REMARKS ON DAVID THE INVINCIBLE’S COMMENTARY ON ARISTOTLE’S PRIOR ANALYTICS: ITS STRUCTURE, CONTENTS, LANGUAGE, AND THE PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATOR AND AUTHORSHIP

Aram Topchyan

1. Introduction

David the Invincible’s Commentary on the Prior Analytics, which survives only in an Armenian translation from the Greek original, is a typical product of the sixth-century Alexandrian school of philosophy. It is composed according to certain rules established by earlier commentators of Aristotle and it follows a widely accepted pattern which is referred to in a number of extant texts. Following that pattern, and mindful of the general rule which Galen had already formulated and which states that “a complete examination of the author’s opinions goes beyond the bounds of an interpretation”, the Alexandrian commentators often preferred to discuss superficial matters, leaving aside the essence of the works in question: an easy way to avoid going deep into the incomprehensible subject-matter of Plato’s or Aristotle’s treatises.

This general pattern consisted of an introduction followed by the main part of the commentary which was devoted to the explanation of specific topics; but the pattern could vary according to each commentator’s particular purposes and the peculiarities of his writing. For instance, in his Commentary on Porphyry’s Isagoge, Ammonius (5th–6th centuries) indicates seven main points of introductory discussion: ὁ σκοπός—ἡμιπροηνηματί (the ‘aim’ of the given

---

2 Gal., in Hipp fract, XVIII B 319.2–319.3 (cf. supra, p.6).
4 We indicate the Armenian equivalents of the Greek terms used in the Armenian versions of David’s works.
work), τὸ χρήσιμον—ἡμισυνήματι (its ‘usefulness’), τὸ γνήσιον—

ημισυνήματι (its ‘genuineness’), ἡ τάξις τῆς ἀναγνώσεως—

ημισυνήματι (the ‘order of the material’ or ‘the order of the writing in question’), ἡ αἰτία τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς—

ημισυνήματι (‘the explanation of the title’), ἡ εἰς τὰ κεφάλαια διαίρεσις—.waitKeyness (‘the division of

the work into chapters’), and ὑπὸ ποιόν μέρος ἀνάγεται τὸ παρὸν σύγγραμα—عاش ἑξῆς ἴμπιμα (‘to which part of phi-

losophy the given work is related’: theoretical or practical?). Simplicius (6th century), a representative of the Athenian school who also stud-

ied in Alexandria, refers in his Commentary on Aristotle’s Categories to the same seven introductory points, slightly changing their order: ὁ σκοπός, τὸ χρήσιμον, ἡ τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς αἰτία, ἡ τάξις τῆς ἀναγνώσεως, εἰ γνήσιον τοῦ φιλοσόφου τὸ βιβλίον, ἡ εἰς τὰ κεφάλαια διαίρεσις […] καὶ ὑπὸ ποιόν μέρος αὐτοῦ τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἀνάγεται. John Philoponus (6th century) in his Commentary on Aristotle’s Categories speaks of six introductory topics, omitting the question to which part of philosophy the Categories belongs, but in his Commentary on the Prior Analytics he adds the seventh point (προσθήσω δὲ καὶ ἐβδομον, ὑπὸ ποιόν τῆς φιλοσοφίας μέρος ἀνάγεται—“I shall add a seventh as well: to which part of philosophy it is related”).

David himself, in the Commentary on Porphyry’s Isagoge, refers to one further introductory subject, ‘the teaching method’ (ὁ διδασκαλικὸς τρόπος) of the author, so that there he has eight points to discuss. But in the work we are here concerned with, namely the Commentary on Aristotle’s Prior Analytics, he discusses only seven topics.

2. Brief Description of the Contents

The text as a whole consists of fourteen lectures or πράξεις: it gives an impression of incompleteness—perhaps it is only a part of a more voluminous work, the rest of which is lost.

Lecture I concerns Aristotle’s aim in writing the book and also the usefulness both of the book and of its principal subject, syllogism

5 Simpl., in Cat, 8.8–11.
6 Philop., in Cat, 7.1–3.
7 Philop., in APr, 1.5–10.
8 Dav., in Isag, 80.12–14.