What Has Aristotelian Dialectic to Offer a Neoplatonist? A Possible Sample of Iamblichus at Simplicius on the Categories 12,10-13,12

Michael J. Griffin*
Assistant Professor of Greek Philosophy
The University of British Columbia
michael.griffin@ubc.ca

Abstract
Simplicius in Cat. 12,10-13,12 presents an interesting justification for the study of Aristotle's Categories, based in Neoplatonic psychology and metaphysics. I suggest that this passage could be regarded as a testimonium to Iamblichus' reasons for endorsing Porphyry's selection of the Categories as an introductory text of Platonic philosophy. These Iamblichean arguments, richly grounded in Neoplatonic metaphysics and psychology, may have exercised an influence comparable to Porphyry's.

Keywords
Iamblichus, Simplicius, Damascius, Aristotle, Categories, neoplatonism

In this paper, I would like to explore one of the ancient arguments for the thesis, maintained by Porphyry (c. 234-305 CE) and his intellectual heirs in the Greek, Latin, and Arabic traditions,¹ that the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle are fundamentally compatible. I will focus specifically on the role of the later ancient Neoplatonist Iamblichus (c. 240-325) in laying the

*) I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. John Dillon and to the journal's anonymous reader for comments that contributed to the improvement of this paper. Any remaining slips and infelicities are, of course, my responsibility alone.
¹) See for example Ebbesen 1990, 2005; Newton 2008; Karamanolis 2006; Gerson 2005. On the early Platonist interpretation of the Categories in particular, see Tarrant 2008.
groundwork for subsequent commentators’ acceptance of Aristotle’s *Categories* into the curricular and conceptual framework of Neoplatonism.

The evolution of the *Categories* (with Porphyry’s *Isagoge*) into the ‘first book’ of later ancient Platonist philosophy encouraged the adoption of Aristotelian logic and metaphysics into the Platonic mainstream, and helped to establish the treatise as the gatekeeper of a good deal of later European philosophy of language and metaphysics. But the *Categories*—with its emphasis on the primacy of individual, ‘concrete’ subjects grounding the qualities that range over them—has struck many of its readers, Plotinus perhaps included (in *Enn.* 6.1-3), as a counterproductive introduction to a Platonic philosophy which highlights the ontological priority of intelligible forms like Justice, Beauty, Equality, and the Good. Why, then, did Porphyry choose this treatise to introduce Platonic philosophy?

A familiar answer runs along the following lines: in endorsing the *Categories*, Porphyry took the view that this treatise, and the Aristotelian curriculum in general, offered a good account of logical method and especially of the *sensible* world (here following earlier Peripatetic commentators), whereas Plato offers a decisive account of the *intelligible* world. Beginning students need to develop conceptual schemes for the sensible world first, and for the intelligible world later on. Therefore we ought to begin philosophy from the treatises of Aristotle, starting with his elementary *Categories*, and subsequently shift our focus to the text of Plato and lift the eye of the soul to the intelligible world. In other words, Aristotelian and Platonic ontology are complementary schemes, useful for tackling different problems; from a pedagogical standpoint, it can be useful to study them in sequence, as modern higher education in physics might teach Newtonian mechanics before introducing Einstein’s equations. In a sense, then, Porphyry would begin the course from what is more familiar to us, and transit toward what, in a Neoplatonic framework, is more knowable by nature: this would follow the kind of pedagogical notion that Aristotle adopts at *Physics* 1.1, for example, and would echo Porphyry’s own approach in the *Isagoge*.

If Porphyry thought along these lines, such pedagogical motives may help to explain his choice to erect a philosophical curriculum atop the *Categories*. Questions have lingered about the compatibility of Porphyry’s exegesis with his teacher Plotinus’s views on the same question; but since

---

2) See Chiaradonna 2002, 2005; Strange 1987; De Haas 2001; Evangeliou 1988.
Porphyry exercised a crucial influence on the later Neoplatonic commentators on this subject (e.g. Simplicius in Cat. 2,6), his opinion would account for the later Neoplatonists’ acceptance of the Categories as compatible with the Platonic curriculum, and this sort of explanation has, reasonably enough, been widely accepted (e.g. Ebbesen 1990).

But this account of Porphyry’s view does not altogether explain an important feature of later Neoplatonic commentary on the Categories. This is the point that I want to explore here. Like many philosophical readers nowadays (e.g. Wedin 2000), Neoplatonists such as Iamblichus, Dexippus, Simplicius and Ammonius suppose that the Categories provides a clue to Aristotle’s view about the structure of reality, about ontology, and about first philosophy. Porphyry, on the other hand, had stressed that the Categories was really a work of semantics, about ‘simple utterances insofar as they signify beings’ (περὶ φωνῶν σημαντικῶν ἁπλῶν καθὸ σημαντικαί εἰσί τῶν πραγμάτων, Porph. in Cat. 58,5-6); he saw a kind of theory of reference at work in the treatise, and explicitly rejected the interpretation of the Categories as basically ontological (a view apparently adopted by earlier Platonists such as Nicostratus). The later commentators certainly support Porphyry’s view that the Categories is about words insofar as they refer to beings (cf. Simplic. 9,28-30, 104,6-14, with remarks in Irwin 1988:499). But most—Iamblichus and Simplicius, for example—also maintain that the Categories’ mapping of language to being discloses something essential about reality itself, carving nature at the joints. In particular, they find the division of ten categories to reflect a basic tenfold division of kinds of beings; for instance, in Simplic. in Cat. 12,10 and following (a passage I attribute to Iamblichus below, in T9), we read that ‘the division [of ten] is the same everywhere… [and] significant vocal expressions are not wholly separate from the nature of beings’. There is also evidence of Iamblichus criticizing Porphyry for taking too exclusively ‘verbal’ or linguistic an approach to the Categories, as I suggest below. On the whole, the Neoplatonists after Iamblichus do not merely suggest that the Categories contains an ontology which is pedagogically compatible with Plato’s, but that the metaphysics of the Categories actually is Platonic.

It may have been Iamblichus whose ideas about the Categories, exemplified in his use of pseudo-Archytas (cf. Szlezák 1972), fueled the subsequent Neoplatonic tendency to read the Cat. as a work of ontology or first philosophy that was Platonic (and Pythagorean) in essence, rather than merely propaedeutic to Platonism. In the short scope of this essay, I would like to
engage with Iamblichus’s contribution in two specific ways: (1) to draw attention to passages in the later Alexandrian commentators, such as Olympiodorus, who imply that Iamblichus criticized Porphyry’s approach to the categories as excessively limited (for example, to a solely verbal point of view),\(^3\) and show that the later commentators at least implicitly followed Iamblichus; (2) to suggest that the substance of a well known passage in Simplicius’s commentary on the *Categories*, which Simplicius relays without attribution, should likely be assigned to Iamblichus, shedding light on his views about the place of the *Categories* in the curriculum.

**Simplicius on Iamblichus’s Methodology**

First, I would like to briefly sketch the context for Iamblichus’s approach to the *Categories*. Porphyry, who may have taught Iamblichus, has been regarded as a fairly orthodox Peripatetic exegete, in the sense that he generally supported the interpretation of the *Categories* and the Organon offered by Alexander of Aphrodisias and earlier Peripatetics. A reader of Porphyry’s *Life of Plotinus* could easily develop the impression that a rationalist, critical, and broadly Peripatetic sort of temper brought Porphyry to Plotinus’s circle.

By contrast, Iamblichus is often depicted, and depicts himself, as a philosopher with close ties to the practice of contemporary Mediterranean spirituality, and in particular a willingness to develop philosophical ideas in concert with an allegorical exegesis of the religious rites of cultures from Egypt to Greece and Babylon (e.g. *De Mysteriis*, itself a reply to Porphyry), leading to the integration of the notion of ‘theurgy’, literally god-work, into mainstream Neoplatonic intellectualism, with rather important implications both for the structure of the grand metaphysical systems that came to their fullest rigour and sophistication in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, and also for their influence on Christianity in the person of, e.g., ‘Dionysius the Areopagite’. The central idea of theurgical practice, that sensible

\(^3\) While Alexandrians following Ammonius agree on ascribing the synthetic solution (words + concepts + referents) to Iamblichus, they disagree on which earlier commentators took which partial view (for example, Olympiodorus ascribes the verbal interpretation to Porphyry and the conceptualist interpretation to Alexander, while Philoponus ascribes the conceptualist interpretation to Porphyry and the verbal interpretation to Alexander).
symbols or tokens can be interacted with in such a way that they are infused by noetic or divine power, will be of some importance later in this paper.

The distinct but complementary temperaments of Porphyry and Iamblichus emerge in their approaches to the *Categories*. A vivid example of the difference is apparent in the sixth-century exegete Simplicius, whose commentary *On the Categories* is the most extensive surviving specimen of a genre of commentary that was once practiced with every passing generation. In his doxographical remarks, Simplicius explains how Iamblichus added a layer of Pythagoreanizing ‘intellective contemplation’ to the *Categories*; this was a kind of symbolical interpretation (see text T1, below). Iamblichus, Simplicius explains, followed Porphyry on most points of line-by-line exegesis of what Aristotle was on about in a given lemma, but he also tended to simplify Porphyry’s scholastic exposition (which was likely inherited in part from the tradition passed down through Alexander) into a few crisp points, and then ‘applied his Intellecutive Theory (noêra theôria) everywhere [and adduced] the Pythagorean Archytas’ (2,15). I will return shortly to the question of what exactly Simplicius means us to understand by this (cf. Dillon 1997).

Olympiodorus, Iamblichus on Porphyry, and noêra theôria

The first passage of Simplicius that we will review (T1) is well known (see Chase 2003 ad loc.), and has been put to excellent use in piecing together Iamblichus’s contribution to the commentary tradition on the *Categories* and his critical relationship to Porphyry:

_T1_. Simplicius *in Cat.* 2,9 (trans. M. Chase, lightly modified, as in following citations). 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 Intellecutive Theory (noêra theôria) everywhere, to almost all of the chapter-headings. In addition, he also added something else to his writing which was useful: for 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 (gnôrismata) and had indicated the order (taxis) they occupy with regard to each other . . .
But among the Alexandrian commentators, Olympiodorus provides what seems like a very different angle on Iamblichus’s posture toward Porphyry’s commentary. In an unattributed passage which clearly (from the subsequent context) derives from Iamblichus’s commentary, Olympiodorus addresses the problem of the skopos (subject-matter or target) of the dialogue by dividing it into three, and ascribes to Porphyry a view that the dialogue concerns primarily phônai (voice, language). Olympiodorus then develops a case from Iamblichus to show why the verbal interpretation is incomplete. I think there is some trace here of a Iamblichean criticism of Porphyry’s ‘semantic’ interpretation of the Categories in favour of a version that strives to deliver an interpretation in terms of the intelligible world, which we can also detect in the divergence of two doxographies in Simplicius, one bipartite (words-signify-things) and the other tripartite (words-signify-concepts-signify-things). The exemplary texts are T2 and T3; while the discussion in T2 (Olympiodorus) is clearly attributed to Iamblichus by name, we have to piece together the ascription of T3 (Simplicius) from Simplicius’s own remarks about the methodology used by Iamblichus.

T2. Olympiodorus, Prol. in Cat. 18,29. Porphyry . . . advocated the solely verbal reading (peri phônôn monôn) . . . 18,35 [he argued] from the title Katêgoriai (ouden de heteron esti katêgoria ê to kata allou agoreuesthai) . . . 19,2-3 the word legetai [on his view] demonstrates that the subject is words and not things (to de legetai ouk epi pragmatôn all’ epi phônôn lamanetai . . .) 19 But the divine Iamblichus, who was born later, replies to [Porphyry and others]: ‘Gentlemen, you are “warring in peace.” You are right and wrong—since each of you rightly identifies this or that to be Aristotle’s aim (skopos) 20 but wrongly to be his only aim . . . someone who supposes Aristotle to speak only about phônai or pragmatê or noêmata is both correct and incorrect. He is correct, since he touches on the aim in a partial way (merikôs), but he is incorrect, since he is unable to present the aim of the work in a complete way (teleiôs).

T3. Simplicius, in Cat. 12,2. It is clear, however, that [if the goal of the Categories] is about verbal expressions (phônai) insofar as they signify, it is necessary that the signified realities (pragmatê) and the intellectual concepts (noêmata) which come about in accordance with significations also be involved. . . That is why [Aristotle] teaches us what each expression signifies, and defines realities accordance with each category. Moreover, he uses the same division both here, where the skopos is primarily about significant expressions, and in the Metaphysics, where he teaches about beings qua beings . . . This is because the
division is the same everywhere... significant verbal expressions are not wholly separate from the nature of beings, nor are beings detached from the names which are naturally suited to signify them. Nor, finally, are intellectual concepts extraneous to the nature of the other two; for these three things were previously one, and became differentiated later. Because Intellect (nous), being identical with the realities and with intellection (noêsis), possesses as one both beings and the intellectual concepts of them, by virtue of its undifferentiated unity... 13.20 Now the Pythagoreans gathered together the simple entities into the decad, as was taught by Archytas...

These texts, at least potentially, offer us some context for Iamblichean noêra theôria, which would amount to his insistence on offering an exegesis of the lexis of the Categories on the intellective level. This seems particularly understandable when understood against the backdrop of Porphyry’s view (here probably following the Peripatetic Boethus of Sidon) that the Categories deals with the sensible world in a logical manner, and does not directly address the intelligible world. The idea that Iamblichus was primarily engaged in adding an intelligible level of interpretation to the Categories seems to jibe extremely well with the actual cases in Simplicius where he is explicitly described as talking about noeric theoria, rostered by Dillon (1997). I give some examples of these (paraphrased) as T4-6.

T4. On ousia (Cat. 4a10): the question is whether Aristotle’s definition of ousia, as ‘that which being numerically one and the same is able to receive contraries’, is applicable to intelligible as well as sensible matter. Plotinus suggests that this formulation marks a unique characteristic (idion) of ousia but is not essential (ti estin).

Iamblichus responds (see Dexippus in Cat. 57.18-59.8) that Aristotle is dealing in the Cat. solely with sublunary perceptible substance, not eternal, simple beings. But Iamblichus continues ‘more Pythagorically’, di’ analogian (Simplicius in Cat. 116.25 ff. = fr. 33), to explain how Aristotle’s remarks about perceptible ousia (being the subject of contraries) apply analogously to the intelligible world. There, for example, the subject and what is in or said of it need not be different; motion and rest, sameness and difference are in a subject simultaneously, not successively.

T5. On quantity (poson): Iamblichus includes rhopê as a third type of quantity, citing Archytas; there are weighted and weightless quantities at multiple levels of reality; psyche’s rhopê is toward the below or above, whereas Intellect is arrhepes. (Simplic. 128.16-129.7 = fr. 36).
T6. On quality (poion): for Iamblichus, qualities are objectively existent logoi, not non-substantial (cf. Enn. 6.1.10, 54 ff.) Simplic. 218,5 ff.: Aristotle is said to make qualities immaterial logoi in Categories 8, and (compare Metaph. Γ 14, 1020a33 ff.) Iamblichus affirms that qualities are ousiôdês, not just conceptual (ennôëmatikos) (comparing Porphyry, who regards them as ennoëmatikos at Simplic. 213,10). Qualities are real (hupostasis) and exercise their existence inseparably from what they qualify, and so they are immanent logoi. Citing Archytas, this species of quality is not en skhêmati but en schêmatismôi (shaping).

T7. On the category when, pote, and Cat. 11b10: Iamblichus cites Archytas (Simplicius in Cat. 352,24) to the effect that the When or Time contains as its unique characteristic (idion) partlessness (ameres) and insubstantiality (anhupostaton), since the present moment, having no parts, becomes past and does not endure just as soon as it is thought of. The present moment is impermanent when it is regarded numerically, but it does endure in form or species. Time is a kind of number of change (kinêsis) and in general the diastama (note Doricism) of the natural growth (phusis) of the cosmos. Iamblichus notes that something can’t be both ameres and anhupostaton (353,19 ff.), so Archytas must here be discussing two levels of time (cf. Sorabji, 1983: ch. 3): there is an intellectual time which is the archetype of that in the physical world. The intellectual archetype of time is not identical with the life of the soul (cf. Plot., Enn. 3.7.11) but orders the psychic realm, measuring becoming (Simplic. in Phys. 793). Only at the stage that follows psychic genesis is time insubstantial, a ‘flow of nows’. It is not even this lower participated time that flows but what participates it (in Phys. 787,17-20).

T8. On place or the Where (pou), Simplicius 361,7 (here explicitly described as noëra théoria): place is not just a limit of bodies but active principle descending from above, keeping separate bodies distinct, holding individuals together, bringing them to completion (in Phys. 639,23-640,11). It operates at every level up to the intelligible, if not even to the level of the One (cf. Simplic. in Cat. 364,3: ep’ ekeinon ton theion topon, perhaps an echo of the concept of aiôn in the Chaldaean Oracles).

As Dillon attractively summarizes these passages, Iamblichus aims to provide a ‘metaphysical framework for the interpretation of the Categories’, and his ‘distinctive contribution is to take the Categories as a coherent description of reality in the Neoplatonic sense’ (1997:77). Casting our eye back to Olympiodorus, we can see this metaphysical framework as the addition of a ‘level of interpretation’ of the ten categories (and the Categories)
corresponding coherently to the intelligible level of being, *framed intentionally* as a supplement or response to Porphyry’s view that the *Categories* simply concerns how words signify beings. For Iamblichus (as for the text of ‘Archytas’ on which he draws, which probably dates back to the first century BCE, with Szlezák), there is no problem about the *Categories* being in the least counter-Platonic; its lessons play on the sensible and intelligible world at one and the same time, in contrappunto.

**Simplicius: Iamblichus on Teaching with the *Categories* (T9)**

We might ask, then, what motivated Iamblichus to focus on the *Categories* as a key work of Neoplatonism, and to offer this intelligizing supplement to Porphyry’s exegesis. We find, I suggest, an answer of sorts in a passage of Simplicius’s commentary that has not (to my knowledge) been attributed to Iamblichus before. This passage runs roughly from 12,10-13,18, and I append some key excerpts as T9 (continuing T3 above, where alternative views of the *skopos* of the *Cat.*—words, concepts, beings—have been integrated into a single tripartite scheme).

**T9. Simplicius in Cat. 12,10.** The division [into ten] is the same everywhere… [in] significant expressions…[and] the nature of beings…For neither are significant expressions wholly separate from the nature of beings, nor are beings detached from the names which are naturally suited to signify them. Nor, finally, are intellectual concepts extraneous to the nature of the other two; for these three things were previously one, and became differentiated later. For Intellect (*nous*), being identical with realities and with intellection (*noēsis*), possesses as one both beings and the intellectual concepts of them, by virtue of its undifferentiated unity (*adiakritos henōsis*), and there [sc. in the intelligible world] there is no need for language.

As for the soul, when it is converted towards *nous*, it possesses the same things in a secondary way…Once, however, the soul has departed from there, it also separates the formulae (*logoi*) in itself from beings, thereby converting them into images instead of prototypes, and it introduces a distance between intellection and realities…When, however, the soul has fallen into the realm of becoming, it is filled with forgetfulness, and requires sight and hearing in order to be able to recollect. For the soul needs someone who has already beheld the truth, who by means of verbal expression (*phônē*) uttered forth from the intellectual concept (*ennoia*) also moves the concept within [the soul
of the student] which had until then grown cold. This, then, is how the need for phônê came about… noêseis join the learner’s concepts to those of the teacher… When noêseis are set in motion in the appropriate way, they adjust themselves to realities, and thus there comes about the knowledge of beings, and the soul’s spontaneous erôs is fulfilled.

Phônê is, moreover, the limit of psychic activity, and it pertains to limits to convert things toward their principles. Therefore, language takes those souls which have departed from the Nous and from beings, and have become distinguished from one another, and gathers them together into the unanimity of thought (homonôia); it makes them adjust to realities, sends them back up to the Nous, and prepares them not only to wish to be without phônê but to which no longer even to have ennoiai which differ from realities…

It is thus clear from the preceding considerations that the skopos of the Categories is about simple, primary, and generic phônai insofar as they are significant of beings… and about noêmata… Now the Pythagoreans gathered together the simple entities into the decad, as was taught by Archytas… the only point at which Aristotle deviated [from Archytas] is that he did not take into consideration the One, which contains the ten, and that he rejects the natural character of names.

The passage T9 certainly provides a ‘big picture’ motivation for reading the Categories in a Neoplatonic frame. And there are a number of reasons that one might associate this whole excerpt with Iamblichus, at both the beginning and the end. For example: (a) As to the introductory material, the ‘tripartite’ (words-concepts-things) response to partial readings of the Categories is associated with Iamblichus by Olympiodorus (as we have seen, T2); and Olympiodorus and David describe this account as the Iamblichean skopos (Chase 2003:125, n. 428). Next (b) at the end of the passage T9 we have a clear example of the citation of Archytas and Pythagorean colour that Simplicius tells us (in T1) is a signature of Iamblichus’s activity. Of course, this isn’t decisive; Simplicius or a source before him (but after Iamblichus) could be responsible for composing the frame of this passage. But what is in the middle, the core of the text, I think, also looks very much like an example of noêra theôria, and decidedly Iamblichean in content and style. If that is correct, we could piece together a very neat picture using both this passage and the other evidence for Iamblichean noêra theôria: the categories of the sensible world occur in every realm and walk of philosophy, and an understanding of them ‘resonates’ from the lower limit of
psychic activity (vocalization) to the One, in such a way that a very practical pedagogical benefit arises from studying the categories of speech with the aid of a (Platonic) teacher, turning the eye of the soul up to the noetic realm; and here we have the metaphysical underpinnings for a later ancient Platonist's appreciation of the *Categories*.

Nonetheless, scholars who have thought especially closely about T9 (such as Hoffmann 1987 and Chase 2003) have, on balance, preferred to ascribe it to a later Neoplatonist, namely Damascius (c. 458-538), a teacher of Simplicius. The argument for Damascius, which I can only summarize very briefly here, is cogent and persuasive: there are many passages in his extant *Parmenides* commentary and *De Principiis* that echo the content and language of T9. One particular example I will focus on here (following Chase 107 n. 162) is the phrase *adiakritos henôsis*, ‘undifferentiated unity’, which occurs early in our passage and plays a pivotal role in its theological interpretation of why the ten categories are the same at all levels of reality. *Adiakritos henôsis* is ‘a favorite expression of Damascius’ (Chase). But I think the evidence for Damascius actually also points backward toward Iamblichus as the original source of the thought in the passage, and perhaps much of the text, in a way that is instructive about the broader intellectual context of our passage. First, the phrase *adiakritos henôsis*, while it is important in Damscius's *De principiis* (the passage cited is I 233,4), is also a favorite passage of Proclus in the earlier generation (*Platonic Theology* 1.35,14, 4.11,6, 5.10,9.40,21.111.9), occurring in similar theological contexts. Damascius clearly inherits its use from his predecessors (not only Neoplatonic: cp. Clement *Strom*. 7.3.14). Next, Damascius himself indicates in very similar contexts, using this same vocabulary, that he is reporting Iamblichus: at *De princ.* I 147,22 ff. = Iamblichus in *Parm.* fr. 2B,12 Dillon, for example, Damascius explains that Iamblichus believed the Intelligible remained in the One, and goes on to report Iamblichus's description of the *adiakritos henomenê noêsis* (compare our passage T9). Similar passages in Damascius also seem to be reporting Iamblichus (see *in Philebum* 105,49-50 West = Iamblichus fr. 4,7 Dillon). At the very least, then, there is a fair probability that the presence of this Damascian vocabulary in Simplicius actually points back to a Iamblichean source.

Moreover, ascribing the passage to Iamblichus shows, I think, how his metaphysical views helped to motivate his pedagogical interest in the *Categories* and lay the groundwork for the still influential reading of the
Categories as a metaphysical (not merely, with Porphyry, semantical) book. In his Timaeus commentary (fr. 5,7 Dillon), Iamblichus explained how Pythagoreans used images in their teaching (didaskalia) in order to reactivate the soul's ability to comprehend the intelligible realm and the purging of the soul's vision. This fits beautifully with our passage T9, where the Categories even in its verbal dimension is actually functioning as a Pythagorean icon or image of the intelligible world. We can also, and I think this is a very important point, understand from this connection how and why Iamblichus chose to reintroduce the Pythagorean treatise by ‘Archytas’ into the commentary tradition; this has never been satisfactorily explained, but I think, with these attributions, we can piece the picture together. Iamblichus believes that the treatise as a whole can function like a Pythagorean symbol of the intelligible, with pedagogical benefits for raising the eye of the soul; in some sense, his approach to the Categories may be surprisingly harmonious with his broader commitment to the principles of theurgy, and the ability of symbols, rightly used, to resonate with and attract their referents. (This may even constitute a semantic ‘theory’ of sorts, replacing Porphyry’s, which itself drew on Hellenistic semantics: cf. Ebbesen 2005.) Therefore, in a Iamblichean framework, there is no need whatsoever to view the Categories of the sensible world, or the study of logic, as a mere propaedeutic or alternative to—let alone a competitor against—the Platonic curriculum of the intelligible realm; rather, it is a picture or symbol of Platonic metaphysics, and repeated training in the former in the company of a good teacher will spur the soul into recognition of the latter.

Select Bibliography

Bodéüs, R. 2001. Catégories. Belles Lettres.
Chase, M. 2003. Simplicius: On Aristotle Categories 1-4. Duckworth.
Chiaradonna, R. 2002. Sostanza, Movimento, Analogia. Plotino critico di Aristotele. Bibliopolis.
Dillon, J. 1997. ‘Iamblichus’s Noera Theoria of Aristotle’s Categories’ Syllecta Classica 8. 65-77.
Ebbesen, S. 1990. ‘Porphyry’s legacy to logic: A reconstruction’. Pp. 141-72 in R.R.K. Sorabji. 1990. Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence. Duckworth and Cornell UP.
Ebbesen, S. 2005. ‘Theories of language in the Hellenistic age and in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries’. Pp. 299-319 in D. Frede and B. Inwood (eds.) 2005. Language and Learning: Philosophy of Language in the Hellenistic Age. CUP.
Frede, M. 1987. *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*. Oxford.
Gerson, L. 2006. *Aristotle and other Platonists*. Cornell UP.
de Haas, F.A.J. 2001. 'Did Plotinus and Porphyry Disagree on Aristotle's *Categories*? *Phronesis* 46. 492-526.
Hoffmann, Ph. 1987. 'Catégories et langage selon Simplicius—la question du 'skopos' du traité aristotélicien des Catégories', pp. 61-90 in I. Hadot (ed.) 1987. *Simplicius, sa vie, son œuvre, sa survie; actes du colloque international de Paris (28 sept.-1 oct. 1985)*. Peripatoi 15. De Gruyter.
Karamanolis, G. 2006. *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement: Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry*. Oxford.
Moraux, P. 1973. *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias*. I. Berlin-NY.
Newton, L. A. (ed). 2008. *Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories*. Leiden: Brill.
Sorabji, R.R.K. 1983. *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Duckworth and Cornell UP.
Strange, S. 1987. 'Plotinus, Porphyry, and the Neoplatonic Interpretation of the *Categories*'. *ANRW* 2.36-2. 955-74.
Szlezák, T. A. 1972. *Pseudo-Archytas Über die Kategorien*. Peripatoi 4. De Gruyter.
Tarrant, H. 2008. 'Eudorus and the Early Platonist Interpretation of the *Categories*. *Laval théologique et philosophique* 64.3 (2008): 583-95.
Wedin, M. 2000. *Aristotle's Theory of Substance*. Oxford.