

SIMPLICIUS ON THE REALITY OF RELATIONS AND RELATIONAL CHANGE

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THE ancient commentators' approach to Aristotle's account of relatives in *Categories* 7 is shaped by the conception that prevailed in later antiquity, in which relatives are composites of a substrate, i.e. an attribute that belongs to the other categories, and a relation.¹ Simplicius shares this conception with the other commentators, but he formulates it in different terms. He calls the substrate on which relational attributes supervene a difference (*διαφορά*) or a character (*χαρακτήρ*) and the supervening relational attribute an inclination (*ἀπόνευσις*).² In this study I attempt to clarify the significance of this terminology, arguing that through the notion of inclination Simplicius answers the question of the unity of Aristotle's category of relatives, as formulated in Plotinus' *Ennead* 6. 1. 6–9. To ex-

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¹ Porph. *In Cat.* 114. 13–14; Ammon. *In Cat.* 69. 24–6; Olymp. *In Cat.* 98. 21–2; and Elias, *In Cat.* 205. 9–11 (all references to these commentators are to Busse's edition in CAG 4/1–3, 4/4, 12/1, and 18/1 respectively). This view goes back to Aristotle (*Metaph.* 1088^a21–^b4) and is held by other thinkers, such as Andronicus of Rhodes (ap. Elias, *In Cat.* 201. 18–23) and Galen (*Diff. puls.* 2. 6, viii. 594. 10–17 Kühn).

² Simpl. *In Cat.* 167. 29–35 Kalbfleisch (all further references are to Kalbfleisch's edition in CAG 8). Simplicius' commentary on *Categories* 7 differs from the other late commentaries in other respects too. For instance, he seeks an ontological explanation, in addition to a didactic one, for Aristotle's discussion of the category of relatives immediately after the category of quantity and before the category of quality (158. 9–21; cf. Ammon. *In Cat.* 66. 10–14; Philop. *In Cat.* 102. 22–9; Olymp. *In Cat.* 97. 13–27; Elias, *In Cat.* 201. 29–202. 8). He explicitly rejects Iamblichus' division of the category into species, of which versions are found in the other commentaries (161. 33; cf. Ammon. *In Cat.* 67. 16–26; Philop. *In Cat.* 105. 1–11; Olymp. *In Cat.* 99. 21–38; Elias, *In Cat.* 202. 11–13). And he tends to minimize the difference between Aristotle's two definitions of relatives that the other commentators consider significantly different (203. 14–204. 11; cf. Ammon. *In Cat.* 67. 11–16; Philop. *In Cat.* 105. 12–18; Olymp. *In Cat.* 97. 38–98. 5; Elias, *In Cat.* 205. 17–21). The significance of some of these differences will become clearer below.

pound this contention, I outline Plotinus' construal of Aristotle's category of relatives.

In the opening paragraph of his discussion of relatives in *Categories* 7, Aristotle presents two lists of examples; the first contains 'greater' and 'double', the second contains 'states', 'conditions', 'perception', 'knowledge', and 'position' (6^a38^b3). Although Aristotle does not explicitly distinguish these lists, they seem to exemplify two different notions of relatives.³ The first list seems to contain relational attributes whose bearers possess them merely due to their mutual dependence, whereas the second list seems to contain attributes which, in addition to arising from their bearers' mutual dependence, are internal qualitative states thereof. Correspondently with this distinction, Plotinus in *Ennead* 6. 1. 9 distinguishes two types of relational attributes: those that come about by participation and those that result from an activity (ll. 1–5). In so doing, he associates Aristotle's account of relatives with the question of the reality of relations, which does not appear in *Categories* 7 but arises from the Stoic notion of relatives. Consequently, Plotinus' distinction of these types of relatives leads to two different accounts of the reality of relations. The first account, in which relational attributes are acquired by participation, secures the reality of relations by preventing their reduction to their substrates. By this account relational attributes are not mere dispositions of their substrates, as the Stoics hold, but exist over and above their substrates. The second account, in which relational attributes are activities of their substrates, secures the reality of relations by grounding them in the inner nature of their substrates. It thereby confronts the contention found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* N 1 (1088^a29–35) and in Sextus Empiricus (*M.* 8. 455–8) that relational attributes are ontologically inferior because their substrates do not undergo an intrinsic change when they acquire and lose their relational attributes. Plotinus' *Ennead* 6. 1. 6–9 leaves this dilemma unsettled. On the one hand, he considers active relations less problematic than relations by participation (6. 1. 6. 13–18); on the other hand, he argues that the unity of the category of relatives is secured if relations are considered to be forms acquired by participation (6. 1. 9. 25–7).

³ On this see J. Ackrill, *Aristotle's Categories and De interpretatione* (Oxford, 1963), 99; D. Sedley, 'Aristotelian Relativities', in M. Canto-Sperber and P. Pellegrin (eds.), *Le Style de la pensée* (Paris, 2002), 324–52; F. Morales, 'Relational Attributes in Aristotle', *Phronesis*, NS 39/3 (1994), 255–74, and my 'The Unity of Aristotle's Category of Relatives', *Classical Quarterly*, forthcoming.

In his commentary on *Categories* 7 Simplicius employs the term ‘inclination’ in two discussions that bear directly on this dilemma: his discussion of the reality of relations (171. 12–21) and his criticism of the Stoic distinction between relatives and relatively disposed attributes (167. 28–30). In the first discussion he defends the reality of relations by drawing a distinction between inclination and the inclining entity (τὸ ἀπονεύον), which corresponds to the distinction between relations and relatives. In the second discussion he argues that all relational attributes differentiate their substrates (κατὰ διαφοράν) because the inclination does not exist separately from the inclining capacity (ἡ ἐπινεύουσα δύναμις) of its substrates (167. 29). Here, then, Simplicius rejects the Stoic notion of relatively disposed attributes, i.e. attributes whose substrates do not undergo an intrinsic change on acquiring or losing them, and argues that all relational attributes are intrinsic states of their substrates.

These discussions suggest that through the notion of inclination Simplicius attempts to integrate Plotinus’ two accounts of the reality of relations. Specifically, they indicate that Simplicius appeals to the notion of inclination in developing a conception of relations in which relational attributes both exist over and above their substrates and are grounded in the substrate’s inner capacity. In what follows I substantiate this interpretation and show how Simplicius succeeds in accommodating Plotinus’ seemingly incompatible accounts. This interpretation does not merely shed light on the reception and transformation of Aristotle’s notion of relatives in late antiquity and on the Stoic distinction between relatives and relatively disposed attributes, for which Simplicius is our main source. Its major significance lies in the doubt it casts upon the assumption that Simplicius’ contribution to the ancient discussions of relations is confined to a systematization and clarification of his predecessors’ views.⁴ By associating Simplicius’ introduction of the term ‘inclination’ with Plotinus’ two accounts of the reality of relations, this interpretation implies that Simplicius’ commentary on *Categories* 7 paves the ground for the formulation of the question that dominated the medieval and early modern discussions of

⁴ C. Luna, ‘La relation chez Simplicius’ [‘La relation’], in I. Hadot (ed.), *Simplicius: sa vie, son œuvre, sa survie* (Berlin, 1987), 113–47 at 115. Cf. A. Conti, ‘La teoria della relazione nei commentatori neoplatonici delle *Categorie* di Aristotele’ [‘La teoria’], *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia*, NS 1/3 (1983), 259–83 at 269.

relations—how to distinguish relations from their *relata* without jeopardizing the subject–attribute scheme.

In substantiating my interpretation, I analyse in the first section Simplicius' and the other late commentators' discussions of the reality of relations. I show that Simplicius' discussion gives rise to the formulation of a precise distinction between relations and their substrates, whereas the other late commentators stress the dependence of relations on their substrates. In the second section I turn to Simplicius' criticism of the Stoic distinction between relatives and relatively disposed attributes, showing that the distinction between relations and their substrates notwithstanding, Simplicius follows the other commentators in stressing the dependence of relational attributes on the inner nature of their substrates. In the light of these conclusions, in the third section I seek to show how Simplicius succeeds in accommodating the distinction between relations and their substrates with his view that relations depend on their substrates. Here I analyse Simplicius' discussion of relational change and show that it facilitates the integration of these two accounts and that it underlies the notion of inclination. In conclusion, I show that Simplicius' conception of relations originates in Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* and in Damascius' account of the relation between the higher and lower grades of reality in Neoplatonic metaphysics. This discussion lends further support to my attempt to articulate the notion of inclination and offers a possible explanation of Simplicius' motivation for deviating from the stance of the other late commentators.

I

Simplicius' account of the reality of relations addresses four queries that Plotinus raises in his discussion of Aristotle's category of relatives. The first questions the reality of relations on the ground that the possibility of thinking and naming a relation does not guarantee its reality. A relation, Simplicius says, can be thought of and named even when one of the *relata* no longer exists: a man, for instance, is called and considered a father even after his child's death (170. 13–21).⁵ The second query questions the reality of relations on the ground that they are not subject to change. A certain entity can

⁵ I read here *ἐπινοεῖται* with MS L because it appears three lines below. For a

acquire and lose its relational attributes, such as standing on the right, without undergoing an intrinsic change: for instance, when the entity that stands to its left changes its position (170. 23–7). The third query asks whether relations are corporeal or incorporeal, and if they are incorporeal whether they inhere in the *relata* or are external to them (170. 28–31). Finally, the fourth query ponders the generic unity of Aristotle’s category of relatives, considering that it seems to cover relations that involve activity as well as inactive relations (170. 34–171. 8).⁶ The following passage seems to settle all these queries except the second, to which Simplicius offers a separate reply (171. 23–172. 10):

Regarding these difficulties as to the subsistence [of relations], it must be said that just as qualities are incorporeal when they are considered according to their own nature in separation from bodies, so relations are incorporeal when they are considered according to their own nature in separation from the compounds. For a relation in itself is a *logos*; and the peculiar property [*ἰδιότης*] of this *logos* is the substantial inclination of the proper difference towards something else.⁷ The difference should be taken not in so far as a relative differs merely from qualified things and substances, but in so far as it differs from all kinds of beings whatsoever. For the form of relatives is distinguished according to the relational *logos* of the difference. Thus, as also having a proper difference, they are associated with the other genera, but as inclining towards something else and not abiding in themselves, in this very peculiar property they differ from the other [genera]. And we must not take the inclining entity but the inclination itself towards something else as the relation, being either in others and towards something else or in themselves as in relation to something else. These are the things that we should say regarding their subsistence. (171. 9–22)⁸

Although this passage proposes an answer to the question of the reality of relations, it seems to address only the third query re-

justification of Kalbfleisch’s reading see B. Fleet (trans.), *Simplicius: On Aristotle’s Categories 7–8* [Simplicius, *On Categories 7–8*] (London, 2002), 164 n. 100.

⁶ Plotinus formulates the first query in 6. 1. 6. 34, the second in 6. 1. 7. 19–21, the third in 6. 1. 8. 2–5, and the fourth in 6. 1. 8. 8–14.

⁷ I do not translate *λόγος* because it is not clear whether it is used here non-technically to mean ‘account’, as Barrie Fleet thinks (Simplicius, *On Categories 7–8*, 25), or whether it refers to the Neoplatonic technical term ‘reason principle’. My analysis of this passage lends further support to the latter reading, in which *logos* refers to the manifestation of a transcendent Form in the lower grades of the Neoplatonic ontological hierarchy.

⁸ All translations are mine.

garding their incorporeality; it offers no explanation as to why the incorporeality of relations secures their subsistence and it gives no explicit answer to the question of the generic unity of the category of relatives. Yet this passage may be understood as providing adequate replies to these questions too, when it is placed in the context of Plotinus' discussion of Aristotle's category of relatives.

In *Ennead* 6. 1. 9 Plotinus associates the question of the reality of relations with the question of their corporeality, arguing that if relations are bodies, it is necessary to say that they are nothing (*οὐδὲν ἔδει λέγειν εἶναι ταύτας*, ll. 5–6). Because of a lacuna in the text it is difficult to understand Plotinus' inference from the corporeality of relations to their non-existence.⁹ However, it can be convincingly reconstructed from his criticism of the Stoic third genus, 'the somehow disposed' (*τὸ πῶς ἔχον*). In *Ennead* 6. 1. 29 Plotinus argues that if dispositions of matter (i.e. the somehow disposed) are real beings they must be incorporeal, and if they do not exist they are empty names (*μάτην λέγεται*) and hence only matter exists (ll. 21–2). This argument serves Plotinus in criticizing the Stoic attempt to accommodate qualities and other seemingly immaterial entities, such as the soul and the intellect, with their materialism, by considering them dispositions of matter.¹⁰ Through this argument, Plotinus seizes on the Stoic distinction between qualities and the material substrate on which they are imposed to force the Stoics to admit incorporeal and active entities to their world-view (ll. 4–5). As the admittance of such entities goes against the Stoic principal presupposition that only bodies can act or be acted upon,¹¹ the Stoics, in Plotinus' view, should give up either this presupposition or the distinction between the material substrate and qualities. Both alternatives are undesirable: the first forces the Stoics to abandon their materialism and the second does away with the distinction between substrates and qualities, implying, in Plotinus' view, that only matter exists and qualities are empty words.

This argument sheds light on Plotinus' discussion of the reality of relations in *Ennead* 6. 1. 6. Regarding this discussion, Dirk Baltzly argues that Plotinus confuses the reduction of relations with their elimination and mind-dependence, because the reduction of relations such as equality or sameness does not imply the

⁹ The apodosis of Plotinus' consideration of the possibility that relations are incorporeal is missing.

¹⁰ Cf. 4. 7. 4. 8–11.

¹¹ e.g. D.L. 7. 134 (*SVF* ii. 300).

non-existence or mind-dependence of the monadic relational attributes 'equal' and 'the same'. Stated in formal terms, Baltzly argues that the reduction of aRb does not entail the non-existence or mind-dependence of $R(a)$ and $R'(b)$.¹² However, when Plotinus' arguments regarding the reality of relations are understood in the light of his argument against the Stoic genera, the qualified and the disposed, it appears to concern relational attributes of the form $R(a)$ and $R'(b)$ and not relations (i.e. aRb).¹³ The reduction of the former, unlike that of the latter, does entail its elimination and mind-dependence because such reduction leaves us with the substrate alone. In formal terms, Plotinus' argument seems to concern not the reduction of aRb to the monadic attributes $R(a)$ and $R'(b)$, which indeed does not entail the elimination and mind-dependence of the monadic attributes. It rather concerns the reduction of the monadic attributes $R(a)$ and $R'(b)$ to their substrates a and b , which does entail the elimination and mind-dependence of relational attributes. This interpretation is confirmed by Plotinus' statement that if relations do not exist over and above their substrates, nothing but the qualified or quantified entities is left (ll. 19–24).¹⁴

Placed in this context, Simplicius' reply to the question of the reality of relations becomes clearer. Following Plotinus, Simplicius evades the consequence that relational attributes are mind-dependent or mere words by assuming their incorporeality. Within the context of Plotinus' criticism of the Stoics, this assumption secures the reality of relational attributes, by preventing their reducibility to their substrates. Further examination of Plotinus' discussion of Aristotle's category of relatives explains how Simplicius' assumption that relations are incorporeal *logoi* secures the unity of the category of relatives.¹⁵

¹² D. Baltzly, 'Porphyry and Plotinus on the Reality of Relations' ['Porphyry and Plotinus'], *Journal of Neoplatonic Studies*, NS 6 (1997–8), 49–75 at 60.

¹³ I use the term 'relation' to designate terms such as 'similarity', 'equality', or 'fatherhood'. By 'relational attributes' I refer to terms such as 'similar', 'equal' and 'father', and by 'relatives' I refer to the entities that bear relational attributes.

¹⁴ Dirk Baltzly's interpretation rests on the assumption that in *Ennead* 6. 1. 6–9 *σχέσις* always means 'relation'. However, in Stoic contexts it often means 'disposition'. See *SVF* ii. 393 and P. Hoffmann, 'Les catégories ΠΟΥ et ΠΟΤΕ chez Aristote et Simplicius', in P. Aubenque (ed.), *Concepts et catégories dans la pensée antique [Concepts]* (Paris, 1980), 217–52 at 233–4. Thus Plotinus' arguments do not necessarily concern relations between two terms; they may reasonably hold for non-relational dispositions of matter.

¹⁵ On the meaning of *logos* see n. 7 above.

In *Ennead* 6. 1. 9 Plotinus claims that if relations are regarded as forms, the unity of the category of relatives is secured because then all cases of relativity will have the same *logos* (ll. 25–7). Understood in the light of this claim, Simplicius' identification of relations with *logoi* in the above passage may seem to be a reply to the question of the unity of the category of relatives. In this reply, the category of relatives is unified because all relatives have in common a peculiar property, which is, according to Simplicius, the 'substantial inclination of the proper difference towards something else' (171. 13–14). Simplicius' explicit discussion of the unity of the category of relatives at 168. 16–36 confirms this interpretation. Here he says that the category of relatives will lose its unity and collapse into the other categories if we consider the substrates and the bearers of the relations (168. 22–5). To avoid this consequence, he proposes to regard relations as both transcending their substrates (i.e. the attributes that belong to the other categories) and maintaining the relationship between them through the peculiar property of the relation (168. 29–30).¹⁶ As this account echoes the distinction that Simplicius draws at the end of the above passage between the inclination itself and the inclining entity (171. 19–21), it seems safe to conclude that Simplicius' contention that relations are *logoi*, whose peculiar property is the inclination towards another, is aimed at securing the unity of the category of relative.

From this analysis we see that Simplicius' reply regarding the reality of relations and his account of the unity of the category of relatives rest on a distinction between relations and their substrates. This distinction brings out the force of the analogy, drawn at the beginning of the above passage, between qualities and relations. This analogy seems to allude to Aristotle's discussion of the category of quality, which differs from his discussion of the other categories

¹⁶ This contention may shed light on the debate between Concetta Luna and Alessandro Conti as to whether Simplicius analyses relations into two predicative propositions $R(a)$ and $R'(b)$, as Luna argues, or conceives of them as properties of the whole composed of a and b , as Conti argues. (Luna, 'La relation', 125–8, and Conti, 'La teoria', 261–3). The contention that relations are *logoi* may suggest that the relation R does not inhere in both terms but that the terms acquire their relational attributes $R(a)$ and $R'(b)$ by participating in the *logos*. This interpretation may also explain why although Simplicius states that relations have their reality in a plurality of substrates (161. 10–11), he never asks how this feature accords with Aristotle's subject and predicate scheme. In sect. III below I show that in accounting for this feature of relations Simplicius appeals to Aristotle's contention that the actualizations of the agent and the patient are one.

in distinguishing the bearers of qualities, i.e. qualified entities (τὰ ποιὰ), from qualities (ποιότητες, 10^a27–9). Understood in this light, the distinction between relations and their substrates, which underlies Simplicius' reply to the question of the reality of relations, seems to be a distinction between relatives and relations rather than between relational attributes and their substrates.¹⁷ Simplicius' appeal to the notion of participation in the above passage, and his characterization of relations as transcendent in his discussion of the unity of the category of relatives, confirm this interpretation. In this interpretation Simplicius' characterization of relations as consisting of a difference and an inclination is different from the similar view found in the other late commentators, in which relational attributes have a unique mode of existence because they necessarily subsist in the other categories.¹⁸ Simplicius' discussion of *Cat.* 8, 11^a20–38, lends further support to this interpretation.

Here Simplicius rejects Alexander of Aphrodisias' claim that only relatives have their being in the other categories, arguing that this characteristic holds for all categories in so far as compounds (σύνθετα) such as Socrates are considered. He argues further that when the compounds are analysed into their various constituents, each constituent belongs to a single category: man to the category of substance, three cubits tall to the category of quantity, and father to the category of relatives (292. 34–293. 5). This discussion indicates that in Simplicius' view relational attributes are not unique in inhering in attributes that belong to the other categories. Further, his contention that relational attributes can be considered in separation from their substrates implies that they are irreducible to their substrates, hence distinct from relational entities, i.e. relatives. This refinement of the traditional view of the dependence of relational attributes on the other categories hinges on the difference between Simplicius' formulation of the question of the reality of relations and the other late commentators' formulations thereof.

The other late commentators, Philoponus, Olympiodorus, and Elias, adopt Ammonius' formulation of the question of the reality of relations, which concerns two issues: whether relatives exist by nature or by position (θέσει) and whether all things are relatives (*In*

¹⁷ According to Baltzly, Porphyry also draws this distinction ('Porphyry and Plotinus', 68–70).

¹⁸ Thus I disagree with Concetta Luna, who claims that Simplicius' formulation of this thesis is also found in the other late commentators (Luna, 'La relation', 118 n. 14).

Cat. 66. 21–67. 11).¹⁹ Ammonius' treatment of the first question, which bears directly on the ontological status of relations, is too brief to determine the exact issue at stake. In his answer Ammonius merely says that in the case of the position of bodily organs, such as the liver and the spleen, the relational attributes 'right' and 'left' are by nature, because the liver is always on the right and the spleen is always on the left. Although Ammonius' followers associate this account with the question whether relational attributes are mind-dependent, it is not clear why, in their view, the contention that no relational attributes exist by nature implies that they are mind-dependent.²⁰ According to the explanation that these commentators offer, natural relations, such as right and left in the case of the liver and the spleen, cannot alter as their alteration would entail the destruction of the organism. This explanation, however, does not imply that relational attributes that are independent of the nature of their bearers are mind-dependent; nothing prevents transitory or accidental attributes from having objective reality. This difficulty suggests that although Simplicius is not alone in addressing the question whether relational attributes are mind-dependent, this question has different significance in the other late commentaries. The distinction between natural and positional relations, which underlies the other late commentators' treatment of the issue of the reality of relations, suggests that their main concern is not whether relational attributes exist over and above their substrates, but their dependence on the inner nature of their substrates. In other words, the other late commentators seem to counter the contention that all relational attributes arise merely from the mutual dependence of their substrates.

A more elaborate exposition of the notion of natural relations, found in Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*, reinforces this interpretation. Here Proclus distinguishes accidental relations that have no being from essential relations that exist by nature. His example for the latter is right and left in animals, of which he says that the right, being a principle of motion, has an essential

¹⁹ Philop. *In Cat.* 103. 18–19 and 31–2; Olymp. *In Cat.* 98. 7–9 and 98. 40–99. 2; Elias, *In Cat.* 203. 35–204. 2. For the sake of convenience, I use here and throughout the name Elias to refer to the author of the commentaries that go under his name in CAG. In so doing I do not take any stance regarding the authorship of these commentaries.

²⁰ Philop. *In Cat.* 103. 19; Olymp. *In Cat.* 99. 1–2; Elias, *In Cat.* 203. 35–6 and 205. 4.

characteristic besides its relation to the left (*In Parm.* 935. 21–936. 3 Cousin).²¹ By this view, then, naturally relational attributes do not merely depend on their correlatives but have in addition an intrinsic characteristic. This characteristic secures the reality of natural relations by granting them a certain independence from their correlatives.

Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the question whether relational attributes exist by nature with the question whether everything is relative suggests that Ammonius and his followers draw on sceptical arguments for the suspension of judgement in formulating the question of the reality of relations. Specifically, this formulation calls to mind Sextus Empiricus' analysis of the statement that everything is relative to the statements (1) everything is relative to its correlative and (2) everything is relative to our judgement (*PH* 1. 135). The assumption that Ammonius and his followers formulated the question of the reality of relations against this background lends further support to the interpretation, in which their main concern in defending the reality of relations is the mutual dependence of relational attributes on their correlatives. This assumption also implies that this formulation of the question of the reality of relations, unlike Simplicius', does not call for a distinction between relatives and relations, nor does it clarify exactly how relational attributes are distinct from their substrates. Although these commentators maintain the distinction between relatives and absolute terms (*καθ' αὐτά*), they do not address the question whether relational attributes are reducible to their substrates. Their account of this issue is confined to the statement that in so far as (*καθό*) a man is a man he belongs to the category of substance and in so far as he is a father he belongs to the category of relatives.²² In the absence of an explication of the locution 'in so far as', it is not clear whether in their view 'father' is in fact a substance considered under a different description or a distinct attribute that exists over and above its substrate.²³

²¹ For the view that locomotion proceeds from the right see Arist. *De caelo* 284^b28, 285^a23, ^b16.

²² Ammon. *In Cat.* 67. 9–10; Philop. *In Cat.* 104. 27–8.

²³ The other commentators' stance on this issue is not clear, but Philoponus seems to reduce relations to their substrates. As Michael Wolff has shown, Philoponus does not regard the natural upward and downward tendencies of elemental bodies as arising from a relation to external causes but as internal forces (M. Wolff, 'Philoponus and the Rise of Preclassical Dynamics', in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Philoponus and the Rejec-*

Viewed in this light, Simplicius' account of the reality of relations may be understood as addressing not only Plotinus' criticism of Aristotle and the Stoics, but also his contemporaries' account of relations. Specifically, it seems to address the question that the other late commentators leave open, that is, whether relational attributes exist over and above their substrates. However, I now show that Simplicius does not abandon his contemporaries' approach altogether. Through an analysis of Simplicius' criticism of the Stoic notion of relatively disposed attributes, I argue that in keeping with the other late commentators Simplicius considers relational attributes to be dependent on the inner nature of their substrates. How this approach coheres with the distinction between relatives and relations that arises from Simplicius' answer to the question of the reality of relations is discussed in the third section.

II

In his criticism of the Stoic distinction between relatives and relatively disposed attributes Simplicius attempts to establish the contention that the Stoic distinction is merely verbal (*κατὰ τὴν λέξιν μόνην*). He argues that all relational attributes are relatives in the Stoic sense: that is, they are intrinsic states that differentiate their substrates (*κατὰ διαφοράν*). By this criticism, he rejects the Stoic relatively disposed attributes: that is, relational attributes that do not differentiate their substrates, but are acquired and lost without their substrate undergoing an intrinsic change (166. 30–167. 1). Simplicius' justification of this contention is unclear because his report on the Stoic distinction is problematic,²⁴ but also because

tion of Aristotelian Science (London, 1987), 84–120 at 111–12). Similarly, Simplicius reports that in his *De aeternitate mundi contra Aristotelem* Philoponus tried to refute one of Aristotle's arguments for the eternity of the world on the ground that it wrongly presupposes that things do not acquire their relations simultaneously with their being (*Simpl. In Phys.* 1147. 23–31 Diels). He upholds a similar view in his *De anima* commentary, where he says that relatives should not first exist and then receive the relation (*In DA* 198. 18–22 Hayduck).

²⁴ It is not clear from Simplicius' report whether relatively disposed attributes form a subclass of relatives or whether these two types of relative are disjoint classes. This difficulty is due to the fact that Simplicius offers two descriptions of the Stoic view. The first description supports the first understanding, although it contains, as Mario Mignucci has pointed out, traces of the second interpretation. Here Simplicius explicitly states that relatively disposed attributes are relatives (166. 8–10);

it does not seem to counter the Stoic notion of relatively disposed attributes.

In the second part of his report on the Stoic distinction (166. 15–29) Simplicius uses the same terms that he uses later in presenting his own account of relational attributes. He says that relatives are somehow disposed according to their proper characteristic and incline towards another thing (166. 16–17), whereas relatively disposed attributes hold or do not hold for a certain thing without change or alteration, in addition to being directed towards something else (166. 17–19). By this description, relatives mark a difference in their substrates, whereas relatively disposed attributes are acquired or lost without their substrates undergoing an intrinsic change.²⁵ In the light of this description one would expect Simplicius' contentions that the Stoic distinction is merely verbal, and that all relational attributes are relatives, to imply that in his view all relational attributes differentiate their subjects. However, Simplicius argues instead that a relation has no nature by itself (*οὐ γὰρ ἔχει φύσιν αὐτῇ καθ' αὐτήν*) and therefore it must inhere in a differentiated characteristic that belongs to the other nine categories, such as quality, quantity, time, and place (167. 4–10). In other words, Simplicius seems to reject the Stoic distinction on the

his contention that the relation of implication (*ἀκολουθία*) between these terms is the reverse of the relation between *καθ' αὐτά* and *κατὰ διαφοράν* (166. 3) suggests that the relation between these types of relative is not symmetrical. This discrepancy is of little importance for the present analysis because Simplicius rejects altogether the distinction between the Stoic two types of relative, regardless of whether they are subordinate or disjoint classes. For a thorough analysis of Simplicius' report see M. Mignucci, 'The Stoic Notion of Relatives', in J. Barnes and M. Mignucci (eds.), *Matter and Metaphysics: Fourth Symposium Hellenisticum* (Naples, 1988), 131–217.

²⁵ This account has received various formulations in modern studies of Stoicism. For instance, Philip de Lacy argues that relatively disposed attributes depend on the necessary connection between the *relata* (P. de Lacy, 'The Stoic Categories as Methodological Principles', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, NS 76 (1945), 246–63 at 253); John Rist argues that relatively disposed attributes are those on which the existence of the entity does not depend (J. M. Rist, 'Categories and their Use', in A. A., Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (London, 1977), 38–57 at 54); Anthony Long and David Sedley characterize them as extrinsic relations (A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1987), 178); and Stephen Menn argues that they hold for the substrate not through an *F*-ness (i.e. an abstract entity such as 'justice') (S. Menn, 'The Stoic Theory of Categories', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 17 (1999), 215–47 at 229). Be that as it may, Simplicius seems to understand these attributes as independent from the substrates' inner nature.

ground that all relational attributes are dependent on, rather than being, attributes that differentiate their subjects.

This argument does not soundly refute the Stoic view for at least two reasons. First, the Stoics would agree with Simplicius that relatively disposed attributes supervene on a qualified substrate, hence depend on attributes that differentiate their subjects.²⁶ Second, it is not clear how a relation characterized as an inclination differs from Stoic relatively disposed attributes. From Simplicius' criticism of the Stoics it follows that the non-relational attributes that belong to the other categories, rather than the relational attribute itself, differentiate their subject. By this argument, then, the relation or the inclination corresponds after all to the Stoic notion of relatively disposed attributes, which do not differentiate their subjects, rather than to the Stoic notion of relatives, as one could expect from Simplicius' criticism.

Moreover, it is difficult to reconcile this argument with Simplicius' view of relational change, which plays an important role in his defence of the reality of relations (171. 23–172. 10). Here Simplicius argues that relational attributes are subject to change inasmuch as they inhere in other things and inasmuch as they are related to other things. The second mode of change implies that in Simplicius' view relational attributes themselves and not only their substrates are subject to change. Simplicius indeed draws this implication here and claims that a change in one *relatum*, e.g. in a son, carries a change in the other *relatum*, e.g. in his father, because relational attributes do not change by virtue of being qualities or quantities but by virtue of being relatives (171. 28 and 34–7).²⁷ These difficulties call for a different interpretation of Simplicius' criticism of the Stoics. Such an interpretation should meet two requirements: it should render Simplicius' view a genuine alternative to the Stoic view and it should accord with his contention that relational attributes are subject to change. The concluding paragraph of Simplicius' criticism of the Stoics may lead to such an interpretation.

Here Simplicius refers to the first part of his report on the Stoic

²⁶ Simpl. *In Cat.* 222. 30–3 (*SVF* ii. 378).

²⁷ Here, as in his commentary on *Physics* 3, Simplicius rejects Aristotle's contention that relatives are not subject to change (cf. *In Cat.* 435. 1–31). However, in his commentary on *Physics* 5 he reverts to Aristotle's thesis and claims that relatives are subject to mere accidental change (834. 20–837. 18 and 858. 6–861. 28 Diels). I discuss Simplicius' account of relational change in sect. III below.

notion of relational attributes (165. 32–166. 15) and argues that relatively disposed attributes do not form a subclass of relatives, as the Stoics hold,²⁸ but reciprocally entail each other (167. 27–8). He justifies this claim in the following passage:

For there must be both the inclining capacity [*ἡ ἐπιτεύουσα δύναμις*] considered according to a difference and the inclination itself [*ἡ ἐπίνευσις ἀδρή*], namely the relation [*σχέσις*]. If one of these two is wanting, such a category is not preserved; for neither does the bare relation exist in itself, nor does the difference in separation from the relation make this category. But we must not separate the difference and the relation from each other, but consider the relation of the possessor and the thing in relation to which [the possessor] is disposed according to one common combined property. (167. 28–35)

Given that this passage justifies the reciprocal entailment between relatives and relatively disposed attributes, it seems reasonable to construe Simplicius' distinction between the inclining capacity and the inclination as equivalent to the Stoic distinction between relatives and relatively disposed attributes. By this construal, the inclining capacity or the difference is equivalent to the Stoic notion of relatives, and the inclination or the relation is equivalent to the Stoic notion of relatively disposed attributes. If this construal is correct, then in his criticism of the Stoic notion of relatively disposed attributes Simplicius does not adhere to precisely the same view that the other ancient commentators hold, but to a refinement of it. Whereas the other commentators view relational attributes as supervening on attributes that belong to the other categories, Simplicius regards relations as supervening on the capacity of these attributes to be related or to incline to another thing.²⁹

This interpretation renders Simplicius' account of relations a genuine alternative to the Stoic view. It implies that in his criticism of the Stoic notion of relatively disposed attributes Simplicius re-

²⁸ See n. 24 above.

²⁹ As I argue in sect. iv below, Simplicius' conception of relations presupposes the Neoplatonic distinction between inner activity, by which an entity actualizes its essence, and external activities, by which it acts on another entity. Viewed in this light, a capacity to be related to another thing can be understood as the capacity of a man, for instance, to become a father and thus related to an offspring, by exercising his external activity. Admittedly, the notion of a capacity to be related to another thing is less obviously applicable to other relational attributes, such as 'standing on the right'. In sect. iii below I show that Simplicius applies this notion to all relational attributes.

jects relations that a substrate acquires merely because of external circumstances and argues that all relations inhere in the substrate's inner capacities. In other words, Simplicius agrees with the Stoics that relational attributes, such as whiter or longer, supervene on non-relational attributes, such as white or two cubits long, but he disagrees with the Stoic account of the manner in which relational attributes hold for their bearers. Whereas the Stoics argue that relatively disposed attributes are acquired merely due to the mutual dependence of their substrates, Simplicius argues that all relational attributes arise also from the intrinsic capacities of their bearers.³⁰ Accordingly, Simplicius' criticism of the Stoic notion of relatively disposed attributes cannot be dismissed on the ground that the Stoics would agree that such attributes supervene on a qualified substrate.

Three other passages from Simplicius' commentary on *Categories* 7 confirm this interpretation. First, in his discussion of the order of the categories Simplicius argues that the category of relatives is prior to the last six categories because it holds for connate (*σύμφυτος*) relations, which are naturally associated with the being or essence of their bearers (157. 11–12), as opposed to adventitious (*ἐπίκτητος*) relations, which are acquired due to external circumstances.³¹ Second, in his discussion of the reality of relations, Simplicius defines a relation as 'the *substantial* inclination of the proper difference towards something else' (171. 13–14). And in his discussion of the categorial status of parts, Simplicius reports that Cornutus argued that Aristotle's category of relatives does not hold for incomplete predicates, but for real entities that have their inclination towards something else in their very being (187. 31–4). In keeping with the above interpretation, these passages suggest that a relation or an inclination is grounded in the essence of its substrate.

Furthermore, this interpretation reconciles Simplicius' criticism of the Stoic notion of relatively disposed attributes with his report on this notion. Particularly, it avoids the problematic conclusion that although Simplicius' dismissal of the Stoic notion of relatively disposed attributes is expected to imply that all relational attributes are subject to change, in fact it implies that the substrate of rela-

³⁰ I articulate this contention in sect. III below.

³¹ In this respect, Simplicius differs from the other late commentators, who offer only didactic reasons for the order.

tional attributes is subject to change, rather than the relational attributes themselves. The above interpretation, which construes Simplicius' criticism of the Stoics as hinging on the dependence of relations on the intrinsic nature of their substrates, underlies one of his explanations of relational change, viz. his contention that a change in the substrate brings about a change in its relational attributes (171. 25–6). In so doing, this interpretation renders Simplicius' discussion of the Stoic distinction between relatives and relatively disposed attributes coherent; it shows that Simplicius' notion of relational attributes does correspond with the Stoic notion of relatives, in holding for attributes that differentiate their substrates.

So far my analysis has led to two conclusions: (1) Simplicius distinguishes relations from relatives in accounting for the reality of relations, and (2) in contrast to the Stoics and in keeping with the other late commentators, he views relational attributes as depending on the inner nature of their substrates. This analysis gives rise to two questions: how these conclusions accord with each other and how Simplicius' notion of relations accounts for his second explanation of relational change, in which relational attributes change as a result of a change in their correlatives (171. 34–7). The following analysis of Simplicius' more elaborate discussion of relational change in his commentary on *Physics* 3 answers these questions.

III

In his commentary on *Physics* 3. 1 Simplicius questions Aristotle's reason for denying change to the category of relatives, in which an entity can acquire or lose its relational attributes merely through a change in its correlative (225^b11–13).³² Simplicius argues that since relations inhere in both terms, not only in one, the non-accidental change of one *relatum* carries a non-accidental change in the other *relatum*, although the latter has not moved.³³ For instance, the locomotion of an entity from left to right carries a non-accidental change in the entity that was on the right, although this entity

³² Cf. *Phys.* 246^b11–12; 247^b4; *Metaph.* 1068^a11–13.

³³ This assumption features in Simplicius' commentary on *Categories* 7: 161. 6–11; 164. 19; 173. 22; 204. 10.

has not changed its position (409. 15–22 Diels).³⁴ In substantiating this contention, Simplicius presents the following quotation from Alexander of Aphrodisias:

Or also in the case of the relative, since motion is the actualization of the movable as movable, the potentially double has not been moved but nevertheless the potentially half has moved in order that it becomes double. But the potentiality of the potentially double is not different from the potentiality of potentially half. Therefore in their case too, the motion according to the actuality of the potentiality has brought about also the different disposition [σχέσις] of the relatives, because the potentiality is one in substrate [κατὰ τὸ ὑποκείμενον]. (409. 26–32)

Alexander's account is based on two related Aristotelian theses: the definition of motion as the actualization of the potential as potential (201^a10–11) and the identity of the actuality of the agent with the actuality of the patient (202^a14–16). However, these theses do not suffice to establish Simplicius' contention that upon acquiring or losing relational attributes, both *relata* undergo non-accidental change.³⁵ In Aristotle's view the actuality of the agent and the actuality of the patient, although one, are not both motions. Motion, according to *Physics* 3. 3, is located in the patient (202^a13–14 and 202^a28–31), whereas the agent's activity upon the patient is actualization rather than alteration or change. The distinction between actualization and change does not feature in *Physics* 3. 3, but Aristotle's contention that motion is located in the patient presupposes it. In *De anima* 2. 5 Aristotle applies the distinction between actualization and change to agents and patients. In keeping with his contention that motion is located in the patient, he considers here the acquisition of knowledge through the agency of a teacher to be alteration or qualitative change, and the exercise of an already acquired knowledge actualization. By this account, a knower who exercises the knowledge that he has already acquired does not alter, just as a builder (i.e. an agent) does not undergo alteration when he exercises his capacity to build a house (417^a30–^b16). This account underlies Aristotle's denial of relational change. Given that agent and patient are relatives (200^b28–31), and that motion is located in the patient, only one of the *relata* undergoes non-accidental change, while the other actualizes its capacity as a result of this

³⁴ All further references are to Diels's edition in CAG 9–10.

³⁵ Indeed, Alexander does not share with Simplicius the view that relational attributes are subject to change (Simpl. *In Phys.* 436. 26–35).

non-accidental change.³⁶ Consequently, to argue effectively against Aristotle's denial of relational change, Simplicius has to show that any actuality, including the exercise of a capacity, is change.

In his comments on *Physics* 3 Simplicius presents two arguments to the effect that any actualization is change.³⁷ In his comments on *Physics* 3. 1 he argues that any actuality is incomplete, or in his terms preserves the potential. In the case of relational attributes he argues that the potentiality of an object to be on the right is preserved until its correlative completes the locomotion that brings it to the left (408. 19–23). With this argument, then, Simplicius rejects Aristotle's distinction between actualization and change. In his commentary on *Physics* 3. 2 Simplicius offers a different argument, which takes into account Aristotle's refined definition of motion as the actualization of the movable as movable. In this argument Simplicius does not reject the distinction between complete and incomplete actuality, but considers it irrelevant. He argues that just as the change from potentiality to actuality can be instantaneous, so motion in respect of a relative (*κατὰ τὸ πρὸς τι*) can be instantaneous, because the elimination of time does not entail the absence of motion (437. 15–18). His general comments regarding Aristotle's restriction of change to substance, quality, quantity, and place in the commentary on *Physics* 3. 1 clarify this argument. Here Simplicius argues that just as a substance undergoes non-accidental change when it is generated and corrupted, even though it is not moved, so each of the other categories admits non-accidental change because their substrates undergo generation and corruption with respect to them (412. 10–20). He strengthens this claim by saying that things that change from being on the right to being on the left, from being enemies to being friends, or from being heated to being cooled do not merely change with respect to their qualities, but by virtue of receiving different and contrary affections (*κατὰ τὸ διάφορα καὶ ὑπεναντία πάθη πάσχειν*, 412. 22–6). This discussion brings to the surface another assumption that underlies Simplicius' account of relational change: any acquisition and loss of attributes, including relational attributes, is analogous to generation and corruption, i.e. substantial change. Still, from Aristotle's viewpoint this as-

³⁶ For agent and patient as relatives see also *Metaph.* Δ 15, 1020^b28–30 and 1021^a14–19.

³⁷ Aristotle's first definition of motion, as the actualization of the potential as potential, gives rise to this view, because the distinction between potentiality and actuality holds for all genera of being (*Simpl. In Phys.* 408. 15–21).

sumption does not imply that the acquisition and loss of relational attributes are motions, or that they differentiate their subject. In *Physics* 5. 2 Aristotle claims that there is no motion in respect of substance because substance has no contrary (225^b10–11), and in *Physics* 7. 3 he argues that generation is not an alteration because not the generated object but its matter undergoes alteration (246^a4–9).³⁸ Simplicius' discussion of Aristotle's denial of change to states (ἐξέεις) in *Physics* 7. 3 clarifies how the analogy between substantial change and the acquisition and loss of attributes entails, in his view, relational attributes being subject to non-accidental change.

In *Physics* 7. 3 Aristotle establishes the contention that only affective qualities, i.e. qualities that come about through the affection of sensible things, are subject to alteration, whereas other qualities such as figures and states (ἐξέεις) are not.³⁹ One of his arguments to the effect that states are not subject to alteration rests on the characterization of virtue as perfection (τελείωσις) and of vice as corruption (φθορά) or degeneration (ἐκστασις, 246^a10–^b3). In his comments on this argument Simplicius seizes on Aristotle's reference to corruption to argue that the acquisition and loss of psychic virtues amount in a certain way to a generation and corruption of the soul (1066. 3–4 and 1066. 32–1067. 2).⁴⁰ In so doing, he draws a distinction between two types of perfection: the perfection of the substance itself and the perfection according to the substance's states. The second type of perfection supervenes on the

³⁸ Simplicius addresses the first argument in his comments on *Physics* 3. 1. He argues that the distinction between form and privation holds for all contraries because in all pairs of contraries one of them is worse than the other (406. 28–407. 20).

³⁹ Figures and states are classified under the category of quality in *Cat.* 8, 8^b26–7 and 10^a11–14.

⁴⁰ Whether Simplicius is committed here to Damascius' thesis that the rational soul undergoes substantial change is a matter of debate between Carlos Steel and Ilsetraut Hadot. Steel argues that in this passage Simplicius does not draw the conclusion that the soul undergoes substantial change (C. Steel, *The Changing Self: A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism. Iamblichus, Damascius, and Priscianus* (Brussels, 1978), 115). By contrast, Hadot argues that Simplicius refrains from stating this thesis explicitly because his role as a commentator on Aristotle obliges him to use a different formulation (I. Hadot (ed.), *Simplicius: Commentaire sur le Manuel d'Épictète. Introduction et édition critique du texte grec [Commentaire]* (Leiden, 1996), 83). This debate has consequences for the authorship of the commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* that goes under Simplicius' name in CAG; whereas Steel attributes this commentary to Priscian, Hadot attributes it to Simplicius. Cf. F. Bossier and C. Steel, 'Priscianus Lydus en de *In de Anima* van Pseudo(?)–Simplicius', *Tijdschrift voor filosofie*, NS 34 (1972), 761–822; I. Hadot, *Le Problème du néoplatonisme alexandrin: Hiéroclès et Simplicius* (Paris, 1978), 193–202.

substantial form, so that its acquisition and loss do not involve the destruction of its substrate (1066. 10–15). Although Simplicius is careful here not to identify the acquisition and loss of states with the generation and corruption of their substrates, he comes close to such identification when he discusses Aristotle's analogy of the acquisition of virtues to the completion of a substance (246^a13–^b1). Here Simplicius suggests that a form becomes complete not only when it gains the proper parts that complete it, but when it gains the proper virtue, which enables it to perform its natural activities (1066. 17–20). The performance of these activities, which Aristotle considers an actualization, is analogous to a substantial change, in Simplicius' view. He argues that the rational soul is not a soul in the strict sense when it loses its virtue and as a result cannot perform its natural activities (1066. 24–7). At the end of this discussion he even strengthens this contention, claiming that states and virtues are not accidental attributes because their substrates perish when virtues withdraw from them (1066. 32–1067. 2).

From this analysis we see that Simplicius' account of relational change rests on three assumptions: (1) the actualization of both terms that enter into a relation is one; (2) any actualization, including complete actualization, is change; (3) complete actualization is analogous to substantial change. These assumptions lead to the conclusion that the acquisition and loss of states affect the inner nature of the substrate or perhaps alter it altogether. However, it is uncertain whether this conclusion holds for relational attributes too since Simplicius propounds it with regard to states in so far as they are qualities, but he does mention it in his comments on Aristotle's subsequent arguments that deny change to states on the ground that they are relatives. Nevertheless, despite the absence of explicit evidence, the view that Simplicius' account of relational change presupposes his thesis that the acquisition and loss of states are analogous to substantial change can be plausibly established on the basis of indirect evidence.

First, Simplicius' account of relational change explains his discussion of the Stoic distinction between relatives and relatively disposed attributes. Particularly, the identification of change with actualization clarifies the dependence of relations on the inner nature of their substrates: by this assumption, relations depend on their substrates because they are actualizations of their natural capacities. Second, this assumption explains Simplicius' contention that rela-

tional attributes are subject to change by virtue of being dependent on their correlatives, not merely on their substrates. It implies that the substrate changes so as to become a relative when it actualizes its capacity to be related to another thing as a result of a change in its correlative. Third, Simplicius' thesis that actualizations alter the substrate explains how relations can be dependent on and yet distinct from their substrates. It prevents the reduction of relational attributes to their substrates by implying that a substrate that actualizes its natural capacities and a substrate that does not are not, strictly speaking, the same substrate. This thesis explains in turn how, in Simplicius' view, relational attributes, though dependent on their correlatives, differentiate their substrates; it thereby renders his criticism of the Stoic notion of relatively disposed attributes coherent with his report on this notion.

Moreover, throughout his commentary on *Categories* 7 Simplicius alludes to his account of relational change: he uses the expression 'inclining capacity' in referring to the substrate of relations (167. 29), he characterizes the inclination as substantial in his discussion of the reality of relations (171. 13), and he employs the terms generation and corruption with regard to relational change (171. 24, 37). These remarks suggest that Simplicius' account of relations in his commentary on *Categories* 7 presupposes his account of relational change, in viewing relations as actualizations of the substrate's inner capacity to be related to another thing and in considering the acquisition of relational attributes to be a sort of generation or substantial change.

Further evidence in support of this interpretation is found in Simplicius' argument to the effect that a state ($\xi\xi\iota\varsigma$) is related to its object, i.e. to the havable ($\tau\omicron\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\tau\omicron\nu$), and not to its subject, i.e. to the haver ($\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\epsilon}\chi\omega\nu$, 163. 30–164. 27). Here Simplicius draws on *Metaph.* Δ 20, where Aristotle defines having ($\xi\xi\iota\varsigma$) as 'a certain activity of the haver and the had' (1022^b4–5), to argue that a state is related to the thing towards which the activity is directed (164. 12–15). This argument does not merely imply that certain relational attributes, i.e. states, are activities. Viewed in the context of Simplicius' objection to one of Iamblichus' accounts of the difference between Aristotle's two definitions of relatives, it seems to suggest that all relations are activities.⁴¹ In his discussion of states Simplicius follows Aristotle's

⁴¹ In *Categories* 7 Aristotle presents two definitions of relatives. According to the first definition, relatives are 'all such things as are said to be just what they are, of or

analogy between having and making (1022^b5–8) and characterizes states as being between (*μεταξύ*) the haver and the had. He appeals to this characterization in his reply to Iamblichus' contention that Aristotle's first definition of relatives does not present the relation as a medium (*μέσον*) between its substrates (204. 6–9). Here he argues that if the first definition is understood in terms of inclination, the inclination is the medium between the thing which inclines and the thing towards which the inclination is directed. Taken together, these discussions may suggest that the inclination, which holds for all relational attributes, is an activity that subsists between the *relata*. If this is correct, Simplicius' commentary on *Categories* 7 presupposes another assumption on which his account of relational change rests, viz. the assumption that relations are activities that are common to both terms.

These allusions may indicate that Simplicius' account of relations in his commentary on *Categories* 7 shares with his account of relational change the assumptions that relation is actualization of both terms, and that their acquisition and loss are analogous to generation and corruption. However, they do not sufficiently indicate that Simplicius' commentary on *Categories* 7 presupposes his discussion of *Physics* 7. 3, where the actualization of states is said to alter their substrates. Next I try to show that by basing his account of relations on the imagery of inclination, Simplicius incorporates into his account of relations his thesis that the acquisition and loss of states alter the inner nature of the substrate.

Simplicius' discussion of the categories of acting and undergoing suggests that the noun *aponeusis* and its verbal forms are only one among other cognate terms that convey the idea of a relation between two terms. In this discussion Simplicius explains why these categories are distinct, by using the imagery of inclination. Here, however, he does not employ the term *aponeusis* but the verb *rhepein*. He says that just as pure acting is distinct from the acting that

than other things, or in some other way *in relation to* something else' (6^a36–7), and according to the second they are 'those things for which being is the same as being somehow related to something' (8^a31–2). The exact way in which these definitions differ has been discussed since antiquity. For modern treatments of this issue see Ackrill, *Aristotle's Categories and De interpretatione*, 101–2; Sedley, 'Aristotelian Relativities', 332–3; Morales, 'Relational Attributes in Aristotle', 260; K. Oehler, *Aristoteles: Kategorien* (Berlin, 1984), 248; M. Mignucci, 'Aristotle's Definition of Relatives in *Categories* 7', *Phronesis*, NS 31/2 (1986), 101–29 at 107–8; F. Caujolle-Zaslavsky, 'Les relatifs dans les *Catégories*', in Aubenque (ed.), *Concepts*, 167–95 at 185–7.

inclines (*rhepousa*) towards another (310. 15, 22), so pure undergoing has no reference, relation, and connection to activity (310. 23–5).⁴² In the sequel, he employs this term again in distinguishing acting that is directed to a patient from acting in the strict sense (319. 17–19). Given that in these discussions Simplicius associates the latter type of acting and undergoing with the category of relatives (311. 9–13; 319. 29–30), it seems reasonable to infer that in these discussions he uses the verb *rhepein* to convey the same meaning as the verb *aponeuein*. In other contexts Simplicius uses other cognates of *aponeusis* to convey the idea of a relation between two entities: he uses the verb *apoklinein* in describing the relation to time and place (360. 11) and the verb *neuein* in his report on the Stoic notion of relatives (166. 20). When the notion of inclination is taken to be conveyed by this variety of terms, it becomes possible to link Simplicius' account of relations to his thesis that the soul undergoes a sort of a substantial change upon acquiring its virtues.

This thesis plays an important role in Simplicius' commentary on Epictetus' *Handbook*.⁴³ On various occasions throughout this commentary Simplicius uses the imagery of inclination in referring to the capacity of the human rational soul to be naturally related to both higher realities (i.e. the intelligible) and lower (i.e. the body). Here he does not use the term *aponeusis*, but the verbs *rhepein*, *neuein*, *apoklinein*, and their nominal forms.⁴⁴ To mention just one representative example, in his comments on the thirty-fifth lemma Simplicius uses the term *rhopē* in arguing that if we do away with the human soul's inclination towards both higher and lower realities, human virtues and together with them the whole human form will necessarily be abolished (340. 435–41 Hadot). Here Simplicius uses the imagery of inclination in formulating the thesis that he expounds in his commentary on *Physics* 7. 3. He considers the virtues that arise from the relation of the human soul to higher and lower realities to be essential for the preservation of the human form. In the light of this evidence, it seems plausible to infer that Simplicius' account of relations in his commentary on *Categories* 7 presupposes all the assumptions on which his account of relational change is based. If this interpretation is correct, then in his commentary on *Categories* 7 Simplicius exploits the distinction

⁴² Cf. Plot. 6. 1. 18.

⁴³ On this see Hadot, *Commentaire*, 83–100.

⁴⁴ e.g. *In Epictet.* 202. 114–15; 262. 154, 157; 263. 161; 272. 392; 281. 12; 336. 350 Hadot.

between capacities and actualizations in accounting for the distinction between relations and their substrates, their dependence on the inner nature of their substrates, and their being subject to change.

Having propounded this interpretation, I conclude my analysis with an attempt to place Simplicius' account of relation in a wider context. This attempt lends further support to the above interpretation and offers a plausible explanation of Simplicius' motivation for deviating from the account found in the other commentaries on the *Categories*.

IV

The above analysis shows that in his commentary on *Categories* 7 Simplicius offers a conception of relations that unifies Plotinus' two types of relation: those that come about by participation and those that result from an activity. It further shows that the notion of inclination facilitates such a conception. Being the peculiar property of the reason principle of relations, the notion of inclination serves to explain the acquisition of relational attributes in terms of participation; and being an actualization of the substrate's inner capacity to be related to something else, it explains the acquisition of relational attributes in terms of activity. This integration of actualization and participation is made possible because of Simplicius' assumption that the complete actualization of the agent is analogous to substantial change, namely to the acquisition of a form.⁴⁵

A similar conception of relations is presented in outline in the fourth book of Proclus' commentary on Plato' *Parmenides*. Here Proclus distinguishes three types of relative: one type holds for accidental relatives, such as double and half, and it has no essential being (935. 26–31 Cousin), another type holds for natural relatives, such as the right or the left position of bodily organs (935. 31–8 Cousin), and the third, characterized as more perfect and suitable for self-subsistent entities, holds for things that are primarily 'for themselves' and then 'for another' (936. 7–11 Cousin). Of this type of relative Proclus says:

A father in our realm [*ἐνταῦθα*], even if he is a father by nature, is not first for himself and then a father of another, but he is that which is only of another.

⁴⁵ He uses the term 'participation' at *In Phys.* 412. 18.

But in the higher realm [$\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}$] if something is a paternal cause, it completes the substance of itself and then it also gives from itself the procession to secondary [entities] . . . For even each of the so-called relatives is one form; for instance, the substantial form 'the right' is the cause of such a relation and similarly 'the left'. As a result, a certain one *logos* gives to the things in that realm the relation of the sort which is produced in them. (936. 15–21 and 30–4 Cousin)

The conception of relations that Proclus describes here resembles Simplicius' conception in three respects. First, like Simplicius' conception, this conception rests on a distinction between the substrate's essential subsistence and the substrate as a relative. Second, although Proclus does not explicitly characterize relations as activities, his characterization of a relation as a bestowal of procession ($\pi\rho\acute{o}\delta\omicron\varsigma$) upon secondary entities implies that he forms the distinction between the substrate and the relation in terms of the Neoplatonic distinction between inner activity, which is the actualization of the essence of a substance, and external activity, which leads to the necessary production of a lower grade of reality.⁴⁶ And third, like Simplicius, Proclus posits forms of relations in accounting for this conception of relations. Nevertheless, one crucial aspect of Simplicius' conception of relations is missing from the above passage: although Proclus draws in this passage a distinction between the substrate in its role as an independent entity and the substrate in its role as a relational entity, he does not commit himself to Simplicius' stronger contention that the latter is irreducible to the former.

This contention is found in Damascius' discussion of the intellect in his *Doubts and Solutions concerning First Principles*. Here Damascius discusses the relation between the intellect and its object in the context of the notion 'relation' in general, and asks whether the mutual entailment of relations implies that the effect acts on the cause, the desiring subject on the object of desire, and the knower on the known (ii. 156. 19–157. 2 Westerink and Combès). He concludes this discussion as follows:

Therefore the effect does not act on the cause, but the cause acts on itself and on the effect; for simultaneously with the being [of the effect] the cause produces the relation of mutual correspondence [$\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}\theta\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$] and, if one may say so, it makes itself knowable, desirable, a cause, and a producer

⁴⁶ This thesis is widespread in Neoplatonic writings. For a clear formulation of it see e.g. Proclus, *ET*, prop. 25.

before the making of the product, the effect, the desiring subject, and the knowing subject. (ii. 158. 17–22 Westerink and Combès)

The view by which the cause does not merely make the effect but makes itself a cause plays an important role in Damascius' metaphysics. Particularly, it underlies his criticism of the notion of an absolute first principle that serves also as a cause, a fundamental notion in Neoplatonic metaphysics that received its clearest formulation in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.⁴⁷ Briefly, Damascius argues that if the One is absolute it cannot serve as a principle or a cause, and if it is a principle or a cause it is not absolute but relative to its effects (i. 2. 9–20 Westerink and Combès). His contention that the primary entity makes itself a cause, which results in a distinction between the primary entity and the primary entity as a cause, provides Damascius with a way out of this dilemma, thereby restoring somehow the One to its status as a principle. This thesis does not merely imply the distinction, found also in Proclus, between the primary entity and its role as a cause. It also implies that this distinction amounts to a distinction between two distinct entities and not to a distinction between two descriptions of the same entity. Damascius explicitly draws this implication in another discussion of causality and employs the imagery of inclination in doing so.⁴⁸ Here Damascius argues that although primary entities cause secondary entities, the cause is distinct from the primary entity because the primary entity makes itself a cause and makes the effect (ii. 112. 6–8 Westerink and Combès). He bases this contention on an analogy: just as a material body is distinct from an immaterial body by the inclination (*rhōpē*) of its form towards matter, so an immaterial entity advances (*χωρεῖ*) to a material entity, without ceasing to be a distinct entity (ii. 112. 1–15 Westerink and Combès).⁴⁹ This analogy indicates that in Damascius' view, as in Simplicius', the substrate as subsisting in itself and the substrate as a relative are two distinct entities. Further, this view is based on the same assumption that underlies Simplicius' account of relational change.

⁴⁷ This notion finds expression in Proclus' theses that the cause transcends its effect (*ET*, prop. 75) and that it is greater than its effect (*ET*, prop. 7). For a lucid exposition of the background and consequences of Damascius' criticism of this notion see S. Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism: Non-Discursive Thought in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius* (Cambridge, 2000), 197–227.

⁴⁸ On the significance of the imagery of inclination for Porphyry's account of relations see Baltzly, 'Porphyry and Plotinus', 71–5.

⁴⁹ Cf. Damasc. *In Parm.* i. 76. 18–22 Westerink and Combès.

The activity of the agent on the patient, in Damascius' view, is not an actualization or an accidental change, which results from the patient's relation to the agent, but a change that conditions the patient's dependence on the agent.

This brief discussion of Proclus' and Damascius' conceptions of relations suggests that in his commentary on *Categories* 7 Simplicius is defending the reality of the relations that underlie Neoplatonic ontology. It suggests further that in so doing Simplicius has a more specific objective: namely, to defend the metaphysics of his teacher Damascius as opposed to Proclus' metaphysics. To this effect, he defends the reality of relations by arguing for two contentions of crucial importance for Damascius' metaphysics: (1) relations are irreducible to their substrates, and (2) they are subject to change. Viewed in this light, Simplicius' enumeration of the absurd consequences that follow from the denial of the reality of relations and his contention that relations subsist in all realms of reality, including the intelligible (169. 23–6), become more significant than may appear at first glance. According to Simplicius, the denial of the reality of relations results in the eradication of the relations between God and creatures (169. 15–16), the intellect and the soul, the soul and the body (169. 20–3), and the possibility of speech (169. 26). In the light of Damascius' criticism of Proclus' notion of the first principle, this claim appears to be more than a rhetorical exaggeration. Given that Damascius' criticism threatens to undermine the foundations of Neoplatonic metaphysics, it seems reasonable to understand Simplicius' deviation from the other late commentators' account of relations as motivated by this criticism. By this understanding, Simplicius' commentary on *Categories* 7, unlike the other late commentaries, is not aimed at securing the natural relations that subsist among sensible entities, nor does it defend Proclus' account of the relations that subsist in the intelligible realm. Rather, by preventing on the one hand the reduction of relational attributes to their substrates, and by stressing on the other hand their dependence on the substrates, Simplicius' commentary on *Categories* 7 defends the Neoplatonic ontological hierarchy against Damascius' doubt.

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OXFORD STUDIES
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PHILOSOPHY

EDITOR: BRAD INWOOD

VOLUME XXXVII

WINTER 2009

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS