
Philosophy and Exegesis in Simplicius: The Methodology of a Commentator by Han Baltussen

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In *Philosophy and Exegesis in Simplicius*,¹ a preparatory study for a history of the ancient philosophical commentary [224nn10, 13], Han Baltussen addresses the ‘methodology’ of pagan antiquity’s last major Platonist and its greatest philosophical scholar, Simplicius of Cilicia (AD *ca* 480–*ca* 540). What ‘methodology’ means can be best appreciated if the book’s general conclusions are first summarized.

By laying ‘special emphasis on the philological and historical features of a commentator who is often viewed as a mere mediator of earlier thinkers’ [2], Baltussen finds in his voluminous works of Aristotelian exegesis a ‘multi-layered, inter-textual, extravaganza’ [90], ‘a cornucopia of sources’ [169], consisting of scholarship that went well beyond orthodox explications and analyses of texts to create a learned artifact reflecting ancient Platonism in its maturity. The whole exercise, ‘incredible as this may seem’ served ‘a higher purpose, the preparation of the human soul to ascend to god’ [169], being ‘geared towards revealing an ancient spiritual wisdom by rational means . . . a theology with philosophical underpinnings mixed with spiritual insights and religious rituals’ [90], a ‘pagan “gospel”’ [209] sung by a ‘great pagan choir of voices’ [207] in a unison created by an ‘extreme harmonization’ (συμφωνία) of ideas from disparate

¹ Disclaimer: I am thanked on p. xi for ‘advice or support’. I did not, however, see any part of the manuscript prior to publication except for a contents table, and my input was limited to the provision of some factual information [see 237n37] and one photocopied item, Hoffmann 2006.

sources, all designed to match its Christian counterpart [86–87, 207].² Thus fortified intellectually, Simplicius, and a like-minded elite [181], undertook a ‘rearguard action’ [87] in a grossly mismatched battle with ‘the ever-growing presence and impending victory of Christianity’ [209]. Such, then, is Simplicius’ almost tragic narrative, and when dramatized in evocative metaphors it reveals a commentator whose personality so often seems buried beneath his ancillary role [23, 133], much as his Christian contemporary, John Philoponus, has come to life over the past two decades, though on the basis of rather different evidence.

In this account, ‘methodology’ defines the nexus between scholarship (primarily the assimilation of sources and authorities) and a religious goal, not the procedures governing exegetical explorations of substantive philosophical issues.³ We are indeed warned that to ignore the religious dimension of his program is to risk

turning [Simplicius and other late ancient Platonists] into secular (analytical) philosophers,⁴ whose philosophical *nous*

² Golitsis [2008] now offers a well documented account of Simplicius’ deployment of harmonizing strategies. Baltussen’s appendix 3 [218–220] lists instances of the term *συνφωνία* in Simplicius, while his discussions in the main body of the book are sporadic and descriptive. One case in the appendix is not relevant: *In Phys.* 341.27 [218] refers to a consensus of views regarding the existence of *τόχη*, which is quite different from the harmonization of ideas involved elsewhere, when there is a *reconciliation* of often seemingly incompatible views.

³ Baltussen [73] warns us that his discussion of Simplicius’ attack on Philoponus for adopting Christian creationism will emphasize ‘the religious nature of the motivation for this debate’ rather than ‘the interesting *philosophical* details’ (Baltussen’s italics). More generally, Baltussen [196] notes that ‘Simplicius has been judged on his intentions rather than the results he offers in what he takes Aristotle to be saying’ and defines his general purpose as being to show how ‘exegetical strategies served [Simplicius’] philosophical outlook’ [201]. *Philosophy and Exegesis* also contains nothing for the historian of science; the two references for ‘astronomy’ and ‘science’ in the subject index are insignificant.

⁴ See p. 205 for similar language used to describe the bulk of recent scholarship on Platonic commentators, where allegedly they have been subject to ‘(analytical) philosophical investigations’. But that would not make the subject of such an investigations an ‘(analytical) philosopher’. Baltussen does not explain the brackets on ‘analytical’.

would make them seem interested only in analyzing the world through language and logic. [149]

But even so, religious values are not central to the text of his works, whereas his scholarly method (the ‘philological and historical features’ that Baltussen is targeting) is omnipresent. This contrast turns *Philosophy and Exegesis* in effect into two overlapping books—a painstaking and detailed analysis of Simplicius’ method of handling his inherited materials blended with a straightforward assertion of the commentator’s wider religious purpose. But the pains that have to be taken to complete the first of these are quite considerable when the author’s chosen data base is over 3,000 pages of the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* containing Simplicius’ commentaries on Aristotle’s *Categories*, *De caelo* and *Physics*, even if the latter receives ‘particular emphasis’ [8].

Philosophy and Exegesis begins with an introduction and opening chapter that includes basic bio- and bibliographical information [12–14; resumed at 48–51],⁵ Simplicius’ early career, and no mention of the possibly spurious commentary on the *De anima* attributed to him.⁶ After a selective review of the literature stressing the negative or one-sided attitudes towards this commentator that Baltussen thinks still prevail [2–8; see my Additional Note 3, p. 220 below], there is a preparatory survey of exegetical goals [33–38] and of scholarly techniques (the use of manuscripts, textual criticism, the deployment of quotations) [38–48].

For a book ostensibly concerned with the ‘intellectual framework’ [14] of its author’s writings, Simplicius is introduced in surprisingly generic terms on the opening page as ‘one among a group of late

⁵ The second of these goes unnecessarily deeply into the drawn-out debate over where Simplicius returned after his departure from Athens *ca* 531–532. Baltussen is open-minded about the actual location but inclines to its being Athens [204].

⁶ The abbreviation ‘*in DA*’ is included in the list on p. viii, and the bibliography includes some items that address its authenticity, yet this work is not cited in the *index locorum*. This should be collected with other complaints about the indexing.

Platonists who lived and worked in Alexandria and Athens' [1], with no mention of Philoponus here or when Ammonius (who taught them both) is first introduced [12] and then later profiled [163]. Philoponus appears on page 43 without a word of introduction (and with no dates given until page 176).⁷ Yet Simplician methodology could have been profitably compared from the outset with Philoponus', particularly in his commentary on the *Physics*.⁸

Chapters 2–5 are the core of the book. They focus on the players in Simplicius' exegetical extravaganza (for some of whom he has famously become our only source) and explore his methods of citing and using them. These chapters, any one of which could easily be enlarged into a monograph [see 55], proceed chronologically:

- 2 the Presocratics (principally Parmenides, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras)
- 3 the early Peripatetics (principally Theophrastus and Eudemus)
- 4 Simplicius' 'prototype' [121], 'benchmark in commentary composition' and 'beacon in navigating the Aristotelian text' [135], Alexander of Aphrodisias, the epitome of Peripatetic orthodoxy
- 5 the Platonists of the centuries between Plotinus and Simplicius' teacher at Athens, Damascius

Chapters 3 and 4 reflect the evolution of the Peripatetic school in antiquity, but no attempt is made to explain why Alexander is 'a died-in-the-wool (*sic*) Peripatetic' [107] in contrast with less dogmatic earlier members of that school [105–106], except for the unexplored suggestion that 'a shift in the first century BCE' [106] produced 'the notion of a canon as established doctrine'. More should

⁷ *Philosophy and Exegesis* could have benefited from a prosopographical appendix: Ammonius is assigned dates on his 12th appearance, Iamblichus on his 10th.

⁸ Golitsis 2008 adopts such an approach. On the general contrast between Simplicius and Philoponus, see Wildberg 1999, 120–121 and my forthcoming review of Golitsis [Todd 2009].

be said here.⁹ By contrast, the evolution of Platonism between Plotinus and Damascius is handled in some detail, albeit in a derivative [137] survey [147–164].

The book concludes with a final chapter on the rhetorical aspects of Simplicius' polemic against Philoponus on the eternity of the world (really a side-issue in a study of basic methodology, and just a way of re-emphasizing Simplicius' paganism) and an epilogue. There is no separate chapter on Plato, whose works are cited only 18 times (though the role that the *Timaeus* plays in Simplicius' re-configuration of the *Physics* and *De caelo* could be the subject of a monograph)¹⁰ nor on Aristotle (19 references),¹¹ despite Simplicius' interaction with him being the basis of his methodology.

Baltussen's own methodology, background surveys aside,¹² is to list examples illustrating various Simplician procedures in relation to the wide range of authorities and sources that he addresses. Sampling is inevitably selective and texts are often rather briefly treated. The whole process leads, as Baltussen repeatedly acknowledges [e.g., x, 107, 108, 134, 137, 165, 170] only to tentative or preliminary conclusions, or just to daunting statistics [64, 109, 118, 128–129, 154, 199, 255n10] inviting further research, or in one striking case to an unanalyzed bar graph [217] of the distribution of references to Alexander

⁹ Baltussen does not, for example, consider the evolution of the philosophical commentary as part of the return to authority that some scholars have recently seen as occurring in the first century BC: see [Falcon 2008](#), 7–10 for a useful orientation to the literature on this issue. Baltussen's brief references [26, 88, 106] to the creation of a Peripatetic canon lack any precise historical focus.

¹⁰ See [Guldentops 2005](#) (not cited by Baltussen) for a study of its role in Simplicius' critique of Alexander in his commentary on the *De caelo*. [Gavray 2007](#) is a recent study of Simplicius' use of another Platonic dialogue, the *Sophist*.

¹¹ One of these, 279b17–2 [191], should be to the *De caelo*. The *index locorum* misses this and two additional references: *Phys.* 189a32 [119] and 251b15f. [219]. See [218n24](#) below.

¹² See pp. 24–27 on the evolution of the commentary, pp. 173–182 on the history of philosophical polemics, especially between Christians and pagans, and pp. 140–158 on Platonism between Plotinus and Proclus.

in the *Physics* commentary by units of 25 pages rather than by the content of the Aristotelian and Simplician treatises.¹³ Sometimes we are offered the minute detail usually found in formal commentaries;¹⁴ at other times, lists of references.

The evidence canvassed is more accessible when consisting of ‘programmatically statements’ [16] than where specific loci are used to illustrate methodology. This is because by being invariably detached from their exegetical context they are difficult to assess¹⁵ and open to misinterpretation.¹⁶ Aristotelian *lemmata* are, as far as I can see, pro-

¹³ The fewest references (less than five) are at *In phys.* 625–650, all but five pages of which are taken up with the *Corollarium de loco*—which would exclude Alexander because this digression was not exegetical in nature. The next section [650–675] covering *Phys.* 4.6–8 on the void has no references to Alexander at all, perhaps because Simplicius had cited Alexander fully on this subject in his earlier commentary on the *De caelo* (on its date see Golitsis 2008, 18n38) at 285.2–286.27, an important item in Simplicius’ Alexandrian material, which Baltussen overlooks in his ch. 4. The most references (over 30) are on pp. 700–725, which address *Phys.* 4.10–11 [218a31–219b33] on time, a subject in which Alexander had a special interest [see Sharples 1982]. I offer the preceding as a specimen of the work that Baltussen’s minimal bar graph has left to his readers.

¹⁴ See, for example, the analysis of the quotation on p. 165.

¹⁵ On p. 118 there is a reference to Simplicius’ report of Themistius’ disagreement with Alexander on the issue of instantaneous change in *Phys.* 6.4; on this see my translation of Themistius’ paraphrase of this chapter at Todd 2008, 50–51 with nn309–310. Baltussen’s failure to identify the relevant Aristotelian context renders his comments almost incomprehensible. See also p. 191 where the Aristotelian context is defined but as ‘part of the concluding section discussing time in *Phys.* 4’, which is little help except to patient readers with a text of the *Physics* to hand. The same goes for the vague references to ‘*Phys.* A7’ (actually 189a11–14) at p. 119 (where there is also no reference for the Simplician passage [192.14–21] translated except for an interpolated ‘192.20’) and that to ‘*Phys.* 6’ on p. 164.

¹⁶ For example, I doubt that *In Phys.* 193,16–19 has anything at all to do with ‘the late technical rephrasing of Platonic doctrine in a new framework’ [161]. It would seem only to record a disagreement with Syrianus about what the ‘contrariety’ (ἐναντιώσις) said to be ‘in every γένος’ (i.e., in every category) involves. Syrianus had argued [at 129.29–32] that there was a single contrariety based on excess and defect for every category; and in the passage that Baltussen cites, Simplicius is responding to this by saying that ‘contrariety is proprietary to quantity alone’ if we take ‘excess’ and

vided only at pages 77, 81, and 151; and their absence raises not just a trivial issue of documentation but one of principle, since the effect of Baltussen's discussion of these passages is to treat the commentator's discussions in isolation from their basic exegetical purpose [see also my [Additional Note 4](#), p. 220]. Baltussen realizes the need to take account of the context in which Simplicius quotes and cites authorities [e.g., 15, 55] but equally important is the broader exegetical context that is the basis for this activity.¹⁷ Fewer samples more closely scrutinized would have made such contextualization possible and also allowed Baltussen to explore rather than skirt philosophical issues excluded by his restrictive notion of methodology. The structure and character of the three commentaries utilized is also not well defined.¹⁸ Probably just Simplicius' most important commentary, that on the *Physics*, should have been Baltussen's main focus in a study of this length; certainly the survey of it at pages 34–38 is, for example, too brief.

Baltussen is at his best in playing to his pre-established strengths in dealing with Simplicius' reception of source material, especially where direct quotations are involved. The most famous of these are from the Presocratics in the commentary on *Physics 1* (of which unfortunately no English translation is currently available), and pertinent criticisms are offered of the principles governing Diels' collection

'defect' in a strict sense, because they exist derivatively in other categories due to quantity. Baltussen's translation, 'the appropriate antithesis would belong to quantity alone', obscures this reasoning. 'Appropriate' (οἰκείος) is predicative here, and is used in the sense of unique (equivalent to ἴδιος). Also, the presence of the terms 'excess' and 'defect' is due to their presence in the Aristotelian text at *Phys.* 1.4, 187a16–17, which is recalled in 1.6 at 189b10–11.

¹⁷ See [Todd and Bowen 2009](#), 167–175 for three passages from Simplicius' commentary on the *De caelo* translated along with their Aristotelian *lemmata* to contextualize reports of Heraclides of Pontus' theory of the rotation of the Earth. Baltussen might have offered similar examples to show the full range of interaction between Simplician methodology and its exegetical context.

¹⁸ The 'headings' (κεφάλαια), notably the 'goal' (σκοπός), by which the *Physics* is analyzed at the outset of the commentary are dealt with piecemeal at pp. 37, 42, and 116–117, with some historical background at 145, and the σκοπός of the *In de caelo* discussed at p. 160; contrast [Golitsis 2008](#), ch. 2, where these propaedeutic classifications are handled systematically for the *Physics* commentary.

of evidence [63–44, 72].¹⁹ The treatment of the Simplician reports of Theophrastus and Eudemus, on which Baltussen also has a proven track record, is also effective. But the practical problem, as already indicated, is that it is difficult to engage there or elsewhere with Baltussen’s detailed discussions without determining the relevant Aristotelian *lemmata* and in many cases checking ancillary texts. In fact, something like Simplicius’ library, which Baltussen tries to reconstruct in his first appendix [211–215],²⁰ is required. Quotations are certainly too few and too brief (I counted 56, most shorter than 10 lines), often in borrowed translations²¹ or questionable ones;²² and there is no complementary appendix of annotated translations, as is standard in studies of a less familiar author like Simplicius [see Gavray 2007 and Golitsis 2008].

Philosophy and Exegesis, then, is a challenging book to use and also not an easy one to read, too often wordy, sometimes repetitious,

¹⁹ Lewis 2000, 10–12 should have been cited for his attempt to identify a new ‘B’ fragment of Anaxagoras at Simplicius, *In phys.* 164.20–22.

²⁰ Baltussen includes references to several works that are inherently implausible candidates for the Simplician bookshelf. Also, titles are given mostly in English, but some in Latin and Greek, and one (Alexander, *De mixtu* rather than *De mixtione*) in an unorthodox form. Themistius’ paraphrase of the *Categories* (cited at Simplicius, *In cat.* 1.1. and 1.9) is omitted, as, more pardonably, is a hidden reference to Ptolemy, *Almagest* 1.7, 24.7–10 at *In de caelo* 445.1–2 in a partial quotation [see Todd and Bowen 2009, 175]. Baltussen does mention on p. 36 that ‘Ptolemaeus’ (*sic*) is cited at *In de caelo* 9.29, and so it is surprising that he is omitted from the ‘library’.

²¹ This can be risky [see also 219n26 below]. Thus, on p. 157 Baltussen cites *In phys.* 611.25–26, a reference to Proclus, as ‘he expounded his opinion clearly and expertly’. But this is the late J. O. Urmson’s incorrect translation [1992, 32] of the second adverb, *συνηρημένως*, which means ‘in comprehensive terms’. It is *συνηρσημένως* that means ‘expertly’ and since it is just four items down the page at *LSJ* 1716 col. 1, the translator’s eye may have fallen on it mistakenly.

²² On p. 108, for example, *δι’ ἐνδόξων* at Alexander, *In top.* 27.10 is oddly translated ‘through what is approved’ (rather than, say, ‘through reputable opinions’); and on p. 73 the contrast between things that are *φυσικά* and those that are *ὑπὲρ φύσιν* at Simplicius, *In phys.* 21.17 is blunted by translating the latter as ‘those above nature’ and the former as ‘physical things’ rather than ‘natural things’, or ‘the realm of nature’. Finally, on p. 218 *τύχη* is unusually translated as ‘fate’.

with too many overloaded paragraphs and too much untranslated transliterated Greek, and defects that cannot be overlooked in its bibliography²³ and indices.²⁴ It will not be the widely ‘accessible’ work that Baltussen initially hoped to produce [ix], and determined specialists may want to consult it selectively. Its vision of Simplicius as a religiously engaged scholarly exegete was well worth displaying but perhaps not in the context of a book that needs to go in so many other directions.

Finally, there are five general topics on which I take issue with Baltussen’s treatment and now append comments.

²³ It cites but omits some commentaries in the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle series (‘Gaskin 2000’ at p.99 and ‘Mueller 2004’ at p.131 have no entries); A. Graeser is morphed into ‘A. Gaiser’; Gersh (1992) is cited in abbreviated form on p.3 but not included; Sharples 1990 is not ‘The School of Alexander of Aphrodisias’ but ‘The School of Alexander?’; and the two editions of ‘Ong, W.J.’ are confusingly cited separately. The system of multiple entries for a given year breaks down: ‘Luna 2001’ [50] should be ‘2001c’ and the review by R.Netz of ‘Mansfeld 1999’ [273] should be of ‘Mansfeld 1999a’.

²⁴ On p.287, the last three references from the *In de caelo* are to the *In physica*. The index of names is highly selective for modern names, omits Plato, and gives only two references for Aristotle. The index of subjects and terms omits οἶμα [129, 199] (part of an important discussion of Simplicius’ modes of self-expression) and ὑπόνοια (discussed as part of the background to the evolution of exegesis on p.25), and also has nothing under ‘Christianity’, ‘religion’, and ‘rhetoric’, yet manages to include ‘anonymous commentator’ when this is in fact the *Anonymous Commentary on the Theaetetus* listed in the *index locorum*. See also 214n11.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. *Orality*

Baltussen [47–48: cf. 86] considers rationalizing Simplicius' penchant for quoting the original words of a source as an analogical application of Plato's preference for the spoken over the written word: as he says,

Could Simplicius' emphasis on the original words perhaps be inspired by the thought that teaching by the living voice (*viva voce*) was superior to writing, as was suggested in a programmatic way by Plato (*Phaedrus* 267–268: cf. *Seventh Letter* 342d–444d)?

A resounding 'no', surely, if Baltussen wants to use that capacious term 'inter-textuality' [1] to describe Simplicius' use of inherited material as the creation of 'books about books'. In a literary culture, quotation can hardly be rationalized as quasi-oral. Baltussen's later speculation [53] that Simplicius' quotations were 'based on an acute awareness of his scholarly responsibility for future generations' seems preferable, since it at least reflects the actual result of his efforts.

2. *Target audience*

This is speculatively identified as, among other possibilities,²⁵ 'future teachers', for whom the commentaries are intended as 'almost the equivalent of an elaborate textbook' [22: cf. 201, 206]. But Simplicius himself *explicitly refers* to an intended audience, in language that Baltussen (unlike Golitsis [2008, 18]) misses, as 'readers' or 'future readers' (οἱ ἐντυγχάνοντες, οἱ ἐντευξόμενοι).²⁶ This usage allows the commentaries to be identified securely as literary works

²⁵ On p. 51 Baltussen speculates that Simplicius' isolation in the 530s means that 'he could have been writing for an imaginary student body'. The subject index has no entries under 'education' or 'teaching'.

²⁶ See *LSJ* ἐντυγχάνω III for this use of the verb. At pp. 130 and 199, Baltussen relies on translations that take this verb in the generic sense of 'encounter', though on p. 43 he cites a translation that does render it 'read'. He himself uses 'those who encounter' at p. 192 in a translation of the (unreferenced) *In de caelo* 298,21–22, thereby missing the significant *future* participle, οἱ ἐντευξόμενοι.

directed to an informed audience of readers, whatever professional identity unfounded speculation may suggest that they had.

3. *The negative image*

- The image against which this book is reacting is not usefully constructed even partially from Galileo's Aristotelian Simplicio in his *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World-Systems* (1632) [see 3–4: cf. 209] since in the preceding century Simplicius was a respected authority in Aristotelianism.²⁷
- Baltussen is not, as he often seems to imply, the first scholar to protest Simplicius' being represented as merely learned. The late Henry (not 'Henri', as on page 4) Blumenthal in an article that Baltussen does not cite argued that

it is necessary to take account of the ideas and purpose of these [i.e., Neoplatonic, but particularly Simplicius'] commentaries if one is to make any serious critical use of their work [1976, 64]

and added that this could not be done 'if one merely dips into their voluminous works in the hope of occasional enlightenment'. Here is the essential rationale for Baltussen's project articulated in 1976, though probably an invitation to more 'serious critical use' of Simplicius than uncovering his religiously motivated scholarly method.

- Baltussen is surely correct in saying that Simplicius has received more attention as the study of later Platonism has expanded during the 20th century; but his brief sketch of the revival of Neoplatonic studies on pages 4–5 is selective and superficial, and neglects recent relevant secondary literature [see [Hankey 2005](#), 2007; and [Todd 2005](#)].

4. *Exegesis and paraphrase*

The term 'paraphrase' [27, 164] used to describe Simplicius' treatment of Aristotelian texts is perhaps best confined to exercises,

²⁷ See the still authoritative study by [Nardi 1958](#). Recently Mueller [2006, 200n71] has identified eight editions of Simplicius' commentary on the *Physics* for the period 1526–1587. There is, as Mueller notes, no study of this commentator's *fortuna* in the Renaissance. I believe that an entry for the *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum* has been long delayed.

like Themistius' in the fourth century,²⁸ in which the commentator restates the *whole text*, almost entirely in the persona of Aristotle. This process is significantly different from that by which Simplicius, like Alexander before him, guides the reader to an understanding of a *finite text* (a *lemma*) and its relationship to associated texts in the given work as well as to other Aristotelian works.²⁹ *En route* Aristotle's words may well be restated but they are not invariably or systematically paraphrased or epitomized, and the structure of passages necessarily cannot be adjusted in this format as they can in paraphrases proper. Baltussen calls Simplicius' attempts to 'clarify' [21, 90] the Aristotelian text 'his immediate objective' [85: cf. 90], the bedrock perhaps of the multiple layers of Simplician exegesis; but as such it is just as crucial to his methodology as are quotations and citations of other authors. To say that it consists of 'expansive but straightforward paraphrases' [162, 164] oversimplifies matters and highlights the problem created by pretty much excluding Aristotle from a book on an Aristotelian commentator's methodology.

5. *The 'religious dimension'*

If this is indeed central to an understanding of Simplicius' exegetical procedures (and what prevents him from being taken for an '(analytical) philosopher'), then the moving and eloquent prayer to the Demiurge at the end of the commentary on the *De caelo* [731.25–29]³⁰ should surely have been cited. It is a much better

²⁸ Simplicius' references to this commentator are briefly discussed at 166–167; but Baltussen does not acknowledge the numerous cases of the tacit incorporation of material from him, which are easily traced in the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* edition of Themistius' *Physics* paraphrase. Also, in summarizing Simplicius, *In phys.* 1051.9–13, Baltussen [41] misses its evidence that Simplicius may have had two copies of Themistius' paraphrase of the *Physics*, an important indicator of his philological method [see Golitsis 2008, 69 with n12].

²⁹ For some careful work on the role of paraphrase in the context of lemmatized exegesis in Alexander, see Abbamonte 1995 and 2004. The relation between paraphrasing and lemmatized exegesis was already acutely analyzed *ca* 1300 by the Byzantine monk Sophonias: see the proem to his paraphrase of the *De anima* 1.4–3.9 (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 23.1).

³⁰ This is my translation:

example than the alleged prayer from the *Physics* commentary discussed at pages 182–183.³¹ Here Baltussen’s quotation of *In phys.* 5.17–26 is selective and omits a key sentence [5.20–21] in which natural philosophy is said to merit practice because of the awe felt for nature as a result of knowledge of its workings, with the verb for ‘practice’, ἀσχεῖν, identifying exegesis as a spiritual exercise rather than prayer. This passage is also not identified as part of Simplicius’ preparatory study of the utility (τὸ χρησιμὸν) of the *Physics*; contrast Golitsis [2008, 53–55] who is fully mindful of this context. Religion is also linked with exegesis in the conclusion of this passage [*In phys.* 5.23–26] when Simplicius quotes part of the opening sentence of the *Physics* [184a12–14] to extract religious implications from Aristotle’s advocacy of knowledge of the first principles of nature before subsequently explicating the same text [11.32–12.14] by citing Alexander and Plato. Baltussen’s method of atomized sampling militates against identifying this kind of instructive ramification.

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LSJ = Liddell, Scott, and Jones 1940

O master of the whole cosmos and demiurge of the elements in it, I convey praise on these things for you and for the things that have come into being through you, being zealous to behold (ἐποπτεῦσαι) the magnitude of your deeds and to reveal (ἐκφῆναι) them to those who are worthy, so that by reckoning nothing petty or human about you we may worship you in accordance with the eminence that you possess in relation to everything created by you.

Baltussen makes some general references to Simplician exegesis as the revelation of mysteries [e.g., 198, 208]; here is language to support them.

³¹ Further, in the area of religion, Simplicius, *In phys.* 1360,24–25 is said to involve ‘reverence and worship’ [183]; but what Simplicius says there, on the basis of passages in *Meta.* Λ [see McKirahan 2001, 151 with nn565–567] is that *Aristotle* praises ‘the prime mover as mind, eternity and god’. Baltussen says that the verb used for ‘praise’ is ὕμνει (it is in fact ἀνομνεῖ, which is not readily determined thanks to the absence of any reference for this passage), but the use of this verb in this context to describe *Aristotelian* language does not in itself tell us anything about Simplicius’ attitudes.

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