

Ancient  
Commentators  
on Aristotle

GENERAL EDITOR: RICHARD SORABJI

DEXIPPUS:  
On Aristotle Categories

Translated by  
John Dillon

B L O O M S B U R Y



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Dexippus  
*On Aristotle Categories*

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# Dexippus

## *On Aristotle Categories*

Translated by  
John Dillon

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# Introduction

## Dexippus' life and works

Under this heading there is unfortunately little to be said.<sup>1</sup> From Dexippus himself we learn only that at the time of composing the present work he had a daughter about whose health he was anxious (or even whose death he may be mourning), and that he presided over a philosophical school, of which the otherwise unknown Seleucus was at least one of the star pupils. That Dexippus himself was a student, or at least a philosophical partisan of Iamblichus, can be deduced from Simplicius' description of him in the introduction to his *Commentary on the Categories* (p. 2,9 Kalbfleisch) as 'the Iamblichean' (*ho Iamblicheios*), and from the fact that Iamblichus dedicates a letter to him on Dialectic, a passage from which is preserved by Stobaeus (*Anth.* II 18,12-19,11 Wachsl.), but he is not mentioned among the pupils of Iamblichus by Eunapius (*Lives of the Sophists and Philosophers*, p. 458 Boissonade) though that is an open-ended list (Eunapius speaks of 'many others').<sup>2</sup> Certainly he is no amateur philosopher. His work shows a thorough acquaintance with technical terminology, and a good understanding of the philosophical issues, at least by the standards of his time.

The present work is the only one he is known to have

<sup>1</sup> The entry in *RE*, composed by Krüger, vol. 5, cols. 238-4 summarizes what there is, as does Zeller in *Phil. d. Gr.* 3, 29, 1087.

<sup>2</sup> It is curious, however, that Eunapius, in describing the historian Dexippus, just prior to dealing with Iamblichus (p. 757), describes him as 'a man overflowing with culture and logical power' (*ποικίλος ἰσχυρὸς καὶ ἀνεκράτος λογικῆς σοφίας*), but this Dexippus, as he he led a force against the Herulians who sacked Athens in AD 267 and defeated them, is a generation too early to be a follower of Iamblichus. However, he could, I suppose, have had a son of the same name or even a grandson, who inherited his *eleonias agōnē* — unless Eunapius is simply confusing the two Dexipp., as he is quite capable of having done. And see now that the *Categories* commentary was written by the historian; cf. A. Jusse, *Revue* 50, 1985, 102ff.



written, and it would seem reasonable to date it some time in the first decades of the fourth century AD (Iamblichus himself died in the early 320s). Dexippus is making use, on his own admission (5,9), not only of the commentary of Iamblichus on the *Categories*, but also of those of Porphyry – the big *Commentary to Galatius* (now lost), and perhaps also the surviving short commentary in question-and-answer form, which now precedes his own commentary in the *CAG* Series.

### The nature of the commentary

Like Porphyry's short commentary, Dexippus' work is in dialogue, or rather, question-and-answer form, though he makes considerably more effort to give his work literary form than does Porphyry.<sup>3</sup> The origins of this form of commentary are obscure. It has an ancestor in the 'problems and solutions' type of commentary, of which Philo of Alexandria's *Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* are an example, and more remotely in the philosophical dialogue generally, but there are no surviving examples of what one might term the 'catechetical' commentary before that of Porphyry. It doubtless dramatises a school practice of which we know something from such sources as Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights* and Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, the master's making himself available for questions.<sup>4</sup> The connexion with the 'problems and solutions' type of commentary is made by Dexippus himself – indeed at 5,10ff., when he is explaining how he is not going to compete with his immediate predecessors, Porphyry and Iamblichus, both of whom have composed vast and comprehensive commentaries, he makes it clear that he will confine his treatment to 'the disputed questions' (*ta aporoumena*).

He does indeed do that, making use (no doubt at second hand through Porphyry and Iamblichus), first of the earlier,

<sup>3</sup> Apart from the introductory passages to the three books, which indulge in some literary flourishes and quotations of Hesiod and Pindar, Seleucus is allowed to display something of a personality throughout the work, and there are a few lively exchanges. By contrast, Porphyry's interlocutors use quite anonymous and impersonal.

<sup>4</sup> Gellius *Nat. J.* 26: 19–20; *VS 13*. Cf. also Iamblichus' account of Iamblichus fielding questions in *VS 461*.

Middle Platonic and Stoic critics of the *Categories*, such as Eudorus, Lucius, Nicostratus, Atticus, Cornutus and Archedororus, and then increasingly, from Book 2 on, of objections raised by Plotinus in *Enneads* 6.1 and 3, and possibly (again *via* Porphyry) in oral communication.<sup>5</sup>

### The content and extent of the commentary

Dexippus' declared purpose, as we have seen, is to cover all the 'problems' that have been raised over the years against the *Categories*, and from a comparison with Porphyry's surviving commentary, and with that of Simplicius, we can see that he does do that fairly comprehensively.

The criticism of the *Categories* had a long history, going back to the Platonist Eudorus of Alexandria (*fl.* c. 25 BC) in the first generation after Andronicus' edition, and continuing, as we have just noted, in both the Platonist and Stoic schools down to Plotinus, who criticises both Aristotle and the Stoics in *Enn.* 6.1.<sup>6</sup> The tradition was derivative and cumulative, each later author simply taking over his predecessors' *aporiai* (questions), amplifying them (or alternatively, summarising them), and adding a few of his own. On the evidence of Simplicius (deriving ultimately from Porphyry), the most comprehensive collection of *aporiai* seems to have been that of 'Lucius and Nicostratus', that is to say, as he makes clear at *in Cat.* 1.19, Nicostratus taking over Lucius (*ἡ τῶν Λουκίου Νικοστράτου*).<sup>7</sup> Nicostratus was a Platonist philosopher of the mid-second century AD,<sup>8</sup> so that Lucius may be dated, presumably, to the first or early second century. Simplicius'

<sup>5</sup> See on this possibility Paul Henry, 'Travaux apocryphes de Plotin sur les *Categories* d'Aristote', in *Actes* (Études de la Sorbonne, Annuaire 1978), 234-65. While conceding the possibility that a number of *aporiai* mentioned by Dexippus are based on Porphyry's memorises or notes of Plotinus' seminars rather than on the text of the *Enneads*, I am unable to work up a real excitement about the addition to our knowledge of Platonic thought that this involves.

<sup>6</sup> The whole tradition is now excellently covered in volume 3 of Paul Moraux's great work, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen*, Berlin, 1964, 369-601.

<sup>7</sup> We have fully 26 references to this pair (or one or the other of them) in Simplicius' commentary.

<sup>8</sup> He is honoured by the Delphians in an inscription to be dated somewhat before AD 164 (Ditz. *Syd.* 11<sup>o</sup>, pp. 86B), along with three other (otherwise unknown) Platonists. See Karl Preisler, 'Nikostrotos der Platoniker', *Byzantica* 37, 1922, 441-517, and Paul Moraux, *op. cit.*, 328-63.

description of Nicostratus' procedure is important for our understanding of the tradition which Dexippus is inheriting, as it explains the frequently fiddling and even absurd objections which we see him raising - or allowing Seleucus to raise (*In Cat.* 1, 18ff.):

Others have chosen to confine themselves solely to raising problems against the text, as is the case with Lucius and after him Nicostratus, who took over what Lucius wrote, making it their business to bring objections against pretty well everything written in the book, and act with any discrimination, but recklessly and shamelessly. We may be grateful to them, however, both because many of their objections do raise important (*πραγματιώδεις*) issues, and because they have given those who came after them opportunities, arising out of the solution to the problems, for many fine theoretical developments.

We can see, indeed, from the surviving testimonies, that the practice of Lucius and Nicostratus was to fire at anything that moved, but, as Simplicius says, interesting issues are often raised in the process.

In the late second century, Atticus continued the tradition, but seems to have added little to it, and Plotinus, in his turn, bases himself very largely on Lucius and Nicostratus, though applying his characteristic penetration to the problems.

On the Stoic side, the earliest known critic is a certain Athenodorus who wrote a work *Against Aristotle's Categories* (Porph. *in Cat.* 86.27). Moreux<sup>9</sup> argues for his identification with Athenodorus, son of Sandon, of Cuna (near Tarsus) in Cilicia, who lived in the last half of the first century BC. Whether or not the identification is correct, this is certainly the period when Athenodorus must have written his work, since he is utilised, and criticised, by his fellow Stoic L. Annaeus Cornutus in the mid-first century AD.<sup>10</sup> Cornutus, a teacher and friend of the poet Persius, is the author of an extant *Critique of Hellenic Theology* and some works on rhetoric, but he concerned himself also with criticism of the *Categories*, composing a *Reply to Athenodorus* in which he

<sup>9</sup> *Arztetichemus* 2, 265-7.

<sup>10</sup> See Moreux, *Arztetichemus* 2, 593-507.

criticised some of his positions while plainly adopting others. Of those, at least the Platonist tradition was known to Plotinus (though perhaps only through the writings of Atticus), but the learned Porphyry was acquainted with all of them, and it is through him, in his big Commentary dedicated to Godealius, in seven books, that their work is passed on to the later Neoplatonic tradition beginning with Iamblichus.<sup>11</sup>

What we find in Dexippus, then, is a holed-down version of the results of Porphyry's erudition, probably largely mediated through Iamblichus (though there are a few instances, adverted to in the notes,<sup>12</sup> where he seems dependent on Porphyry in opposition to Iamblichus). In most cases, it is only by using the vast commentary of Simplicius as a control that we can see what is going on. Simplicius knows of Dexippus' existence (in *Cat.* 2,25ff.):

And Dexippus, the follower of Iamblichus (*ho Iamblichikos*) also wrote a concise commentary on the book of Aristotle, but primarily sets out to give solutions to the problems raised by Plotinus,<sup>13</sup> which he presents in dialogue form, adding almost nothing himself to the work of Porphyry and Iamblichus.

However, it seems most improbable that he used him as a source. In many cases, indeed, when they are verbally very close, Simplicius specifies that he is actually following Iamblichus.<sup>14</sup> Dexippus may be regarded, then, as an independent witness to Iamblichus' commentary, and a series of passages, where he is verbally very close to Simplicius, may be claimed with fair certainty for Iamblichus' commentary (which would not, in most of these cases, it must be said, have differed much from that of Porphyry).

<sup>11</sup> Simplicius is explicit (in *Cat.* 1,301) that Iamblichus followed Porphyry very closely, even verbatim, in most of his commentary, merely introducing qualifications and clarifications at certain points, but also bringing Anaxytas into the argument, and overall giving a distinctive 'intellectual interrogation' (*noetic pōsis*) of the subject matter. Dexippus does take note of Anaxytas on occasion (2,35ff., 35,36f.), but he has not much use for the *noetic pōsis*.

<sup>12</sup> 26,30f. (n. 27); 49,100f. (n. 30); 66,140f. (n. 7).

<sup>13</sup> This is true, really, only for the part of the commentary from Book 2 on. Book 1 concerns material from the earlier tradition.

<sup>14</sup> *De*. 17,25-9ff.; 61,19-62,6 - *De*. 69,1040,5; 99,4-9 - *De*. 48,2-9; 100,13-101,13 - *De*. 48,53-53,2; 106,26-107,4 - *De*. 51,23-60,4; 130,8-19 - *De*. 68,6-25; 131,7-16 - *De*. 70,3-14.

Dexippus, then, is of interest both as a surviving testimony to the great achievement of Porphyry in turning aside Plotinus' rejection of Aristotle's *Categories* and as partial evidence for the content of Iamblichus' commentary,<sup>16</sup> but is there anything distinctive that we can claim for him? Probably, if we possessed the commentaries of Porphyry and Iamblichus *in toto*, we would find very little that was original to Dexippus, but as things stand, there are a few cases where we may accord him the benefit of the doubt.

The first instance is his extended treatment of the arguments presented by the Peripatetic philosopher Sosigenes<sup>17</sup> on the subject matter of the *Categories* (7,4-9,22). There is nothing corresponding to this in Simplicius' nor in Porphyry's short commentary, so that it looks almost as if Dexippus has done this bit of research on his own. From the extended treatment which he gives it, one might conclude that he was rather proud of himself. He seems to have got hold of a sort of dialectical exercise composed by Sosigenes to sharpen the wits of his pupils (to adopt Moraux's suggestion, *op. cit.*, 338) and is using it as a basis for developing his own view, that the true subject matter is *noëta*.

This is perhaps his most notable contribution, but there are other, smaller ones, probably less original. One is his presentation of some problems raised by Plotinus against the *Categories* which do not appear (either at all, or so fully) in *Enneads* 6.1 or 3. Fr. P. Henry has devoted a long article to these,<sup>18</sup> dealing chiefly with chs 2.8 (an *aporia* on substance), 3.7 and 3.11 (two *aporiai* on *logos*), and showing, with great

<sup>16</sup> In this connection, it must be said that B.D. Lasser's collection of the fragments of that Commentary in his *Iambliche de Catégories: Études et Philologie*, Archiv 1972, vol. 2, though useful, is grossly incomplete, since he confined himself to assembling the passages explicitly attributed to Iamblichus by Simplicius, taking no account of the parallel passages in Dexippus, which reveal many places where Simplicius is using Iamblichus without attribution simply because he has no disagreement with him. A good example, perhaps, of the value of Dexippus as a surviving link in the sceptical tradition is the passage 10,19-12,3, where he first (10,19-20) gives what is probably Porphyry's argument against Plotinus that the *Categories* is not a bad attempt to talk about *being*, because, being designed for beginners, it is instead about words as significative of things; and then (11,18-12,3) presents the Iamblichean explanation of how Aristotle's account of substance can be applied, if one does so, to the intelligible Forms, whereas Forms are neither *being* nor present in a subject.

<sup>17</sup> On whom, see Paul Moraux, *Aristotelismus* 2, 355-60.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. above, n. 5.

probability, that Dexippus is relaying material presented originally by Porphyry from records of oral criticisms by Plotinus of the *Categories* which amplify what we have preserved in *Enneads* 6.1 and 3. As I have said above (n. 6), while interesting, this supplementary material does not come across as particularly sensational. In 3.8, Plotinus<sup>18</sup> makes the objection that Aristotle does not give a positive definition of Substance in *Cat.* 3a8-9, but merely a description by negatives ('neither said of a subject nor in a subject'). Plotinus actually adumbrates this objection in *Enn.* 6.1, 2.15-18 ('But in general, it is impossible to say what Substance is: for even if one gives it its "proper characteristic" (*to idion*), it does not yet have its "what it is" (*ti esti*!)), but he certainly does not develop it as it is developed here. I see no difficulty in supposing that Porphyry is amplifying Plotinus' objection here from his own personal memories or notes of what his master used to say. Similarly in the case of 3.7: Plotinus at the beginning of 6.1.5 raises, in his usual compressed manner, the problem about language (*logos*) that it is really only as sound, or more exactly, sounded air, that it is a *quantum*. Language as such, though, is rather an impact (*plégé*) on air, and so, if anything, is an instance of 'making'. What we find in Dexippus and Simplicius is an amplification of this, no doubt, but essentially the same point, and Henry seems to me to make rather too much of it.

3.11 is the most interesting of the three passages with which Henry deals, as it seems to correspond to nothing in *Enn.* 6.1-3. Unfortunately, Dexippus' text has given up by this time, so we have only the summary:

That language, being a thing involving combination (*samplōhē*), cannot fall under the categories, at least if the categories are simple items. (cf. *Cat.* 1a16: 1b25)

Simplicius mentions the *aporos* briefly (in *Cat.* 130,32-3), attributing it, not to Plotinus, but, vaguely, to 'they' (*aporousin*), which I would take as more naturally referring

<sup>18</sup> I've accepted that it is Plotinus. The *aporos* is not explicitly identified as its either by Dexippus, or by Simplicius (137,16-22), though it is sandwiched between two Plotinian ones, and the manner of its introduction in Dexippus certainly suggests that it is by the same author as its predecessor. Also, its use of *Dex.* 44.9 probably echoes the same term in *Enn.* 6.1.2.17.

either to Lucius and Nicostratus, or to the whole critical tradition. Henry regards it as 'certain' (op. cit., 243) that this is an *aporia* of Plotinus, since it comes at the end of a series of *aporias* about *logos*, all the previous ones of which are identified as emanating from him. I am afraid that I cannot share his certainty. Both Dexippus' summary and Simplicius' had the opportunity so to identify it if they chose, and they do not. I do not see that it can be claimed confidently as an oral *aporia* of Plotinus, as opposed to an *aporia* which was just floating around in the tradition, and picked up by Porphyry.<sup>19</sup>

Other than these oral *aporias*, there are just a few features of interest. The last *aporia* of Book 1 (1.40), which occurs neither in Simplicius nor in Porphyry and thus may be Dexippus' own contribution, seems to present a distinctive notion of existence, arising out of the sophistic problem that to say substance, etc. exists is either redundant, or creates a parallel set of *existent* categories, which could then be said in turn to exist, producing an infinite regress. Dexippus counters this by denying that adding 'is' indicates anything distinct from the subject, but merely bears witness to its subsistence (*hypostasis*).

There are a number of other passages in the commentary which find no parallel in Simplicius or Porphyry: 1.7: 1.14; 1.23: 1.32; 1.35; 1.39; 2.1; 2.4;<sup>20</sup> 2.9;<sup>21</sup> 2.17-19; 2.26; 2.32; 3.24; 3.29-30; 3.37. None of these problems are, I think, of any great importance. They are generally just scholastic elaborations of other problems which do figure in the tradition, and some of them are very trivial indeed. We cannot be sure that Simplicius did not find them in Porphyry and/or Iamblichus and decide to omit them, but there could be instances of Dexippus venturing to add a little to the tradition himself.

It is plain, then, that no great claims can be made for

<sup>19</sup> We may also note in this connexion 2.14, where Dexippus attributes to Plotinus an *aporia* which is reported also in Simplicius (80.30-30.6), no echo of which appears in the *Enneads*. Henry does not actually deal with this passage, though it would have helped his case. It seems to me possible, however, that Porphyry (to whom all this goes back) simply tacked this *aporia* on to the previous one, which is itself not Plotinian, but attributed by Simplicius only to some people (*τινων*).

<sup>20</sup> A Platonic *aporia* not mentioned by Simplicius, so it may be the result of Dexippus' own reading of *Enneads* 6.1-4, though one would assume Porphyry (and Iamblichus) to have dealt with it as well.

<sup>21</sup> One gets no trace of this *aporia* in Simplicius, so perhaps an original contribution.

Dexippus as an original thinker, nor is there any suggestion that he aspired to be one, but in view of the fragmentary state of the tradition of commentary on the *Categories*, it can be seen that his little work takes on a certain importance.

As regards the original extent of the commentary, there seems no reason to suppose that Dexippus did not intend to cover the whole *Categories*, including the *Postpraedicamenta*, which he regards as part of the work (*in Cat.* 17,7-9). Simplicius seems still to have had access to the whole work, so the present mutilation of it took place later than his time. As we have it, the work covers only the text up to 4b23, in the middle of the discussion of Quantity, which the preserved table of contents of the third book shows to have been concluded in that book. The whole work may have been somewhat more than three times its present size, if we may judge from the fact that the present text corresponds to 132 of the 438 pages of Simplicius' commentary in the CAG edition.

### The present translation

Doing justice to the technicalities of Dexippus' philosophical vocabulary and, at times, compressed argumentation, has not been easy. I have tried to keep the needs of modern philosophers in mind by maintaining consistency of technical vocabulary as far as possible, and by liberal insertion of the original Greek terms in brackets. This is clumsy, as are a number of the terms I have been forced to use, but, to appreciate the scholastic points that are being made, it is essential to know exactly what terms are being used. A common item (*κοινόν*) or 'commonality' (*koínótēs*), for example, is not a universal (*katholón*), nor is a definition (*lógos*) an account (*lógos*) – though I have sometimes rendered the latter as the former, when nothing substantive is at stake. A *hypokeímenon* is sometimes a subject, and sometimes a substrate. Subsisting (*huphistatón*) is distinct from existing (*einai*, *huparkhein*): and so on.<sup>23</sup> I have been greatly aided in

<sup>23</sup> Strictly speaking, *κοινόν* or *κοινότης* should refer to a common property, as a broader concept than a universal (*cat.* 4b24; 5b, 13-15); a *lógos*, again, is a broader concept than *einai*, subsisting is conceptually applicable to a broader range of entities than 'existing' (at least in the sense of *huparkhein*), and *hupokeímenon* has to serve both as a physical and as a grammatical 'subject'. But I must confess that the



this, and other matters, by the assiduous comments of Professor Steven Strang, whose translation of Porphyry's short commentary will appear in this series. The full extent of his help is only imperfectly acknowledged in the notes, as is that of another, anonymous reader.

I have decided to include the chapter headings in the text of the translation, rather than grouping them at the beginning (where they are to be found in the manuscripts), or omitting them altogether, in order to help the reader by providing both divisions and indications of the subject matter. The chapter headings are probably not by Dexippus himself, which is why they are placed in square brackets, but they are reasonably authoritative,<sup>29</sup> and sometimes help to elucidate the text. I have also included the *personae* of the dialogue in each case, though the manuscripts omit them.

### The text of the commentary

The standard text of Dexippus is that of Adolf Busse in the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* (CAG) Series of the Berlin Academy (1887), in which it figures as vol. 4, part 2. The first edition of the work is in fact no older than 1859, that of Leonard Spengel, published in Munich by the Bavarian Academy.<sup>24</sup> Much earlier than an edition of the Greek text, however, there appeared a Latin translation, by Felix Felicianus of Verona, published in Venice in 1548 by Hieronymus Scotus. Though based on an inferior manuscript (Coislinianus 332), this translation occasionally contributes useful insights.<sup>25</sup>

Busse lists ten manuscripts of the work, all of which go back to a single late medieval exemplar, which was itself mutilated, and four of which he considers worthy of attention. These he divides into two families, one comprising the manuscripts (C) *Laurentianus* 72, 21, of the fifteenth century,

read differences between these terms as used by Dexippus is now given instance is frequently less than clear to me.

<sup>24</sup> On a few occasions they are less than accurate, e.g. 1.25.2.23; but generally they fit the spot.

<sup>25</sup> This edition was reviewed by Ferruccio Uboldi, in the *Letter. Contribuzioni* 1860, 124-5, and he offers a useful commentary.

<sup>26</sup> on 12.2, 13.2-8, 51.14; 54.2-8.

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and R (*Parisinus gr.* 1942, of the fourteenth century), the other comprising A (*Laurentianus* 71, 33, fourteenth century) and M (*Matritensis* 76, fourteenth century), the CR tradition being the better of the two. I have been content to accept his text, save in the instances noted in the list of emendations or variant readings. The evidence of Simplicius in parallel passages is frequently useful, but sometimes problematical, as we shall see.

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Dexippus

*On Aristotle Categories*

Translation

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## Dexippus

### Commentary in dialogue form on Aristotle's *Categories*<sup>1</sup>

#### BOOK 1

##### *Prologue*

SELEUCUS: A certain diffidence takes hold of me as I make bold to ask a most fair and noble favour of you, Dexippus, my instructor in all that is good, but since I am mindful of Hesiod's dictum (*WD* 317): 'Modesty is no good companion of a man in need', I am encouraged in my desire to discuss this matter. 4,5

DEXIPPUS: But I for my part have long wondered at you, most excellent Seleucus, that, though still so young, you are so conspicuous in aptitude for learning and gentleness, you attack your studies vigorously, and retain what you have learned firmly and unerringly, while under the stimulus of mental agility and sharpness you jump ahead of everyone else in your questions, and now I am ready to accede to your enthusiastic request for instruction. For you are lacking in none of the gifts of good fortune, and in addition you are in point of breeding and reputation equalled by none of your contemporaries. I commend your natural readiness for any noble purpose, and the fact that you despise all external goods, but love education and are insatiable for learning. So, as regards whatever philosophical topic you wish, pray command me! 15

SELEUCUS: Turn your attention, then, to the problems that 20

<sup>1</sup> The full title in the ms. is 'Dexippus the Platonic Philosopher, Problems and Solutions in relation to Aristotle's *Categories*, Book One First'. The work is in dialogue form, and the characters in the dialogue are Dexippus himself and Seleucus.

have been raised in relation to Aristotle's *Categories*, and try to solve the disputes that have arisen.

DEXIPPUS: A tall order, indeed, my dear and valued friend, and not at all easy for me to fulfil at the present juncture. For both the misfortune<sup>2</sup> which has befallen my clever and beautiful daughter Diphile seems grievous and troublesome to me (why should one not speak the truth?) and my body is wasted with diseases. I am glad, then, on the one hand, to accede to your request, but I have resolved to agree from afar, as do cowardly contestants, because it is hard to contradict the Platonic philosopher Plotinus when he has produced such penetrating difficulties. However, for your sake I will not shrink from going forth, like the Homeric hero, even against a divinity.<sup>3</sup> But do you aid me in the argument by not insisting on detailed exegeses; for many scholars, in particular Porphyry, and then later Iamblichus, have produced a vast number of commentaries on this work, difficult to master because of their bulk. So then, that I may not fall into the same situation as them, please confine your questions to the disputed questions. For it is not my ambition to fill any deficiencies in their treatments (I do not flatter myself so much), but I simply wish to provide solutions which are swift and concise and clear. (Whoever is intending to read these problems should first of all make sure that he has clearly in mind the details of the text, since otherwise he will understand nothing of what is said here).<sup>4</sup>

[1. Why have many people raised problems about Aristotle's *Categories*?]

15 SELEUCUS: Well then, what is the reason that impelled the philosophers of old to engage in disputes of every kind with each other on the subject of this Aristotelian writing which we

<sup>1</sup> See Introduction, v. 7.

<sup>2</sup> More to say this, cf. *Iliad* 15.101, when contemplating the onset of Hector. The implication is that, if Seleucus will play Ajax (who said Menelaos pro-ge-ge in the *Iliad*), then the project might prosper. Another explanation, perhaps not to be pressed too hard, is that Plotinus is *demonios* or even *Maïas*. It is not clear how early this terminology of 'demonisation' for Platonic philosophers came in.

<sup>3</sup> The simile of a hero against a deity is of course a cliché, but Seleucus ignores it. I take it to be a gloss.

call the *Categories*.<sup>3</sup> For as far as I can see, neither have more  
 numerous controversies occurred about any other topic, nor 20  
 have greater contests been stirred up, not only by Stoics and  
 Platonists trying to undermine these Aristotelian Categories,  
 but even among the Peripatetics with each other, with some  
 assuming that they have more perfectly grasped the man's  
 meaning, while others think that they can solve with relative  
 ease the problems raised by opponents.

THEXIPPUS: Because, most industrious Seleucus, the subject 25  
 of this book concerns the primary and simple utterances <and  
 the things><sup>4</sup> they signify. So since rational discourse (*logos*) is  
 useful to all branches of philosophy, and the first principles of  
 this are simple utterances and their objects of reference, it is  
 natural that much controversy has arisen as to whether  
 Aristotle has dealt correctly or incorrectly with the subject.

## 12. Why is the book entitled 'Categories'?

SELEUCUS: But what is the significance of his title, and the 30  
 name 'Categories'? For he presumably doesn't intend to  
 explain how men accuse each other in law courts; for the 6,1  
 Greek language has given this term to prosecution  
 (*kategoria*), to which the opposite is defence (*apologia*), so that  
 one might reasonably accuse him of an unnatural use of  
 terms.

THEXIPPUS: Many responses to this accusation have been 5  
 made, Seleucus, on behalf of Aristotle, and these may be read  
 in the commentaries of Alexander and Porphyry. I propose to  
 pass over most of them, and will instead set out that which  
 seems to me to be the most penetrating, i.e. that names are  
 not on an equal footing with things, nor do signs have the

<sup>3</sup> Criticism of the *Categories* goes back at least to Eudorus of Alexandria (fl. c. 28 BC): in the first generation after Andronicus published his edition. The history of controversy is well documented in Simplicius' massive commentary, and see Introduction, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> I follow Porphyry for the phraseology after *topoi*. The text as it stands makes no sense, and this English phrase is supported by what follows just below.

<sup>5</sup> This whole discussion of the meaning of the title down to 8.23 is reflected in Simplicius 13.31-17.5 and 17.26-18.3 (17.1-28 is a report of Porphyry's view, followed by a comment by Simplicius), though it is not verbatim. Simplicius is probably closer to the original text, or just. The substance of the discussion is also to be found in Porphyry's commentary (any 105,3-108,14).



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