

# Selected Bibliography on the Ancient Greek Commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories*

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## CRITICAL EDITIONS OF THE ANCIENT COMMENTARIES TO ARISTOTLE'S *CATEGORIES*

Eight Neoplatonic commentaries are extant: seven in Greek by Porphyry, Dexippus, Ammonius, Philoponus, Olympiodorus, Simplicius, Pseudo-Elias (David), published in the series of *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* by the Berlin Academy (1882-1909, 23 volumes; this edition is reprinted by Walter de Gruyter) and one in Latin by Boethius.

1. Porphyry. *Porphyrii Isagoge et in Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*. Edited by Busse Adolf. Berlin: Reimer 1887.  
Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca: IV/1.
2. Dexippus. *Dexippi In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*. Edited by Busse Adolf. Berlin: Reimer 1887.  
Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca: IV/2.
3. Boethius. *Porphyrii Isagoge et in Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*. Edited by Busse Adolf. Berlin: Reimer 1887.  
Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca: IV/1
4. Ammonius. *In Aristotelis Categorias commentarius*. Edited by Busse Adolf. Berlin: Reimer 1895.  
Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca: IV/4
5. Philoponus. *Philoponi (olim Ammonii) In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*. Edited by Busse Adolf. Berlin: Reimer 1898.  
Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca: XIII/1
6. Olympiodorus. *Olympiodori Prolegomena et In Categorias commentarium*. Edited by Busse Adolf. Berlin: Reimer 1902.  
Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca: XII/1
7. Simplicius. *Simplicii In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*. Edited by Kalbfleisch Karl. Berlin: Reimer 1907.  
Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca: XXI
8. Pseudo-Elias (David). *Eliae In Porphyrii Isagogen et Aristotelis Categorias commentaria*. Edited by Busse Adolf. Berlin: Reimer 1900.  
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For a general bibliography on the Greek Commentators on Aristotle see: [The Neoplatonic Commentators on Aristotle's \*Metaphysics\*](#)

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"The main purpose of this paper is to offer an exposition and a critical examination of the ancient interpretations of Aristotle's doctrine of homonyma. A circumlocution of what Aristotle means by homonyma things is given in Categories, ch. 1, I a. The ancient interpretations with which we are concerned in this paper are to be found in the extant commentaries on this treatise. Evidently, more commentaries had been written on the Categories than the vicissitudes of time allowed to survive, but we have only those of the following writers: Porphyrius (c. 233-303), Dexippus (fl. c. 350), Ammonius (fl. c. 485), Philoponus (c. 490-530), Olympiodorus (fl. c. 535), Simplicius (fl. c. 533), Elias (ft. c. 550). One' might add here the relevant writings of John Damascene (675-749), Photius (820-91), and Michael Psellus (1018-79), which are useful paraphrases rather than full commentaries. For that reason, the interpretations they support are not discussed in this paper. The main body of this paper is given to a discussion of the interpretations which the ancient commentators offered and to an analysis of the assumptions which underlie them. It can be stated here in anticipation of what follows that the commentators often attached to Aristotle's meaning of homonyma aspects that were quite foreign to his views, and that by doing so these commentators were taking extensive liberties with the text at hand. As we hope to show, the commentators brought into their discussions of this particular portion of the Categories issues and views that were far more relevant to their own ontologies and logical theories than to Aristotle's doctrines. In order to show how this is the case, we must first give a summary of what we believe our text permits us to say about the meaning of homonyma, as given in the opening chapter of the Categories.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to add at this point that the interpretations of the doctrine of homonyma with which we are concerned here are only those that are discussed exclusively in the relevant commentaries on this work." pp. 1-2
2. Anton John Peter. Aristotle's theory of Categories and post-classical ontologies. In *Proceedings of*

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"Contrairement à l'opinion reçue, les questions que soulève Porphyre dans son Commentaire aux *Catégories* d'Aristote ne sont pas posées par un maître, mais par un disciple en quête du savoir. Les indices probants qui le suggèrent sont nombreux et, consultant les manuscrits, on peut même, dans un passage précis (p. 74-75), découvrir la bévue éditoriale qui, dans le chef de Busse, est à l'origine du malentendu. La rectification qui s'impose permet de comparer Porphyre avec le Commentaire de Dexippe et de tirer une conclusion sur l'apprentissage de la philosophie dans les premières écoles néoplatoniciennes."
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- dans le *De Trinitate*. In *Les Catégories et leur histoire*. Edited by Bruun Otto and Corti Lorenzo. Paris: Vrin 2005. pp. 175-222
21. Dillon John, "Iamblichus' *Noera Theoria* of Aristotle's *Categories*," *Syllecta Classica* 8: 65-77 (1997).  
"An examination of Simplicius *In Cat.* 2, 5-9ff ; 3, 10-17 ; 13, 4ff ; and 13, 13-16 shows that Iamblichus applied his allegorical technique of interpretation to the *Categories*, which he read as a coherent description of the Neoplatonic intelligible world. Two important features of his *noera theoria* were the search for ontological rather than merely logical explanations, and discreteness and continuity as manifestations of the power of the One."
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  25. Evangeliou Christos, "Aristotle's doctrine of predicables and Porphyry's *Isagoge*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23: 15-34 (1985).  
"Porphyry has recently been criticized for "muddling" Aristotle's doctrine of predicables by adding species to the list. I argue that a careful comparison of the two lists shows that they differ more profoundly than Porphyry's critics suspect, and that these modern critics, unlike the ancient commentators, have been misled by the title of *Isagoge* which they interpret as "Introduction" to *Topics* or *Categories* exclusively. It is shown that this is not the case."
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"Simplicius reports in his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* that Claudius Nicostratus and a certain Lucius argued that there is a problem with Aristotle's definition of homonyms in the first chapter of the *Categories*. If homonyms fall under that definition, they, *qua* homonyms, are not homonyms at all but synonyms, since they share the name 'homonym' and also the definition of homonyms. The author of the present article discusses a number of ancient and modern attempts to resolve this paradox, arguing that none of them is fully satisfactory. He proposes, rather, the elimination of the words 'of being' from lines 1a2 and 1a4, a solution that finds support in some of the oldest evidence regarding manuscripts that exists in Aristotelian studies."
  28. Gaskin Richard, "Simplicius on the meaning of sentences: a commentary on 'In Cat. 396,30 - 397,28'," *Phronesis. A Journal for Ancient Philosophy* 43: 42-62 (1998).  
"At *Categories* 12b5-16 Aristotle appears to regard the referents of declarative sentences, such as 'Socrates is sitting,' as what later writers were to call '*complexe significabilia*', i.e., items such as 'that Socrates is sitting'. Simplicius's discussion of this passage in his commentary on the *Categories* clearly shows the influence of Stoic philosophy of language; but, if we follow the text printed by Kalbfleisch, Simplicius's commentary is seen to be a muddle of Stoic and Aristotelian elements, neither properly understood. It is possible, however, by making a crucial emendation. On that line Simplicius would be adopting the view that a declarative sentence refers to a thought in the first instance and a '*complexe significabile*' in the second instance. This view is plausibly the upshot of combining the *Categories* text with the first chapter of *De Interpretatione*."
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"Le present article décrit les différents types de schémas introductifs contenus dans les commentaires des néoplatoniciens tardifs sur les oeuvres d'Aristote et de Platon, en essayant de déterminer leur signification exégétique ainsi que l'origine de plusieurs d'entre eux. Il apparaît que les deux schémas en dix points qui introduisent respectivement à la philosophie d'Aristote et à celle de Platon ont de toute vraisemblance été codifiés par Proclus au V siècle de notre ère, tandis que certains points des schémas en six points introduisant aux différents traités d'Aristote ou aux divers dialogues de Platon apparaissent déjà au III siècle chez Origène qui a dû s'inspirer des commentaires platoniciens de son temps."

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"Cet article représente une contribution de plus à ma critique générale des thèses de Praechter selon lesquelles l'école neo-Platonicienne dite "d'Alexandrie" se distinguerait, non seulement par le lieu de son enseignement, de celle dite "d'Athènes", mais encore et surtout par ses doctrines philosophiques et par son attitude envers l'oeuvre d'Aristote. La comparaison entre elles des Préfaces des cinq commentaires neo-Platoniciens des *Catégories* d'Aristote, dont l'un, celui de Simplicius, appartiendrait, selon Praechter, à l'école d'Alexandrie, fait apparaître la concordance fondamentale de la philosophie neo-Platonicienne qui était enseignée à Athènes avec celle qui était enseignée à Alexandrie: toutes deux interprètent la philosophie d'Aristote dans la même perspective neo-Platonicienne et la même volonté d'harmoniser Platon et Aristote."
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  58. Sharples Robert W., "Habent sua fata libelli: Aristotle's *Categories* in the first Century BC," *Acta*

*Antiqua.Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 48: 273-287 (2008).

"A re-examination of the question why, in the revival of interest, in the first century BC in Aristotle's esoteric works, as opposed to his doctrines, the work *Categories* played so large a part. The answers suggested are that the work aroused interest just because it did not easily fit into the standard Hellenistic divisions of philosophy and their usual agendas, and that, more than Aristotle's other works with the possible exception of the *Metaphysics*, it revealed aspects of Aristotle's thought that had become unfamiliar during the Hellenistic period."

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## EXTERNAL LINKS

Falcon, Andrea, "[Commentators on Aristotle](#)", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition) , Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

[The Aristotelian Commentators: a bibliographical guide](#) by John Sellars (PDF)

[Chronology of Aristotelian Commentators Prior to Aquinas](#) by Erik Norvelle (PDF)

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