

# The Early Peripatetic Interpreters of Aristotle's *Categories* and the Previous Philosophical Tradition

## The peripatetic commentators and the return to the ancients

The renaissance of interest in Plato and Aristotle is one of the major features of first-century BC philosophy. This aspect is famously connected to the genesis of an exegetical tradition on authoritative texts, which ultimately led to the great commentaries on Plato and Aristotle in Late Antiquity. The return to Plato and Aristotle was certainly also connected to a distinctive attitude to the past: the first century BC can be seen as an age of return to the ancients, as opposed to the anti-Classical attitude proper to the Hellenistic philosophical schools.<sup>1</sup> This holds true for Antiochus of Ascalon's return to Plato and the Old Academy and for Eudorus of Alexandria's return to Plato and Pythagoras.<sup>2</sup>

Here I will try to reconstruct how Andronicus of Rhodes and Boethus of Sidon, the two most prominent Peripatetic commentators on Aristotle's *Categories* in the first century BC, fit with this picture.<sup>3</sup> As I aim to show, their approach to Aristotle can best be assessed against the distinctive backdrop of first-century philosophical debates. Andronicus and Boethus come across as somewhat surprising figures, if compared to later Aristotelian commentators such as Alexander

<sup>1</sup> On this see e.g. Gerson and Inwood (1997), xvi: 'on the crucial issues both the Stoics and the Epicureans set themselves deliberately and consciously against what they took to be the views of Plato and Aristotle'. The Hellenistic philosophers consciously bypassed Plato and Aristotle to return to the early Greek thinkers (Democritus or Heraclitus are prime examples of this tendency).

<sup>2</sup> There is a vast literature on these issues. I would only refer to the classical discussion in Frede (1999). On the ongoing debate, see the papers collected in Schofield (2013); Griffin (2015).

<sup>3</sup> Details about Andronicus and Boethus' lives are extremely scanty. On Boethus, see now Chiaradonna and Rashed (2020a) (collection of fragments with essays). Philoponus (*In Cat.* 5.15–20) says that Andronicus was Boethus' teacher: for details, see Griffin (2015), 32–33 and Chiaradonna and Rashed (2020b), 1–5. A survey can be found in Falcon (2016b).

of Aphrodisias. As we shall see below, Andronicus and Boethus' positions are somewhat idiosyncratic, as they do not refrain from emending certain aspects of Aristotle's philosophy; moreover, both Andronicus and Boethus appropriate doctrines from the Old Academy. Scholars are sometimes inclined to assess these aspects against the background of the later Aristotelian commentary tradition: it is argued that in their time no standard Aristotelian position had been established yet and that this explains why their attitude to the authorities was rather free if compared to the subsequent approach to the same authorities. A passage from Michael Frede's authoritative survey of post-Hellenistic philosophy is revealing of this approach:

This vagueness and indefiniteness about what it is to belong to a certain school must have reinforced greatly the process by which the founders of a school turned into authorities and their writings became authoritative texts that to some extent defined the school. What came to unify a school more and more was the special status the schools accorded to their respective founder or founders. At the beginning of the period it still had been possible for a Peripatetic to take issue with Aristotle, even though Aristotle was an authority. Thus Andronicus does not accept Aristotle's doctrine of categories, and Xenarchus writes against Aristotle's assumption of a fifth element. But it seems that in the course of time the explication and defence of Plato's or Aristotle's views became more and more important.<sup>4</sup>

It seems to me that this outline is potentially misleading in that it presents the early commentators in a quasi-teleological way: their work is seen as a first approximation of the full systematisation which was to be achieved later on. Here I will follow a different approach and will investigate whether the specific philosophical situation during the first century BC can explain certain features of Andronicus and Boethus' distinctive approaches and in particular their attitude to the previous philosophical tradition.

Focusing on the early commentators on Aristotle's *Categories* can help shed light on some crucial aspects of first-century BC philosophy. Aristotle's *Categories* was the 'star treatise', so to speak, of the ancient commentary tradition. This at least partly depended on Andronicus' arrangement of the Aristotelian corpus. Andronicus probably placed the *Organon* at the very beginning of his list of Aristotelian writings because he took the study of logic to be a prerequisite for the rest of philosophy (see Philop., *In Cat.* 5.19–20).<sup>5</sup> It is possible too that within the *Organon* he placed the *Categories* first because this treatise focuses on terms rather than on propositions.<sup>6</sup> It is likely that those who wanted to study Aristotle, even only to refute his views, started from the *Categories* – and, more often than not, stopped at it, for the other treatises were difficult and long enough to discourage

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4 Frede (1999), 793.

5 See Griffin (2015), 225.

6 See Bodéüs (2001), XI–XXIV.

any further engagement.<sup>7</sup> As a matter of fact, both Aristotelian commentators and philosophers from other schools soon critically engaged with the treatise. Simplicius (*In Cat.* 159.32) draws a list of 'ancient exegetes' of the *Categories*, which provides something like a map of school debates during the first century BC. It includes three Peripatetics (Andronicus of Rhodes, Boethus of Sidon, and Ariston of Alexandria), one Academic philosopher (Eudorus of Alexandria), and one Stoic (Athenodorus). So the interpretation of Aristotle's *Categories* provides a privileged perspective to assess philosophical school debates in the first century BCE.

## The early commentators and the previous tradition

Both Andronicus and Boethus have much to disconcert those who equate the genesis of the commentary tradition with the creation of some kind of 'orthodoxy' based on allegiance to authoritative texts. Andronicus, for example, criticised Aristotle's division of the categories as redundant and sided with Xenocrates' bipartition of *per se* and *relative* (*Simpl., In Cat.* 63.22–24). Boethus, on the other hand, claimed that the hylomorphic form must be placed outside substance, if we accept the definition of substance as a primary subject of inherence set out in the *Categories* (*Simpl., In Cat.* 78.4–20). And Boethus was apparently sympathetic to the Old Academy. So he argued that Aristotle's distinction of homonyms, synonyms, and paronyms in the first chapter of the *Categories* omits what the moderns (i.e. the Stoics) call synonyms, and Speusippus called polyonyms (e.g. a plurality of names for the same thing, where their account is one and the same) (*Simpl., In Cat.* 36.28–31). Boethus referred to Speusippus' account of 'onyms' positively: for (unlike Aristotle's account, we may add) that of Speusippus is a division that includes all names (*Simpl., In Cat.* 38.19–39.2). Indeed, this entails a further departure from Aristotle. For Aristotle's homonyms, synonyms, and paronyms are things, whereas Boethus apparently construed this division as a division of names and of their properties.<sup>8</sup> In addition to this, Boethus was certainly familiar with Plato and he aimed to show that certain features of Aristotle's thought had somehow been anticipated by his master. So, according to Simplicius, Boethus discussed Aristotle's initial definition of the relative in *Cat.* 7, 6a36–7 (relatives are those 'which are said to be what they are "of" other things') and traced it back to Plato (see *Republic* IV.438a7–b1; *Sophist* 255 d; *Simpl., In Cat.* 159.10–15).<sup>9</sup>

7 There is an extensive literature on Andronicus' arrangement of Aristotle's treatises. Recent contributions include Griffin (2015), 29–32; Griffin (2016); Hatzimichali (2016); Perkams (2019); Rashed (2021).

8 On this, see Barnes (2012), 298–302. For further details on Boethus' views on semantics, see Chiaradonna (2020a).

9 On Boethus' account of relatives, see Rashed (2020).

Some of these changes may be seen as hardly significant. But others certainly *are* significant and it is very interesting for example that Simplicius reports that Andronicus and Xenocrates endorsed the bipartite categorial division between ‘per se’ and ‘relative’, and had reservations (αἰτιῶνται) about the redundancy of Aristotle’s division (*In Cat.* 63.22–24). If we possessed nothing but this fragment from Andronicus, we might infer that he was a Platonising follower of Xenocrates rather than a Peripatetic. Furthermore, Andronicus’ sympathy for Xenocrates was not limited to the *Categories*. Themistius reports that Andronicus accepted Xenocrates’ definition of the soul as a self-moving number and attempted to reconcile this definition with the view that the soul is the harmony of the constituents of the underlying body (*In De An.* 32.22–31).<sup>10</sup> Apparently, Andronicus held that Xenocrates’ definition refers to the role played by soul as the cause of the ratio in the mixture of the primary elements of the body.<sup>11</sup> This is a very partial survey of the evidence and it is limited to the interpretation of Aristotle’s *Categories* (so, for example, I omit Xenarchus’ discussion of Aristotle’s physics).<sup>12</sup> That said, even this partial survey suffices to draw a provisional conclusion. It seems to me that it is somewhat misleading to say that the early commentators were slowly and imperfectly approaching a standard reading of Aristotle similar to that developed by the later exegetes, i.e. a reading which is based (to put it very roughly) on the idea that the authoritative texts are both always true and always consistent with one another. We simply don’t find this general idea in the surviving evidence. Should we therefore infer that the early commentators were heterodox? Indeed, they are such if seen from the later commentators’ perspective. In a series of contributions, Marwan Rashed has persuasively shown that Alexander of Aphrodisias’ reading of Aristotle was construed as a response to the earlier interpretations by Andronicus and Boethus.<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact, Boethus’ controversial arguments in Simplicius are sometimes followed by replies by Porphyry who, in turn, probably relied on previous material (possibly on Alexander) (see e.g. *Simpl., In Cat.* 78.20–24 = *Porph.*, 58F. Smith against Boethus’ account of hylomorphic form). If we take Alexander’s exegetical project to imply the creation of an Aristotelian orthodoxy, then we can certainly regard Andronicus and Boethus as his heterodox counterparts.

It is, however, far from clear that Alexander is an orthodox Aristotelian whereas Andronicus or Boethus are heterodox. Actually, confessional notions such as those of ‘allegiance’, ‘orthodoxy’, and ‘heterodoxy’ should be used with caution when reconstructing philosophical debates and are perhaps best avoided. Rashed has argued persuasively that both Boethus and Alexander were Aristotelian philosophers who developed different possible readings of Aristotle’s

10 See Sharples (2010), 239–240 and 247. On Andronicus’ attitude to Xenocrates, see Rashed (2004).

11 For further details, see Rashed (2004), 47 n. 82.

12 See Falcon (2012).

13 See, in particular, Rashed (2004); (2007); (2013).

works and philosophy (different 'possible Aristotelianisms').<sup>14</sup> It is worth quoting Rashed's remarks:

Alexander's opposition to Boethus allows us to see more clearly in what sense Boethus' ontology is neither a piece of 'Aristotelian orthodoxy' nor un-Aristotelian, but nothing but a possible way of reading Aristotle. The main interest of the commentators is precisely to construct, out of different possible doctrines latent in the Master's corpus, a coherent interpretation.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, Andronicus and Boethus' approaches were not unprecedented. The early disciples of Aristotle in the Lyceum regarded themselves as somehow contributing to their master's philosophical and scientific enterprise rather than interpreting his authoritative works. So they did not refrain from emending certain aspects of Aristotle's thought. Now, if assessed from the perspective of later Peripatetic scholasticism, this attitude can obviously be seen as critical or even polemical. And in fact an extensive scholarly debate focuses e.g. on Theophrastus' criticism of Aristotle's physics. But nothing compels us to see the work of the early Peripatetics from this perspective. For example, David Lefebvre characterises Theophrastus' attitude as follows: 'Theophrastus' work in fact testifies more to a desire to explore and apply its Aristotelian theoretical inheritance than to criticise it. Of all Aristotle's successors, Theophrastus is the only one whose work suggests a global research project, potentially comparable to Aristotle's.'<sup>16</sup> Besides, this was a common situation within the philosophical schools in Athens: for example, the debates among the Stoic scholars offer ample evidence of the same situation. So we should not take Theophrastus and Eudemus' work on Aristotle's logic, for example, as a criticism of Aristotle and a departure from his views, but rather as further work on a research area already explored by their master. This situation was not limited to logic but included the revision of some crucial aspects of Aristotle's physics and psychology. One example is particularly interesting for the present investigation. Among the early Peripatetics, both Aristoxenus and Dicaearchus equated the soul with the harmony of the constituents of the underlying body (though with different nuances).<sup>17</sup> Aristotle famously discards this view in his treatise *On the Soul* (I.4, 407b34–408a5) and his criticism is based on his hylomorphic ontology, which sees the form inherent in the body as both a substance and something causally efficacious: the form, while supervenient upon the body, cannot be reduced to the physical properties of the underlying body.<sup>18</sup> Apparently, Aristotle's early disciples did not find these aspects of his physics and ontology very appealing. And, indeed, the interpretation of Aristotle's soul in Aristoxenus and Dicaearchus can be read against a wider background, since

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14 See Rashed (2007), 1–31.

15 Rashed (2013), 61.

16 Lefebvre (2016), 17.

17 The authoritative discussion is Caston (1997).

18 For further details, I can only refer to Caston (1997), 326–332.

none of the early Peripatetics were apparently very interested in developing Aristotle's account of substantial form and his essentialist ontology (Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* offers a famous example of this).

Now, if we keep this background in mind, then Andronicus and Boethus' philosophical positions become much less surprising. Andronicus actually takes up the early Peripatetic view and reads Xenocrates' definition of the soul as number against this background. So, apparently, Andronicus regarded Xenocrates' reference to 'number' as actually designating the harmony of constituents of the underlying body (see Them., *In De An.* 32.22–31). Boethus' rejection of the substantial status of form seems like the obvious consequence of this general view once it is adopted in the exegesis of Aristotle's *Categories*. For if form is nothing but the arrangement of the underlying body, then we must assume that it is just a quality inherent in the body and so that it must fall outside substance. Furthermore, we know that Boethus addressed some objections to Plato's *Phaedo* and these are closely reminiscent of Strato's earlier discussion.<sup>19</sup>

From this picture it emerges that the early commentators were probably reviving the philosophical stances and methods that characterised the early Peripatos during the fourth century BC. There is a major difference, however, since they combined these positions with exegetical work on Aristotle's treatises and this reflects a new situation. Scholars have convincingly argued that the genesis of a commentary tradition on Plato and Aristotle was somehow connected to the end of the philosophical schools in Athens and to the decentralisation of philosophy. Since there was no longer any institutional continuity with the scholarchs, Platonic and Aristotelian philosophers had to comment on their normative texts in order to justify their philosophical allegiance.<sup>20</sup> Commenting on Plato and Aristotle was an effective way to construe systematic readings of Plato and Aristotle capable of competing with Stoicism.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the genesis of commentary traditions certainly reflects the philosophical climate characterised by a return to the ancients which marked the decline of the Hellenistic schools.<sup>22</sup>

## Platonists and Peripatetics in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC

Andronicus and Boethus aim not only to reaffirm Aristotle's authority, but also to revive the philosophical traditions and debates of the fourth century BC. Interestingly, Boethus mentions the 'ancients' and he uses this expression to refer to

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19 On Strato, see Dam. (?), *In Phaed.* versio I.433 and 442 = Fr. 80.8–11 and 33–35 Sharples. On Boethus, see [Simpl.], *In De An.* 247.23–26. Discussion in Trabattoni (2011) and (2020).

20 See Sedley (2003).

21 See Donini (1994).

22 See Frede (1999), 784.

Aristotle:<sup>23</sup> this move is somewhat parallel to Antiochus' famous references to the 'ancients'. This does not entail that Aristotle was regarded as an infallible authority: as noted earlier, the early Peripatetic debates on Aristotle did not rule out criticisms and emendations. Furthermore, if my discussion thus far is plausible, early engagement with the ancients was not limited to Aristotle but extended to the early Peripatetics and, at least to a certain extent, to Plato and the Old Academy. From this point of view, all the various revivals of interest in Plato and Aristotle during the first century BCE shared some common ideological features (whatever of their philosophical interests). That there actually was some common ground between Platonic and Aristotelian philosophers at that time is interestingly shown by some well-known lines of Philodemus' *Index Academicorum* (xxxv.11–16) which report that Ariston and Cratippus, two students of Antiochus' and of his brother Aristus', 'became Peripatetics' (ἐγένοντο Περιπατη[τι-/κοὶ ...: xxxv.14–15).<sup>24</sup> It is at least possible that Ariston and Cratippus' move from Antiochus' Academy to the Peripatos was not perceived as a traumatic event and that it may even have been inspired by Antiochus' favourable attitude to Aristotle.<sup>25</sup> Such a conclusion lends further support to the idea that the philosophical panorama of the first century BC was fluid and that the boundaries between Platonism and Aristotelianism were permeable since, after all, both philosophical movements were characterised by the revival of fourth-century philosophical traditions.

Eudorus of Alexandria's interest in Aristotle can be read along the same lines.<sup>26</sup> His attitude was not so much that of an anti-Aristotelian opponent, as that of an opinionated reader of Aristotle who aimed to incorporate Aristotle's thought and works into a Platonist-Pythagorean background. Such an approach certainly did not rule out the presence of particular criticisms and objections, but by no means implied a rejection of Aristotle similar to what we can find in the anti-Aristotelian Platonist philosopher Atticus two centuries later. The second-century AD Platonist approach to Aristotle is certainly marked by the *querelle* about the harmony or disagreement between Plato and Aristotle: this debate apparently continued down to Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus' master in Alexandria (see Hierocles *apud*

23 See Simpl., *In Cat.* 41.28–29: 'Boethus says that for the ancients only thoughts [νοήσεις] are said and signified [ὁ δὲ Βόηθος μόνα λεγόμενα καὶ σημαίνόμενα τὰς νοήσεις εἶναι φησὶ παρὰ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις]'. The reference here is to Arist., *De An.* III.6, 430a26–28 (see also Dexippus, *In Cat.* 9.27–10.1). Further discussion in Menn (2018), 28–29. In Simpl., *In Cat.* 38.19–24 Boethus says that he understands 'synonyms' 'according to the usage of the ancients'. Here 'ancients' refers to Aristotle (and probably Speusippus), as opposed to the Stoics.

24 Text after Blank (2007); see also Chiaradonna and Rashed (2020a), 2–3.

25 See Chiaradonna (2013), 38–39. On Cratippus, see now Dorandi and Verde (2019).

26 See Chiaradonna (2009a) and (2013). The relevant sources are now collected and discussed in Boys-Stones (2018), 418–436 (Texts 15A–Q). An updated survey of the reception of Aristotle in Middle Platonism can now be found in Michalewski (2016). The reference discussion can be found in Karamanolis (2006).

Phot., *Bibl. cod.* 251, col. 461a24–39 = Ammonius T. 15 Schwyzer).<sup>27</sup> Alexander of Aphrodisias' reading of Aristotle can (at least partly) be seen as a systematic attempt to develop an interpretation of Aristotle capable of countering Platonic objections such as those raised by Taurus and Atticus. This is consistent with the fact that Alexander parted company with readings that dangerously blurred the distinction between Aristotle and the Old Academy: this explains his criticism of Xenocrates, which can be read as a tacit response to Andronicus.<sup>28</sup>

As a matter of fact, nothing really suggests that the same debates took place in the first century BC. At this time, I would argue, the discussion between Platonists and Aristotelians focused not so much on the differences between Plato and Aristotle, but rather on the different ways in which one could revive the philosophies of the 'ancients', in an effort to compete with the Hellenistic schools and particularly with the Stoics.

From these remarks, however, we should certainly not infer that Peripatetic and Platonic philosophers held the *same* views in the first century. Indeed, their ways of reviving the past were probably very different. To put it very simply, Eudorus of Alexandria and his followers adapted (and thus subordinated) Aristotle's philosophy to their Platonic-Pythagorising metaphysics. This is nicely shown, for example, by Ps.-Archytas' treatise *On the Universal Account*, which probably stems from Eudorus' milieu. The author argues that 'Man-in-itself' receives Aristotle's first category, i.e. the τὸ τί ἐστίν κατὰ τὰν ἰδέαν ([Arch.], *Cat.* 30.23–31.5).<sup>29</sup> Some later Platonising references to Aristotle's metaphysics as 'Aristotle's epoptics' in Plutarch and Clement of Alexandria possibly stem from the same philosophical milieu.<sup>30</sup> What happens in the early Peripatetic commentators is different or rather the reverse. Apparently, they incorporated Plato and the Old Academy and adapted them to a Peripatetic philosophical background, so that Plato and the Academy were actually subordinated to Aristotle. More precisely, they incorporated Plato and the Old Academics into a philosophical background shaped by an anti-essentialist reading of Aristotle, which was based on the approach developed by the early Peripatetics in the fourth century BC (i.e. the approach of philosophers like Aristoxenus, Dicaearchus, and Strato).

The clearest example of this situation is the testimony regarding Andronicus' view on the nature of the soul. This view apparently strips Xenocrates' theory of all its metaphysical implications and takes it to express the belief that the soul is the harmony of the constituents of the underlying body (to be more precise, Andronicus espouses a more sophisticated version of this view: see also Gal., *Quod animi mores* 4.26.9–27.1 Bazou = IV.782–783 Kühn = 4.44.12–20 Müller).<sup>31</sup> Even

27 For details, see now Michalewski (2016), 232–234, with further references. Hierocles' report is possibly based on Porphyry and raises a number of problems: see Chiaradonna (2016).

28 See Rashed (2004).

29 For a recent discussion, see Ulacco (2016), 206–210.

30 See Plut., *V. Alex.* 7.668A–B; Clem. Alex., *Strom.* I.28.176. See also Chiaradonna (2017).

31 For details, see Rashed (2004), 47 n. 82 and Sharples (2010), 247.



Andronicus' argument in favour of the bipartition of categories should probably be seen as implying not so much a rejection of Aristotle's division but rather a reform of it.<sup>32</sup> As for Boethus, his reference to Plato was ultimately meant to show the superiority of Aristotle's distinctive second definition of the *pros ti*. And Boethus' positive references to Speusippus were meant to supplement Aristotle's discussion of the 'onymies' and not to endorse Speusippus' metaphysical views. Scanty as it is, our extant evidence suggests that Boethus rejected Eudorus' metaphysical reading of the *Categories* and refused to read Aristotle's substance against the background of Plato's metaphysics.<sup>33</sup>

## Boethus and the monad

These remarks can perhaps shed light on a very difficult fragment from Boethus' lost commentary on the *Categories*. The passage comes from Simplicius' commentary on the *Categories*. There Simplicius focuses on some objections against the alleged completeness of Aristotle's list of categories. Among these objections, he mentions the one concerning the categorial status of the monad and the point. After mentioning Alexander's solution (the monad and the point should be placed among the relative), Simplicius says:

If, however, number is twofold – one incorporeal, the other corporeal – then, as Boethus too would say, the monad will also be twofold: one which is substance, and is in intelligible number – Aristotle also thinks that this one exists – and one which is a relative or quantified item. Later, however, Boethus says that perhaps it is better to call it a quantified item, for as whiteness is to white, so the dyad is to two. If, therefore, the former are both qualified, the latter are also quantified. (Simpl., *In Cat.* 65.19–24)<sup>34</sup>

Paul Moraux had already remarked that this passage is somewhat troublesome. Boethus' philosophical views cannot easily be reconciled with a theory of ideal numbers such as that which Simplicius seems to attribute to Boethus in these lines. Moraux, however, regards Simplicius' report as trustworthy and suggests that Boethus followed Speusippus also on this issue.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, Simplicius'

32 See Reinhardt (2007), 521–522. On Andronicus' distinctive Aristotelian reception of Xenocrates, see now Granieri (2019).

33 See Boethus *apud* Simpl., *In Cat.* 78.4–5. Discussion in Chiaradonna (2009a), 104.

34 Trans. Chase (2003). Εἰ δὲ διττὸς ὁ ἀριθμὸς, ὁ μὲν ἀσώματος, ὁ δὲ σωματικός, ἔσται, ὡς καὶ ὁ Βόηθος ἂν φαίη, καὶ ἡ μονὰς διττὴ, ἡ μὲν οὐσία, ἡ ἐν τῷ νοητῷ ἀριθμῷ (τοῦτο δὲ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλει δοκεῖ), ἡ δὲ πρὸς τι ποσόν. ὕστερον δὲ φησὶν ὁ Βόηθος μήποτε ἄμεινον εἶναι ποσὸν φάναι· ὡς γὰρ λευκότης ἔχει πρὸς λευκόν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ δυὰς πρὸς τὰ δύο· εἰ οὖν ἐκεῖνα ἄμφοι ποῖον, καὶ ταῦτα ποσόν.

35 See Moraux (1973), 155. For further details on the scholarly debate, see Griffin (2015), 127. See now Chiaradonna (2020b).

words (ὥς καὶ Βόηθος ἂν φαίη: Simpl., *In Cat.* 65.20) do not help to settle the matter and it remains uncertain whether his paraphrase can completely be trusted or not.

Simplicius refers to two different solutions proposed by Boethus. According to the first solution, Boethus distinguished between a substantial monad, which is in the realm of intelligible number, and a relative or quantified monad, which should obviously be placed in the sensible world. According to a second solution set out 'later', however, Boethus said that perhaps it is better to call 'it' a quantified item, for the dyad is to two as whiteness is to white. Accordingly, if both whiteness and white are qualified, then both the dyad and two are quantified. The Greek text at Simpl., *In Cat.* 65.14 runs as follows: ὕστερον δὲ φησιν ὁ Βόηθος μήποτε ἄμεινον εἶναι πῶσον φάναί. The subject of εἶναι πῶσον can plausibly be identified as the monad (more on this below). If this is the case, according to Boethus' second solution both the monad and the dyad are quantified items. Thus, given a couple of particulars, the dyad is the quantity that corresponds to the quantified predicate 'two'; given a single particular, the monad is the quantity that corresponds to the quantified predicate 'one'.

A first reading of Simplicius' passage would credit Boethus with a quasi-Speusippean doctrine that regards the intelligible monad as a substantial intelligible number. If the words τοῦτο δὲ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλει δοκεῖ (Simpl., *In Cat.* 65.21) stem from Boethus, then he suggested that Aristotle too held this view.<sup>36</sup> As for the sensible monad, Boethus first suggested that it should be equated with a relative or quantified item; then, on a second approach (ὕστερον), he suggested to regard it as a quantified item (thus ruling out the hypothesis that it is a relative). Note that according to this reading the subject of εἶναι πῶσον would be the *sensible* monad (as opposed to the intelligible and substantial one), which is first seen as a relative or a quantified item, and then is set in parallel with the dyad and seen as a quantified item. If this interpretation is correct, Boethus would be incorporating an Academic theory of intelligible numbers into his reading of Aristotle's *Categories*. An objection to this interpretation comes from another well-known passage where Simplicius reports that Boethus rejected the view that Aristotle's account of substance refers to the οὐσία νοητή: so he regarded the investigation of those who brought intelligible substance into the exegesis of Aristotle's *Categories* as redundant (Simpl., *In Cat.* 78.4–5). It is difficult to suppose that Boethus held this view but, at the same time, took Aristotle's substance to include intelligible numbers.

I would suggest, then, a different reading of the passage. Simplicius, or rather his source (Porphyry or Iamblichus), may be reporting Boethus' interpretation misleadingly. The first part of the fragment would thus contain not Boethus' view

<sup>36</sup> Kalbfleisch (1907) *in app.* refers to Arist., *A.Post.* I.27, 87a36 (there Aristotle mentions the definition of the monad as οὐσία ἄθετος). Chase (2003), 147 n. 733 suggests that Simplicius' reference may instead be to Aristotle's lost *On the Good*: this hypothesis would be supported by the reference to the dyad in what follows.

about the intelligible monad and the sensible, but a view reported by Boethus and later rejected in his commentary. According to this view, Aristotle's division of categories can account for the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible monad: the former is a substance while the latter is a quantity or a relative. This reading is similar to that in Ps.-Archytas' treatise, where 'Man-in-itself' is said to receive Aristotle's first category, i.e. the  $\tau\acute{o} \tau\acute{i} \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\acute{i}\nu \kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha} \tau\grave{\alpha}\nu \acute{i}\delta\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu$ . I would suggest that both readings have the same origin, i.e. the exegesis of Aristotle in Eudorus' circle.<sup>37</sup> If this is the case, Simplicius' words  $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron \delta\grave{\epsilon} \kappa\alpha\iota \acute{\Lambda}\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota \delta\omicron\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}$  (Simpl., *In Cat.* 65.21) would ultimately reflect the position of Boethus' opponents, i.e. those interpreters who did not refrain from ascribing a theory of intelligible numbers to Aristotle (but it could indeed be the case that these words reflect Simplicius' position, influenced by Iamblichus' Pythagorising reading of the *Categories*). Boethus' second solution would actually be Boethus' response to this reading. So, if not according to Simplicius, at least according to Boethus' original argument, we should identify the subject of  $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota \pi\omicron\sigma\acute{o}\nu$  not as the sensible monad (as distinct from the intelligible and substantial one), but with the monad *as such*. Boethus would be rejecting the rival interpretation according to which there are two levels to the monad (a substantial level and a quantified or relative level): against this view, Boethus claims that the monad is nothing but a quantified item. This reading can perhaps explain a puzzling detail in this passage, i.e. Boethus' reference to the dyad. In order to show that the monad is a quantified item, Boethus actually says that whiteness is to white as the dyad is to two. We would rather expect a reference to the monad. But if Boethus is rejecting a Pythagorising interpretation of the categories, then his reference to the dyad acquires an interesting polemical nuance. For Boethus would indirectly be suggesting that there is actually no difference between the status of the monad and that of the dyad. Both are quantified items that stand to the predicates 'one' and 'two' in the same way as whiteness stands to the predicate 'white'. Far from endorsing a reading of Aristotle along Platonic-Pythagorean lines, Boethus would actually be rejecting such a reading.

I would tentatively suggest that the second interpretation – speculative as it undoubtedly is – is the correct one. Indeed, we are forced to suppose that Simplicius (or his source) actually misunderstood Boethus' original argument. But the passage acquires a more satisfying meaning, which can both account for the reference to the dyad and be consistent with Boethus' general interpretation of the *Categories*. If this is the case, Simplicius' arrangement of the text may be

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<sup>37</sup> According to Eudorus' outline of the Pythagorean doctrine of principles (Simpl., *In Phys.* 181.7–30 = 3O Boys-Stones), there exist two levels of principles. The highest level is that of the One, later called *archê* and God. The secondary level is that of the Monad and the Dyad, later specified as *stoicheia*. See Bonazzi (2013), 171–179. Boethus' argument would focus on the second level of Eudorus' metaphysics and would critically equate the status of the monad and that of the dyad: both of them would be somewhat ironically downplayed to the status of quantified items.

somewhat misleading. Boethus would not exactly be responding to the objections of those who found no place for the monad in Aristotle's system.<sup>38</sup> Rather, Boethus would be countering those who aimed to incorporate Aristotle's list of categories into a Pythagorean account of principles. To be more precise, I would suggest that those Pythagorising interpretations (by Eudorus or someone else) run more or less as follows. Aristotle's division of categories needs to be supplemented, since there is no mention in it of the monad. From this perspective, Aristotle's list is certainly insufficient. However, Aristotle's division can be adapted and therefore incorporated into the Pythagorean account of principles, since the intelligible monad is actually a substance and the sensible monad is a relative or a quantified item. In doing so, Eudorus and his followers possibly aimed to integrate Aristotle's categories, while at the same time showing the superiority of their metaphysical views. Boethus adopts the opposite approach, since he makes use of Aristotle's account of quantified items in order to downplay the status of Pythagorean principles (the monad and the dyad): as a matter of fact, these are nothing else than quantified items that correspond to predicates of sensible objects ('one', 'two').

If the present discussion is correct, during the first century BC Platonic and Peripatetic philosophers tried to revive the legacy of fourth-century BC philosophy and to build – from different philosophical perspectives – something like a common front of ancient philosophers against the Hellenistic schools. This does not mean, however, that Platonic and Peripatetic philosophers held the same positions, for their ways of reviving the ancient traditions were very different and even opposite. Eudorus and his followers aimed to show the superiority of their Platonic-Pythagorean metaphysics when integrating Aristotle's doctrines into it. Andronicus and Boethus, instead, stripped their references to Plato and the Academics of theological and metaphysical connotations. Furthermore, Boethus probably criticised some Pythagorising readings of Aristotle. Andronicus and Boethus' readings of Aristotle and their attitude to the previous tradition are best explained against this background and should not be assessed against the background of later discussions.<sup>39</sup>

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38 My interpretation, then, is different from that in Griffin (2015), 122–124; 189 n. 34, who regards this passage as one of Boethus' replies to the 'Lucians' (i.e. the followers of Lucius), the Platonic-Pythagorean opponents of Aristotle, who found no place in Aristotle's system for the Monad. In his response, Boethus would be willing to acknowledge the reality of intelligible beings, such as intelligible numbers.

39 A fuller discussion of Boethus' passage on the Monad can be found in Chiaradonna (2020b). On Eudorus and the early reception of Aristotle's treatises, see also Chiaradonna (2019). I would like to thank the anonymous referee for some valuable comments on a previous draft of this chapter.