Jonathan Barnes, *Porphyry Introduction, Translated with an Introduction and Commentary,* Later Ancient Philosophers Series, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003, pp. 415 + xxvi. Hbk £53.00.

Students of medieval philosophy normally learn very soon the idea that Porphyry refrained from discussing a topic that has been discussed by more philosophers than, perhaps, any other in the history of western philosophy: Do the concepts of GENUS, SPECIES, DIFFERENCE, PROPERTY AND ACCIDENT that govern all of our thoughts and predications have any foundation in reality? Despite the centrality of this question to medieval and modern philosophy (no less than a computer-based culture that takes it for granted and a postmodernist culture that eschews objective truth-conditions) very few people have ever read the primary text that poses it. Thanks to Jonathan Barnes scholars no longer have the excuse that the text is inaccessible or that commentary on it is hard to come by.

The first thing that Barnes teaches us is that Porphyry's "*Introduction* to Aristotle's *Categories"*--as it is often titled--is not an introduction to Aristotle's *Categories.* Careful attention to the Greek reveals that it is rather an introduction to Aristotle's "predications", i.e. things that Aristotle *said* that give rise to problems in ontology and epistemology. To be precise, a "category" is a zero-level predicate such as we use in everyday speech as when we say, "Socrates sits." A "predicable" is a second-order predicate that identifies the relation of a predicate term to its subject term. As Aristotle understood it, predicates stand to their subjects in one of four ways. They express either a genus, definition, property or an accident of their subject. These ideas are contained in Aristotle's *Topics* that is not read much by those who think that Aristotle's only contribution to logic is the theory of syllogism in *Prior Analytics.* Faced with the problem of presenting his massive research into the entire field of ancient dialectic, Aristotle organized the rules of dialectic around the four predicables. A dialectician could be challenged (dialecticians by profession challenge one another) by showing, for example, that his claim to have defined X is false because he had only expressed a genus, or worse a property or mere accident of X. Similarly, a claim that such and such is an essential property of X could be countered by arguing that it was an accident, and so forth. If, as the ancient and medieval worlds believed, dialectic is essential to the human pursuit of truth, the validity of dialectical reasoning must rest on a firm foundation of objective relationships between the predicates of sentences. The nature and scope of these relationships is the subject-matter of Porphyry's *Introduction.*

Barnes's easily readable translation of Porphyry's text spans only 16 pages in modern edition; his introduction and notes make up the remainder of the book. All show why Porphyry was a pivotal thinker in the development of Western Philosophy. Barnes discusses most of the great questions that Porphyry's work raised. Why did Aristotle not list "difference" as a separate predicable? (He treated it under "genus".) Why did Aristotle not list "species" as a separate predicable? (He treated it under "genus".) Of course, the separate listing of "species" gave rise to notorious problems in medieval philosophy just as "difference" has played havoc in postmodern philosophy. Why did Porphyry reconstruct Aristotle's list of predicables by dropping definition and adding species and difference? Barnes places all of these issues in a proper textual and historical context, and shows *in principiis* why and how they could have become issues in the later philosophical tradition. The translation and commentary presupposes no knowledge of Greek or Latin on the part of the reader; though, of course, a measure of each would serve the reader well to make out and appreciate the finer distinctions in Barnes's arguments.

For scholars who like wrestling, Barnes offers a good match as he argues with the scholarship of Alain de Libera. Barnes's commentary gives a line-by-line analysis of Porphyry's *Introduction.* Medievalists normally must go back to Abelard for this kind of discussion. But Barnes gives us an exhaustive examination of each of the predicables—genus (50-92), species (93-154), differences (155-200), properties (201-219), accidents (220-236). After assaying their common and proper characteristics (236-241), he then launches into useful analyses of relations between the various predicables: (1) of genera to differences (242-254), (2) of genera to species (255-261) , (3) of genera to properties (262-268), (4) of genera to accidents (269-278), (5) of differences to species (279-284), (5) of differences to properties (285-287), (6) of differences to accidents (288-290), (7) of species to properties (291-294), (8) of species to accidents (295-300), (9) of properties to accidents (301-311). Following this useful analytic work the remainder of the book called "Additional Notes" takes up a wide range of issues that are pertinent to a scholarly understanding of Porphyry's position in western philosophy. They include historical aspects such as the Stoic influence on Porphyry and the "Old Masters" that gives Porphyry's most important sources as well as systematic issues such as "Talking of Expressions" (second-order or meta-linguistic statements), simple and singular predicates, Platonist vs. Aristotelian 'categories', parts and species, individuals, diversity and otherness etc. A very interesting set of questions asks: "Do differences entail their genera?" and explores the relations of differences to qualities. For post-modernists who write so glibly of "difference" these last sections, in my opinion, ought to be "required reading". Finally, "Epicurean accidents", "Synonymous Predication", and "The Rules of Priority" give valuable insight into predications that involve generic or specific terms.

Barnes's translation and commentary is a very useful introduction to one of the most influential works in medieval philosophy. I have only one major disappointment: apart from occasional references to the *Topics* Barnes does not relate the predicables to the main traditions of dialectical argumentation in the ancient and medieval worlds. Technical analysis of Porphyry's theory is, to be sure, a worthy project. Emphasis on the scientific soundness or logical rigour of the theory, however, may incline us to forget or neglect the central importance of predicables for the practice of dialectic. When, for example, in his commentary Boethius restates Porphyry's "questions" and proceeds to argue them, he is clearly engaged in a dialectical exercise. Later thinkers, however, came to regard his views about universals and "the problem of universals" as a "scientific" rather than a dialectical issue. The late great historian of medieval philosophy Etienne Gilson, stated "that the whole philosophy of the Middle Ages was little more than an obstinate endeavour to solve one problem—the problem of Universals." (The William James Lectures published as *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937). The misconception that the status of universals was a scientific problem to be solved rather than a dialectical problem to be discussed *pro et contra* gave way to the rigid divide between so-called "realists" and "nominalists" that has enjoyed a much longer life in the school textbook tradition than it ever had in historical fact, or than its origin in dialectical debate would have justified. Barnes's study does little to change this entrenched reading of history.

This handsome volume comes with various apparatuses: textual notes, Porphyry's texts ("Porphyry's Remains"), an extensive Bibliography, Glossaries (Greek-English and English-Greek), an Index of Citations and a General Index. In my opinion, it should soon become essential reading for every scholar in medieval and renaissance studies. Modern and postmodern thinkers might also learn from it.

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