre Hadot with reference to Dexippus. In his seminal study on the Neoplatonic interpretation of Aristotle’s *Categories*, Hadot has demonstrated that the typically Porphyrian idea of a twofold οὐσία, intelligible and sensible, depends upon a specific interpretation of *Metaphysics* XII which is echoed in Dexippus:

La réponse à cette objection [i.e. Dexippus’ doubt about the unity of the Aristotelian notion of οὐσία] va consister à montrer que la philosophie d’Aristote bien comprise rejoint la philosophie de Plotin, et qu’il y a chez Aristote, comme chez Plotin, la notion d’une *ousia* intelligible qui fonde à la fois l’être et la notion de l’*ousia* sensible. (...) Disons tout de suite que ce développement [i.e. Dexippus’] nous paraît être l’œuvre de Porphyre (...). En effet, nous pouvons ici encore constater, grâce aux parallèles qui se trouvent dans Simplicius (...) la déformation que Jamblique avait fait subir au texte de Porphyre. En effet, la source de Dexippe se réfère au livre Λ de la *Métaphysique* et nous dit explicitement que tout ce qu’elle nous rapporte concernant la doctrine aristotélicienne de l’*ousia* provient de ce traité. Effectivement, dans ce livre de la *Métaphysique* (1069 a 30 sq. et 1071 b 3) on trouve la classification des *ousiai* dont parle la source de Dexippe: distinction entre une *ousia* immobile et une *ousia* sensible ou physique, puis distinction au sein de cette dernière, entre *ousia* sensible et corruptible et *ousia* proprement physique et éternelle. Les deux *ousiai* sensibles sont l’objet de la *Physique*, tandis que l’*ousia* immobile est l’objet d’une science supérieure. (...) Porphyre (...) avait probablement retenu la classification des *ousiai* en sensibles, physiques et intelligibles parce qu’elle permettait, comme on le

aiming at a first Unmoved Mover that is desired and imitated by a number of animated celestial spheres to which is granted the intellectual power. Themistius’ exegesis shines in the accounts of the animation and movement of the heavens by Averroes and Thomas Aquinas (cf. E. Coda, “A Revised Aristotelian Theology. Themistius on the Soul of the Heavens and the Movement of the Heavenly Bodies”, in F. Baghdassarian – G. Guyomarc’h (ed.), *Réceptions de la théologie aristotélicienne*, Peeters, Louvain-la-Neuve 2017, pp. 207-38).

²² Above, fn. 14.

voit dans le texte de Dexippe, de systématiser les différentes sortes d'*ousiai* que Plotin avait distinguées à la suite d'Aristote (...). Nous savons par Simplicius (...) que Porphyre avait commenté le livre Λ de la *Métaphysique*. Les quelques lignes que nous venons de lire dans Dexippe peuvent nous permettre de nous faire une idée du sens général du commentaire. Nous avons vu comment Porphyre faisait un rapprochement systématique entre l'*ousia* sensible et l'*ousia* composée, l'*ousia* physique et la matière et la forme, l'*ousia* immobile et l'*ousia* intelligible. Ceci correspond à une certaine systématisation et transformation de la doctrine d'Aristote.²³

Themistius' way to deal with the Aristotelian *ousia* is not dissimilar to the position described by Pierre Hadot as typical of Porphyry and those Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle who were in all likelihood influenced by him. If and how Porphyry's interpretation of the *Metaphysics*, and perhaps a commentary by him on *Metaphysics* XII, reached Constantinople is admittedly difficult to establish, but this is an example of the multiple ways in which the work made available by Yoav Meyrav is relevant in the history of the Aristotelian exegesis.

Elisa Coda

²³ P. Hadot, "L'harmonie des philosophies de Plotin et d'Aristote selon Porphyre dans le commentaire de Dexippe sur les *Catégories*", in *Plotino e il neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente*. Atti del Convegno Internazionale 5-9 ottobre 1970, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Roma 1974, pp. 31-47, repr. in Id., *Plotin Porphyre. Études néoplatoniciennes*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1999 (L'Âne d'or), pp. 355-82, here pp. 38-40 (366-9 of the reprint).