

Ancient  
Commentators  
on Aristotle

GENERAL EDITOR: RICHARD SORABJI

PORPHYRY:  
On Aristotle Categories

Translated by  
Steven K. Strange

B L O O M S B U R Y



Porphyry  
*On Aristotle Categories*

*This page intentionally left blank*

Porphyry  
*On Aristotle*  
*Categories*

Translated by  
Steven K. Strange

B L O O M S B U R Y  
LONDON • NEW DELHI • NEW YORK • SYDNEY

**Bloomsbury Academic**

An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square  
London  
WC1B 3DP  
UK

1385 Broadway  
New York  
NY 10018  
USA

**www.bloomsbury.com**

**Bloomsbury is a registered trade mark of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc**

First published in 1992 by Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.  
Paperback edition first published 2014

© Steven K. Strange, 1992

Steven K. Strange has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Author of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organization acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Bloomsbury Academic or the author.

**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN HB: 978-0-7156-2244-5  
PB: 978-1-7809-3431-0  
ePDF: 978-1-7809-3432-7

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

**Acknowledgements**

The present translations have been made possible by generous and imaginative funding from the following resources: the National Endowment for the Humanities, Division of Research Programs, an independent federal agency of the USA; the Leverhulme Trust; the British Academy; the Jowett Copyright Trustees; the Royal Society (UK); Centro Internazionale A. Beltrame di Storia della Spazio e del Tempo (Padua); Mario Mignucci; Liverpool University. The general editor further wishes to thank John Dillon for his comments on the translation and Ian Crystal and Paul Opperman for their help in preparing the volume for press.

Typeset by Derek Doyle & Associates, Mold, Clwyd.  
Printed and bound in Great Britain

# Contents

Introduction	1
Plotinus and Porphyry on the <i>Categories</i>	1
Porphyry's Platonising interpretation of the <i>Categories</i>	3
Textual Emendations	13
Felicianus' headings for Porphyry <i>On Aristotle Categories</i>	19
Translation	27
Concerning Synonyms	49
Concerning Substance	76
Concerning Quantity	94
Concerning Relatives	111
On the Qualified and on Quality	136
Concerning Action and Affection	157
Bibliography	159
Appendix: the commentators	160
English-Greek Glossary	170
Greek-English Index	173
Subject Index	182

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Introduction\*

## Plotinus and Porphyry on the *Categories*

The claim is often made that the most extensive of Plotinus' treatises, *On the Genera of Being* (*Peri tôn genôn tou ontos*, *Enn.* 6.1-3), contains a polemical attack on Aristotle's theory of categories.<sup>1</sup> This claim would seem to be well-grounded, given that in the first part of the work (6.1.1-24),<sup>2</sup> Plotinus proceeds through the list of categories given by Aristotle and systematically raises a series of powerful objections to claims Aristotle makes about them in the text of the *Categories*. At the same time, Plotinus' student Porphyry is rightly given credit for establishing Aristotle's *Categories*, along with the rest of the Aristotelian logical treatises usually referred to as the *Organon*, as the fundamental texts for logical doctrines in the Neoplatonic scholastic tradition, and through this tradition later for medieval philosophy, by means of his *Isagoge*<sup>3</sup> or introduction to the *Categories* and his commentaries on that work. Taken together, these two propositions tend to give the impression that there was deep and

\* A different version of this introduction appeared as 'Plotinus, Porphyry, and the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Categories*', in W. Haase and H. Temporini (eds), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* 2.36.2 (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1987), pp. 955-74.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* III.2<sup>4</sup> (Leipzig, 1904), p. 578, n. 4, p. 698; É. Bréhier, *Les Ennéades de Plotin* (Paris, 1924-1938), introduction to *Enn.* 6.1-3, pp. 9-10; A.C. Lloyd, 'Neoplatonic logic and Aristotelian logic', *Phronesis* 1 (1955-56), pp. 58-72, 146-60, at p. 58; P. Merlan in A.H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 38. R. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London, 1972), p. 45, makes the work part of Plotinus' 'anti-Aristotelian polemic'.

<sup>2</sup> The *Enneads* will be cited by chapter and line number of the *editio minor* of P. Henry and H. Schwyzer (Oxford, 1964-1982).

<sup>3</sup> A. Busse (ed.), *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* [hereafter CAG] IV.1 (Berlin, 1887), translated in this volume.

substantive disagreement between master and pupil about the value of the theory found in the *Categories*. This impression is reinforced by the implication in the introduction to the extant commentaries on the *Categories* of Dexippus<sup>4</sup> (5,1-12) and Simplicius<sup>5</sup> (2,3-8) that Porphyry, in the massive commentary on the *Categories* which he dedicated to Gedalios, probably one of his students, replied in detail to Plotinus' objections against the *Categories*.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, in Porphyry's extant catechism-commentary<sup>7</sup> and throughout Dexippus' and Simplicius' commentaries, both of which seem to be following closely either Porphyry's lost *To Gedalios* or Iamblichus' lost commentary, itself based on *To Gedalios*, we can see Porphyry doing precisely this. Moreover, it is clear from the text of Simplicius that many of the objections Plotinus raises against the *Categories* in *On the Genera of Being* he got from a work or works of Lucius and Nicostratus, who were certainly hostile to Aristotle.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, I am convinced that this simple way of putting the matter is more than a little misleading: it both misrepresents the nature and originality of Porphyry's contribution to the history of logic and metaphysics and distorts our view of the fundamental

<sup>4</sup> A. Busse (ed.), *CAG IV.2* (Berlin, 1888), translated in this series by John Dillon.

<sup>5</sup> C. Kalbfleisch (ed.), *CAG VIII* (Berlin, 1897).

<sup>6</sup> cf. especially Simplicius' words *Plátinos de ho megas epi toutois* [i.e. Lucius and Nicostratus: see below, n. 7] *tas pragmateiôdestatas exetaseis en trisin holois bibliois tois Peri tôn genôn tou ontos epigegrammenois tõi tôn Katégoriôn bibliôi prosêgaga. meta de toutous ho pantôn hêmin tôn kalôn aitios Porphurios exêgêsîn te entelê tou bibliou kai tôn enstaseîn pasôn luseis ouk aponôs en hepta bibliois epoïêsato tois Gedaleiôi proshônêtheisi k.t.l.*

<sup>7</sup> A. Busse (ed.), *CAG IV.1* (Berlin, 1887), translated in this volume.

<sup>8</sup> *Simpl. in Cat.* 1,18-22 refers to them as *skhedon ti pros panta ta eirêmena kata to biblion enstaseis komizein philotimoumenoi, kai oude eulabôs, alla kataphorikhôs mallon kai apêruthriakotôs*. I follow K. Praechter, 'Nikostratos der Platoniker', *Hermes* 57 (1922), 481-517 (= idem, *Kleine Schriften* [Collectanea 7, Hildesheim, 1973], 101-37), in taking Nicostratus at least to have been a Platonist, not a Stoic as affirmed by Zeller, *op. cit.* (n. 1), III.1, pp. 716-17n., even if he is not identical with the otherwise known second-century AD Platonist as Praechter argues. If Lucius was a Stoic, Nicostratus' dependence on him might help to account for the Stoic elements found in his fragments. Certainly Lucius at *Simpl. in Cat.* 64,18-19 seems to be following a line of objection due to the Stoics Athenodorus and Cornutus, based on the assumption that the *Categories* is about different kinds of words; cf. *Simpl. in Cat.* 18,27-19,1, *Porph. in Cat.* 59,9-14, 86,22-4. At *Simpl. in Cat.* 48,1-34, Porphyry is quoted as using a Stoic distinction to refute an objection of Lucius', which may be evidence that Lucius was a Stoic. On the other hand, Nicostratus' assumption that Forms exist (*Simpl. in Cat.* 73,15-28, where however his name is linked with that of Lucius) as well as immaterial mathematical objects (429,13-20) seems conclusive for his having been a Platonist.

Neoplatonic problem of the relationship between Plato and Aristotle. Elsewhere I have tried to sharpen the statement of the historical situation by examining some of the connections between Porphyry's interpretation of the *Categories* and Plotinus' discussion of the problem of the nature of the categories, especially the category of substance, in *On the Genera of Being*. I have suggested that Plotinus' and Porphyry's attitudes toward the *Categories* are much closer to one another than has previously been supposed, and that in particular Porphyry's position on the nature of categories has been deeply influenced by Plotinus' arguments.<sup>9</sup>

I will now look at some of the more important features of Porphyry's interpretation of the *Categories* that enabled him to downplay the evidently anti-Platonic metaphysical elements that the work contains and to turn it into a basic textbook of logic for his revived school-Platonism. Here I will be relying heavily upon an important and seminal paper by A.C. Lloyd.<sup>10</sup>

### Porphyry's Platonising interpretation of the *Categories*

*Prima facie*, it is hard to see how the *Categories* could ever have come to serve as a basic introductory text for a Platonist philosophical school. There are a number of ways in which it seems to be an explicitly anti-Platonist work. This is most clear in chapter 5 of the *Categories*, the chapter on substance or *ousia*. Aristotle takes over the philosophical use of the term *ousia* from Plato and transforms it. The fundamental meaning of *ousia* in both Plato's and Aristotle's metaphysics seems to be 'primary or basic kind of being'. In the *Phaedo* (78d) and the *Timaeus* (29c), Plato uses *ousia* to refer to the separate Forms, and Aristotle's adoption of the term as the name of his first category is connected with his denial, in conscious opposition to Plato's middle-period Theory of Forms, that non-substantial items such as qualities and quantities have being in the primary sense, even considered

<sup>9</sup> Steven K. Strange, 'Plotinus, Porphyry, and the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Categories*', in W. Haase and H. Temporini (eds), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* 2.36.2 (Berlin and New York, 1987), pp. 955-74.

<sup>10</sup> A.C. Lloyd, *op. cit.* (n. 1).

as universals. This denial does not by itself necessarily constitute unorthodox Platonism, however, since in the *Timaeus* at least Forms seem to be only of natural kinds, i.e. in Aristotelian terms, of substances. What is fundamentally anti-Platonist about *Categories* § 5 is its argument that less universal substance is ontologically prior to more universal substance, and that particular substance is primary. Aristotle claims at *Cat.* 2b6 that unless first or particular substances exist, nothing else can either: so universal substances, corresponding to the Platonic Forms or *ousiai* of man, animal, and so forth of the *Timaeus*, cannot exist apart from their instances, as separate Forms.<sup>11</sup> In the Academic terminology that Aristotle sometimes employs, this means that particular substances are 'prior in nature' or 'prior in being' to universal substances (cf. *Metaph.* 1019a1-4, *Cat.* 14a29-35, 14b11-13, 25-33). Priority in nature corresponds to the notion of ontological dependence. X is prior to Y in this sense if either (a) X can exist without Y but not *vice versa*, or (b) X is the cause of the being of Y. Note that (b) appears to be a somewhat weaker condition than (a): at least Aristotle remarks at *Cat.* 14b11-13 that it does not entail (a). Nevertheless, Aristotle certainly seems to want to deny in the *Categories* not only the separation of the Forms from sensibles, but also the fundamental tenet of the Theory of Forms that the universal F is the cause of the being of particular F's. The being of universals in the *Categories* seems to consist entirely in their being predicated of particulars, in accidental categories as well as in the category of substance. Aristotle's later metaphysical views represent a further development of this

<sup>11</sup> For this interpretation of Aristotle's view of the nature of the alleged 'separation' (*khôrismos*) of the Platonic Forms, see G. Fine, 'Separation', in J. Annas (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (1984), pp. 31-87. I have not been convinced by D. Morrison, 'Separation in Aristotle's Metaphysics', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 4 (1986), pp. 125-57, that Fine's interpretation is incorrect, though the issue is certainly far too complex to be discussed fully here. (See also Fine's reply to Morrison and his response in vol. 4 of *Oxford Studies*, pp. 159-65 and 167-73, respectively.) Morrison argues that separation for Aristotle consists instead in the numerical distinctness of two things or sorts of things from one another. On this view, if the Forms are conceived as in the *Categories* as the genera and species of substance, then they cannot be separate from the individual substances that fall under them, since a thing is included within its genus and species. But in that case Aristotle would not need the argument against separation of the Forms that on my view he gives in *Cat.* § 5.

position. The *Metaphysics* indicates that it was Aristotle's mature considered view that less universal being is prior in nature to more universal being, even that universals have no real as opposed to abstract existence at all (cf. the sixth and seventh *aporiai* of *Metaph.* 3 in Ross's numbering<sup>12</sup> with their resolution in the central books), and though this issue seems to have been a matter of controversy within the Academy,<sup>13</sup> it seems clear that Plato himself took the opposite view, that what is more universal is naturally prior.<sup>14</sup>

The *Categories*, then, seems to contain an attack on orthodox Platonism, in that it denies the separation of Forms and the ontological priority of the universal. Moreover, Aristotle uses the theory of categories as the basis of one of his main objections to the Theory of Forms (*Eudemian Ethics* 1.8, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.6). So how can Porphyry, who not only considers himself to be an orthodox Platonist but wants to interpret Aristotle as being one as well, manage to deal with these apparently obvious facts about the metaphysics presupposed in the *Categories*? How does he think he can fit the Aristotelian theory of categories into a Platonist metaphysics? It will only be after we have examined Plotinus' reply to Aristotle's argument in the *EE* and *NE* that we will be able to suggest an answer to the more general problem of how Porphyry could have handled Aristotle's main objection to the Theory of Forms based on the theory of categories. For now, let us restrict ourselves to the question of how Porphyry can read the *Categories* itself as not inconsistent with orthodox Platonism.

Porphyry's approach to interpreting the *Categories* is determined by a specific view of the nature and purposes of that work. Notoriously, it was a matter of controversy among the ancient commentators what the *Categories* was about and to what branch of philosophy it belonged. This issue is covered most fully in extant texts in an extended passage of the preface to Simplicius' commentary on the *Categories* (9,5-13,26), where the various positions on the question that

<sup>12</sup> W.D. Ross, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford, 1923).

<sup>13</sup> cf. S. Pines, 'A new fragment of Xenocrates and its implications', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s.v. 51, pt. 2 (Philadelphia, 1961), especially pp. 19-20.

<sup>14</sup> cf. *Metaph.* 3.3 with Ross's notes.

had been taken by previous commentators are laid out. Simplicius is there discussing the problem of what the *skopos* or subject-matter of the *Categories* is, i.e. that which it is Aristotle's intention to discuss in the work. The fundamental disagreement among the commentators was over whether the *Categories* was a logical work, concerning either simple terms or the simple concepts they represent, or whether it was a work of metaphysics, concerned with the classification of simple entities or concepts by genera.

There is more at stake here than merely what the text of the *Categories* says, but there are certainly textual grounds for the dispute. Unlike most of Aristotle's other treatises, the *Categories* fails to be explicit about the field of philosophical activity into which it falls. This may be, as Michael Frede has suggested,<sup>15</sup> because the work as we have it is fragmentary and missing its original beginning, where this question would have naturally been addressed. The abruptness with which *Cat.* § 1 begins is indeed striking, as is its lack of apparent connection with what follows it. It may also be that the *Categories* is a very early work of Aristotle's, written at a period of his development at which he had not yet become self-conscious about the departments of philosophical inquiry, in particular about the distinction between logic and metaphysics. But more importantly, Aristotle is quite unclear in the *Categories* about whether he is discussing entities or linguistic items. He slides in a loose way back and forth between the material and formal modes of speech, and presents the list of categories of § 4 as a classification of uncombined *legomena* or 'things said', but as signifying either substances, quantities, qualities, and so forth. The things signified here are presumably entities, but one can certainly understand the temptation to see the work as a whole as being concerned with the *legomena*, the terms that are used to talk about entities – particularly if one is already inclined to think, from reading the *Metaphysics* for instance, that Aristotle does not allow any sort of real existence to universal entities.

<sup>15</sup> 'Einheit und Echtheit der aristotelischen Kategorienschrift', in P. Moraux and J. Wiesner (eds), *Zweifelhaftes im Corpus Aristotelicum* (9th Symposium Aristotelicum, Berlin, 1983), pp. 1-29.

Porphyry, of course, does want to have Aristotle admit the existence of universals, but nevertheless adopts on this point an earlier Peripatetic line of interpretation that sees the *Categories* as principally about terms or linguistic items, which Porphyry calls 'predicates' (*katêgoria*, Porph. *in Cat.* 57,19-58,20; *katêgoroumena*, *Simpl. in Cat.* 10,21-2).<sup>16</sup> According to Porphyry, this accounts for the title *Categories* or 'predications'.<sup>17</sup> Here Porphyry is agreeing with the interpretation of Alexander of Aphrodisias,<sup>18</sup> which Simplicius gives in an important fragment (10,11-19), probably quoting Porphyry's own quotation of it in *To Gedalios*.<sup>19</sup> Alexander's view is a sort of compromise among the various alternative interpretations listed above. According to this view, Aristotle does indeed in his metaphysics divide simple entities and their corresponding concepts into ten genera, but as Porphyry puts it (58,27-9), the *Categories* itself, which is the first of the logical works of Aristotle, is only incidentally concerned with things thus differing in genus: primarily it is about simple significant expressions, *qua* significant (cf. also Porph. *in Cat.* 58,5-6).<sup>20</sup>

On this interpretation, the *Categories* is a work of logic, not a work of metaphysics. This was clearly also the view of the ancient editor of Aristotle's corpus (perhaps Andronicus of Rhodes)<sup>21</sup> who was responsible for the traditional ordering of the treatises, since he made the *Categories* the first of the logical works, and perhaps also gave it its present title. (There were various other titles current in antiquity; cf. e.g. Porph. *in Cat.* 56,18-19.) This placement of the *Categories* in the Aristotelian corpus predates Alexander, who defended it as the correct one (*Simpl. in Cat.* 10,10). The rationale for the traditional ordering of the treatises of the *Organon* is pretty clearly that they are supposed to deal successively with

<sup>16</sup> cf. *Simpl. in Cat.* 11,2-3 for the technical distinction between these two terms.

<sup>17</sup> Porph. *in Cat.* 59,18; cf. also Herminus ap. Porph. *in Cat.* 59,27-9.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander is himself following his teacher Herminus; cf. previous note.

<sup>19</sup> cf. also Porph. *in Cat.* 58,10 with *Simpl. in Cat.* 10,13-15.

<sup>20</sup> For a contemporary defence of a similar 'linguistic' interpretation of the *Categories*, see M. Matthen, 'The *Categories* and Aristotle's Ontology', *Dialogue* (Canadian Philosophical Review) 17 (1978), pp. 228-43.

<sup>21</sup> See P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias*, Bd. 1 (*Peripatoi*, Bd. 5, Berlin and New York, 1973), p. 149.

increasingly complex subject-matter (cf. e.g. Porph. *in Cat.* 56,25-8, *Simpl. in Cat.* 9,9-13): the *Categories* with simple terms, *de Interpretatione* with simple propositions, the *Prior Analytics* with syllogisms, the *Posterior Analytics* with demonstrations, and the *Topics* and *Sophistici Elenchi* with dialectical practice. In turn, the *Organon* as a whole is supposed to serve as the 'instrument' by which one investigates the various theoretical and practical 'parts' (*merê*) of philosophy, i.e. physics or natural philosophy, metaphysics or first philosophy, and ethics.

This picture, enshrined as it is in the traditional ordering of the treatises of the Aristotelian corpus, and defended by Porphyry following Alexander of Aphrodisias, suggests that the *Categories* is the right place to begin the study of Aristotle's philosophy, and that is why it is placed first in the traditional order of the corpus.<sup>22</sup> Porphyry, following the Peripatetic Nerminus (59,21-2), believed that Aristotle had deliberately intended the *Categories* as a work for beginners in philosophy.<sup>23</sup> This is a strange view, for as anyone who has begun an introductory course on Aristotle with it can attest, beginning students tend to find the *Categories* extremely rough going. Porphyry must have been aware of this as well, for he is supposed to have written the *Isagoge* as an introduction to the *Categories* for his student Chrysaorius, a Roman senator who found himself befuddled by Aristotle's terminology in the work.<sup>24</sup> It is worth emphasising that the *Isagoge* is an introduction to the *Categories* and to the *Organon* as a whole, not merely to the *Topics*. Porphyry is often and quite unfairly taken to task for having made the species a 'fifth predicable' in the *Isagoge*, i.e. adding it to the list of four predicables discussed in *Topics* 1.5-9, but the species (*eidos*) is one of the basic sorts of predicates in the *Categories*, though it is a predicate of individuals, and lies therefore outside the purview of the *Topics* discussion, which

<sup>22</sup> cf. *Simpl. in Cat.* 5,5-15.

<sup>23</sup> cf. *Dex. in Cat.* 42,5-8, probably following Porphyry; cf. P. Hadot, 'L'Harmonie des philosophies de Plotin et d'Aristote selon Porphyre dans le commentaire de Dexippe sur les Catégories', in *Plotin e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Problemi attuali di scienze e di cultura 198 (Rome, 1974), pp. 31-47.

<sup>24</sup> cf. Ammonius *in Isag.* 22,13-22 (ed. A. Busse, CAG IV.3, Berlin, 1891).

concerns dialectical propositions involving only universals.

We should take a brief look at the famous preface to the *Isagoge* (1,3-16), for it will help illuminate Porphyry's attitude toward the metaphysical problems raised by the *Categories*. Since he is writing an introductory work, Porphyry says there, he will avoid going into the deeper problems (*ta bathutera zêtêmata*, 1,8-9) concerning the existential status of genera and species – as is well known, his brief summary of the various possible views on this that follows (1,9-14) served as the starting point for the medieval controversies over the problem of universals – but will stick instead to expounding the *logikôteron* opinions of the ancient philosophers, especially the Peripatetics (i.e. Aristotle) concerning the kinds of predicates. The word *logikôteron* here may well mean, as it is usually taken, 'more pertaining to the subject of logic';<sup>25</sup> this would fit with Porphyry's official view of the *Categories* as principally a logical work. It is just possible, however, that it means, in accordance with Aristotle's standard usage of *logikôs*, 'more dialectical'.<sup>26</sup> (Boethius translates it, incorrectly, as *probabiliter*, which shows however that he has the latter sense in mind.) Why Porphyry might want to call these opinions 'dialectical' will become apparent in a moment. In any case, Porphyry is suggesting here that the *Categories* can be adequately understood by a beginner without going into the deeper metaphysical problems concerning the ontological status of universals, e.g. whether or not there are separate Platonic Forms.

Porphyry conceives the *Categories* as being a dialectical work in the sense that it begins the study of substances and their properties from the logical analysis of ordinary language that even non-philosophers use to signify everyday things, and hence introduces the study of ontology, as a sort of subtext, from the point of view of those entities that are most knowable with respect to us, not those most knowable in themselves. Now we are in a position to see how Porphyry can deal with the seemingly obvious anti-Platonism of the *Categories*. This issue is addressed directly in an important

<sup>25</sup> cf. Ammonius in *Isag.* 45,3-22, David in *Isag.* (ed. A. Busse, CAG XVIII.2, Berlin, 1904) 120,19-121,2; Plot. 1.3.4,19.

<sup>26</sup> This possibility was suggested to me by Prof. Alexander Nehamas.

passage of our *Categories* commentary (90,12-91,27). The question is put, why does Aristotle in the *Categories* say that particular substance is primary and prior to universal substance, when actually it is the universal that is primary (i.e. according to Platonism)? We recall that it is precisely on this point that the anti-Platonism of the *Categories* is most apparent. In reply to this question, Porphyry correctly remarks that Aristotle does not mean that a single particular substance taken by itself is prior to its universal, but that the whole class-extension of a universal predicate is prior to it. (Aristotle, in the *Categories* at least, does seem to assume that there can be a universal one over above the many.) This latter claim, however, says Porphyry, is true: we cannot conceive a universal predicate as existing apart from its extension (90,29-91,7). Aristotle calls particular substances primary substances in the *Categories*, according to Porphyry, because he is there discussing the classification of significant expressions, and these apply primarily to sensible individuals, and only secondarily to the abstracted universals that are predicated of them. For the primary purpose of language is to communicate about ordinary things and their individual properties (91,8-9).<sup>27</sup> Abstracted universals for Porphyry, unlike the real universals, the Platonic Forms, have a merely conceptual existence, and are indeed posterior to sensible things.<sup>28</sup>

Hence the *Categories* on Porphyry's interpretation does turn out to have certain ontological commitments, but from the Platonist standpoint they can be defused. A student reading the *Categories* through Porphyry's spectacles will find in it mention only of those entities that are signified by terms of ordinary prephilosophical discourse. But since the *Categories* is not primarily concerned with metaphysics, there is nothing restrictive about its ontological commitments: they can be incorporated within a wider, richer ontology. In particular, this ontology can be an orthodox Platonistic one, as

<sup>27</sup> cf. Porph. in *Cat.* 57,20-8.

<sup>28</sup> In his discussion of abstracted or abstractable universals, Porphyry is following Alexander of Aphrodisias' view of the nature of universals: cf. A.C. Lloyd, *Form and Universal in Aristotle* (Arca. Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs, vol. 4, Liverpool, 1981), ch. 4; M. Tweedale, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias' views on universals', *Phronesis* 29 (1984), pp. 279-303.

long as allowance is made in it for the entities that ground the semantics of ordinary language, the fundamental referents of ordinary terms. Thus the Aristotelian abstractable universals that are the referents of general terms can be included in our ontology alongside the Platonic Forms: they are immanent universals, the Forms are transcendent universals and the causes both of sensibles and of immanent universals.<sup>29</sup> Sensible individuals are primary with respect to us, i.e. they denote the sensible objects that we refer to in our ordinary discourse (cf. Porph. *in Cat.* 91,19-27), but posterior in the order of nature to the universals involved in scientific demonstration, which involves an extension of ordinary language; these universals are more knowable in themselves and causes. Here Porphyry can rely for his interpretation of Aristotle on a well-known passage of *Posterior Analytics* 1.2 (71b29-72a5), which certainly seems foreign to the anti-Platonism of the *Categories*, since it states that universals are prior in the order of nature.<sup>30</sup>

This is the sort of apparent inconsistency in Aristotle's texts that a modern commentator would probably try to account for by recourse to a developmental hypothesis. Porphyry, of course, does not do this, but rather exploits the inconsistency for his own purposes, to show that Aristotle in the *Categories* is really a Platonist, though he appears not to be. Porphyry's interpretation will obviously be comforting for a Platonist who is confronted with the *Categories*. But besides comforting the orthodox, it is philosophically significant as well. For whatever sorts of things the Platonic Forms are supposed to be, it is hard to see how they could be the primary referents of

<sup>29</sup> Simpl. *in Cat.* 79,30-80,7 is probably an amplification, not a criticism, of the position of Porphyry stated just before (79,22-30), *pace* J. Pinborg, *Logik und Semantik im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1972), p. 39, so that the abstractable universal immanent in the subject is what is predicated of a subject in essential predication, and not the Form. A.C. Lloyd, 'Neoplatonic logic and Aristotelian logic' (above n. 1), n. 1, p. 59, correctly locates the Neoplatonist's source for the concept of immanent form in Plato himself, primarily the Receptacle passage of the *Timaeus*.

<sup>30</sup> *Cat.* § 13, 15a4-7 (part of the so-called 'Postpraedicamenta') also seems to contradict the view of *Cat.* § 5 that the universal is posterior in nature, for it says that the genus is prior in nature to its species. *Metaph.* 7.3 fin., 1029b8-12, also makes the point that what is prior with respect to us is posterior in the order of nature, but with no implication that the latter is also more universal, which would be inconsistent with the view argued for elsewhere in *Metaph.* 7, that universals have no real existence.

terms in ordinary discourse. For apart from some talk about, e.g. mathematical entities such as numbers and about psychological states, what we are concerned with in ordinary speech are things we can see, hear, or otherwise directly experience, i.e. sensible objects and their properties, whereas the Forms are supposed to be intelligible objects, grasped only by a special sort of thought, namely scientific understanding. The Forms are supposed to be the causes of sensibles, but that is a matter that need not fall within the purview of a semantic theory of ordinary language, which according to Porphyry is all that is at issue in the *Categories*. Porphyry's interpretation of the *Categories* thus effects a restriction of its subject-matter to the purely 'logical' relations, as opposed to the more general ontological relations, in which sensible objects participate.

## Textual Emendations

The following textual changes from Busse's *CAG* edition have been adopted in the translation, in many cases following Busse's own suggestions in his *apparatus criticus*.

- 55,4            *pros tina for pros tas* (conj. Busse).  
55,16          Omit *ha* before *epiginetai*, with the *editio princeps*.  
56,6            Read *enklêtikês* for *elentikês* with the MS. (cf. note ad loc.).  
56,8-9        Perhaps read *kath' hou sêmainêtai* for *kata tou sêmainomenou* (Busse and the *editio princeps*; *kath' hou sêmainomenou*, MS.) with Simpl. 17,5-7.  
57,1            <en> *oudemiâi* (conj. Busse).  
58,9            *hekastê gar kata arithmon sêmainei* <hen> *tôn ontôn* (conj. Busse).  
60,7-8        *panta* <ta> *hephexês* (conj. Busse).  
61,18          *pragmata* <ha> *diaphora heurethenta* (conj. Busse).  
63,21          Read *mête* for *mê* (conj. Busse).  
63,32          *zôion* <logikon> *thnêton* (conj. Busse).  
64,8            Read *ho toutôi homônumou horos* for *ho toutou sunônumos horos*.  
66,25          <idion hekaterou logon> *apodôsei* at 66,25 (conj. Busse).  
67,17          *to* <euthun> *on* (conj. Busse).  
68,6-7        Insert *ho te anthrôpos kai ho bous* after *zôion* (conj. Busse).  
72,1            Read *epi* for *epei*, with the *editio princeps*.  
74,2-3        Read *emou kai sôî legontos* vel sim., after Felicianus (cf. note ad loc.).