

Neoplatonic Word Classes that Designate Aristotle's Categories

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Abstract: The subject of this paper is the way that Neoplatonic commentators on Aristotle treat the word classes that designate the philosopher's categories. In the *Categories* Aristotle provides us with the first "model" of a conceptual classification. These classes are designated by specific linguistic utterances, the possible categorization of which has been puzzling thinkers and scholars ever since antiquity: why did the philosopher choose these specific terms for his categories? Neoplatonic philosophers who comment on the first logical treatise believe that only certain linguistic utterances can render Aristotle's ten classes and their approach emerges from: *i*) the treatment of the *Categories*' purpose, as related to the subject matter of *On Interpretation*; *ii*) their discussion of the 'parts of expression' (*lexis*) in connection with the grammatical 'parts of speech' (*logos*).

Keywords: Aristotle; Porphyry; Grammatical categories; Parts of speech; Word classes.

1. *The Categories, On Interpretation and their subject matters*¹

Neoplatonic views on Aristotle's categories are formulated on the basis of Porphyry's approach to the purpose of the respective treatise, a theory with a tremendous influence on the commentary literature, whether its representatives agreed with him or not².

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² Simplicius, e.g., who had at his disposal both Porphyry's commentaries on the *Categories*, i.e., the surviving *By question and Answer* and the lost *To Gedaleius*, believed

According to Porphyry, the first logical treatise's subject-matter is «the first imposition of words»³ (πρώτη θέσις τῶν ὀνομάτων)⁴, the first words that were established for things and were used from then onwards. As Porphyry describes, human beings were faced with the need to declare and signify things with their voice⁵. In the specific text, Porphyry doesn't deal with the distinction between language and inarticulate vocal sounds (ψόφοι), but the one between non-vocal and vocal designation of things via articulated human sounds⁶. Therefore, human beings used their articulated vocal sounds and decided to call something a «dog», something else a «pedestal», something else a «man», another thing «the sun», one colour «white», another colour «black», something else as a «number», another as a «size», etc. (Porph. *On Cat.* 57.23-9)⁷:

Thus his first use of linguistic expressions came to be to communicate each thing by means of certain words and expressions. In accordance with this relation between words and things, this thing here is called a 'chair', that a 'man', this a 'dog', that 'the sun', and again, this colour is called 'white', that 'black', and this is called 'number', that 'size', this 'two cubits', and that 'three cubits'. In this way words and expressions have been assigned to each thing which serve to signify and reveal that thing by employing particular sounds of the voice. (Strange, 1992/1887: 33)

According to Porphyry, the purpose of the *Categories* is vocal sounds «to the extent to which they *signify* things»⁸, not words

that Porphyry had rightly conceived of the *purpose* of the *Categories* (see Kotzia, 1992: 22, 100 ff). On the contrary, Philoponus (*On Cat.* 9.4-12), Olympiodorus (*On Cat.* 18.29-19.6) and Elias (*On Cat.* 129.10-11) did not consider Porphyry's views as fully right.

³ Porph. *On Cat.* 58.5 & 58.32-33.

⁴ Ὄνομα here has the sense of 'word'; ὄνομα is said in two ways in ancient linguistic thinking, as pointed out by Aristotle: *a*) it is every meaningful utterance; in this respect, ῥήματα are also ὀνόματα (they are rendered as such in *On Interpretation*); *b*) in the context of a *categorical statement*, a *name* designates the agent of a verb to the action of the verb, the *subject* (*On Interpretation* 16b19-20). For a more recent survey on the development of the term ὄνομα see Wouters - Swiggers (2014a).

⁵ Porph. *On Cat.* 57.20-23. The outlines of Ebbesen (1990: 382) and Kotzia (1992: 21-31) are in general followed here in approaching Porphyry's text.

⁶ When Porphyry refers to the distinction "ψόφος ≠ φωνή", he does it rather explicitly, as for example in his commentary on Ptolemy's *Harmonics* 7.8 ff.

⁷ Porphyry's stressing «also with his voice» is clarified when he uses the deictic phrase «τὸδετί», so as to explain that people named certain things which were before their eyes (see also 56.7-13).

⁸ For the specific concept see Ebbesen (1990: 143) and Kotzia (1992: 24 ff).

which differ among them in number, but according to the *genera* of things that they represent⁹. Therefore, Aristotle refers to a primary categorization of experiential data with the help of language, in his first logical work.

After the declaration of things, man passed on to another use of words: they reconsidered them, this time concerning their function within speech, a function which is related to their *form*. The ‘second imposition of names’ is a categorization of words according to this very function, which is no longer related to the representation of things, but to their *form* that renders them functional in particular ways. In fact, words preceded by an *article* were called ὀνόματα (‘names’)¹⁰, while those that could be inflected in a certain way were called ῥήματα (‘verbs’). This second “name-giving” resulted to the language by which mankind could now refer to language itself and not to things (Porph. *On Cat.* 57.29-58.4):

When certain expressions had been laid down as the primary tokens for things, man began to reflect upon the expressions that had been posited from another point of view, and saw that some were of such a kind as to be attached to certain articles: these he called ‘nouns’. Others, such as ‘walk’ and ‘walks’, he called ‘verbs’, indicating the qualitative differences between the two types of words by calling the one ‘nouns’ and the other ‘verbs’. (Strange, 1992/1887: 33-4)

Only *names* and *verbs* are included in the ‘second imposition of words’¹¹, but it is extremely important to emphasize that this is not a *grammatical theory*: Porphyry’s *metalanguage* expresses a very different perspective, by classifying *names* and *verbs* together, based exclusively on the fact that they render human beings capable of referring to language¹².

⁹ Porph. *On Cat.* 58. 3-8.

¹⁰ The term ‘names’ is preferred here to translate ὀνόματα, since this is the way by which the ancient Greek word is rendered for Porphyry’s theory in all the foreign translations and commentaries, rightfully, in my opinion. A ‘noun’ is the specific part of speech, while Porphyry does not mean that, since he also refers to, e.g., *white* which is an adjective. It would be wrong here to use terminology from the later grammatical parts of speech, as it is also explained below, where it is specified that this is not a grammatical distinction.

¹¹ Regarding the term ῥήμα see section 3 below.

¹² See also Amm. *On Cat.*, 11.15-12.1. John Philoponus also notes that the action of *imposing a name* on each thing did not automatically lead to any kind of distinction between *names* and *verbs*, which was a further step (*On Cat.* 11.34-12.3).

Porphry's source for the distinction between words as signifying things and words as utterances was probably Theophrastus¹³, but this specific discussion goes beyond the scope of the present treatment. What interests us at this point is that Porphyry's theory on the 'first' and the 'second imposition of names' functions as a hermeneutic tool for the Neoplatonic commentators to approach the purpose of both the first two logical treatises, i.e., the *Categories* and *On Interpretation*. Porphyry considers that not all words are examined in the *Categories*, but only «simple vocal sounds which signify things», i.e., words to the extent that they represent something, while *On Interpretation* focuses on *names, verbs* and *sentences* (speech = λόγος) which can be rendered as *true* or *false*: the 'second imposition of words' is the subject matter of Aristotle's *On Interpretation*¹⁴.

2. Aristotle's categories as designated by the 'basic parts of speech'

Given that the revisiting of the words that designate Aristotle's categories results to names and verbs according to Porphyry, we are led to the following question: what kind of utterances can actually represent Aristotle's categories?¹⁵ We get useful information on Porphyry's discussion by Simplicius in his respective commentary. Simplicius points out that Porphyry testifies – probably in his lost commentary – that Boethus¹⁶ discussed this particular issue by concluding that *names* and *verbs* belong to *logos*, while *conjunctions* belong to *lexis* (Simpl. *On Cat.* 11.23-9):

¹³ Simplicius refers to Theophrastus' work *On the Elements of Logos* and remarks that there were other philosophers before Theophrastus who were interested in this topic, although he does not name them: Simpl. *On Cat.* 10.23-25:fr. 683 Fortenbaugh; see also Ax, 2000: 78 ff. See Huby, Sharples, Fortenbaugh – Gutas (2007: 21-2). It is difficult to trace Theophrastus' sources, which were probably Peripatetic [see Ax (1986, n. 289); also Ax (2000: 82)].

¹⁴ Porph. *On Cat.* 58.33-7; see Kotzia (1992: 22-8).

¹⁵ For a study on the way that Aristotle seems to suggest new terms in general see Chriti (2018).

¹⁶ Boethus was a student of Andronicus of Rhodes and Head of the Peripatos School (1st cent. BC). On Boethus see Barnes *et al.* (1991: 6).

Porphyry also adds the remarks of Boethus, which are full of sharp-wittedness and tend in the same direction as what has been said. He too says that with regard to nouns and verbs, the division takes place as far as the elements of speech (*logos*), but according to the categories the division takes place in so far as expressions (*lexeis*) have a relation to beings, since they are significant of the latter. “This”, he says, “is the reason why conjunctions, although they are to be found within the vocabulary (*lexis*), fall outside the categories. For they do not indicate any being, not substance, nor the qualified, nor anything of the kind” (Chase, 2003/1907: 27).

Boethus says that the distinction between a *name* and a *verb* concerns the ‘elements of speech’, i.e., the parts of a *categorical statement* in *On Interpretation*, and he stresses that this distinction is not identified with Aristotle’s classification in the *Categories*, since categories express the relation between words and things. What is understood in Boethus’ text is that: *i*) *names* and *verbs* are considered as vocal sounds that represent things on the one hand in the *Categories* and ‘elements of speech’ on the other hand, regarding Aristotle’s treatment in *On Interpretation*: in the one case the specific word-classes are treated as mere *signifiers*, while in the other one they are treated as belonging to a *metalanguage*; *ii*) utterances that are neither names nor verbs do not belong to *logos* but to *lexis* and they are not considered to represent Aristotle’s categories: thus, *conjunctions* do not represent, e.g., a “substance” or a “quality”, etc. The sentence «that is why conjunctions...» erases any doubt that names and verbs are considered as the subject matter of the *Categories*, since it comes as a conclusion: the only way to conclude that «that is why conjunctions are excluded from the categories» when it is previously said that «the division into names and verbs takes place...», is to state that «names and verbs are the only vocal sounds to represent categories».

Boethus’ discussion involves the consideration of *lexis* and *logos*. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle investigates the parts of *lexis*, that is, of ‘linguistic utterance’: the term λέξις had already been used in the same sense by Plato, who is considered to have inaugurated the distinction between ‘linguistic expression’ and ‘content’¹⁷. In the

¹⁷ In 1450b13-5 of the *Poetics*, *lexis* is defined as “linguistic utterance in poetry and prose”. The term λέξις mainly means ‘linguistic utterance’ in Plato, in contrast to ‘content’ [*Republic* 392c6; see Waterfield (1993: 87-8)]. The suggestion that the term λέξις means ‘linguistic utterance’ in Plato is adopted by Hamilton & Cairns in their comments

3rd Book of the *Rhetoric* (*On Lexis* [Περί λέξεως]), Aristotle deals with the prose of literature and evokes the *Poetics* for the discussion of poetic language¹⁸. In the *Poetics*, the «parts of linguistic expression» are defined as *element, syllable, conjunction, name, verb, article, declension* and *speech*¹⁹. As Swiggers - Wouters stress, these *parts* do not constitute homogeneous classes, but reflect the levels of a range of composite vocal sounds²⁰. We are not dealing with the grammatical classes of the Hellenistic era, because Aristotle is interested in treating *utterances* which are ‘articulated meaningful vocal sounds’²¹.

The later Stoic theory on the ‘parts of speech’ was the basis for the formulation of all related grammatical theories²² and the Stoic pair *lexis - logos* is a fundamental one for the ancient linguistic reflection. Our basic source for the Stoic approaches is Diogenes Laertius, who exposes the relevant theories in the famous *Diocles fragment*, which is included in the *Life of Zenon*²³. According to Laertius, the term *lexis* is used by the Stoics in two senses, the one of ‘linguistic expression’ and the other of the Modern Greek

on the *Statesman* (277c4), on the *Charmides* (160c6), on the *Theaetetus* (204c6) and on the *Sophist* (204c6; 1961: 1043, 106, 911 and 968 respectively).

¹⁸ *Rhet.* 1372a1-2, 1404a35 ff. According to Dupont-Roc - Lallot (1980: 307-9, 314), Aristotle avails himself of the Platonic term and distinction between ‘linguistic expression’ and ‘content’, treating *lexis* as the whole of the means of linguistic expression and adjusting the term in his *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* following the aim of each treatise. See also Lucas (1968: 199); Halliwell (1987: 345); Grintser (2002: 74).

¹⁹ *Poet.* 1456b20-1.

²⁰ See Swiggers - Wouters (2002b: 125).

²¹ The term *lexis* presupposes the phonetic matter, along with the form; however, when Aristotle treats *lexis*, he has in mind the types of ‘linguistic utterance’ not from the phonetic point of view, but as representing particular ‘contents’: see Dupont-Roc - Lallot (1980: 311-2).

²² E.g., Dion. Thrax *Techne Grammatike* 1.23.1-2, with details in chapters 11 and 12; see Lallot (1998: 123-5). See also Robins (1988); Swiggers-Wouters (2002: 130); Matthaios (2002).

²³ It is a fragment from the Hellenistic doxographer Diocles of Magnesia (1st cent. BC), and its subject is the “Topos on the voice”, the first part of the Stoic dialectics. As Hülser (1987, II.3.1) highlights, the Stoics aspire to define the concept of ‘logos’ via a dividing procedure which begins from the voice. On Diocles see Schenkeveld, 1994: 301; on the issue of whether Diogenes draws directly upon Diocles, see Mansfeld, 1986: 351 ff. Diocles’ exposition is based on the work of Diogenes of Babylon entitled *Technical Treatise on Voice* (Diog. Laert. VII, 55-60 Long = SVF II.140 = Hülser 476; see below. See also Ax (1986: 150, n. 53) and (1986: 152, nn. 66, 67). This Diogenes was the successor to Chrysippus (230-150 B.C.) as the head of the Stoa.

sense of ‘word’ (Modern Greek ‘λέξιη’)²⁴. As he explains, *lexis* is a meaningful utterance in discourse, e.g., “It is day”. Voice and linguistic expression differ between them since voice can be the mere sound, while expression can’t be anything but articulate. Another distinction is that between ‘utterance’ and *logos*: an ‘utterance’ can be meaningless, while *logos* always signifies something. That is why an utterance can just be *emitted*, while *logos* is always *said*. As meaningless are cited articulated sequences with no signified content and not utterances which are neither names nor verbs²⁵.

To return to Simplicius²⁶, conjunctions are parts of *lexis* and do not represent any of Aristotle’s categories: of course, only conjunctions are cited here, but we should pay attention to Porphyry’s narration of the ‘second imposition of words’ that articles existed at the same time with or pre-existed names, so that the latter could be joined with them²⁷. This means that in his surviving text we have Porphyry implying the auxiliary function of articles, which simply help to determine whether a vocal sound is a name or not and this makes two classes of utterances that are excluded from designating Aristotle’s categories in the discussion by Boethus, Porphyry and Simplicius: conjunctions and articles.

Be that as it may, it seems that only names and verbs as “signifying vocal sounds” can declare Aristotle’s categories according to Boethus, Porphyry and Simplicius. The same discussion is testified to in another commentary, later than Porphyry’s and earlier than Simplicius’, which is not cited by the latter at this very point, although in many other cases²⁸: Dexippus in his commentary on the *Categories* states that only words that can function as terms of a categorical statement are examined by Aristotle in the *Categories*²⁹ (i.e., *names* and *verbs*). Dexippus uses the verb *co-signify* (συσημαίνει,

²⁴ Also in the writings of the Grammarians, the term λέξις expresses the Modern Greek concept of ‘word’ (λέξιη) as a part of speech (λόγος): see Lallot (1998: 120-2); Matthaios (2007).

²⁵ Diog. Laert. 7.56.3-7.57.5 Long.

²⁶ Simpl. *On Cat.* 10.26 ff.

²⁷ See right above, Porph. *On Cat.* 57.29-58.4.

²⁸ See, e.g., Dex. *On Cat.* 12.6-10 ≈ Porph. In Simpl. 10.28-11.1; Dex. 11.11 ≈ Porph. in Simpl. 10.26 and Boeth in Simpl. 11.27-28.

²⁹ Dex. *On Cat.* 12.16 ff.

συσσημαίνουσι)³⁰, a verb probably used by Theophrastus³¹, for vocal sounds which do not signify in their own right, referring to conjunctions which are paralleled with glue, functioning just to bond the main constituents of something³². Dexippus dedicates a whole chapter to the identity of the words which are investigated in the first logical treatise and, notwithstanding his absence from Simplicius' discussion, we can't exclude that Simplicius' and Dexippus' source may have been Porphyry's *To Gedaleius*.

3. Aristotle's list of terms in the *Categories*: complete or not?

Dexippus is in accordance with Boethus, who notes that the division which is made by Aristotle in the *Poetics* concerns the constituents of *logos*, and the division in the *Categories* regards the relation between words and beings. This "ontological" connection between the categories of beings and particular word-classes is where the issue of whether Aristotle's categories represent a grammatical classification or not originates from. It was discussed in antiquity: the correspondence of these categories to certain parts of speech had an impact on several ancient scholiasts and commentators, and some of them, according to Simplicius, like Lucius (a Platonist of the 2nd cent. AD, who wrote the work *Queries* [Ἀπορίαι] with questions mainly directed against some of Aristotle's views), argued that the philosopher's list was incomplete, because it did not include, for example, conjunctions, articles, declension, etc.³³

The relation between philosophical treatments of word-classes and the established parts of speech had already intrigued the Middle-Platonist Plutarch (1st cent. AD). Taking his start from Plato's *Sophist*³⁴, Plutarch raises the question as to why Plato recognizes only two 'parts of speech', while Homer includes all the parts of

³⁰ Dex. *On Cat.* 32.20-22.

³¹ See Simplicius *On Cat.* 10.23-30: Simplicius refers to Theophrastus' positions on utterances which only contribute to the expression of content.

³² 32.30 ff. See also 64.24-65.1.

³³ Of course declension is not a part of speech, but this is the position of Lucius. Concerning this discussion see also Ackrill (1968: 78-9).

³⁴ *Platonic Questions* 262c; see above.

speech in only one verse (*Iliad*, 1.185)³⁵. Plutarch distinguishes two categories of words, those which can be joined and result in *dialect* and *speech*, i.e., ὄνομα and ῥήμα, and those which contribute to speech in a supplementary way, just as salt supplies food with better taste and water contributes to the mixing of dough³⁶.

This specific discussion is echoed in the writings of Simplicius' teacher, Ammonius, who argues that only names, pronouns (which are also considered to be names), verbs and participles (which are also considered to be verbs) can constitute an elementary *categorical statement*, which is the subject matter of *On Interpretation*; the rest of the linguistic utterances simply *co-signify*³⁷. Simplicius³⁸ and Philoponus also use the verb συσσημαίνειν to express the belief that utterances such as conjunctions³⁹ only mean something when they are *co-uttered* with other utterances⁴⁰.

Simplicius defends Aristotle's list in the *Categories* and stresses that Aristotle had the intention of including meaningful utterances and not the utterances that just *co-signify*⁴¹. Simplicius compares the utterances that *co-signify* to the symbols of Ancient Greek aspiration in the written word: these have a secondary importance, as he points out, because they are added after a word is written. Even if it is accepted that conjunctions and articles do signify, it has to be clarified that this only happens in conditions of *composition*, when they are co-ordered with other utterances in speech. The same applies for articles, which declare *gender* and not *being*. Simplicius also uses the glue-parallel⁴², explaining that utterances which co-signify do not constitute elements of speech, but

³⁵ *Platonic Questions* 1010b1 ff: «αὐτὸς (pronoun) ἰὼν (participle) κλισίηνδε (name + preposition), τὸ (article) σὸν γέρας· ὄφρ' (conjunction) εὖ (adverb) εἰδήξ (verb)».

³⁶ *Platonic Questions* 1010c7-9.

³⁷ Amm. *On Int.* 11.8 ff. See also *On Int.* 32.31: «τῶν δὲ ὀνομάτων οὐδαμῶς τὰ μέρη σημαίνει, καθάπερ ἢ αν συλλαβὴ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἄνθρωπος ὀνόματος, ἀλλὰ συσσημαίνειν».

³⁸ Simpl. *On Cat.* 10.20-23.

³⁹ Conjunction is an utterance in the sense of any expressive articulated vocal sound. Conjunctions, prepositions etc. are considered as linguistic utterances and not simple vocal sounds, which can also be non-articulated, such as a cry.

⁴⁰ Simpl. *On Cat.*, 64.20 ff.; see also 64.24; Philop. *On Cat.*, 43.20-21.

⁴¹ In modern research, Lallot - Ildefonse (2002: 23-4) in opposing the views of Trendelenburg and Benveniste have convincingly argued that the variety of "signifiers" that Aristotle uses shows that he already had in mind a series of pre-existing concepts.

⁴² Simpl. *On Cat.*, 64.24.

elements of expression: glue is not part of the paper, but its role is auxiliary. This means that, Simplicius continues, conjunctions are uttered (ἐκφωνοῦνται) and not spoken (λέγονται), since speech only comprises what signifies and not what co-signifies (Simpl. *On Cat.*, 64.24-65.1):

For conjunctions also co-signify when they are with the other parts of speech; in this they are similar to glue. In the third place, conjunctions are not even elements of speech, but at best they are parts of the vocabulary (*lexis*), just as glue is not a part of paper. Thus they are not even said but at best are merely enunciated. Moreover, it should be said that even if conjunctions do signify, and are agreed to be lexically significant, it is by virtue of syntax and combination that they signify. Here, however, the discussion (*logos*) is about things without combination. They also inquire about where articles are to be placed, but the same reasoning (*logos*) applies to them as well. After all, these things [sc. articles] are like conjunctions [...] (Transl. M. Chase)

Let us recapitulate: Boethus, Dexippus, Porphyry and Simplicius identify the terms of the *Categories* with names and verbs. The *Categories* have as subject matter the words which express things but these words are only names and verbs according to these philosophers' views, because the two word-classes are the only ones that signify something in their own right. That is why Aristotle doesn't include, e.g., conjunctions in his list, because his treatise is not linguistic but logical/ontological and, the only word-classes which can represent beings are names and verbs. Conjunctions which are considered as 'parts of *lexis*' are not viewed as 'parts of speech' and names and verbs which can represent Aristotle's categories are approached to as 'parts of speech'.

4. *The impact of the grammatical tradition*

These commentators also had the writings of the Grammarians at their disposal, where the treatment of names and verbs as the 'basic parts of speech' is in process. It seems that the Grammarians took over from the Peripatetics the concept of the 'sovereignty' of names and verbs among the 'parts of speech', as the former testify that the Peripatetics looked into the question of whether the specific word-classes play the main role in speech or not: in the *Scholía* on Dionysius Thrax it is stated that «for the Peripatetics, only

ὄνομα and ῥήμα are μέρη τοῦ λόγου», and all other utterances are used «for purposes of conjunction (ἔνεκα συνδέσεως)»⁴³.

Apollonius Dyscolus in his works *On Adverbs* and *On Syntax* refers to ὄνομα and ῥήμα as «the most primary» parts of speech by using the terms θεματικώτερα ('primarily order-related')⁴⁴ and θεματίζω ('place in order')⁴⁵; the rest of the parts of speech have an auxiliary role, since they facilitate the construction of speech. In *On Syntax*, Apollonius characterizes names and verbs as «the most animate parts» of speech (τὰ ἐμψυχότατα μέρη), and enumerates the «adverbial parts» of speech that express *quantity, size, origin, manner, frequency, place*, etc.⁴⁶ Apollonius looks into the 'fundamental role' of ὄνομα and ῥήμα to a significant extent, and his treatment concerns not only the 'basic parts of speech' but the order of all the parts as well as the possible combinations among them. This view of the *ruling* of names and verbs over the rest of the "parts of speech" is reflected in the *Grammar* of Priscian⁴⁷ and in the *Scholia* on the *Techne* by Dionysius Thrax⁴⁸.

The conception of the basic role of ὀνόματα and ῥήματα, as well as of the auxiliary role of the rest of the parts of linguistic utterance is crucial to the Neoplatonic treatment; what Simplicius says in his commentary on the *Categories* about the comparison of conjunctions and articles to aspiration and the function of glue on paper was also discussed by Ammonius: only a name and a verb belong to λόγος, while other utterances belong to *lexis*. Ammonius comments on Aristotle's treatment of ὄνομα and ῥήμα by explaining that the philosopher divides into names and verbs all the vocal sounds which signify natures, persons, activities and passions, i.e., the utterances that designate the categories⁴⁹; those

⁴³ *In Art. Dion.* 515.19; as Lallot says (1998: 231), the last position of the conjunction in the 'parts of speech' by Dionysius Thrax suggests in particular a kind of "margin-alization".

⁴⁴ Apol. Dyc. *On Adverbs* 122.29-32.

⁴⁵ *LSJ s.v.* θεματικός, 'principle'.

⁴⁶ Apol. Dyc. *On Syntax* 28.4-8. See also *On Syntax* 16.12-17.4. For a thorough discussion see Luhtala (2011: 479-80).

⁴⁷ *GL II* 551.18-552.17 and *GL* 515.19-521.37. Priscian's reference to the two 'basic parts of speech' can be directly traced to Apollonius, who is – admittedly – his main source (Luhtala, 2011: 109).

⁴⁸ 31.23.25; see Luhtala (2003: 218-22). See also *On Syntax* 17.6 ff.

⁴⁹ Amm. *On Int.* 12.16-8.

which are neither names nor verbs, regardless of their position in a sentence, are not ‘basic parts of speech’. Ammonius explains that these excluded utterances declare *whether the predicate applies or not*, or *when it applies*, or *how*, or *how often* (ποσάκις), or, in general, if there is any other type of relation between the subject and the predicate; this means that such utterances play a “secondary role” in the construction of a sentence. For this reason, as Ammonius believes, Aristotle does not consider them to be ‘basic parts of speech’ in *On Interpretation*⁵⁰.

5. Concluding remarks

Neoplatonic philosophers and commentators on Aristotle Porphyry, Dexippus and Simplicius are convinced that names and verbs are the vocal sounds which render Aristotle’s categories and can also construct a categorical statement, a view which takes us back to the Peripatetic Boethus. From their angle, this is the reason why Aristotle examines names and verbs in his first two logical treatises from different perspectives, according to each work’s subject matter: in the *Categories* these word-classes are investigated to the extent that they signify things (Porphyry’s ‘first imposition’) and in *On Interpretation* they are considered as functioning within speech (‘second imposition’). The Neoplatonists’ research is developed within the scope of a crucial linguistic distinction, that between language as representing things and relating vocal sounds to reality, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, linguistic utterances as referring to other linguistic units, a distinction which

⁵⁰ Amm. *On Int.* 12.16-24. The utterances which are neither names nor verbs are compared by Ammonius with the material, such as nails, tar and fabric, which is used to join together the wooden members of a ship. No matter how much tar or how many nails we have, we can never construct a ship without the wooden parts. The same goes for conjunctions, articles etc., which function like nails, tar and fabric: no matter how many conjunctions or articles we put together, there can never be a sentence (= speech; Amm. *On Int.* 12.20-30 & 12.30-13.6). The ship-metaphor is considered to belong to the Peripatetic tradition (Apollonius Dyscolus was aware of the glue simile also as Peripatetic: fragmenta GG 2.3, 31) and occurs in two Latin texts: *a*) in *Περί ἑρμηνείας* or *Peri hermeneias* or *De Interpretatione* (2nd cent. AD) the attribution of this text to Lucius Apuleius has been questioned (see Londey-Johanson, 1987: 3); *b*) in Priscian’s *Grammar*. See generally Londey-Johanson (1987: 85); Luhtala (2005: 129-37).

may evoke Theophrastus. This specific treatment is related to the concept of the “sovereignty” of names and verbs as ‘basic parts of speech’, which may be traced to the *Scholía* on Dionysius Thrax, as well as to *On Adverbs* and *On Syntax* of Apollonius Dyscolus. The position that the basic parts of speech are *names* and *verbs* is formulated by Ammonius and Simplicius and it is highly possible that the Neoplatonic commentators also use the idea of the ‘auxiliary’ function of conjunctions and articles as it is insinuated in Aristotle’s texts, which they combine with the term συσσημαίνειν (‘co-signifying’). The Neoplatonists adopt the Stoic position that *logos* is meaningful utterance, while *lexis* is every utterance, but they differentiate themselves as regards what utterance is not meaningful: for them, conjunctions are φωναὶ ἄσημοι and belong to λέξις, not to λόγος, since they are neither verbs nor names.

Consequently, as regards the Neoplatonic discussion we are dealing with a multileveled reflection, the strands of which reveal the variety of integrated influences from previous philosophical theories: Peripatetic, Stoic, grammatical etc. Nevertheless, having as a starting point the approach to the categories as signified by *names* and *verbs*, it would be of high interest to examine these particular ten terms as such, given that the terms of the categories also comprise substantivized forms. Such a sustained study may afford scholarship a glimpse of what the commentators believed that a name or a verb can actually be. Let us hope that such a research is yet to follow.

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