

SIMPLICIUS, IN CAT., P. 1,3–3,17 KALBFLEISCH

An Important Contribution to the History of the Ancient Commentary¹

The last few decades have witnessed a strong renewal of interest in the history of the ancient and medieval commentary. The imposing series of translations of the ancient commentaries on Aristotle inaugurated and directed by R. Sorabji is a clear indication of this². Villejuif, France, was the scene in 1999 of an International Colloquium on “The Commentary between tradition and innovation”, the acts of which were published under the direction of M.-O. Goulet-Cazé. At Bochum, Germany, a “Graduiertenkolleg” under the direction of W. Geerlings worked for six years on “Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter”, and a collection of contributions to this workshop was edited by W. Geerlings and Chr. Schultze in 2002 (Leiden-Boston-Köln). In these publications, three articles³ were devoted specifically to the tradition of the Neoplatonic commentaries. None of them deals with the beginning of

1) Translated from the French by Michael Chase.

2) Many translations of commentaries on Aristotle have already appeared in this series. For Simplicius, cf. also I. Hadot, *Simplicius – Commentaire sur le Manuel d’Épictète*, Introduction et édition critique du texte grec, Leiden / New York / Köln 1996 (*Philosophia Antiqua*, vol. LXVI), and *Simplicius – Commentaire sur le Manuel d’Épictète*, chap. I à XXIX (with French translation), Paris 2001, as well as the works cited note 3. I shall not cite here the editions and translations of the Neoplatonic commentaries on Plato, also very numerous, which took on renewed vigor after the translations of A. J. Festugière.

3) Cr. D’Ancona, *Syrianus dans la tradition exégétique de la Métaphysique d’Aristote*, II: Antécédents et postérité, in: *Le Commentaire entre tradition et innovation*, M.-O. Goulet-Cazé (ed.), Paris 2000, 311–327, and *Commenting on Aristotle: from Late Antiquity to the Arab Aristotelianism*, in: *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter – Beiträge zu seiner Erforschung*, ed. by W. Geerlings and Chr. Schulze, Leiden / Boston / Köln 2001, 201–252. The author was inspired, as she herself declares, by H. D. Saffrey’s article, *Comment Syrianus, le maître de l’école d’Athènes, considérait-il Aristote?* mentioned note 21. I. Hadot, *Der fortlaufende philosophische Kommentar in der Antike*, in: *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter, 182–200* (French version: *Le commentaire philosophique continu, Antiquité Tardive 5*, 1997, 169–176).

the preface by the Neoplatonist Simplicius (6th century A. D.) to his commentary on the *Categories*, which contains a brief, fairly detailed historical sketch of all the works on this theme of which he was aware and which he finds worthy of mention. This text seems to be very important for the history of philosophical commentaries. By examining it, we may be able to provide, among other things, a clear answer to the question raised by Cristina d'Ancona: was the form of the continuous, lemmatized commentary, used by the late Neoplatonists, introduced by Syrianus, who followed the example of the commentaries of the Peripatetic Alexander of Aphrodisias⁴? Alternatively, was this type of commentary already current among the Neoplatonists prior to Syrianus? In addition, the text enables us to contribute some indications on the role occupied by Syrianus within the history of Neoplatonism, which has, it seems to me, been somewhat overestimated in recent scholarship.

Here is a translation of the passage in question⁵:

Many authors have set forth many speculations on Aristotle's book of *Categories*. This is so not only because it is the prologue to the whole of philosophy (1,5) (since it is the beginning of the study of logic, and logic, in turn, is rightly taken up prior to the whole of philosophy), but also because the *Categories* is, in a sense, about the first principles (ἀρχαί), as we shall see in our discussion of the goal (σκοπός).

Different authors have carried out studies of this book from different standpoints. Some, like the eloquent Themistius, and whoever else was like him, have been anxious only to make (1,10) the actual wording (λέξις) itself more clear; others strove concisely to unveil the bare concepts (ἔννοιαι) proposed by Aristotle as well, as Porphyry did in his commentary by questions and responses. Others, in addition to this, touched at least moderately upon specific subjects of inquiry (ζητήματα), as was the case with Alexander of Aphrodisias, Herminius, and other such men. In this latter group (1,15) I also place Maximus, who, although a student of Aidesius, the student of Iamblichus, concurred with Alexander on almost every point in his *Commentary on the Categories*. Some commentators, however, also applied deeper thoughts to the work, as did the admirable Boethus. Others were content to write only puzzles (ἀπορίαι) against what is said: this is what Lucius did, and after him Nicostratus, who appropriated the consider-

4) Cf. note 3.

5) The following is taken, with some modifications, from the translation by M. Chase, Simplicius, *Commentary on the Categories*, I–IV, to appear in the series "Ancient Commentators on Aristotle", under the direction of R. R. K. Sorabji, London 2003.

ations of (1,20) Lucius. These two vied with each other in providing objections (ἐνστάσεις) to nearly everything said in the book, and they did not go about their task with respect, but rather in a violent and shameless manner. Nevertheless, we must be grateful to them, too, both because the puzzles they set forth were, for the most part, (2,1) substantial, and because they provided their successors with starting-points both for the resolution of the puzzles, and for the development of many other excellent theories.

After these, the great Plotinus applied the most substantial examinations to the book of the *Categories*, (2,5) in three entire books entitled *On the Genera of Being*. After these men it was Porphyry, cause of all that is good for us, who composed – not without labor – a complete explanation of the book, containing the resolution of all objections, in seven books addressed to Gedalios. He also included in this work an account of many of the doctrines of the Stoics, in so far as they dealt with the same themes. (2,10) After Porphyry, the divine Iamblichus also devoted a lengthy treatise to this book. For the most part, he followed Porphyry right down to the letter, but he picked out some things and articulated them in order to make them more clear. At the same time, he contracted the scholastic long-windedness Porphyry had used against the objections; and he applied his Intellectual Theory everywhere, to almost all of the chapter-headings. In addition, he also added something else to his writing that was useful: for (2,15) even before Aristotle, the Pythagorean Archytas, in the book he entitled *On the All*, had already divided the primary genera into ten, and had clearly explained, with the help of examples, their distinctive tokens (γνωρίσματα), and had indicated the order (τάξις) they occupy with regard to one another, and the specific differences of each [genus], as well as their common and individual properties. (2,20) Iamblichus, then, adduced the considerations of Archytas in the appropriate places, unfolding that which had been intellectually concentrated, and demonstrating their accord with the doctrines of Aristotle. If there happened to be anything discordant between them – there are few such instances – then he brought these differences, too, to the attention of lovers of learning; nor did he leave the cause of such discord unexamined. Rightly so, for it is obvious that Aristotle (2,25) always wants to remain faithful to Archytas. Dexippus, the student of Iamblichus, also gave a concise explanation of Aristotle's book, but he proposed mainly to resolve the problems (ἀπορίαι) raised by Plotinus, which he set forth in dialogue form. Dexippus, however, added virtually nothing to the considerations of Porphyry and Iamblichus.

(2,30) Since, then, there has been so much interest in the *Categories* on the part of the most illustrious philosophers, I should straight away appear ridiculous for having dared (3,1) to have written something myself as well, unless I were to show that the cause of my audacity was reasonable. Now, I have also read some of the aforementioned writings, and, following the comments of Iamblichus as carefully as possible, I wrote them down, often even using the philosopher's very words. My

goal (σκοπός) in making this copy was, (3,5) in the first place, to obtain, through the act of writing, as accurate a comprehension (κατανόησις) as possible of what had been said. At the same time, I wished to reduce this man's lofty spirit, inaccessible to the common people, until it was more clear and commensurate [with the common understanding]. Thirdly, I also wanted to reduce somewhat the vast multitude of multi-form writings; not, as the most philosophical Syrianus did, to an absolute minimum, (3,10) but as far as was compatible with leaving out nothing necessary. If I, too, have had the strength to add something, then I owe gratitude to these men for this as well, after the gods; for it was guided by them that I have added the occasional problem (ἀπορία) of some value, or some articulation of what has been said that is worthy of mention. Nevertheless, I advise my readers never to disdain the writings especially of Porphyry and Iamblichus (3,15) in favor of these little scholia, but rather, if at all, to use them as an introduction and training for a clearer comprehension of what those men have said.

In this text, Simplicius carries out a kind of classification of works on the *Categories* previous to him, according to the criterion of the authors' intentions. We can approximately distinguish six types of exegesis in this classification:

1st group: the author is content to paraphrase the text. As his one example, Simplicius names Themistius (who lived at Constantinople in the 4th century), several of whose paraphrases of works by Aristotle have come down to us.

2nd group: the author strives to clarify, albeit briefly, the notions Aristotle formulated: this was the procedure of Porphyry (a 3rd-century Neoplatonist) in his commentary by *Questions and answers*, which we still have.

3rd group: the authors "touched in addition upon specific subjects of inquiry"; that is, in addition to clarifying the text itself, they also expand "at least moderately", on a few problems or difficulties. Among these authors, Simplicius counts the Peripatetics Alexander of Aphrodisias and Herminus⁶, as well as the Neoplatonist Maximus⁷, who belonged to Iamblichus' philosophical tendency. We read that Maximus, in his commentary on the *Categories*, "concurred with Alexander on almost every point". Another member of this same group, along with some authors whom Sim-

6) On Herminus, cf. P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen*, vol. II, Berlin / New York 1984, 361.

7) Maximus of Ephesus, who lived at Pergamum, then at Constantinople under Julian the Apostate, then again in Asia Minor. He was the disciple of Iamblichus' student Aidesius, and later the tutor of the emperor Julian.

plicius does not cite by name, is the Peripatetic Boethus⁸, whose commentary excels by its profundity. None of these texts has come down to us, but from some other commentaries by Alexander, which have survived, and which are continuous, we can conclude with some probability that the same held true for the others.

4th group: the author proposes a collection of objections. This kind of commentary deals only with problems (ἀπορίαι) directed against what Aristotle said, for instance the works of Lucius and Nicostratus. The latter seems to have been a Platonist philosopher⁹. “These two vied with each other in providing objections (ἐνστάσεις) to nearly everything said in the book, and they did not go about their task with respect, but rather in a violent and shameless manner”. Plotinus’ three treatises *On the Genera of Being* also belong to this same kind of commentaries; they are, however, distinguished by the seriousness of the work they contain.

5th group: the continuous Neoplatonic commentaries. Simplicius first names Porphyry, who wrote a commentary in seven books, dedicated to a certain Gedalios. This commentary has not come down to us, but in view of Simplicius’ description of this work as: “a complete explanation of the book (ἐξήγησις ἐντελής τοῦ βιβλίου), containing the solution of all objections”, and the length of this commentary – 7 books – compared to the extreme brevity of the text of the *Categories*, it can only have been a continuous commentary¹⁰, and therefore one that followed the text to be commented step by step, dividing it into lemmas. Without such a division, it would be practically impossible to find one’s way in a commentary of such length, given that the writings of Antiquity knew neither pagination, which would have changed from one copy to another each time they were transcribed, nor indices. What is more, the dimensions of Porphyry’s commentary did not allow

8) On Boethus of Sidon, cf. Moraux (cf. note 6), vol. I, Berlin / New York 1973, 143–179.

9) On Lucius and Nicostratus, cf. Moraux (cf. note 6), vol. II, 528–563.

10) This also emerges from the explanations given by Dexippus at the beginning of his commentary (In Cat., p. 5,6 ff. Busse) in dialogue form: he wishes his interlocutor not to ask him for detailed exegeses (τὰς κατὰ μέρος ἐξηγήσεις), for numerous and endless books (πολλὰς . . . καὶ ἀπείρους συγγραφάς) on the *Categories* have already been written by many others, but especially by Porphyry and after him by Iamblichus, which are hard to use because of their amplitude (τῶ πλήθει δυσλήπτους). In order not to fall into the same trap, he asks his interlocutor to limit his questions to the problems at hand.

it to be placed in the margins of the extremely brief text of the *Categories*, even by leaving very wide margins.

The second author Simplicius mentions is the “divine Iamblichus”, whose commentary – also lost to us – once more constituted, according to Simplicius, “a lengthy treatise”. In this commentary, says Simplicius, Iamblichus most often followed that of Porphyry to the letter, when he did not shorten the latter’s commentary on certain points, or, on the contrary, enlarge upon it in several ways, for instance by inserting texts from the treatise *On the All*¹¹ by Pseudo-Archytas, the latter being considered to be Aristotle’s source.

At the end of his preface, Simplicius, after stating he has not read all the works he has just mentioned, affirms with regard to his own commentary on the *Categories*, which is obviously a continuous commentary, that in writing it he has followed Iamblichus’ commentary step by step, reducing it “until it was more clear and commensurate [with the common understanding]”. He even describes his own commentary as a copy (ἀπογραφή) of Iamblichus’ commentary. Although we must limit this term’s meaning in the sense indicated by Simplicius himself, this phrase should suffice to exclude the possibility that Simplicius had anything other than a continuous commentary before him¹². He adds that he has been more concerned to “reduce somewhat (ἐπ’ ἔλαττον ὁποσούν συστειλαί) the vast multitude of multiform writings¹³”, while “not leaving aside . . . anything of what is necessary”, in contrast with the procedure of Syrianus, who “reduced it to an absolute minimum (εἰς ἐλάχιστον)”, where we must understand: without maintaining all that was necessary.

6th group: the author does not undertake a complete commentary of the *Categories*, but limits himself to solving a selection

11) The treatise *On the All* (otherwise known as *On universal notions*) is a pseudepigraphic work which, according to Moraux (cf. note 6), vol. II, 608, was probably written in the 1st or 2nd century of our era. Cf. T. A. Szlezák, *Pseudo-Archytas über die Kategorien* (Peripatoi vol. IV), Berlin / New York 1972.

12) In view of the description Simplicius gives of Iamblichus’ commentary, the possibility mentioned by D’Ancona (Commenting on Aristotle . . . [cf. note 3] 225 ff.) that it could be a paraphrase, seems to me to be out of the question, not only for the reasons I have stated, but also because Simplicius did not class it among the paraphrases.

13) By “the vast multitude of multiform writings”, we should probably understand all the material amassed in Porphyry’s commentary, as transmitted by Iamblichus.

of important problems. The only example given is the Neoplatonist Dexippus, who sought in particular to respond to the objections of Plotinus, while following the commentaries of Porphyry and Iamblichus. We can still read this commentary, and can verify that Simplicius' description is correct.

If Simplicius somehow distinguishes the third group, which probably contained only continuous commentaries, from the fifth group, which also consists in continuous commentaries, it is, I think, because he sees a difference in tendency and amplitude between them. Compared with the third group, the continuous Neoplatonic commentaries mentioned by Simplicius are all characterized by their acceptance of the dogma that there are no significant doctrinal differences between the philosophy of Aristotle and that of Plato. This harmonizing tendency, already present in some Middle Platonists, became dominant with Porphyry, and implies a sustained effort on the part of the Neoplatonic commentators on Aristotle to prove this harmony, which is often possible only at the cost of some distortions (the difficulties increase with the treatises *On the soul*, *Physics*, and *Metaphysics*, to the point that they sometimes, albeit seldom, become insurmountable). For them, this effort is added to the task that, among others, Alexander of Aphrodisias had set himself, which consisted in making the text of the *Categories* understandable, and in defending Aristotle's point of view. This process must be the cause of a certain lack of measure with regard to the length of the commentaries of Porphyry and Iamblichus, as emphasized by Simplicius. Moreover, Simplicius presents his own commentary, although it is of considerable length, as a condensation of that of Iamblichus. The Peripatetics Alexander of Aphrodisias and Herminius, by contrast, limited themselves to simply explaining and defending Aristotle's doctrines, and the Neoplatonist Maximus did not go much further than Alexander of Aphrodisias.

Simplicius' text also clearly brings out the unity of the Neoplatonic tradition with regard to the continuous commentaries on the *Categories*¹⁴. Simplicius and Syrianus alike rely, *grosso modo*,

14) The relations between these Neoplatonic commentaries on the *Categories*, and their doctrinal unity, have been described in Simplicius – *Commentaire sur les Catégories*, fasc. I (Introduction, première partie) and III (chap. I), Leiden / New York / Köln 1990, by I. Hadot and C. Luna respectively (translation of the Greek

on the same exegetical material collected by Porphyry and transmitted, while enlarging the doctrinal core, by Iamblichus; material that may sometimes have been enriched or corrected¹⁵. Yet if I speak of the unity of the Neoplatonic tradition, this does not mean that the commentators mutually copied one another in a servile way; Simplicius' account already informs us of some changes that were carried out. I shall limit myself to giving a single example of the modifications that may have intervened from one commentator to another. By introducing the texts of Pseudo-Archytas, Iamblichus sometimes considerably modified Porphyry's reasoning, as Pierre Hadot has shown¹⁶; but broadly speaking all the Neoplatonic commentaries on the *Categories* that have come down to us embroider on the same canvas of argumentation. To go beyond the special case of the Neoplatonic commentators on the *Categories* and speak more generally: we know that Porphyry partially modified the philosophical system of Plotinus, that Iamblichus modified Porphyry's system, and Syrianus-Proclus that of Iamblichus, whereas Damascius and his student Simplicius carried out a partial return to the doctrines of Iamblichus. Each slightly modified the teaching of his most important predecessor, and this has no relation to any alleged difference between the Neoplatonists teaching at Athens or elsewhere. The Neoplatonic system evolves constantly towards an ever more pronounced systematization, and an ever more precise diversification of the various levels of reality, all the while maintaining its identity, so that there is evolution, but not revolution.

We cannot know to what extent Porphyry had utilized the commentary by Alexander of Aphrodisias that was read in the school of Plotinus, and which still seems to have been available to

texts by Ph. Hoffmann), as well as by C. Luna (translation of the Greek text by Ph. Hoffmann), in: Simplicius – Commentaire sur les *Catégories* d'Aristote, chap. 2–4, Paris 2001.

15) Cf. for example Simplicius, In Cat., pp. 41,22 ff.

16) Cf. Pierre Hadot, L'harmonie des philosophies de Platon et d'Aristote selon Porphyre dans le commentaire de Dexippe sur les *Catégories*, in: Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Roma, 5–9 ottobre 1970, Rome, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1974, 31–47, reprinted in: Plotin, Porphyre – Études néoplatonicennes, Paris 1999, 355–382. English version: The harmony of Plotinus and of Aristotle according to Porphyry, in: Aristotle transformed, R. Sorabji (ed.), London 1990, 125–140.

Simplicius himself¹⁷, but I think it is certain he did use it¹⁸, and references to Alexander are found in all the Neoplatonic commentaries on the *Categories* later than that by Porphyry. Alexander and Theophrastus are the two Peripatetics who are constantly utilized by the Neoplatonists. Whereas Simplicius' commentary on the *Categories* depends directly on that of Iamblichus, and at least indirectly¹⁹ on Porphyry's great commentary, all three of which were voluminous, the abridged version conceived by Syrianus, which is lost for us, could be the indirect source, via Proclus, for the Alexandrian commentators such as Proclus' student Ammonius, and Ammonius' students Philoponus and Olympiodorus, as well as the latter's students. The Alexandrian commentaries on the *Categories*, although they go back to the same sources – Iamblichus and Porphyry²⁰ – are indeed much more restrained, as far as their length and the wealth of their material is concerned, than is that of Simplicius, and their relative brevity cannot be the exclusive result of the fact that in most cases they consist of notes taken and published by students. From the doctrinal point of view, Dexippus' refutation of Plotinus' objections is in keeping with this same tradition; Boethius' Latin commentaries on the *Categories*, moreover, also belong to this tradition. With regard to Syrianus, to judge by Simplicius' account, his commentary on the *Categories* had its place within the Neoplatonic tradition that gained new impetus with Porphyry, and it is significant that Simplicius did not mention it in the third group, together with the Neoplatonist Maximus – who seems primarily to have used Alexander's commentary – but in the fifth group. Except for its excessive brevity, Simplicius does not record any feature, formal, methodical, or dogmatic, that might distinguish it from the commentaries of surrounding Neoplatonism.

I believe that the Simplicius passage can also provide us with some information on the place of Syrianus' commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the context of the Neoplatonic tradition,

17) Cf. Simplicius, *In Cat.*, p. 41,22 ff.

18) Dexippus also recommends that his interlocutor read it; *In Cat.*, p. 6,4–6 Busse.

19) In a thesis that still awaits publication, M. Chase has given excellent reasons to question the received opinion according to which Simplicius himself might still have been able to utilize Porphyry's commentary to Gedalius.

20) See the references given note 14.

which has been the subject of several articles²¹. Simplicius' text seems to me, first, to prove that the form of the continuous commentary existed, in Neoplatonic circles, well before Syrianus. The view that prior to Syrianus, this form of commentary may have been utilized by the Neoplatonists only for the interpretation of the *Organon*, and perhaps the treatise on the *Physics*, is already improbable in itself, but the existence of the continuous commentary on the *Carmen aureum* by the Neoplatonist Hierocles of Alexandria, student of the Neoplatonist Plutarch of Athens, proves the contrary. According to F. W. Köhler, author of the only critical edition of this text, the *Carmen aureum* itself, which the manuscripts and editions place before the text of the commentary, was not even present in the archetype, but was reconstructed after the lemmas of the commentary²². Curiously, the works of Hierocles are not often taken into consideration by modern historians of philosophy; thus, for H. D. Saffrey, it was Syrianus' pupil Hermias who introduced "Athenian Neoplatonism" to Alexandria²³. However, Hierocles, the student of Plutarch of Alexandria, had taught at Alexandria before Hermias. As far as Iamblichus is concerned, one needs only to read J. M. Dillon's discussion on Iamblichus' commentaries on works by Plato, to be convinced that Iamblichus used the form of the continuous commentary²⁴. A glance at the Latin tradition can also confirm that the continuous commentary was a well-established form of exegesis even among the Latins: the commentary by Macrobius (Syrianus' contemporary) on the *Dream of Scipio* is a

21) Cf. the first article mentioned note 3 (the second article cited also deals with this question), as well as H. D. Saffrey, Comment Syrianus, le maître de l'école néoplatonicienne d'Athènes, considérait-il Aristote?, in: J. Wiesner (ed.), Aristoteles – Werk und Wirkung, Paul Moraux gewidmet, II, Berlin / New York 1987, 205–214 (English translation in: R. Sorabji [ed.], Aristotle transformed [cf. note 16] 173–179). In her article Commenting on Aristotle ... (cf. note 3), despite the objections made to her by many scholars, such as M. Baltes, Ph. Hoffmann, and A. Segonds, which she scrupulously records in her notes, D'Ancona still writes (212): "My point is precisely that this tradition [that is to say, the tradition of continuous commentaries, id est lemmatized: my addition] ... stems from the school of Athens, where it seems that it has been inaugurated by Syrianus".

22) F. W. Köhler, Hieroclis in *Aureum Pythagoreorum Carmen* commentarius, Stuttgart 1974, V f.

23) H. D. Saffrey, Syrianus, Der Neue Pauly, XI (2001) 1168.

24) J. M. Dillon, Iamblichus Chalcidensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta, Leiden 1973 (Philosophia Antiqua, vol. XXIII), 54–57.

continuous commentary. On this subject, Syrianus is not an innovator, but the continuator of a Neoplatonic tradition that existed well before him.

We now come to Syrianus' attitude towards Aristotle, analysed by H. D. Saffrey in his article²⁵ that bears the title "Comment Syrianus, le maître de l'école d'Athènes, considèrait-il Aristote?" in which the author attributes to Syrianus a completely innovative attitude with regard to Aristotle. On this subject, we must take a brief look at Neoplatonism prior to Syrianus. I have already mentioned the fact that the tendency to harmonize the philosophy of Plato with that of Aristotle had its roots in Middle Platonism²⁶, and that Porphyry and Iamblichus succeeded in ensuring the triumph of the harmonizing tendency. As I have already said elsewhere²⁷, this does not mean that henceforth, the Neoplatonists denied all differences between the philosophies of Plato and of Aristotle. Even Porphyry had written a treatise with the title *On the difference between Plato and Aristotle, to Chrysaorios*²⁸, and another one entitled *Against Aristotle, on the doctrine that the soul is an entelechy*²⁹. It is obvious that Aristotle's logical treatises did not pose a major difficulty for a harmonizing interpretation, but that the situation was entirely different when it came to explaining the treatise *On the soul* or the *Metaphysics*. Yet even in the commentaries on the *Categories*, authors like Iamblichus, for instance, who was nevertheless a fervent defender of the harmonizing tendency, sometimes emphasize the differences between the philosophies of Plato and of Aristotle³⁰. The history of Neoplatonism shows that

25) Cf. the reference given above, note 21.

26) We know the title of a lost treatise by the Middle Platonist Atticus: "Against those who claim to be able to explain the works of Plato with the help of those of Aristotle" (É. des Places, *Atticus, Fragments*, Paris 1977, fr. 1). This title, and the fragments belonging to this treatise, prove that already at the time of Atticus, that is, in the second century A. D., there were Platonists who minimized the differences between the two philosophers, and explained Plato with the help of Aristotle. Nearly a century later, Porphyry wrote against the opponents of the harmonizing tendency, who were still rather numerous at his time, a treatise in seven books, lost for us, with the title *On the fact that the school of Plato and that of Aristotle are one single school*.

27) Cf. I. Hadot, *Le commentaire philosophique continu . . .* (cf. note 3) 171.

28) Porphyrius, *Fragmenta*, ed. A. Smith, Stuttgart / Leipzig 1993, 258.

29) Smith (cf. note 28) 259.

30) For example, Simplicius (summarizing Iamblichus), *In Cat.*, p. 271,6 ff. and p. 2,21 f. (cited above p. 410) on the differences between Aristotle and Archytas.

individual divergences existed among the different philosophers in their appreciation of the limits of the doctrinal accord of Plato and of Aristotle, and this independently of their place of activity, be it Alexandria or Athens³¹. For all these reasons, I cannot, unlike H. D. Saffrey, discover in Syrianus' prologue to his commentary on Book M of the *Metaphysics*, any new attitude with regard to previous Neoplatonism. At the beginning, Syrianus expatiates at length on his great admiration for Aristotle, then to announce his intention to criticize and refute his attacks against the doctrines of Pythagoras and of Plato concerning the first principles in books M and N. How would he differ from Porphyry, the title of one of whose lost works clearly announced his criticism of an element of Aristotle's doctrine concerning the soul, or from Iamblichus, who, among other things, advanced objections against the Aristotelian doctrine of ποιότης? Could any Platonist, as such, have done otherwise than to refute Aristotle's direct attacks against Pythagoras and Plato, whose tradition they claimed to represent? It is possible that there may have been nuances in Syrianus' criticism in comparison to his predecessors – we are not in a position to tell, because of the loss of previous commentaries on the *Metaphysics* – but everything seems to indicate that the broad lines of the harmonizing interpretation always remained the same.

In summary, I would say the following. In the first place, the survey of the commentaries on the *Categories* with which Simplicius provides us, as well as the examination undertaken by J. M. Dillon of the fragments of Iamblichus' commentaries on Plato's dialogues, show as clearly as possible that the form of the continuous commentary was utilized by the Neoplatonists right from the start, and that it therefore was not introduced by Syrianus. Secondly, an attentive comparison between those Neoplatonic commentaries on the *Categories* that have come down to us proves that a genuine doctrinal continuity existed from Porphyry to Simplicius³². In addition, I consider it likely that an analogous continuity

31) Cf. I. Hadot, Aristote dans l'enseignement philosophique néoplatonicien, *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 124, 1992, 407–425. English version: The role of the commentaries on Aristotle in the teaching of philosophy according to the prefaces in the Neoplatonic commentaries on the *Categories*, in: *Oxford studies in ancient philosophy*, suppl. vol. 1991, 175–189.

32) Cf. the studies cited above, note 14.

with regard to the tendency to harmonize the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle also existed in the Neoplatonic commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, of which only that of Syrianus (partial), and that of Asclepius-Ammonius (partial) have come down to us, whereas those of Porphyry and Iamblichus are lost, but attested³³, and that Syrianus' attitude, which he manifests in the introduction to his commentary on book M of the *Metaphysics*, is therefore no more original than his use of the form of the continuous commentary. In conclusion, Syrianus was certainly a great philosopher, but, as far as the precise points dealt with in this article are concerned, he was not the innovator he has been made out to be.

Limours

Ilsetraut Hadot

33) Cf. Simplicius, In De caelo, p. 503,34 and 506,13 Heiberg. Cf. P. Hadot, L'harmonie des philosophies de Plotin et d'Aristote ... (cf. note 16), 40 ff. [369 ff.] The utilization of the *Metaphysics* before Syrianus in Neoplatonic philosophy also emerges from Dexippus' commentary on the *Categories*, which refers to books Λ, Ζ, and Α; cf. Busse's index s. v. 'Αριστοτέλης.