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**Classifying Knowledge and Cognates:  
On Aristotle’s *Categories* VIII, 11a20-38 and Its Early Reception**

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Aristotle, in Chapter VII of his *Categories*, classifies habits and dispositions, as well as knowledge, among relatives. However, in Chapter VIII of the *Categories*, he affirms that habits, including knowledge, and dispositions, including unstable knowledge, are qualities. Thus, habits and dispositions in general, and knowledge in particular, seem to be subject to a “dual categorization”. At the end of Chapter VIII of the treatise, the issue of the dual categorization is explicitly raised. How can one and the same thing be a quality and a relative? Aristotle gives two distinct solutions to this problem. Both have been criticized by some modern commentators: these solutions would amount to a rejection of the basic principles of the categorial system and, as such, to a sort of philosophical suicide. However, Aristotle’s early commentators, notably the Greek Neoplatonists and Boethius, made attempts to render both solutions plausible and compatible with the rest of the doctrine. Their attempts are not only of exegetical interest, they also contain some significant philosophical analyses concerning the categories. In what follows, I will present the abovementioned problem of dual categorization in Aristotle and the two solutions offered to it in *Categories* VIII, 11a20-38. I will then turn to

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<sup>1</sup> This article was written in the context of the SNF research project “Dispositions and Relations in Late Ancient and Early Medieval Philosophy”, University of Lausanne (SNF 152884). As part of this project, an anthology, in French, of Antic and Medieval commentaries on Chapter VII of Aristotle’s *Categories* is in preparation, under the direction of Christophe Erismann and Jocelyn Groisard, and the working translations of Jocelyn Groisard (Porphyry, Ammonius, Simplicius, and Olympiodorus) and Charles Girard (Boethius) were very useful to me when preparing this article. I am grateful to an anonymous referee of this journal for his comments on a previous version of this article. Besides, I wish to thank greatly Alessandra Lukinovich for her precious help in Ancient Greek. Finally, I thank Nicole Osborne for having checked my English.

the early reception of this text, and focus on the way the Greek Neoplatonists and Boethius tried to make Aristotle's solutions more plausible. Throughout, I will try to establish in what sense habits and dispositions in general, and knowledge in particular, are relative. I will conclude with some remarks on the later reception of *Categories* VIII, 11a20-38 and on the problem of the ontological status of mental acts and states.

## I. Aristotle's *Categories* VIII, 11a20-38

In the beginning of Chapter VII of his *Categories*, Aristotle affirms that habit (ἕξις), disposition (διάθεσις), sensation (αἴσθησις), knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and position (θέσις) are relatives (πρός τι)<sup>2</sup>. Later in the chapter, he holds that every piece of knowledge is the knowledge “of a knowable” (ἐπιστητοῦ), just as every sensation is the sensation “of a sensible” (αἰσθητοῦ)<sup>3</sup>. In other words, knowledge, like sensation, is always of an “object”<sup>4</sup>. Yet, knowledge being a habit, unstable knowledge being a disposition<sup>5</sup>, and all habits and dispositions being relative, knowledge and unstable knowledge, besides being relative like sensation, are seemingly also relative like habits and dispositions in general. Following J. Ackrill and K. Oehler<sup>6</sup>, there are two ways to explain why habits and dispositions in general, as well as positions, are included among relatives. The first is to say that habits, dispositions and positions are relative in the sense that they are always of a “subject” (*Zugrundeliegendes*)<sup>7</sup>. The other is to affirm that habits,

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<sup>2</sup> *Cat.* VII, 6b1-6, and *Categories*, transl. J. L. Ackrill, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, J. Barnes (ed.), 2 vol., Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 1984 (Bollinger Series 71.2). For “ἕξις” and “διάθεσις”, instead of the standard translations “state” and “condition”, I will follow F. Ildefonse and J. Lallot's “*habitus*” and “*disposition*” (ARISTOTE, *Catégories*, transl. and comm. F. Ildefonse – J. Lallot, Seuil, Paris 1986 [Points. Essais]), in order to keep the idea of “having” in “ἕξις”'s translation, as well as the lexical proximity between “διάθεσις” and “θέσις” in their translations.

<sup>3</sup> See *Cat.* VII, 6b34-35 and more broadly 7b22-8a12.

<sup>4</sup> See also *Met.* Δ, 15, 1021a26-1021b3, where Aristotle admits three classes of relations – relations “according to number” (κατ' ἀριθμόν), relations “according to potency” (κατὰ δύναμιν), and relations between the “measure” (μέτρον) and the “measurable” (μετρητόν) – and includes knowledge, sensation and “thought” (διάνοια) in the third class. The term “object”, which I use for the sake of commodity, is not found explicitly in Aristotle, but has medieval origins. On these questions, see O. BOULNOIS, *Être, luire et concevoir. Note sur la genèse et la structure de la conception scotiste de l'esse objective*, «Collectanea Franciscana» 60, 1990, pp. 117-135, and, more generally, A. DE LIBERA, *Archéologie du sujet I. Naissance du sujet*, Vrin, Paris 2007 (Histoire de la philosophie), pp. 133-154.

<sup>5</sup> For unstable knowledge as a disposition, see *Cat.* VIII, 9a4-8.

<sup>6</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, transl. and comm. J. L. Ackrill, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1993 (Clarendon Aristotle Series), ad 6a36 and ARISTOTELES, *Kategorien*, transl. and comm. K. Oehler, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1986, ad 6a36 sq.

<sup>7</sup> A similar point is made by A. Trendelenburg, who thinks that Aristotle admits among relatives things linked by a “subjective genitive”, more precisely by the genitive of the “possessor” (*Genitiv des Subjectes, z. B. des Besitzers*) (F. A. TRENDELENBURG, *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre*, vol. 1, G. Bethge, Berlin 1846, pp. 119-121). Moreover, Sten Ebbesen holds that Aristotle, in Chapters VII and VIII of the *Categories*, is confused by the fact that: “Knowledge, ἐπιστήμη in Greek, is a deverbative noun. The verb ‘to know’ is divalent, i.e. it requires two arguments, a subject and an object. Basically the same applies to the derived noun, knowledge

dispositions and positions are relative in the sense that they must be “specified”: for example, there are habits *of* virtue, there are, in turn, virtues *of* justice, *of* temperance, etc.<sup>8</sup>. However, as J. Ackrill and K. Oehler also underscore, both solutions entail problems. According to the first solution, every accident would be a relative, since every accident is *of* a “subject”. According to the second solution, every genus would be a relative, since every genus has species. In both cases, relatives would not be limited to one category, but would play a transcategorical role. Thus, it seems like a problematic idea to admit habits, dispositions and positions among relatives for such reasons. Aristotle, in *Physics* VII, 3, again mentions the relativity of habits, both bodily and psychic<sup>9</sup>. He holds that bodily virtuous habits, such as “health” (ὕγεια), are “a blending of hot and cold elements in due proportion, in relation either to one another within the body or to the surrounding”<sup>10</sup>. Following Simplicius, psychic virtuous habits, for example temperance, could be understood similarly, in that they are “due proportions” of “emotions” (θυμοί) and “appetites” (ἐπιθυμίας)<sup>11</sup>. As for vicious habits, like disease and intemperance, these would not be “due proportions” (συμμετρία), but “disproportions” (ἀσυμμετρία) of the same elements<sup>12</sup>. *Mutatis mutandis*, these considerations could also apply to dispositions<sup>13</sup>. Thus, even if *Physics* VII cannot explain the relativity of positions, since there is seemingly neither “due proportion” nor “disproportion” in them, it could at least solve the difficulties raised by J. Ackrill and K. Oehler concerning the relativity of habits and dispositions<sup>14</sup>. At any rate, knowledge is probably relative *like* all other habits and dispositions, i.e. for the same reason

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must be somebody’s knowledge of something” (S. EBBESEN, *A Porretanean and a Nominalis on Relations*, unpublished talk, given at the conference “The Logic and Ontology of Relations in the 12th Century”, Lausanne, March 2012). These interpretations seem to be confirmed by *Top.* IV, 4, 124b32-34, where Aristotle says that knowledge is not only relative to an “object”, but, as an habit or a disposition, relative by being “of the soul” (ψυχῆς).

<sup>8</sup> For the examples, see *Cat.* VIII, 8b33 and 11a27-28, transl. J. Ackrill. See also ARISTOTLE, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, comm. J. L. Ackrill, *op. cit.*, ad 6a36.

<sup>9</sup> See *Phys.* VII, 3, 245b3-248a9.

<sup>10</sup> ἐν κράσει καὶ συμμετρίᾳ θερμῶν καὶ ψυχρῶν τίθεμεν, ἢ αὐτῶν πρὸς αὐτὰ τῶν ἐντὸς ἢ πρὸς τὸ περιέχον (*Phys.* VII, 3, 246b5-6, and *Physics*, transl. R. P. Hardie – R. K. Gaye, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, *op. cit.*).

<sup>11</sup> See SIMPLICIUS, *In Phys.*, CAG X, ed. H. Diels, 1071.18-30, and *On Aristotle. Physics* 7, transl. and comm. Ch. Hagen, Duckworth, London 1994 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle).

<sup>12</sup> See SIMPLICIUS, *In Phys.*, CAG X, ed. H. Diels, 1067.5-10, and 1071.18-30 again, transl. Ch. Hagen.

<sup>13</sup> Note that “health”, given as an example of bodily virtuous “habit” by Aristotle in *Phys.* VII, 3, is a disposition according to *Cat.* VIII, 8b35-37.

<sup>14</sup> For the interpretation of all habits and dispositions, including knowledge, in terms of relatives of “activity and passivity”, on the basis of an exegesis of *Physics* VII, 3, see O. HARARI, *The Unity of Aristotle’s Category of Relatives*, «Classical Quarterly» 61, 2011, pp. 521-537. On *Physics* VII more generally, see R. WARDY, *The Chain of Change. A Study of Aristotle’s Physics VII*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990 (Cambridge Classical Studies).

that they are relative, no matter what this reason may be, but knowledge as such has also another relativity, namely its being *of* a knowable, i.e. *of* an “object”<sup>15</sup>.

Now, independently of *how* they are relative, a major problem, *if* habits and dispositions in general and the habit or disposition of knowledge in particular are relative, is that they would be submitted to a “dual categorization”<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, habits and dispositions, and thus the habit or disposition of knowledge, are not only relative, they are also included among qualities<sup>17</sup>. According to a famous distinction made by D. Sedley, such relatives, i.e. relatives affected by dual categorization, are “soft relatives”, in contrast to “hard” ones: they are “relative” according to the first definition given by Aristotle in Chapter VII of the *Categories* (“we call *relatives* all such things as are said to be just what they are, *of* or *than* other things, or in some other way *in relation to* something else”), but not according to the second definition (“those things are relatives for which *being is the same as being somehow related to something*”), which is, for D. Sedley, “stronger and narrower, singling out those properties which consist in a relation *and nothing more*”<sup>18</sup>. However, such an interpretation seems difficult to defend, since knowledge is mentioned as a relative falling under the second definition in *Topics* VI, 8<sup>19</sup>. Independently of D. Sedley’s distinction between “soft” and “hard relatives”, it appears that habits and dispositions, including knowledge, are not only relatives, but also qualities. The issue of the dual categorization of habits and dispositions in general, and of knowledge in particular, is explicitly tackled by Aristotle in Chapter VIII of the *Categories*. The text runs as follows:

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<sup>15</sup> See also the developments in ARISTOTLE, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, comm. J. L. Ackrill, *op. cit.*, ad 6a36 and ARISTOTELES, *Kategorien*, comm. K. Oehler, *op. cit.*, ad 6a36 sq. Certainly, if knowledge is relative by being *of* an “object” whereas habits and dispositions are relative for another reason, knowledge as such and knowledge according to its genus would be differently relative (I thank Charles Girard for this observation). Yet such a consequence is considered by Aristotle himself in *Top.* IV, 4, 124b32-34, quoted above: knowledge as such is relative to the knowable, but as a habit or disposition it is relative to the soul.

<sup>16</sup> This problem does not concern positions, which, according to Aristotle’s explicit statement, are not included in another category, nor form another category, even if there is a category called “being-in-a-position” (κεῖσθαι). On this difficult point, see *Cat.* IX, 11b10-11, transl. J. Ackrill.

<sup>17</sup> See *Cat.* VIII, 8b26-9a13.

<sup>18</sup> Πρὸς τι δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγεται, ὅσα αὐτὰ ἄπερ ἐστὶν ἐτέρων εἶναι λέγεται ἢ ὅπως οὖν ἄλλως πρὸς ἕτερον (...) ἔστι τὰ πρὸς τι οἷς τὸ εἶναι ταῦτόν ἐστι τῷ πρὸς τί πως ἔχειν (*Cat.* VII, 6a36-37 and 8a31-32, transl. J. Ackrill). See D. SEDLEY, *Relatività aristotelica*, «Dianoia», 2, 1997, pp. 11-25 and «Dianoia», 3, 1998, pp. 11-23; translation: *Aristotelian Relativities*, in *Le Style de la pensée. Recueil d’hommages à Jacques Brunschwig*, M. Canto-Sperber – P. Pellegrin (eds.), Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2002 (Anagôgè), pp. 324-352, p. 334.

<sup>19</sup> See *Top.* VI, 8, 146b3-4. D. Sedley’s defence against this argument is to say that Aristotle’s theory was not yet fully established in the *Topics* (see D. SEDLEY, *Aristotelian Relativities*, *op. cit.*, p. 345 n. 34). Another, more general argument against D. Sedley’s distinction between “soft” and “hard relatives” would be that the second definition is merely a different formulation of the first, as stated in F. CAUJOLLE-ZASLAWSKY, *Les relatifs dans les Catégories*, in *Concepts et catégories dans la pensée antique*, P. Aubenque (ed.), Vrin, Paris 1980 (Bibliothèque d’histoire de la philosophie), pp. 167-195. See also, more recently, M. DUNCOMBE, *Aristotle’s Two Accounts of Relatives in Categories 7*, «Phronesis», 60, 2015, pp. 436-461, who denies that there are two definitions of relatives, one with a “narrower extension” than the other.

We should not be disturbed lest someone may say that though we proposed to discuss quality we are counting in many relatives (since habits and dispositions are relatives). For in pretty well all such cases the genera are spoken of in relation to something, but none of the particular cases is. For knowledge, a genus, is called just what it is, of something else (it is called knowledge of something); but none of the particular cases is called just what it is, of something else. For example, grammar is not called grammar of something nor music music of something. If at all it is in virtue of the genus that these too are spoken of in relation to something: grammar is called knowledge of something (not grammar of something) and music knowledge of something (not music of something). Thus the particular cases are not relatives. But it is with the particular cases that we are said to be qualified, for it is these which we possess (it is because we have some particular knowledge that we are called knowledgeable). Hence these – the particular cases, in virtue of which we are on occasion said to be qualified – would indeed be qualities; and these are not relatives. Moreover, if the same thing really is a qualified and a relative there is nothing absurd in its being counted in both the genera.<sup>20</sup>

Aristotle gives two explanations meant to solve the problem of dual categorization. Both have been considered unsatisfactory by some modern commentators. According to the first explanation, whereas knowledge as a genus would be relative, its “individuals” (καθ' ἕκαστα) would not<sup>21</sup>. Ackrill seems to think that the individuals of knowledge are not “individuals” *stricto sensu*, but species of knowledge, for example “grammar” or “music”<sup>22</sup>. On this basis, he says: “the claim that a genus that is relative may have species that are not relative seems to conflict with Aristotle's whole idea of a genus-species classification and categorial ladders”<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, how could grammar be a species of knowledge, knowledge be classified among

<sup>20</sup> Οὐ δεῖ δὲ ταράττεσθαι μή τις ἡμᾶς φήσῃ ὑπὲρ ποιότητος τὴν πρόθεσιν ποιησαμένους πολλὰ τῶν πρὸς τι συγκαταριθμεῖσθαι· τὰς γὰρ ἕξεις καὶ τὰς διαθέσεις τῶν πρὸς τι εἶναι. σχεδὸν γὰρ ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν τοιούτων τὰ γένη πρὸς τι λέγεται, τῶν δὲ καθ' ἕκαστα οὐδέν· ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐπιστήμη, γένος οὖσα, αὐτὸ ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἐτέρου λέγεται, – τινὸς γὰρ ἐπιστήμη λέγεται. – τῶν δὲ καθ' ἕκαστα οὐδὲν αὐτὸ ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἐτέρου λέγεται, οἷον ἡ γραμματικὴ οὐ λέγεται τινὸς γραμματικὴ οὐδ' ἡ μουσικὴ τινὸς μουσικὴ, ἀλλ' εἰ ἄρα κατὰ τὸ γένος καὶ αὐτὰ πρὸς τι λέγεται· οἷον ἡ γραμματικὴ λέγεται τινὸς ἐπιστήμη, οὐ τινὸς γραμματικὴ, καὶ ἡ μουσικὴ τινὸς ἐπιστήμη, οὐ τινὸς μουσικὴ· ὥστε αἱ καθ' ἕκαστα οὐκ εἰσὶ τῶν πρὸς τι. λεγόμεθα δὲ ποιοὶ ταῖς καθ' ἕκαστα· ταύτας γὰρ καὶ ἔχομεν, – ἐπιστήμονες γὰρ λεγόμεθα τῷ ἔχειν τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα ἐπιστημῶν τινά· – ὥστε αὐτὰ ἂν καὶ ποιότητες εἴησαν αἱ καθ' ἕκαστα, καθ' ἃς ποτε καὶ ποιοὶ λεγόμεθα· αὐτὰ δὲ οὐκ εἰσὶ τῶν πρὸς τι. – ἔτι εἰ τυγχάνει τὸ αὐτὸ ποιὸν καὶ πρὸς τι ὄν, οὐδὲν ἄτοπον ἐν ἀμφοτέροις τοῖς γένεσιν αὐτὸ καταριθμεῖσθαι (*Cat.* VIII, 11a20-38, transl. J. Ackrill, slightly modified, notably for “ἕξεις” and “διάθεσις”).

<sup>21</sup> See also *Topics* IV, 4, 124b15-22 and *Met.* Δ, 15, 1021a4-6.

<sup>22</sup> Ackrill's interpretation echoes a statement by Aristotle himself in *Topics* IV, 4, 124b18-19.

<sup>23</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, comm. J. L. Ackrill, *op. cit.*, ad 11a20.

relatives, and grammar not be classified among relatives<sup>24</sup>? Similar problems would arise if “individuals” was taken *stricto sensu*<sup>25</sup>. According to Ackrill, a “conflict” with the rest of Aristotle’s theory also arises in the second solution. Indeed, the second solution simply consists in admitting that one and the same thing could belong to two categories. This affirmation has been criticized by M. Frede, and led him to suspect the authenticity of the passage, since “there is no other place in the corpus where the possibility is considered that the highest genera are not mutually exclusive”<sup>26</sup>. Indeed, isn’t, for example, ‘being’ said “in many ways” (πολλαχῶς), i.e. in many “mutually exclusive” ways<sup>27</sup>? Now, not only did some modern commentators find Aristotle’s solutions to the problem of dual categorization “perplexing”, as Ackrill says<sup>28</sup>, early readers of the *Categories*, i.e. the Greek commentators and Boethius, did too. Being more reverent to Aristotle’s authority, they were not much inclined to criticize the two solutions present in the abovementioned text, and the rejection of the authenticity of the passage was apparently not an option. On the contrary, they more or less tried to justify Aristotle’s affirmations, and to accommodate the passage with the rest of the theory. In the following pages, I will present the discussions of Aristotle’s *Categories* VIII, 11a20-38 by the Greek commentators, above all by Neoplatonists, and also by Boethius, whose commentary on the *Categories* can be included in the same tradition<sup>29</sup>. Due to the proximities between these discussions, they can easily be compared and are mutually enlightening. As a whole, they form a quasi-systematic attempt – and the oldest we know of – to solve the problems emerging from the dual categorization of habits and dispositions in Aristotle<sup>30</sup>. Before reading these authors

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<sup>24</sup> Although Aristotle does not explicitly say that knowledge is relative by definition, one would maybe think here of *Cat.* V, 3b2-5, where it is affirmed that the definition of a genus of essence (οὐσία) applies to its species.

<sup>25</sup> See again *Cat.* V, 3b2-5, where Aristotle affirms that the definition of a genus of essence (οὐσία) applies to its individuals; moreover, see *Cat.* V, 3a17-20.

<sup>26</sup> M. FREDE, “The Title, Unity and Authenticity of the Aristotelian *Categories*”, in *Id.*, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1987, pp. 11-28, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> *Met.* Γ, 2, 1003a33.

<sup>28</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, comm. J. L. Ackrill, *op. cit.*, ad 11a20. In line with Ackrill and Frede, F. MORALES, *Relational Attributes in Aristotle*, «Phronesis», 39, 1994, pp. 255-274, p. 265, finds this passage “perplexing”. By contrast, see O. HARARI, *The Unity of Aristotle’s Category of Relatives*, *op. cit.*, pp. 534-535, and M. DUNCOMBE, *Aristotle’s Two Accounts of Relatives in Categories 7*, *op. cit.*, pp. 458-459, for two different modern attempts to make sense of Aristotle’s remarks.

<sup>29</sup> On the proximity of Boethius’ commentary on the *Categories* to Porphyry’s, see S. EBBESEN, *The Aristotelian Commentator*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, J. Marenbon (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009 (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy), pp. 34-55.

<sup>30</sup> My statement that a quasi-system emerges from a transversal reading of Neoplatonic texts is circumscribed by the topic that I analyse: the reception of *Categories* VIII, 11a20-38. I do not mean to conclude from this observation any kind of general thesis on the unity of the Neoplatonic philosophy nor on the relations between the Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonic schools. On these difficult questions, see I. HADOT, *Commentaire*, in Simplicius, *Commentaire sur les Catégories*, transl. Ph. Hoffmann – I. Hadot – P. Hadot, Brill, Leiden 1989 (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 50), pp. 19-182.

on *Categories* VIII, 11a20-38, I will discuss in what sense they count habits and dispositions, as well as knowledge, among relatives.

## II. Aristotle's early commentators on the relativity of habits and dispositions, and of knowledge in particular

Porphry, in his commentary on the *Categories*, says, quite astonishingly, that a habit is relative because it is a quality: every quality is “of something qualified” (ποιουῦ), i.e. of the bearer of the quality as bearing the quality<sup>31</sup>. In another passage of his commentary, he affirms that just as a position is of a “θετόν”, “a habit is the habit of a ἐκτόν”<sup>32</sup>. The same idea is to be found in Ammonius and Philoponus: just as a disposition is relative to a “διαθετόν”, “a habit is said of a ἐκτόν”<sup>33</sup>. Elias too mentions the habit as relative to the ἐκτόν, like a disposition is relative to a “διακείμενον”<sup>34</sup>. When Elias gives an example of a ἐκτόν, he mentions “the grammarian” (γραμματικός)<sup>35</sup>. S. Strange translates “ἐκτόν” in Porphry as “thing capable of having a state”, and S. Cohen and G. Matthews translate “ἐκτόν” in Ammonius as “possessor”<sup>36</sup>. J. Groisard suggests translating it in Porphry as “*ce qui est dans cet état*”, “that which is in this state”, and similarly in Ammonius<sup>37</sup>. Now, as B. Fleet underscores, the normal voice of the kind of verbal adjective in question (-τόν) is passive, and the literal translation of “ἐκτόν” would be “hivable”<sup>38</sup>. But in Porphry, the “ἐκτόν” is a case of “qualified thing” (ποιόν), as well as in Elias, since the example he gives of a “ἐκτόν” is “the grammarian” (γραμματικός). The idea seems to be that the habit is relative to its bearer as potentially or actually bearing the habit. Thus, although “ἐκτόν”'s literal translation would be “hivable”, its translation as “thing capable

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<sup>31</sup> PORPHYRY, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.1, ed. A. Busse, 114.9-12.

<sup>32</sup> ἡ μὲν ἔξις ἐκτοῦ ἔξις (PORPHYRY, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.1, ed. A. Busse, 112.30-31, and *On Aristotle Categories*, transl. and comm. S. K. Strange, Duckworth, London 1992 [Ancient Commentators on Aristotle]).

<sup>33</sup> AMMONIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.4, ed. A. Busse, 68.14-19, and PHILOPONUS, *In Cat.*, CAG XIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 106.21-23.

<sup>34</sup> ELIAS, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 207.34-208.1. I assume that the commentary attributed by A. Busse to Elias is from Elias (on this question, see A. BUSSE, *Praefatio* and *Supplementum praefationis*, in Elias, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, pp. v-xxxi, and R. GOULET, *Élias*, in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques, III, d'Eccélos à Juvenal*, R. Goulet (ed.), CNRS Éditions, Paris 2000 [Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques], pp. 57-66).

<sup>35</sup> ELIAS, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 229.26-27.

<sup>36</sup> PORPHYRY, *On Aristotle Categories*, transl. S. K. Strange, *op. cit.*, and AMMONIUS, *On Aristotle Categories*, transl. and comm. S. M. Cohen, G. B. Matthews, Duckworth, London 1991 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle).

<sup>37</sup> PORPHYRE, *Commentaire aux Catégories d'Aristote par questions et réponses*, CAG IV.1, 111.6-126.32, working translation by J. Groisard, and AMMONIUS, *Commentaire aux Catégories d'Aristote*, CAG IV.4, 66.4-80.13, working translation by J. Groisard.

<sup>38</sup> SIMPLICIUS, *On Aristotle's "Categories 7-8"*, transl. and comm. B. Fleet, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY 2002 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle), p. 161 n. 54.

of having a state” and cognates is not unfaithful to its contextual meaning. At any rate, one should keep in mind that in Porphyry and Elias, and maybe also in Ammonius and Philoponus, the “ἐκτόν” is the bearer of the habit as potentially or actually bearing it. In the same manner, the “διαθετόν” or “διακεείμενον”, literally the “dispositionable” or “disposed thing”, is the potential or actual bearer of the disposition, and the “θετόν”, literally the “positionable thing”, is the potential bearer of the position, its actual bearer, i.e. the “positioned thing”, being the “κείμενον”. In sum, habits, dispositions and positions are relative to their bearers as potentially or actually bearing them.

Yet it is not certain that among Neoplatonic philosophers, “ἐκτόν” always refers to the bearer of the habit. Indeed, Simplicius seems to have another understanding of what a “ἐκτόν” is. He opposes the “ἐκτόν” to “the haver” (τὸ ἔχων) of the habit<sup>39</sup>. He asks whether a habit is relative to the “ἐκτόν” or “ἐχόμενον” (i.e. the actualised ἐκτόν) or to the “haver” (ἔχων). In such a context, it seems, following B. Fleet, that the best translation of “ἐκτόν” or “ἐχόμενον” is indeed “havable” or “had thing”<sup>40</sup>. Now, the idea that the habit is relative to the haver is explicitly rejected by Simplicius. According to Simplicius, the habit is in fact the “relation” (σχέσις) of having itself, holding “between” (μεταξύ) the haver and the “havable” or “had thing”<sup>41</sup>, and cannot itself be had, i.e. cannot be related to the haver, otherwise one would need a second relation of having relating the haver to the first having, etc.<sup>42</sup>. Simplicius seems to base his claim on *Metaphysics* Δ, 20, where Aristotle says that the “habit”, or the “having”, cannot itself be “had”:

We call a having (1) a kind of activity of the haver and the had – something like an action or movement. When one thing makes and one is made, between them there is a making; so too between him who has a garment and the garment which he has there is a having. This sort of

<sup>39</sup> See SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 163.30-164.27, transl. B. Fleet.

<sup>40</sup> See again SIMPLICIUS, *On Aristotle's "Categories 7-8"*, comm. B. Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 161 n. 54.

<sup>41</sup> SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 164.19-20 and 177.20-22, transl. B. Fleet. On the notion of ‘relation’ (σχέσις), see SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 201.34-203.13, as well as C. LUNA, *La relation chez Simplicius*, in *Simplicius. Sa vie, son œuvre, sa survie. Actes du colloque international de Paris (28 sept. – 1er oct. 1985)*, I. Hadot (ed.), Walter De Gruyter, Berlin 1987 (Peripatoi. Philologisch-historische Studien zum Aristotelismus, 15), pp. 113-147, and O. HARARI, *Simplicius on the Reality of Relations and Relational Change*, «Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy» 37, 2009, pp. 245-274. This notion, which is often presented as Neoplatonic, is indeed discussed in PORPHYRE, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.1, ed. A. Busse, 125.16-19, but it is already mentioned by Alexander of Aphrodisias: “relatives have their being in their relation to one another” (τὰ δὲ πρὸς τι ἐν τῇ πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσει τὸ εἶναι ἔχειν) (ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS, *In Met.*, CAG I, ed. I. Bruns, 83.25-26).

<sup>42</sup> See also B. Fleet’s explanations in SIMPLICIUS, *On Aristotle's "Categories 7-8"*, comm. B. Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 161 n. 58.



having, then, evidently we cannot have; for the process will go on to infinity, if we can have the having of what we have.<sup>43</sup>

According to Simplicius, something similar would hold for dispositions and positions<sup>44</sup>. The idea seems to be that dispositions and positions are in fact the “relations” (σχέσεις) themselves of being-in-a-disposition and of being-in-a-position holding between, on the one hand, the thing that is in a disposition and the διαθετόν and, on the other hand, between the thing that is in a position and the “positional equivalent” of the ἐκτόν or διαθετόν<sup>45</sup>. As concerns the διαθετόν, the problem is inverted in comparison to the case of the “ἐκτόν” in Porphyry *et alii*: the literal translation of “διαθετόν” would be “dispositionable”<sup>46</sup>, but the contextual meaning, in Simplicius, prevents us from saying that “διαθετόν” refers to the bearer of the disposition. J. Groisard suggests translating “διαθετόν” as “*la manière d’être disposée*”, “the way of being disposed”<sup>47</sup>. On the same basis, one could say that the position is the relation (σχέσις) of being-in-a-position that holds between the bearer of the position and “the way of being positioned”. However, it is not easy to know to what exactly the “ἐκτόν”, the “διαθετόν” and their “positional equivalent” refer in Simplicius. One solution would be to say that they are “specifying items”, i.e. that they serve to express the fact that habits, dispositions and positions must be “specified”, as Aristotle may do, according to J. Ackrill and K. Oehler<sup>48</sup>. Simplicius, in his commentary on *Physics* VII, holds, following Aristotle, that bodily habits are relative in that they are “due proportions” (συμμετρίαι) or “disproportions” (ἀσυμμετρίαι) of elements like “cold” and “heat”, and psychic “ethical habits” (ἠθικαὶ ἕξεις) relative in that they are “due proportions” (συμμετρίαι) or “disproportions” (ἀσυμμετρίαι) of “emotions” and “appetites”<sup>49</sup>. Like in

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<sup>43</sup> Ἐξίς δὲ λέγεται ἓνα μὲν τρόπον οἷον ἐνέργειά τις τοῦ ἔχοντος καὶ ἐχομένου, ὥσπερ πράξις τις ἢ κίνησις (ὅταν γὰρ τὸ μὲν ποιῇ τὸ δὲ ποιῆται, ἔστι ποιήσις μεταξύ· οὕτω καὶ τοῦ ἔχοντος ἐσθῆτα καὶ τῆς ἐχομένης ἐσθῆτος ἔστι μεταξύ ἕξις) – ταύτην μὲν οὖν φανερόν ὅτι οὐκ ἐνδέχεται ἔχειν ἕξιν (εἰς ἄπειρον γὰρ βαδιεῖται, εἰ τοῦ ἐχομένου ἔσται ἔχειν τὴν ἕξιν) (...) (*Met.* Δ, 20, 1022b4-10, and *Metaphysics*, transl. W. D. Ross, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation, op. cit.*; referred to by C. Kalbfleisch and B. Fleet).

<sup>44</sup> See SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 164.22.

<sup>45</sup> The διαθετόν is mentioned as parallel to the ἐκτόν in SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 163.32. As for the “positional equivalent” of the ἐκτόν and the διαθετόν, the natural candidate would be the “θετόν”. Now, the “θετόν” do appear in SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 165.3, but it seems to refer to the bearer of the disposition. The translation suggested by J. Groisard is “*le positionnable*”, in SIMPLICIUS, *Commentaire aux Catégories d’Aristote*, CAG VIII, 155.30-205.35, working translation.

<sup>46</sup> In SIMPLICIUS, *On Aristotle’s “Categories 7-8”*, transl. B. Fleet, *op. cit.*, “διαθετόν” is translated as “conditionable”.

<sup>47</sup> See SIMPLICIUS, *Commentaire aux Catégories d’Aristote*, CAG VIII, 155.30-205.35, working translation by J. Groisard.

<sup>48</sup> See ARISTOTLE, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, comm. J. L. Ackrill, *op. cit.*, ad 6a36 and ARISTOTELES, *Kategorien*, comm. K. Oehler, *op. cit.*, ad 6a36 sq., discussed above.

<sup>49</sup> SIMPLICIUS, *In Phys.*, CAG X, ed. H. Diels, 1067.5-20 and 1071.18-30, transl. Ch. Hagen.

Aristotle, such an explanation could apply to dispositions, but not to positions, which have seemingly nothing to do with “due proportion” nor “disproportion”. Thus, the account of the relativity of habits and dispositions that Simplicius gives in his commentary of *Categories* VII is different from the one that emerges in *Physics* VII, as he himself suggests<sup>50</sup>. In other words, the sense in which habits, dispositions and positions are relative in the commentary of the *Categories* can hardly be elucidated with the help of the information present in the commentary of the *Physics*. It seems that habits and dispositions are (i) relative in a way that is common to them and positions, i.e. by being “relations” (σχέσεις) holding between their bearer and, maybe, a specifying item, and (ii) relative in a way proper to them, i.e. bodily habits and psychic ethical habits are “due proportions” or “disproportions”.

It is also difficult to know in what sense the “habit” (*habitus*) is relative in Boethius. According to him, the habit is *of* a “*habilis res*”<sup>51</sup>, which is the Latin equivalent of the Greek “ἐκτόν”. Now, it seems that the “*habilis res*” is not the bearer of the habit, but probably some sort of specifying item. Indeed, Boethius says that “the habit is of the thing that can be had” and “it is by the habit that we have the things that can be had”<sup>52</sup>. However, when discussing “disposition” (*dispositio*), Boethius affirms that the case of the disposition being *of* the disposed thing and the disposed thing being disposed *by* disposition belongs to the more general case of “every affection being the affection *of* the affected thing and every affected thing being affected *by* the affection”<sup>53</sup>. Thus, it seems that a disposition is relative to the thing that it affects, namely the bearer of the disposition, but this creates a kind of discrepancy: habit is relative to the “hivable” or “had thing” probably understood as a specifying item, whereas disposition is relative to the bearer of the disposition. The discrepancy increases when Boethius adds that habit, disposition, and position are all relative in the same manner:

Position is also relative. Indeed, the position is the position of the positioned thing, and the positioned thing is positioned by the position, and this should be understood according to the preceding mode of the habit and the disposition<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> See SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 177.22-27.

<sup>51</sup> *habitus habilis rei habitus* (BOETHIUS, *In Cat.*, PL 64, ed. J.-P. Migne, 219A).

<sup>52</sup> *illius enim rei habitus est quae haberi potest (...) ipso enim habitu res quae haberi possunt habemus* (BOETHIUS, *In Cat.*, PL 64, ed. J.-P. Migne, 219A).

<sup>53</sup> *omnis affectio affecti affectio est, et omne affectum affectione affectum est* (BOETHIUS, *In Cat.*, PL 64, ed. J.-P. Migne, 219A).

<sup>54</sup> *Positio quoque relativa est, nam positio positea rei positio est, et posita res positione posita est, et hoc intelligi convenit secundum priorem habitus et dispositionis modum* (BOETHIUS, *In Cat.*, PL 64, ed. J.-P. Migne, 219A-B).

One solution would be to admit that disposition and position are relative to their bearer, whereas habit is relative to a “specifying item”, and to say that the common element between them is merely grammatical: the habit/disposition/position is *of* the had/disposed/positioned thing, and the had/disposed/positioned thing is had/disposed/positioned *by* the habit/disposition/position. In other words, the correlation is made, on the one hand, with a genitive and, on the other hand, with what Boethius calls a “seventh case”, i.e. apparently an ablative without preposition<sup>55</sup>.

Now, although it is difficult to establish in what sense exactly in Boethius, like in other early readers of Aristotle, habits and dispositions are relative, there is no doubt that for him, knowledge, like sensation, is relative in the sense that it is *of* an “object”: whereas sensation is relative to the “sensible” (*sensibile*), knowledge is relative to the “knowable” (*scibile*)<sup>56</sup>. In the Greek commentators too, even if it is hard to see in what sense habits and dispositions are relative, there is no doubt that knowledge, taken as a cognition, is relative to an “object”. At very least, the fact that cognition, by being relative to a “cognizable” (γνωστόν), is more obviously relative than “ethical habits” understood as “due proportions” is explicitly stated in Simplicius’s *Physics* commentary<sup>57</sup>. Thus, in all these authors, knowledge seems to have a proper relativity, which is of another nature than the relativity of habits and dispositions in general. Now, the question arises as to whether the habit and the disposition of knowledge are relative to an “object” *and* relative in the same manner as other habits or dispositions, or whether they are *just* relative to an “object”. According to Simplicius, the relativity of habits and dispositions understood as “due proportion” or “disproportion” does not apply to cognitive habits and dispositions: cognition is not relative in that sense, but in the sense that it is *of* an “object”, i.e. “*of* the cognizable” (τοῦ γνωστοῦ)<sup>58</sup>. However, in Simplicius, as well as in the other early commentators of Aristotle, there is also a sense in which habits and dispositions are

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<sup>55</sup> On this grammatical structure, which also applies to knowledge and sensation, see BOETHIUS, *In Cat.*, PL 64, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217D-218A. On the “seventh case”, see G. SERBAT, *Le septimus casus en latin : un cas-fantôme ?*, in *Florilegium historiographiae linguisticae. Études d’historiographie de la linguistique et de grammaire comparée à la mémoire de Maurice Leroy*, J. de Clercq – P. Desmet (eds.), Peeters, Louvain-la-Neuve 1994 (Bibliothèque des Cahiers de Linguistique de Louvain, 75), pp. 159-172, reprint in G. SERBAT, *Opera disiecta. Travaux de linguistique générale, de langue et littérature latines*, L. Nadjo (ed.), Peeters, Paris-Louvain 2001 (Bibliothèque de l’information grammaticale, 49), pp. 333-344. I thank Charles Girard for the precious conversation we had on habits in Boethius.

<sup>56</sup> See notably the commentary on *Cat.* VII, 7b22-8a12 in BOETHIUS, *In Cat.*, PL 64, ed. J.-P. Migne, 229A-233D.

<sup>57</sup> SIMPLICIUS, *In Phys.*, CAG X, ed. H. Diels, 1074.13-19, who bases his claim on *Phys.* VII, 3, 247b2-3. See also the Neoplatonic commentaries of *Cat.* VII, 7b22-8a12, above all PORPHYRY, *In Cat.*, ed. A. Busse, CAG IV.1, 118.5-121.19 and SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 190.31-196.33. Note that the relativity of knowledge is ontologically weakened in ELIAS, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 203.20-29 and 238.28-33. I will come back to this point below.

<sup>58</sup> SIMPLICIUS, *In Phys.*, CAG X, ed. H. Diels, 1074.13-19.

relative in the same way as positions. Maybe in this sense, knowledge is relative like all other habits and dispositions *and* relative to an “object”<sup>59</sup>. At any rate, Aristotle’s early commentators count habits and dispositions in general, and knowledge in particular, among relatives, and seem to think that knowledge is not – or not only – relative like other habits or dispositions, but – or but also – in the sense that it is relative to an “object”. Yet, according to Aristotle, habits and dispositions, including the habit and disposition of knowledge, are qualities. Thus, following Aristotle, his commentators had to tackle the problem of the dual categorization of habits and dispositions, and of knowledge in particular.

### III. Saving Aristotle

According to Porphyry and Simplicius, the dual categorization of habits and dispositions is problematic. Indeed, since for Aristotle, “the differentiae of genera which are different and not subordinate one to the other are themselves different in kind”<sup>60</sup>, the dual categorization of an item would entail that one and the same thing has different specific differences<sup>61</sup>. It is not wholly obvious what the problem is. Maybe Porphyry and Simplicius’ point is that things falling under different specific differences form non-overlapping extensions, so that in the case of a dual categorization, one and the same thing would become a member of such extensions.

Be that as it may, in Porphyry’s reading of *Categories* VIII, 11a20-36, there is apparently no problem with saying that the habit of knowledge is only relative at the level of the genus, whereas its individuals, as well as its most specific species, e.g. grammar or music, are qualities<sup>62</sup>. Porphyry’s idea is to follow Aristotle’s statement: “by a quality I mean that in virtue of which things are said to be qualified somehow”<sup>63</sup>, then to defend the idea that Aristarchus or Aristoxenus are said to be grammarians or musicians from the individual grammar or music that they possess, whereas they are not qualified “from the generic knowledge” (ἀπὸ τῆς γενικῆς ἐπιστήμης), and finally to conclude that their individual grammar and music are qualities, whereas knowledge as a genus is not. On the contrary, the individual grammars and musics of Aristarchus or Aristoxenus are not themselves relative since, following Aristotle, “grammar is called knowledge of something (not grammar of something) and music knowledge of

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<sup>59</sup> As said above, the fact that something can be differently relative in itself and according to its genus is considered by Aristotle himself in *Top.* IV, 4, 124b32-34.

<sup>60</sup> Τῶν ἑτερογενῶν καὶ μὴ ὑπ’ ἄλληλα τεταγμένων ἕτεροι τῶ εἶδει καὶ αἱ διαφοραὶ (*Cat.* III, 1b16-17).

<sup>61</sup> See PORPHYRY, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.1, ed. A. Busse, 139.22-28 and SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 291.21-28.

<sup>62</sup> See PORPHYRY, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.1, ed. A. Busse, 140.2-23.

<sup>63</sup> Ποιότητα δὲ λέγω καθ’ ἣν ποιοὶ τινες λέγονται (*Cat.* VIII, 8b25, transl. J. Ackrill).

something (not music of something)”<sup>64</sup>; but knowledge as such, i.e. as a genus, is indeed relative, namely to the knowable. And any attempt to relate grammar to Aristarchus would be in vain, since the converse, namely “Aristarchus is of grammar”, is false. What about this argument? The last mentioned point seems unjustified: this grammar could be the grammar of this grammarian, and this grammarian could be a grammarian thanks to this grammar. Porphyry knows that correlates must be rightly picked out, otherwise the converse relation would be never given, for any relative<sup>65</sup>. And does not Porphyry himself say that every quality is relative by being “of something qualified” (ποιουῶ) <sup>66</sup>? The rest of Porphyry’s argument is no less problematic: the most specific species of knowledge, for Porphyry, are meant to be included in the category of quality; yet it is seemingly not in virtue of *them* that Aristarchus or Aristoxenus are said to be grammarians or musicians, but in virtue of individual knowledges. This problem would not have occurred if Porphyry had said, like other commentators, that the things that “qualify” are not just the individuals of the most specific species, but the species themselves<sup>67</sup>. Besides, in Porphyry, the thesis according to which one is not qualified “from the generic knowledge” is not thoroughly justified. Olympiodorus defends this by holding that “it is impossible for one and the same man to know everything”<sup>68</sup>, i.e. to have all knowledges: grammar, music, etc., or to have “first philosophy” (πρώτη φιλοσοφία). But the argument is problematic. Indeed, is it not enough to fall under one species of ‘being knowledgeable’ in order to fall under the genus ‘being knowledgeable’? It seems that falling under a genus is independent of falling under the whole set of species of a genus. Elias holds that one man cannot have all knowledge, because, as Plato says, every particular man is only a “fragment” (κέρμα) of man, i.e. no one can have any universal whatsoever<sup>69</sup>. But this was probably not Aristotle’s point. More broadly, the “conflict with Aristotle’s whole idea of a genus-species classification and categorial ladders”<sup>70</sup> is still not solved with such considerations: specific and individual knowledges are not relative, but their genus is. As a matter of fact, Elias, when discussing

<sup>64</sup> οἷον ἡ γραμματικὴ οὐ λέγεται τινὸς γραμματικὴ οὐδ’ ἡ μουσικὴ τινὸς μουσικὴ, ἀλλ’ εἰ ἄρα κατὰ τὸ γένος καὶ αὐτὰ πρὸς τι λέγεται (*Cat.* VIII, 11a29-31, transl. J. Ackrill).

<sup>65</sup> See *Cat.* VII, 6a28-7b14 and its commentary in PORPHYRY, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.1, ed. A. Busse, 115.17-117.31.

<sup>66</sup> PORPHYRY, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.1, ed. A. Busse, 114.9-12.

<sup>67</sup> On this question, see AMMONIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.4, ed. A. Busse, 91.10-28, PHILOPONUS, *In Cat.*, CAG XIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 162.7-11, OLYMPIODORUS, *In Cat.*, CAG XII.1, ed. A. Busse, 129.24-25, ELIAS, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 238.22-25, and BOETHIUS, *In Cat.*, PL 64, ed. J.-P. Migne, 259C-260C.

<sup>68</sup> πάντα γὰρ ἀδύνατον ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπίστασθαι (OLYMPIODORUS, *In Cat.*, CAG XII.1, ed. A. Busse, 129.28).

<sup>69</sup> ELIAS, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 238.15-21. As A. Busse indicates (see *ad* 167.9-10), the word “fragment” (κέρμα) is not to be found in Plato.

<sup>70</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, comm. J. L. Ackrill, *op. cit.*, *ad* 11a20.

*Categories* VIII, 11a20-36, wonders how a genus could be relative without its species also being relative<sup>71</sup>. Many of Porphyry's arguments are taken over by Simplicius<sup>72</sup>. However, Simplicius adds an important point:

I think we should say that Aristotle did not mean that the genera were not qualities, nor that the generic habit or disposition is not a quality; what he did mean was that even if habit and disposition are said to be relative, this is not true of all habit and disposition, but only generic. But all habit and disposition, generic and individual, is quality. It is nothing absurd for generic habit to be relative as well, and individual habits to be only qualities, because individual habits were not presented as belonging to the genus Relation, but as belonging to the genus Quality. For knowledge as being relative is not cut up into species, but as quality it is divided into particular branches of knowledge, which are not relative, as has been shown, but are qualities.<sup>73</sup>

In sum, for Simplicius, Aristotle does not say that the genus 'knowledge' is "just" relative. Otherwise, not only would non-relative species and individuals belong to a relative genus, but a non-qualitative genus would have qualitative species and individuals. In such a situation, there would be a still stronger "conflict with Aristotle's whole idea of a genus-species classification and categorial ladders", and despite Simplicius' affirmations, it is not impossible that Aristotle is committed to this stronger conflict. At least, Elias explicitly reads *Categories* VIII, 11a20-36 as holding that the genus 'knowledge' is not a quality<sup>74</sup>. On the contrary, for Simplicius, there is, in Aristotle, a double-faced genus, 'knowledge', both relative and a quality, of which only one "side" is specified and individuated: knowledge as relative is not divided into species and individuals, whereas knowledge as a quality is. Despite its exegetical charity, Simplicius' reading has also some disadvantages: indeed, admitting a non-instantiated genus is not very Aristotelian. But the most obvious problem with Simplicius' interpretation is that it reintegrates

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<sup>71</sup> ELIAS, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 238.22-28, which, as A. Busse indicates, refers to 153.11-15 and, through it, to *Cat.* III, 1b10-15; see also 203.21-24.

<sup>72</sup> SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 291.28-292.19.

<sup>73</sup> ῥητέον δὴ οἶμαι πρὸς ταῦτα, ὅτι οὐκ εἶπεν τὰ γένη μὴ εἶναι ποιότητος οὐδὲ ὅτι ἡ γενικὴ ἕξις καὶ διάθεσις οὐκ ἔστιν ποιότης, ἀλλ' ὅτι, εἰ καὶ εἴρηται πρὸς τι ἡ ἕξις καὶ ἡ διάθεσις, οὐ πᾶσα ἔχει τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ἡ γενικὴ μόνον· ποιότης μέντοι πᾶσα, καὶ ἡ γενικὴ καὶ ἡ καθ' ἕκαστα. καὶ οὐδὲν ἄτοπον τὴν μὲν γενικὴν ἕξιν καὶ πρὸς τι εἶναι, τὰς δὲ καθ' ἕκαστα ποιότητος μόνον, διότι οὐχὶ τοῦ ὡς πρὸς τι γένους ἐδόθησαν αἱ καθ' ἕκαστα ἕξεις, ἀλλὰ τοῦ ὡς ποιότητος. καὶ γὰρ ἡ ἐπιστήμη ὡς μὲν πρὸς τι οὐ τέμνεται εἰς εἶδη, ὡς δὲ ποιότης διαιρεῖται εἰς τὰς κατὰ μέρος ἐπιστήμας, αἵτινες πρὸς τι μὲν οὐκ εἰσιν, ὡς ἀποδέδεικται, ποιότητες δὲ εἰσιν (SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 293.22-31, transl. B. Fleet – who reads τοῦ instead of τῆς at 293.28 – , modified for "ἕξις" and "διάθεσις").

<sup>74</sup> See ELIAS, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 238.8-10.

the dual categorization in a theory created to get ride of it. Elias, apparently more for his own sake than for Aristotle's<sup>75</sup>, says that the genus 'knowledge' can be thought of both as a quality and as a relative, but that it is a quality "by nature" (κατὰ φύσιν), whereas it is a relative only "according to a secondary way of talking" (κατὰ δεύτερον λόγον), and this explains why its species are said to be qualities but not relatives: only what is predicated "by nature" of knowledge is transmitted to its species<sup>76</sup>. In contrast to Simplicius, Elias does not strictly admit a dual categorization of knowledge, but the consequence is that he ontologically weakens the relative aspect of knowledge.

At any rate, Simplicius' and Elias' positions invite us to consider the second solution given by Aristotle, namely the admission of the dual categorization, which is a "sharper" (ἀκριβέστερον) solution than the first for Philoponus<sup>77</sup>. Porphyry presents the second solution as follows:

I claim that if one does not wish to accept this solution, one should adopt the other one, namely that nothing prevents the same thing from falling into two categories. This is in no way absurd: it would be absurd if the same thing in one and the same respect were to be put into two different genera of predication that were not subordinate to one another, but there is no absurdity if it is considered in respect of different significations. Socrates, for instance, can be pointed out in many ways corresponding to his affections: insofar as he is a man, he is a substance; insofar as he is three cubits tall, let us suppose, he is quantified; insofar as he is a father or a son, he belongs to the relatives; insofar as he is temperate, he is qualified; and in this way he is brought under the different categories in virtue of various differentiae. If, then, Socrates, who is a single thing, is found <to fall under different categories> when he is considered in different respects, what is absurd about a habit being in one respect a relative, and in another a quality?<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Compare ELIAS, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 238.8-10 and 238.28-33; see also 203.12-29.

<sup>76</sup> ELIAS, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 238.28-33; see also 203.12-29.

<sup>77</sup> See PHILOPONUS, *In Cat.*, CAG XIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 161.31-162.3 and 162.19-22.

<sup>78</sup> Φημὶ τοίνυν ὡς εἰ μὴ τις ταύτην προσίεται, ἀλλ' ἐκείνην γε λαμβανέτω, ὅτι οὐδὲν κωλύει ἐν δυοῖς κατηγορίας τὸ αὐτὸ τετάχθαι. οὐ γὰρ τοῦτο ἄτοπον, ἀλλ' εἰ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ εἰ αὐτὸ τι εἰς δύο γένη κατηγοριῶν διάφορα ἀναφέροιο καὶ μὴ ὑπάλληλα, ἐπειδὴ κατὰ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο σημαϊνόμενον οὐδεμία ἐστὶν ἀτοπία. ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ Σωκράτης πολλὰ πεπονθὼς ἐπιδειχθήσεται· καθὸ μὲν γὰρ ἄνθρωπος οὐσία ἐστὶ, καθὸ δὲ τρίπηχυς, εἰ τύχοι, ποσόν, καθὸ δὲ πατὴρ ἢ υἱὸς τῶν πρὸς τι, καθὸ δὲ σώφρων ποιός, καὶ οὕτως εἰς τὰς ἄλλας κατηγορίας κατὰ τινὰς διαφορὰς ἀνάγεται. εἰ οὖν ἐν ὧν εὐρίσκεται ὁ Σωκράτης κατ' ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο εἰς ἄλλην καὶ ἄλλην κατηγορίαν ἀναγόμενος, τί ἄτοπον, εἰ καὶ ἡ ἕξις κατ' ἄλλο μὲν ἂν ῥηθεῖ πρὸς τι, κατ' ἄλλο δὲ ποιότης; (PORPHYRY, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.1, ed. A. Busse, 140.26-141.5, transl. S. Strange – who does not follow Busse's proposition of correction at 140.28, but adds εἰς ἄλλην καὶ ἄλλην κατηγορίαν ἀναγόμενος at 141.3, as proposed by Busse –, slightly modified, notably for πολλὰ ἐπιδειχθήσεται πεπονθὼς, following PORPHYRY, *Commentaire aux Catégories d'Aristote*, ed., transl. and comm. R. Bodéüs, Vrin, Paris 2008 [Textes philosophiques], who reads πολλὰ πεπονθὼς ἐπιδειχθήσεται, and for "ἕξις").

According to R. Bodéüs, there is a fallacy here<sup>79</sup>. Indeed, at first sight, Porphyry’s explanations are dubious: Socrates by himself is an individual man, i.e. a primary essence, and does not belong as such to different categories; when, for example, Socrates as temperate is said to be a “qualified thing”, it is only to the extent that he forms an “accidental compound” with the quality of temperance, and when Socrates as a father is said to be a “relative”, it is only to the extent that he forms an “accidental compound” with the relational property of fatherhood<sup>80</sup>. In sum, Porphyry is not talking about one and the same thing, nor about one and the same thing “considered in different respects” (κατ’ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο), but about different “things”, i.e., in the examples given above, a primary essence and two different accidental compounds. Such considerations were maybe part of the reasons leading Olympiodorus to reject the idea that one and the same thing “considered in different respects” (πρὸς ἄλλο μέντοι καὶ ἄλλο) could belong to two categories<sup>81</sup>. However, Porphyry’s point can be clarified and becomes more plausible when we look at the parallel passage in Simplicius<sup>82</sup>. According to Simplicius, the things meant to belong to different categories are “complex things” (σύνθετα)<sup>83</sup>, for example Socrates taken with all or several of his accidental properties. He is complex, but made up of “uncomplex” (ἄνευ συμπλοκῆς) or “simple” (ἀπλᾶ) elements, which, in turn, belong only to one category<sup>84</sup>. Such “complex things” are not just to be found among primary essences taken with their accidental properties. For example, “in the case of an affection there is the aspect of completion – the result of the affection – and the aspect of cause – that which produces the affection”<sup>85</sup>. In other words, an “affection” (πάθος) has in fact two distinct, simple constituents, namely its static being as the result or outcome of a given causal influence (e.g. the heat of a stone that is, or was, in the sun), and its dynamic being as the passive process itself that corresponds to the causal influence in question (e.g. the being-heated, or having-been-heated, of the stone by the

<sup>79</sup> PORPHYRE, *Commentaire aux Catégories d’Aristote*, comm. R. Bodéüs, *op. cit.*, ad 140.30-141.4.

<sup>80</sup> On the notion of “accidental compound”, see F. A. LEWIS, *Substance and Predication in Aristotle*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991.

<sup>81</sup> See OLYMPIODORUS, *In Cat.*, CAG XII.1, ed. A. Busse, 129.15-30.

<sup>82</sup> See SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 292.19-293.9 and 293.32-294.15, transl. B. Fleet.

<sup>83</sup> I change B. Fleet’s translation of “σύνθετον” from “compound” to “complex”, and correlatively the “uncompounded” of “ἄνευ συμπλοκῆς” in “uncomplex”, in order to avoid a confusion with F. Lewis’ notion of “accidental compound”.

<sup>84</sup> I recall, following B. Fleet (SIMPLICIUS, *On Aristotle’s “Categories 7-8”*, comm. B. Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 184 n. 549), that for the Neoplatonic philosophers, the categories, as Ph. Hoffmann says, “sont, dans le langage qui procède de l’âme humaine, les mots simples qui signifient les réalités simples (ou genres suprêmes) par la médiation des notions simples qui sont dans l’âme. C’est ce système à trois termes (mots, notions, réalités) qui constitue la nature de la catégorie” (Ph. HOFFMANN, *Catégories et langage selon Simplicius – La question du “skopos” du traité aristotélicien des “Catégories”*, in *Simplicius. Sa vie, son œuvre, sa survie. Actes du colloque international de Paris [28 sept. – 1er oct. 1985]*, I. Hadot [ed.], *op. cit.*, pp. 61-90, p. 67).

<sup>85</sup> πάθος ὄντος τοῦ μὲν ἐν ἀποτελέσματι, ὅπερ ἐκ πάθους γέγονεν, τοῦ δὲ ὡς αἰτίου, ὅπερ ἐμποιεῖ πάθος (SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 294.6-8, transl. B. Fleet).



sun). Applying this to habits and dispositions, more precisely to knowledge, the result is the following: knowledge is a “complex thing” (σύνθετον), made up of two “simple” elements (ἀπλᾶ), a quality and a relational property. Maybe this is also what Boethius means when he says, less clearly:

In the same manner, habits, to the extent that they are habits *of* a certain thing, are included among relations and, to the extent that things are said to be qualified according to them, are counted among qualities<sup>86</sup>.

Since the “dual categorization” concerns a complex thing, it becomes harmless. Such a solution is not implausible, but it entails that the “τὸ αὐτό” in “εἰ τυγχάνει τὸ αὐτὸ ποιὸν καὶ πρὸς τι ὄν” of *Categories* VIII, 11a37-38 refers to a σύνθετον.

Another solution is offered by Ammonius, who thinks that the statement in *Categories* VIII, 11a37-38 concerns only relatives:

But above all, there is no paradox when some things classified under another category are also classified under relatives. Rather it is altogether necessary that what is subsumed under relatives be classified under some other category as well; for it has been pointed out that relatives do not contain proper things; rather, they are observed in other categories.<sup>87</sup>

Indeed, according to Ammonius, “relatives seem to be offshoots and not distinct things, but rather are found in other categories”<sup>88</sup>. Even if Ammonius rejects the idea that relatives are “proper things” (ἴδια πράγματα), this probably does not mean that they have no being. Indeed, at the beginning of his commentary on Chapter VII of the *Categories*, he clearly holds that relatives have an “existence” (ὑπόστασις), and this “by nature” (φύσει)<sup>89</sup>. More than a denial of the existence of relatives, Ammonius’ idea is presumably that relational properties are always

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<sup>86</sup> *Ita quoque et habitudines in eo quod alicuius rei habitudines sunt, in relatione ponuntur, in eo quod secundum eas quales aliqui dicuntur, in qualitate numerantur* (BOETHIUS, *In Cat.*, PL 64, ed. J.-P. Migne, 261C, with “*aliqui*” instead of “*aliquid*”, on the basis of “*quidam quales*” at 240A and “*aliqui quales*” at 260D).

<sup>87</sup> ἄλλως τε δὲ οὐδὲν ἄτοπὸν τινα τῶν ἀναφερομένων ἐπὶ ἑτέραν κατηγορίαν ἀναφέρεσθαι καὶ ὑπὸ τὰ πρὸς τι, μᾶλλον δὲ πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τὰ ὑπὸ τὰ πρὸς τι ἀναγόμενα ἀνάγεσθαι καὶ ὑπὸ ἄλλην τινὰ κατηγορίαν· εἴρηται γὰρ ὅτι ἴδια πράγματα οὐκ ἔχει τὰ πρὸς τι, ἀλλ’ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις κατηγορίαις θεωρεῖται (AMMONIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.4, ed. A. Busse, 91.28-92.2, transl. S. Cohen, G. Matthews, slightly modified).

<sup>88</sup> παραφυσῖν ἔοικεν εἶναι τὰ πρὸς τι καὶ πράγματα οὐκ ἔστιν ἀφωρισμένα, ἀλλ’ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις κατηγορίαις εὐρίσκεται (AMMONIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.4, ed. A. Busse, 69.24-26, transl. S. Cohen, G. Matthews; referred to in AMMONIUS, *On Aristotle Categories*, transl. and comm. S. M. Cohen, G. B. Matthews, *op. cit.*, p 112 n. 141). The idea that relatives are “offshoots” (παραφύδες) comes from *Nic. Eth.* I, 4, 1096a21-22.

<sup>89</sup> AMMONIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.4, ed. A. Busse, 66.21-67.11.

founded on something of another category<sup>90</sup>. Such a move could be based on the statement of Aristotle in *Metaphysics*, N, 1 saying: “the relative is a certain affection of the quantified”<sup>91</sup>. According to such an interpretation, *Categories* VIII, 11a37-38 would simply be a reminder that relational properties come together with a member of another category. The same interpretation is maybe made by Philoponus. Indeed, even if he says, like Porphyry and Simplicius, that it is not a problem for one thing to belong to different categories “considered in different respects” (κατ' ἄλλο μέντοι καὶ ἄλλο), the examples he gives are father and son<sup>92</sup>. Olympiodorus and Elias suggest the same solution as Ammonius, and this solution is even briefly evocated in Porphyry<sup>93</sup>. In fact, the idea that *Categories* VIII, 11a37-38 is limited to relatives had earlier been defended by Alexander of Aphrodisias:

But Alexander of Aphrodisias thinks that this – the fact of some relatives being classed under another category – happens only in the case of relatives, because what is relative does not even have its own substrate in the first place, but has its being in various different categories. (...) Alexander observed that it was a particular feature of relatives always to exist along with another category; for example a father with Substance, the larger with the Quantified, the friend with the Qualified, the striker with Activity, etc.<sup>94</sup>

Holding that the “father” exists with “substance”, or “essence” (οὐσία), does not seem to make the point, since every accident needs an essence. But the idea probably is that being a father is

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<sup>90</sup> Compare to Simplicius, who also says that “relatives do not exist in their own right but have [their] being in other things” (τὰ πρὸς τι μὴ ἐστὶ καθ' αὐτά, ἀλλ' ἐν ἄλλοις τὸ εἶναι ἔχει; SIMPLICIUS, *In Phys.*, CAG X, ed. H. Diels, 1071.2-3, transl. Ch. Hagen; see also SIMPLICIUS, *In Phys.*, CAG X, ed. H. Diels, 835.21-23 and 837.7-9), and who nevertheless defends at length the existence of relatives (see SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 169.1-171.22, specially 170.4-5). Here too, the idea seems to be that relational properties are founded on other categories, not that they have no existence.

<sup>91</sup> πάθος τι τοῦ ποσοῦ τὸ πρὸς τι (*Met.* N, 1, 1088a24-25).

<sup>92</sup> PHILOPONUS, *In Cat.*, CAG XIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 162.25-28. It is likely that Philoponus' position resemble the one of Ammonius, due to the dependence of his commentary on Ammonius' one (on these questions, see A. BUSSE, *Praefatio* and *Supplementa praefationis*, in Ammonius, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.4, pp. v-lvi, and *Praefatio* and *Supplementum praefationis*, in Philoponus, *In Cat.*, CAG XIII.1, pp. v-xvi). Certainly, Boethius too, in the parallel passage, only gives the examples of father, but he also says that one thing considered in different respects can belong to more than two categories (BOETHIUS, *In Cat.*, PL 64, ed. J.-P. Migne, 261C).

<sup>93</sup> See OLYMPIODORUS, *In Cat.*, CAG XII.1, ed. A. Busse, 129.30-34 and ELIAS, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 238.33-239.2, as well as PORPHYRY, *In Cat.*, CAG IV.1, ed. A. Busse, 114.12-13.

<sup>94</sup> ὁ μέντοι Ἀφροδισιεὺς Ἀλέξανδρος ἐπὶ μόνων τῶν πρὸς τι συμβαίνειν οἶεται τοῦτο τὸ τινα τῶν πρὸς τι καὶ ὑπ' ἄλλην κατηγορίαν ἀνάγεσθαι, διότι τὴν ἀρχὴν τὸ πρὸς τι οὐδὲ εἶχεν οἰκεῖον ὑποκείμενον, ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἄλλης καὶ ἄλλης κατηγορίας τὸ εἶναι εἶχεν. (...) ἴδιον δέ τι ἐπὶ τῶν πρὸς τι ἐνεῖδεν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος τὸ πάντως σὺν ἄλλῃ κατηγορίᾳ ὑφεστάναι, ὡς ὁ μὲν πατὴρ μετὰ οὐσίας, τὸ δὲ μεῖζον μετὰ ποσοῦ, ὁ δὲ φίλος μετὰ ποιοῦ καὶ ὁ τύπων μετὰ τοῦ ποιεῖν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὡσαύτως (SIMPLICIUS, *In Cat.*, CAG VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch, 292.30-34 and 293.5-9, transl. B. Fleet, slightly modified, and, for the first sentence, following the suggestions made by an anonymous referee of this journal).

founded on a peculiar activity of man as a living being, namely its generative activity<sup>95</sup>. At any rate, Alexander’s idea is that relatives always depend on another category, and that this is the only point that Aristotle wants to make in *Categories* VIII, 11a37-38.

Olympiodorus and Elias count three solutions to the problem of the dual categorization: (i) the acceptance of the dual categorization of one and the same thing “considered in different respects” (κατ’ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο); (ii) the sharing out of the dual categorization among species and genus; (iii) the assimilation of the supposed “dual categorization” to the dependence of relational properties on other categories<sup>96</sup>. But in fact, the plausible version of (i) is: (i’) the acceptance of the dual categorization to the extent that it holds of a “complex thing” (σύνθετον). And in the final analysis, as regards the very problem of the dual categorization of habits and dispositions in general, and of knowledge in particular, (i’) and (iii) are not that different: “habit”, “disposition” or “knowledge” refer to a complex thing made up of a quality and a relational property.

#### **IV. The fortune of *Categories* VIII, 11a20-38**

Considering the solutions that emerge from the early reception of Aristotle’s *Categories* VIII, 11a20-38, the one holding that the dual categorization of habits and dispositions could be shared out among species and genus is hard to defend: the Aristotelian “categorical ladder” would lose its rungs. As for the mere dual categorization of one and the same thing, this should be rejected if Aristotle’s categories are meant to stay “mutually exclusive”<sup>97</sup>. The less problematic thesis seems to be that “the same thing” (τὸ αὐτό) can belong to two distinct categories if it is admitted that this “same thing” is not a simple, but a “complex thing” (σύνθετον) – whether this statement is limited to relatives or not. Thus, habits and dispositions are complex “relative-qualities”. Whereas it is difficult to establish in what sense habits and dispositions in general are relative – are they *of* a “subject”, must they be “specified”, are they “due proportions” or “disproportions”? – for the habit of knowledge, and for the disposition of unstable knowledge, there is less doubt about their relative character: like sensation, which is *of* an “object”, namely “*of* a sensible” (αἰσθητοῦ), knowledge too is *of* an “object”, namely “*of* a knowable”

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<sup>95</sup> Note that Aristotle’s classification of father among *Met.* Δ, 15, 1021a14-26’s relatives “according to potency” (κατὰ δύναμιν), i.e. “causal” relatives, is surely due to the fact that fatherhood is founded on the activity of generation.

<sup>96</sup> OLYMPIODORUS, *In Cat.*, CAG XII.1, ed. A. Busse, 129.10-39 and ELIAS, *In Cat.*, CAG XVIII.1, ed. A. Busse, 238.1-239.11. Olympiodorus holds that Aristotle mentions and defends only the second and the third solutions.

<sup>97</sup> See M. FREDE, “The Title, Unity and Authenticity of the Aristotelian *Categories*”, *op. cit.*, p. 13, quoted above.

(ἐπιστητοῦ). Thus, at any rate, the habit and the disposition of knowledge are complex things in the sense that they are “qualities-relative-to-an-‘object’”.

In fact, the dual categorization of the habit and disposition of knowledge in Aristotle is one of the first historical occurrences of a broader philosophical problem, still alive nowadays, concerning the ontological status of mental acts and states in general: are they “absolute” or “relative”? In other words, the dual categorization of the habit and disposition of knowledge echoes the problem of the absolute or relative nature of “intentionality”. Whereas today, Aristotle’s text is not explicitly mentioned in such discussions, this was indeed the case in the Scholastic and Neo-Scholastic traditions. For example, both Scotus and Suárez, in asking whether mental acts and states are absolute or relative, turned to *Categories* VIII, 11a20-38 and to Aristotle’s worries about this point<sup>98</sup>. In view of this, a historian will say that the Scholastics and Neo-Scholastics inherited the hesitations of Aristotle, and that these hesitations could have indirectly determined our contemporary discussions. A philosopher, without denying the historical influences, will add that there could be something in the nature of mental acts and states that invites both an absolute and a relative comprehension of these phenomena. Now, the discussions of Aristotle’s early commentators might inspire the philosopher in his inquiries: “mental act” or “mental state” are ambiguous expressions, which, at least sometimes, refer to a complex entity (a “σύνθετον”), both absolute and relative. In the contemporary context, one application of this idea could be the following: mental acts and states whose object exists are complex entities, in which one has to distinguish the aspect of mere “aboutness”, or “intentionality” *stricto sensu*, which could be understood as an ontologically absolute feature – i.e. nothing is required except thinking-of-a-centaur when thinking of a centaur –, from the aspect of “reference”, which is necessarily relational – i.e. referring to the world means having some sort of relation to the object of which the act or state is about<sup>99</sup>. However, this would only be a first step toward the elucidation of the exact nature of mental acts and states. Indeed, the question is largely open as to what exactly the relation of reference is: is it a causal relation, or

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<sup>98</sup> See DUNS SCOTUS, *Quod*. XIII, ed. F. Alluntis (*Cuestiones Cuodlibetales*, La Editorial Católica, Madrid, 1968 [Biblioteca de autores cristianos]), notably §33, n°101-102 and F. SUÁREZ, *DM XLVII*, ed. J. Doyle (*On Real Relation [Disputatio Metaphysicae XLVII]*, ed. and transl. J. P. Doyle, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, WI 2006 [Medieval Philosophical Texts in Translation]), notably section I and IV.

<sup>99</sup> For reference as distinct from intentionality, in that reference is a relation between the mental act or state and an existent object, whereas intentionality is independent of the existence of the object, see T. HORGAN – J. TIENSON, *The Intentionality of Phenomenology and the Phenomenology of Intentionality*, in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, D. J. Chalmers (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002, pp. 520-533. For a theory where intentionality is something absolute to which a relation is added if the object of the act or state exists, see U. KRIEGL, *The Sources of Intentionality*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011 (Philosophy of Mind).

is it another sort of relation, for example some sort of similarity? Again, going back to Aristotle, his reader will have some difficulties in establishing the status of the relation holding between knowledge and sensation and their objects, the knowable (ἐπιστητόν) and the sensible (αἰσθητόν): whereas in the *De anima*, this relation seems to be a peculiar kind of causal relation<sup>100</sup>, the *De interpretatione* says that the “affections of the soul” (παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς) are “similarities” (ὁμοιώματα) of the “things” (πράγματα)<sup>101</sup>. Here too, following Aristotle, there are important Scholastic debates on these points<sup>102</sup>. And again, hearing this, a historian and a philosopher will ask different questions.

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<sup>100</sup> See *De anima* II, 4, 416b33-34, III, 4, 429a13-15, and above all II, 5. On this peculiar causality in Aristotle, see the famous debate between R. Sorabji and M. Burnyeat originating in the two articles R. SORABJI, *Body and Soul in Aristotle*, «Philosophy» 49, 1974, pp. 63-89 (revised version in *Articles on Aristotle*. 4. Psychology and Aesthetics, J. Barnes – M. Schofield – R. Sorabji [eds.], Duckworth, London 1979, pp. 42-64) and M. F. BURNYEAT, *Is an Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind still Credible?*, in *Essays on Aristotle's De anima*, M. C. Nussbaum – A. Rorty (eds.), Clarendon Press, Oxford 1995 (Clarendon Aristotle Series), pp. 15-26.

<sup>101</sup> *De int.* I, 16a3-9.

<sup>102</sup> See notably the discussions between Godfrey of Fontaines and James of Viterbo presented in A. CÔTÉ, *L'objet et la cause de la connaissance selon Godefroid de Fontaines*, «Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie» 54, 2007, pp. 407-429, as well as the distinction between causality and reference in Scotus's theory of cognition, presented in G. PINI, *Can God Create My Thoughts? Scotus's Case against the Causal Account of Intentionality*, «Journal of the History of Philosophy», 49, 2011, pp. 39-63.