Physics 1.5-9 is of crucial interest for our understanding of Aristotle’s theory of nature since it contains some basic statements about the principles of becoming. In 1.5, Aristotle reminds us that all natural philosophers acknowledged the role of contraries in change because all changes go from one contrary to another. Then, in 1.6-7, he distinguishes three (and only three) principles involved in change: the two contraries plus the substance. Finally, in 1.8-9, tackling the position of Parmenides and those like him (including Plato), he discusses the possibility of coming to be from something that is not: as every substance has many attributes, some that are and others that are not, what is can, in a sense, come to be from what is not. Accordingly, matter, the substratum of change, cannot be confused with privation, which is a non-being per se.

Commenting on these chapters, Simplicius first stresses the definition of principles: “principles must not come from each other nor from other things and all must come from them” (188a27-28). Then he emphasises the agreement among ancient philosophers on this point, going further than Aristotle. Quoting the 1st century BC Platonist Eudorus, he reports that Pythagoreans assumed two contrary principles deriving from a first One—the lower One and the Indefinite Dyad—which they considered to be the elements of all things (the second One would later be identified with the Platonic Forms in the Commentary on 1.7, when quoting Moderatus’ striking fragment). Commenting on 1.6, Simplicius goes on to insist on the general agreement about the necessity of admitting three principles for explaining change. From his perspective, when Plato talks about the active cause of change, the Form, as one, and matter as two, he is basically not in disagreement with Aristotle, who also acknowledges that the substratum is two (being matter and privation), whereas form is one. Going on with matter and privation, Simplicius deals with the receptacle of the Timaeus, making things collude with the alleged Pythagorean Timaeus (on I.7). In his view, Plato’s khôra corresponds exactly to Aristotle’s substratum (matter), which allows change from a contrary to another. These considerations gave Simplicius the opportunity of a digression, which consists in a history of the concept of matter (including Moderatus’ fragment).

Finally, in 1.8 and 1.9, Simplicius reconciles Plato’s Sophist with Parmenides, despite their obvious disagreement about non-being. Simplicius argues first that the Aristotelian distinction between being potentially and being actually
can already be found in Plato’s *Sophist*: something can not be something else, i.e. is potentially not something else, since it is other than that something else. In other words, Plato recognizes a kind of relative non-being, without contradicting Parmenides’ banishment of absolute non-being. Moreover, Plato is in agreement with Aristotle since, beside a non-being which regulates the relations among Forms, he admits another kind of non-being, related to privation and matter, namely the receptacle of the *Timaeus*. As can be seen, Simplicius’ aim is to show the perfect agreement between past philosophers about the principles involved in change.

In parallel with Simplicius’ polyphonic composition, this work is by many hands and has a complex structure. The general introduction, giving a short presentation of each chapter, is by the general editor of the collection, R. Sorabji. The translation that follows is divided into two sections: 1.5-6 and 1.7-9. H. Baltussen is responsible for translating 1.5. Then comes 1.6, also divided into two parts: M. Share was in charge of 190,21 and M. Atkinson of 202,20-208,32. Last comes I. Mueller’s translation of 1.7-9. We should add that both sections are followed by notes, by an English-Greek Glossary (compiled by S. Gertz), by a Greek-English Index and by a Subject Index (compiled by M. Atkinson and, for the first section only, M. Share).

Does such complexity affect the quality of the final product? As far as the translation is concerned, there is nothing to complain about, the authors having adopted the same conventions for the crucial Greek terms. Slight discrepancies, however, remain: for example, *enulon* is translated as *enmattered* in the first part of the translation, but as *in-matter or material* in the second part of the book. *Katholikos* is rendered by *general* in the first part, and becomes *universal* in the second. These variations could leave the reader to assume that Simplicius is using two different words or referring to two different notions.

Moreover, the repartition of the text here does not follow the original division since, for example, both Aristotle and Simplicius seem to consider chapters 6 and 7 as a single textual unit. In other words, the sharp divisions adopted in this volume, reinforced by the distance created by the notes and index, could mislead the reader into separating the two chapters, which Simplicius reads as one. Indeed, in his commentary, the last sentence of chapter 6 and the first sentence of 7 are parts of one and the same lemma. In a way, this complex division of the translation reflects the difficulty that modern readers experience in finding an immediate access to works such as Simplicius’.
In spite of these peculiarities, this translation, followed by the notes and comments as they are, contributes greatly to our understanding of Simplicius' work since it provides an easy point of entry into some of the most important chapters of his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*.

Marc-Antoine Gavray  
FRS-FNRS (Université de Liège)  
Marc-Antoine.Gavray@ulg.ac.be