

Categories in Aristotle

There is a theory called the theory of categories which in a more or less developed form, with minor or major modifications, made its appearance first in a large number of Aristotelian writings and then, under the influence of these writings, came to be a standard part of traditional logic, a place it maintained with more or less success into the early part of this century, when it met the same fate as certain other parts of traditional logic.

There are many questions one may ask about this theory. Presumably not the most interesting question, but certainly one for which one would want to have an answer if one took an interest in the theory at all, is the following: What are categories? It turns out that this is a rather large and difficult question. And hence I want to restrict myself to the narrower and more modest question, What are categories in Aristotle?, hoping that a clarification of this question ultimately will help to clarify the more general questions. But even this narrower question turns out to be so complicated and controversial that I will be content if I can shed some light on the simple questions: What does the word "category" mean in Aristotle? What does Aristotle have in mind when he talks about "categories"?

Presumably it is generally agreed that Aristotle's doctrine of categories involves the assumption that there is some scheme of classification such that all there is, all entities, can be divided into a limited number of ultimate classes. But there is no agreement as to the basis and nature of this classification, nor is there an agreement as to how the categories themselves are related to those classes of entities. There is a general tendency among commentators to talk as if the categories were just these classes, but there is also the view that, though for each category there is a corresponding ultimate class of entities, the categories themselves are not to be identified with these classes. And there are various ways in which it could be true that the categories only correspond to, but are not identical with, these classes of entities. It might, e.g., be the case that the categories are not classes of entities but, rather, classes of expressions of a cer-

tain kind, expressions which we—following tradition—may call “categorematic.” On this interpretation these categorematic expressions signify the various entities we classify under such headings as “substance,” “quality,” or “quantity.” And in this case we have to ask whether the entities are classified according to a classification of the categorematic expressions by which they are signified or whether, the other way around, the expressions are classified according to the classification of the entities they signify. Or it might be thought that the categories are classes of only some categorematic expressions, namely, those which can occur as predicate-expressions. Or it might be the case that the categories themselves are not classes at all, neither of entities nor of expressions, but, rather, headings or labels or predicates which collect, or apply to, either entities or expressions, i.e., the category itself, strictly speaking would be a term like “substance” or “substance word.” Or it might be the case that categories are neither classes nor terms but concepts. All these views have had their ardent supporters.

Given this rather bewildering choice of answers to our question it is too tempting to turn for enlightenment to an obviously very early writing of Aristotle’s which by its very title *Categories* seems to promise an answer to our question. This is, in fact, how the treatise traditionally has been read, and the traditional views concerning Aristotle’s categories to a good extent are based on taking the treatise in this way. Moreover, these views on the categories to a good extent are based on a certain view of the position of the treatise in the so-called *Organon*, the collection of Aristotle’s logical writings. The order of this collection clearly suggests the view that in logic we first deal with terms, then with propositions, and finally with arguments, a view still current in modern times. And the ordering of the treatises in the collection thus suggests that the first treatise, the *Categories*, in providing us with a doctrine of categories provides us with a theory of terms. Hence a traditional tendency to regard the categories as classes of terms or expressions rather than as classes of entities.

But for the following reasons it seems to me that the unfortunate state of our question is largely due to the fact that scholars have been turning to the treatise *Categories* for an answer. I will leave aside the fact that the present order of the writings of the *Organon* was only established in the second century A.D., that there is no good reason to think that Aristotle himself had meant these writings to be read in this order, that it is even far from clear whether Aristotle himself would have classified the *Categories* as a logical treatise, and that hence the position of the treatise in the *Organon* and the view of logic which goes with it should not have had any influence on what we take categories in Aristotle to be. More important, it seems to me, is that it is far from clear whether the treatise *Categories* in whole or even in part was meant to be a treatise on categories. We cannot rely for this on the title *Categories*. For this is just one of a good number of titles the work had in antiquity and possibly not even the most common one. There is no good reason to think that the title is Aristotle’s own. As

to the content, it may have seemed obvious that the treatise is a treatise on categories. But if it did seem obvious, this—apart from the title—was due to the fact that the second part of the treatise, the so-called *Postpraedicamenta*, was not taken seriously. Hence, one focused on the first part, and this part, of course, would seem to constitute a treatise on categories, if one made the additional assumption that the genera of entities distinguished in this part are just the categories or that the categories amount to a classification of expressions depending on the classification of entities given in this part of the treatise. It is revealing that ancient supporters of the title *Categories* claimed that the *Postpraedicamenta* were material alien to the purpose of the treatise, added by somebody who wanted to turn the treatise into an introduction to the *Topics* and who gave it a corresponding title, namely, *Introduction to the Topics*, becoming thus responsible for the other title of the treatise common in antiquity¹ and for another ordering of the treatises in the collection.

But we cannot take it for granted that the categories are the classes of beings distinguished in the first part of the treatise or the corresponding classes of expressions. Nor do we have the right to disregard the *Postpraedicamenta*. For the case against them has not been made successfully, and there are strong philological and linguistic reasons in their favor. The presence of the *Postpraedicamenta* and the further fact that there is a clear gap in the text between the first part of the treatise and the *Postpraedicamenta*, which may be quite extensive, do make it almost impossible to say with any confidence what the treatise originally was meant to be about. We are certainly not in a position to say that the book as a whole was meant to be a treatise on categories. But there is also no reason to think that the text as we have it, or even that at least a part of it, namely, the first part, was meant to deal with categories. The treatise as we have it does not say anything to the effect that it is going to deal with categories. In fact, it does not even use the word “category” except in two lines (10^b 19; 10^b 21) toward the very end of the first part. And here the word is used in such an incidental way that nothing of interest can be inferred. Nor does the treatise use any other word for “category.” It twice uses the term “genus” in a relevant way, but one of these occurrences is in a passage which is clearly spurious (11^b 15) and the other occurs in a stretch of the text which I take to be suspect, both on linguistic and doctrinal grounds (11^a 38). But even if these two passages were authentic they would be of no use for our purpose. For “genus” in these passages is used to refer to the classes of entities which one has to assume anyway on any account of what the categories are. Hence to assume that the genera referred to are the categories is just to beg the question at issue. And for reasons of this sort it seems to me that there is no non-question-begging way in which we can expect the treatise *Categories* to provide us with an answer to our question.

For a good number of reasons the text to turn to seems, rather, to be Aristotle's *Topics*. In date, language, and doctrine the *Topics* seem to be very near the

Categories. In particular, the two are the only treatises in the corpus which give us the full traditional list of ten classes of entities. The *Topics* explicitly talk of the categories in a nonincidental fashion, they give us a clue to the technical sense of the word "category" and how it came to be used this way, and they give us at least some indication of what the distinction of categories was introduced for. The idea to approach the doctrine of categories through the *Topics* rather than through the treatise called *Categories* is by no means new. It was chosen, e.g., by Kapp in 1920. But it seems to me that it has not yet been exploited sufficiently.

The crucial text for us in the *Topics* is Chapter 9 of the first book. But before we turn to this chapter a few words need to be said about the preceding chapter. In this chapter Aristotle distinguishes what later came to be called the predicables: genus, definition, proprium, and accident. For our purposes it is important to notice that these kinds of predicate are distinguished according to the predicative relationship in which they stand with reference to a given subject. For something to be the genus of something the genus-term has to be true of that thing in a certain way. To characterize these predicative relationships Aristotle uses the Greek verb "katēgorein" and a compound of it. In ordinary Greek this verb means "to accuse," but it is clear that Aristotle here is using it in the unprecedented sense of "to predicate" or, one should say, in the sense of "to predicate truly." For clearly what makes something a genus of something is not that somebody happens to predicate a genus-term of that thing but that the term is true of the thing in the appropriate way.

With this in mind let us then turn to the first sentence of Chapter 9. Unfortunately, no two translators seem to agree on the translation of this sentence, and, as far as I can see, none of the translations is satisfactory. Hence let us proceed very cautiously. Leaving the crucial phrase untranslated, the sentence seems to run as follows: "Next we must determine the genera of the katēgoriai in which one will find the four above mentioned." One immediately asks "the four above mentioned what?" It is clear from the grammar of the Greek sentence that "katēgoriai" is to be understood again. Thus the full sentence runs as follows: "Next we must determine the genera of the katēgoriai in which one will find the four above mentioned katēgoriai." The next question obviously is how we are to translate "katēgoria." It is clear from what was said about the preceding chapter that as a translation we need a noun which corresponds to the verb "to predicate." Given the word-formation of "katēgoria" and its ordinary use in the sense of "accusation," we would expect this noun to be "predication." But translators and interpreters tend to prefer "predicate" as a rendering. Moreover, we have to take into account that abstract nouns like katēgoria can be used in the sense of either "a particular katēgoria" or "a kind of katēgoria." When, e.g., Eurylochus tells his companions that all deaths are dreadful but that none is quite as dreadful as that of hunger, it is clearly that by "deaths" he means "kinds of

death" (*Od.* 12, 341). Finally, it should be noticed that everybody agrees that the whole phrase "the genera of the *katēgoriai*" refers to Aristotle's categories in the technical sense which we try to determine. For the next sentence tells us that there are ten such genera and then lists them; what we get here clearly is the list of Aristotle's categories.

With this in mind let us first try to deal with the phrase "the four above mentioned *katēgoriai*." If it meant "the four above mentioned predicates," it would have to refer to the predicates genus, definition, proprium, and accident. But whatever view one has of Aristotle's categories, it seems clear enough that these predicates do not go into any of the categories. "Kinds of predication," on the other hand, might seem to fit. For given the standard views of Aristotle's categories, it will be true in some sense or other that predicates of the four kinds distinguished in Chapter 8 will go into one category or other. The translation "predication," on the other hand, will not work. For the preceding chapter did not mention four predications. What it did distinguish, though, were four kinds of predication, namely, four ways in which a predicate may be true of a subject such that, depending on the way the predicate is true of its subject, we have one or another kind of predicate. In fact, this distinction of four ways of being true of something was the main distinction of the preceding chapter, and hence the phrase "the four above mentioned *katēgoriai*" would most naturally be taken to pick up this distinction. There are, then, two translations of the phrase which deserve further consideration: (i) "the four above mentioned kinds of predicates" and (ii) "the four above mentioned kinds of predication."

Now, as to the open occurrence of the expression "*katēgoria*" in the phrase "the genera of the *katēgoriai*," it seems fairly clear that it should be translated either by "predicate" or by "predication." For the reference of the whole phrase "the genera of the *katēgoriai*" would seem to be either to kinds of predicates or to kinds of predications. Hence our problem of translation for the sentence as a whole seems to come down to the question whether we take the meaning of "*katēgoria*" to be "predicate" and hence also "kind of predicate," or "predication" and hence also "kind of predication."

I am inclined to think that the translation "predicate," at least in the Aristotelian sense of "predicate," would never have been suggested as a possibility if it had not been needed to make the text fit certain preconceptions as to what Aristotelian categories are. In any case, the following seems to me to strongly favor the translation "predication." The term "*katēgoria*" is used at least six times in the *Topics* outside our chapter (107^a 3; 109^b 5; 141^a 4; 152^a 38; 178^a 5; 181^b 27). In each case it can be taken to mean "predication," i.e., in no case do we have to take it in the sense of "predicate," but in at least three cases it definitely has to be taken in the sense of "predication" (109^b 5; 141^a 4; 181^b 27). Let us consider the two most questionable of the three remaining passages. In the first, 107^a 3ff., Aristotle considers the case of an argument whose validity turns on

the question whether the predicate “good” is used univocally throughout the argument, e.g., in the premises “this food is good” and “this man is good.” To check this, we are told, we should see whether “the genera of the *katēgoriai*” are the same. The use of “good” in our examples fails to meet this test. For to say of food that it is good, according to Aristotle, is to say of food what it does: it produces pleasure, health, or whatever. But to say of a man or a soul that they are good is to say what they are like: they are courageous, wise, pious, and the like. This passage most naturally lends itself to the interpretation that it turns on the point that to say of something what it is like is to make one kind of predication and to say of something what it does is to make another kind of predication. In fact, it can hardly turn on the point that the genus of the predicate is different in the two premises. For Aristotle moves on to tell us that another test of univocity is to see whether the genus is the same (107^a 18). Hence “*katēgoria*” here hardly can mean “predicate.” For the first test would not be distinguishable from the second test.

Another questionable occurrence of the term is in 152^a 38ff. We are told that two things are not the same if they are not in the same genus of *katēgoria* (en heni genei *katēgorias*), but one signifies a quality, the other a quantity or a relation. Again it seems very difficult to assume that “*katēgoria*” here might mean “predicate.” For how should one in this case translate “*genos katēgorias*?” And again it is clear from the following that the phrase cannot mean “the genus of the predicate.” For Aristotle in this case, too, tells us that we should also check whether the genus is the same.

The interest of the passage lies in a curious way of talking which deserves closer attention. It says of items which can be predicated, i.e., of items like justice or the size of two feet, that they are in a genus of predication. We should have thought that genera or kinds of predication collect cases of predication. The language here suggests that there is also some sense in which kinds of predication collect kinds of predicates. But this is hardly mysterious. Assume that to say of something what it is like is one kind of predication and that to say of something of what quantity it is is another kind of predication. Now it would seem that qualities are exactly those items one refers to if one says of something what it is like and that quantities are exactly those things one introduces if one says of something of what quantity it is.

Given this, Aristotle’s remarks here make perfect sense. Consider the question whether rationality and reasonability are the same. On this test, and given Aristotle’s views, they clearly are not the same. For to say of something that it is rational is to say what it is essentially, whereas to say that it is reasonable is to say what it is like.

Thus the formation of the word, the ordinary use of “*katēgoria*,” and the use of this term in the *Topics* outside our chapter all strongly suggest that “*katēgoria*” should be rendered by “predication.” In this case we should translate the first

sentence of A 9 in the following way: "Next we must determine the different genera or kinds of predication in which one will find the four kinds of predication mentioned above." And if this is the correct translation of the first sentence, the chapter allows us to draw the following conclusions concerning Aristotle's use of the word "katēgoria" in the *Topics*:

(i) Aristotle uses the word in the sense of "predication";
 (ii) Aristotle uses the word in the sense of "kind of predication";
 (iii) A few lines into the chapter, in 103^b 25, Aristotle substitutes the phrase "the genera of the predications" by the simple phrase "the katēgoriai" to refer to these same genera or kinds of predication, i.e., to the categories in the technical sense. Hence there is a third use of the term "katēgoria" in this chapter, namely, exactly the technical use of "category" we are trying to determine. Given what has been said so far, the explanation of this use is fairly simple. "Katēgoria" in its technical sense literally means "kind of predication," but in its technical use it is restricted to one of several distinctions of kinds of predication, namely, to the distinction of kinds referred to in the first sentence and listed in the second sentence of our chapter.

(iv) Unfortunately, there is yet another use of the term "katēgoria" in our chapter, the one we find in 103^b 29. To understand this use we have to keep in mind that the kinds of predication define classes or kinds of predicates, namely, the classes of those predicates which occur in a statement of a given kind of predication. The category of quality, e.g., defines the class of predicates called qualities, the category of quantity the class of quantities. Aristotle here by extension seems to use "katēgoria" also for the kinds of predicates thus defined. It may be suggested that it is this fourth use of the term which is the technical use for which we are looking. That this is not so will become clear later. It may be pointed out here, though, that this fourth use of "katēgoria" would collapse with the technical use in question if we identified a quality or quantity with the properties of being thus qualified and the property of being thus quantified, if, e.g., we identified the quality health with the property of being healthy. For being healthy for Aristotle presumably is a kind of predication; something's being healthy certainly is.

If we accept these conclusions concerning the use of the term "katēgoria," we will have to distinguish at least three kinds of things: (i) the categories in the technical sense of the word, (ii) classes of predicates defined by the kinds of predication in question, and (iii) the ultimate genera of what there is as they are distinguished, e.g., in the treatise *Categories*. For the ultimate genera of beings clearly are not kinds of predication. Nor can they be identified with the classes of predicates. It is not the case that these two distinctions fall apart because one is a distinction of kinds of nonlinguistic items, whereas the distinction of predicates is a distinction of expressions. For Aristotle tends to think of predicates as the nonlinguistic items introduced by predicate-expressions. The two classes,

rather, seem to come apart insofar as the first class of predicates, i.e., the class of predicates defined by the first category, and the first class of entities, i.e., the class of substances, do not coincide. They differ in at least two respects: (i) the first class of predicates contains not only substance-predicates, but also qualities, quantities, and all other kinds of entities, all entities one could refer to in an answer to the question what something is essentially, whether that something be a substance, a quality, or a quantity. (ii) The first class of predicates will only contain predicates and not individuals, whereas the class of substances will contain individual substances, if anything.

The first of these differences is crucial in several respects. To show that there is this difference is to show a fortiori that the categories of the *Topics* cannot be identified with the ultimate genera of what there is. It also is to show that the categories are not to be identified with the classes of predicates defined by the kinds of predication. And, finally, it is to show that in a way there is no category of substance in the *Topics*. For if there were a category of substance, it would have to be the first category, i.e., the category of the what it is. But if we assume that the class of predicates collected by this category includes not just substances but entities of all other kinds, too, it will not be a category of substance in particular.

Hence, I will just consider this crucial difference between the classes of predicates and the ultimate classes of entities. Which position we take on this basically depends on how we interpret the phrase "what it is" in the list of categories in the second sentence of this chapter. And, hence, it might be appropriate to now move on to this second sentence. It runs as follows: "these [i.e., the kinds of predications] are ten in number: What it is, quantity, quality, relation, where, when, posture, having, doing, suffering."

It is generally assumed that the phrase "what it is" in this list must be just a variant on the term "substance." It is supposed that there is a special, technical use of the phrase "what it is" which restricts it to substances. It is easy to see why this would be assumed. It is taken for granted that there is a category of substance, and the only way to find a reference to it in our list of categories is to assume that the phrase "what it is" here has this special meaning. But if one did not already go on the assumption that the first category has to be the category of substance, one would naturally read the phrase as not being restricted in this way to substances. Given the context, I want to argue the only natural way to read the list is the second way. This will force us to include in the first class of predicates not just substances but qualities, quantities, and all other kinds of entities. The reasons why I take the phrase "what it is" not to be restricted to substances are the following: (i) as we know, e.g., from Plato's dialogues, the usual sense of the phrase in the context of philosophical or dialectical discussions, i.e., the kinds of discussions we are dealing with in the *Topics*, is not such that the phrase is restricted to substances. (ii) The phrase occurs eight times in

our chapter, which is only twenty-two lines long, first in the list of categories, then in a repetition of the list of categories, and then another six times. But the other six times it is clearly used in its usual sense, not restricted to substance but neutral to the distinction of the various ultimate classes of entities. This strongly suggests that the phrase is used this way throughout the chapter. (iii) Taking it that way throughout the chapter makes excellent sense of the text. (iv) The phrase has been used in the *Topics* in preceding chapters and is going to be used throughout the treatise. But throughout it seems to be used in a sense which is neutral to the distinction of classes of entities. (v) The phrase is used neutrally even in places in which Aristotle clearly means to use his distinction of categories (cf. 144^a 17–18). Hence I conclude that nobody who just read the *Topics* could assume that the phrase “what it is” here in the list of categories is restricted in its use to substances.

If, then, the traditional view is to be defended, it would seem that the defense has to take the following form: it will have to be assumed (i) that the phrase “what it is” is used in two different ways in our chapter, in one way in the lists of categories and in a different way throughout the rest of the chapter, and (ii) that Aristotle presupposes that readers are aware of some fact or piece of Aristotelian doctrine which will enable them to see without a warning that the phrase is used ambiguously.

And, in fact, it would seem that readers at this point usually do rely on what they think they know from other writings of Aristotle’s, e.g., the *Categories*, namely, the purported fact that the first category is the category of substance. To just assume, though, that this is what we know and can rely upon is to beg the question. What we would need is an argument to show that Aristotle quite generally takes the first category to be the category of substance. But I have already indicated why such an argument cannot rely on the treatise *Categories*, and I do not see how such an argument could rely on the *Topics*. To what extent it could be based on Aristotle’s later writings remains to be seen.

At least since Alexander of Aphrodisias (*In met.* 473, 3ff.), commentators have relied on a genuine bit of Aristotelian doctrine which would seem to take care of the problem in a rather elegant way. Alexander pointed out that Aristotle himself in the *Metaphysics* (Z 4 1030^a 17ff.) tells us that the phrase “what it is” has different uses and that in its primary use the phrase applies only to substances. Unfortunately, this will hardly help, either. For at the time when he writes the *Topics* Aristotle does not yet seem to have developed the doctrine which will allow him in the *Metaphysics* to distinguish various uses of “what it is.” And hence, when writing the *Topics*, he can hardly expect the reader to have a point in mind which he himself has not yet made. Moreover, it seems to be rather awkward to have to rely on an Aristotelian text whose main claim is that the phrase “what it is” does not have a uniform use across the various kinds of entities, given that Aristotle in our chapter, with the supposed exception of the

list of categories, happily uses the phrase as if it did have a uniform use across the class of entities.

Sometimes commentators suggest a weaker explanation for the purported ambiguity of the phrase "what it is." They suggest that Aristotle assumes that we understand that the list of categories is a list not of the kinds of things we can say about anything whatsoever but of the kinds of things we can say about a given object or substance. And if this were true, it would, of course, be the case that the first class of predicates only collects substance-predicates. Now, it may be true that Aristotle should think, and that at times he does think, that of the various kinds of things one can say about things which he distinguishes here all but the first one apply only to substances anyway. The assumption could be that the only thing one can predicate of non-substantial items, given Aristotle's notion of predication, is what they are. If, then, Aristotle distinguishes ten kinds of things one can say about something, the suggestion runs, he presumably wants to distinguish the various kinds of things one can say about substances. Fortunately, we do not have to discuss the merits of this suggestion. It simply fails because it is clear from later passages in the *Topics* that Aristotle in the *Topics* thinks that the various categories do not just apply to substances. In 144^a 17-18, e.g., both the category of the what it is and the category of quality are applied to virtue. Since, then, (a) the text of the *Topics* in itself cannot justify the traditional reading of the phrase "what it is" and since (b) there does not seem to be a suitable piece of doctrine which the reader could be expected to import from the outside to get the traditional reading, we have no choice but to take the phrase to range over all classes of entities and not just substances.

But if we take the phrase "what it is" in this generous way, it is not just clear that the first category of the *Topics* is not a category of substance; it is also clear that the categories and the classes of predicates defined by them cannot be identified with the ultimate genera of what there is. Moreover, it is clear that the use of the term "categories" in 103^b 29 is not the technical use of the term. For it is now clear that, when Aristotle says in 103^b 27ff. that somebody who indicates the what it is either indicates substance or quality or quantity or one of the other categories, he is talking about predications in the one category of the what it is; i.e., in the sense of the list of categories in the second sentence only one category is involved whether somebody, in saying what something is, indicates substance or quality or quantity. Hence the use of "category" in this later sentence must be a different one. Finally, if we interpret the phrase "what is" in the indicated way, we will also have to read the whole list of categories in a way that differs from the usual way. For if the category of the what it is not only collects substance-predicates but also qualities and quantities, the distinction of categories as given by the list can no longer be an exclusive distinction of kinds of entities like qualities and quantities. The only way to now preserve the mutual exclusiveness of the classification is to assume that the categories are distinguished

according to whether a predicate is used to say of something what it is or of what quantity it is or of what quality it is, etc. And this, of course, fits well with the long observed fact that five or six of the category names are interrogative pronouns. It fits the fact that later in our chapter these category names repeatedly are used as indirect interrogative pronouns. And, finally, it seems to be confirmed by the later use of the categories in the *Topics*.

Given all this, it seems to me that the major threat to our interpretation of *Topics A*, 9 is this: everyone assumes that there is abundant evidence that for Aristotle in his later writings there is a category of substance which is the first category. Hence, there will be a tendency, hard to overcome, to read this later doctrine into the *Topics*, even if the *Topics* themselves do not naturally read this way and even if to read them this way is to beg the question at issue.

This tendency will be all the more difficult to overcome since there is one sentence in *Top. A*, 9 which seems to lend some support to it. Hence, I will first consider this sentence, then argue that the evidence for a category of substance is weaker than usually supposed, and finally argue that if there is a category of substance in later writings, this is due to a change in, or development of, doctrine.

In the sentence in question, 103^b 27–29, Aristotle says that someone who indicates the what it is of something either indicates substance of quality or quantity or some other category. Given the traditional view, it is very difficult not to see in this an open and obvious reference to the category of substance. But I have already argued that “category” in this sentence is not used in the technical sense of “category” in question. So it does not follow from the sentence that there is a category of substance in the required sense. But it does not even follow from the sentence that there is a category of substance in any sense of “category.” Assume, e.g., that we had objects or substances and various kinds of features, namely, qualities, quantities, and whatever else there may be. Assume also that all the names we had were names either of objects or of features. In this case it would be true to say: “A name names an object or a quality or a quantity or another kind of feature.” Now no one would take this sentence to mean that objects are among the kinds of features we find in the world. Everyone would understand that the word “another” in “another kind of feature” is restricted in scope to the kinds of features so far mentioned in the sentence. Similarly, the sentence in the *Topics* can only be construed as referring to a category of substance if we already assume that there is a category of substance. But the example shows that it does not have to be construed this way, and I have given independent reasons why it should not be construed this way.

The evidence that Aristotle accepts a category of substance is circumstantial. For Aristotle, as far as I can see, only once explicitly talks of a “category of substance,” namely in *Phys.* 242^b 5. And in this one place in which this expression is actually used, it does not mean “category of substance.” Given the enormous

importance the category of substance is supposed to have in Aristotle, it should give one at least some pause that Aristotle himself never seems to talk of it in quite these terms. Nevertheless, there is circumstantial evidence for Aristotle's acceptance of a category of substance. This evidence in part is of the following kind. Consider the first lines of *Met.* θ : "That which is a being in the primary sense and which all the other categories of being have to be referred to, namely substance, has been dealt with. For all the other things (i.e., qualities, quantities, etc.) are called 'beings' in so far" Here the phrase "all the other categories" only makes sense, or so it seems, if we assume that the other categories are contrasted with a category associated with substance. Hence, it would seem obvious that Aristotle here is referring to a category of substance.

A little consideration, though, shows that this is not obvious at all. For the phrase Aristotle uses here is not "the other categories" but "the other categories of being," and so what at best follows from this passage is that Aristotle accepts a category of being associated with substance. And from this it only follows that Aristotle accepts a category of substance if we assume that the categories of being are to be identified with the categories in the sense we are interested in. This, of course, is an assumption which is standardly made.² But for the following reason it is at least questionable, if not false. Aristotle's use of the term "category" seems to be such that if he talks of "categories" he is talking of the predication of predicates quite generally. If, on the other hand, he uses "category" with a dependent genitive, he often, if not always, is not talking about predication in general but about the predication of the predicates or terms specified in the expression in the genitive. Thus, when he talks about "katēgoria tou ontos," a "category of being," he can be understood, and presumably has to be understood, as talking about the predication of the term "being," about the, or a, use to which the term "being" is put.

If one has doubts about this, one should consider the following use of the term "category" in *Met.* Γ . In Chapter 2 of this book Aristotle points out that the term "one" has many uses, and that in a case like this, e.g., in the case of terms like "same," "other," or "contrary," one has to try to explain how the various uses of a term are related to a primary use of that term. He then goes on to say in 1004^a 28: "Thus having distinguished in how many ways each term is used, we have, accordingly, to give an account how in each category a term is used with reference to its primary use." Now, "category" here obviously is not used in the technical sense of "category" in question. It, rather, seems that the categories Aristotle is talking about here are the categories of the one, the same, the different, and the like, i.e., the various kinds of cases in which we use the predicate "one," the predicate "different," or the predicate "same." And he is saying that with each of these predicates we should look for a primary use of this predicate in terms of which we can then explicate the other uses of this predicate. Keeping this in mind, it seems to be fairly clear that Aristotle in the opening remarks of

Met. θ just applies this general doctrine to the particular case of the predicate “being.” Let me quote the relevant sentences of *Met.* θ again: “That which is a being in the primary sense and which all the other categories of being have to be referred to namely substance, has been dealt with. For all the other things [i.e., qualities, quantities, and the rest] are called ‘beings’ insofar as” Applying the general point of *Met.* Γ, Aristotle here seems to be saying that the various uses of “being” in which things other than substances are said to be, or to be beings, have to be explained in terms of that primary use of the term “being” in which substances are said to be beings. Hence, it seems that when Aristotle is talking here of the other categories of being, he is not talking about the categories, but about the various uses of the particular predicate “being.” And so it does follow from the passage that there is a category of being associated with substance, but it does not follow, at least not immediately, that there is a category of substance. For, as opposed to what is usually assumed, the categories of being cannot be identified with the categories themselves.

Now it will be argued that the reason why there is a category of being which corresponds to substance is that there is a category of substance underlying this category of being. One will point out, e.g., that the categories of being on the suggested interpretation are the various uses of “is” or “being” with reference to which Aristotle says in many places that there are as many of them as there are categories. And here by “categories” he clearly means categories in the technical sense in question. Hence it would seem that the fact that there is a category of being associated with substance rests on the fact that there is a category of substance.

This inference, however plausible, is not justified either. For one can arrive at the claim that there are as many uses of “is” as there are categories, including a particular use in which substances are said to be, without assuming a category of substance. To arrive at that claim it will do to assume the categories of the *Topics* as we have interpreted them. Hence, it does not even follow from the claim that there are as many uses of “is,” including one for substances, as there are categories that there is a category of substance.

How, then, could the different uses of “is” be derived from the categories of the *Topics*, as we interpret them, i.e., without assuming a category of substance? A locus classicus for the claim that there are as many uses of “. . . is” as there are categories is *Met.* Δ 7, a most obscure chapter. Here Aristotle distinguishes per se being and being per accidens. I take it that per se being is the being of per se beings and that accidental being is the being of accidental beings; an accidental being seems to be something like a red thing or a just thing or a healthy man, as opposed to the color red, justice, health, or a man, all of which are per se beings. What makes them per se beings is that they are what they are, namely, the color red, justice, health, a man, not by being really something else which just happens to be that color or justice or whatever it is, but which also could

be something else. The red thing, on the other hand, is an accidental being, because it is what it is, namely red, by really being something else which just happens to be red, but which might as well not be red. Given this distinction, Aristotle's claim is that there are as many uses of ". . . is" in which per se beings can be said to be, or to be beings or entities, as there are categories. What Aristotle seems to have in mind is this: there is no such thing as plain being such that there is something which all things which are share and which we attribute to them when we say of them that they are; rather, it is the case that it is one thing to say of a substance that it is, another to say of a quality that it is, and yet another thing to say of a quantity that it is. Depending on the ultimate genus of the subject, the use of ". . . is" or "being" is different. To say of a substance that it is, is to say that it is a substance of some kind or that it is of some substance of some kind; to say of a quality that it is, is to say that it is a quality of some kind. But why should this be so? Why should the use of "being" differ depending on the ultimate class of the being in question?

One might be tempted to assume that Aristotle relies on the thesis that quite generally a particular use of a predicate never extends beyond an ultimate class of entities, because the uses of predicates have to be defined with reference to a class of possible subjects and the maximal classes of subjects available are the ultimate classes of entities. Presumably there is enough evidence to show that this is what Aristotle thinks at times. But it does seem to be a very strong thesis, and hence it would be preferable if one did not have to rely on it for the claim in question.

If we go by the opening lines of *Met. Z*, e.g., it seems that Aristotle, when he talks about the different per se uses of ". . . is", has statements of the following kind in mind:

- (i) Socrates is (i.e., a substance);
- (ii) justice is (i.e., a quality of something);
- (iii) the size of two feet is (i.e., a quantity of something).

Now these statements by themselves do not reflect differences in category, given our account of what categories are. If anything, the predicate, in each of these statements is in the category of the what it is. Hence, a consideration just of these statements will hardly help us to see why there should be as many uses of ". . . is" here as there are categories. But most of these statements do have counterparts which do reflect the differences in category. For their category does vary depending on the class of entities of the subject of the first kind of statement. This is most easily seen in the case of non-substantial items. For justice to be, i.e., for justice to be the quality of something, is for there to be something which is qualified by justice, i.e., for justice to be, or to exist, the following statement has to be true: (iiA) something is qualified by justice. Similarly, for the size of two feet to exist the following has to be true: (iiiA) something is quantified by the size of two feet. The predicate of (iiA) is in the category of quality,

just as the subject of its counterpart (ii) was in the genus of quality. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, holds for (iiiA) and (iii) and for the corresponding pairs of statements involving the other kinds of entities. So, for non-substantial items it is easy to see how we always get a corresponding statement in the corresponding category. It is equally clear that there can be no such straightforward correspondence in the case of statements about substances. This just reflects the fact that substances are not the substances of something in the way qualities or quantities are the qualities or quantities of something. And this, in turn, just reflects the fact that substances have a special status in that they in some sense exist in their own right.

But how is all this supposed to help us to understand that there are as many per se uses of "is" as there are categories? Presumably, one can argue that for Aristotle to attribute, in one of the categories, something to something is to attribute some kind of being to it. Presumably it is also true, though this sounds strange to us, that this fact is supposed to be reflected by the use of the copulative "is." Presumably, we also can say that for Aristotle there are different forms or kinds of being which are reflected by different uses of "is." Being something essentially is one kind of being, being something accidentally is another kind of being which presupposes the first one. Moreover, there are different ways of being something accidentally; for being qualified in a certain way is one thing, being quantified quite another, and being in a certain relation to something yet another. But, if this is what we can assume for Aristotle, it also would seem that the kind of being which one attributes to something varies with the category of the statement. And, since the use of "is" is supposed to reflect the kind of being one attributes to something in such a statement, this would seem to give some content to the claim that there are as many uses of "is" as there are categories. But it still would not explain why there are as many per se uses of "is" as there are categories, and, in particular, it would not yet explain why there should be one per se use in which "is" is restricted to substances. For the statements with predicates in the various categories other than the first category involve the various accidental uses of "is" rather than per se uses, and, though statements in the first category involve a per se use of "is," this use is not restricted to substances since this category is not restricted to substances. It is at this point that our consideration of pairs of statements involving non-substantial kinds of entities becomes relevant. We saw that the per se being which we attribute to justice when we say that justice is, or that there is justice, is none other than the accidental being which we attribute to something when we say that it is just. It is one being which can be looked at in two ways: as attributed to objects it is accidental being and as attributed to the quality it is per se being. But if this is so, then there will be at least as many per se kinds of being as there are non-substantial categories. In addition there will be a per se kind of being which cannot be thus identified with some accidental kind of being. For the per se being of substances cannot

be identified with the accidental being or any kind of being of anything else. Thus we arrive at as many kinds of per se being as there are categories, including one which is the per se being of substances. And hence we have as many per se uses of 'is,' including one for substances, as there are categories, though we did not start out with a category of substance. What happened, rather, was that by applying our distinction of categories to the uses of "is" we were forced to introduce the notion of a substance.

Whatever the difficulties of this account may be, it would explain one fact about Aristotle's discussion of per se being in *Met.* Δ 7 which has exercised commentators considerably. And this is that Aristotle in his discussion of per se being considers as examples not only statements which involve a copulative use of "is" but statements which involve a clearly accidental use of "is." This strongly suggests that Aristotle for the claim that there are as many per se uses of "is" as there are categories is considering two sets of statements of the kind we have been considering: it suggests that in support of his claim about the use of "is" in one set of statements he has recourse to another set of statements which involve an accidental use of "is" and which differ in category in the sense of our explanation of what categories are. Thus it not only seems that, given the suggested notion of a category, we can give an explanation of Aristotle's claim but that we even can account for a detail of Aristotle's argument which otherwise would go unexplained. It does not seem to be the case, then, that we have to assume a category of substance to account for Aristotle's claim that there are as many uses of "is" as there are categories.

I have argued so far that the evidence that there is a category of substance is circumstantial and that a good deal of this evidence is inconclusive. I now want to argue that Aristotle in his later writings does restrict the first category to substances but that this is due to a development or change within his theory which does not affect the very notion of a category itself.

That Aristotle at some point comes to accept a category of substance is fairly clear from a passage like the following (*Met.* K 1068^a 8ff.; *Phys.* 225^b5 ff.): "Since the categories are mutually exhausted by substance, quality, place, etc. it is necessary that there be three kinds of motion, namely those with reference to quality, quantity, and place." So here we have a category of substance, and the subsequent remarks in the text make it clear that by "substance" Aristotle here does not mean "essence," as he often does, but substance in the sense in which Socrates is a substance. Hence, we have a category restricted to substances in the standard sense.

It seems to me that this acceptance of a category of substance is due to a development of doctrine which is reflected by a severe restriction on the use of the phrase "what it is" in this context. Consider, e.g., *Anal. Post.* 83^a 21-23. Here Aristotle says that if one thing *A* is predicated of something *B*, *A* either is (part

of) the what it is of *B* or signifies that *B* is of a certain quality or of a certain quantity, etc. There is no reason from the context to suppose that the what it is here is restricted to substance; in fact, the context strongly suggests that it is not (cf 84^a 14; 85^b 20). Thus we here seem to have the category of the what it is in its generous construal of the *Topics*. This, incidentally, makes it clear that the case presented here does not rest solely on the *Topics* and that the suggested interpretation of the *Topics* concerning the first category is not in conflict with all the rest of Aristotle's writing on the matter. In fact, the restricted use of the phrase "what it is" is much rarer than Bonitz's Index would make us believe and is largely, though not entirely, limited to the *Metaphysics*. Now, in contrast with this passage from the *Posterior Analytics*, consider the opening line of *Met. Z* 1028^a 10ff.: "being' is used in many ways, . . . for in one case it signifies what it is and a this, in another case a quality or a quantity or one of the other things thus predicated. . . . It is clear that of these it is the what it is which signifies the substance which is a being in the primary sense." In this passage the what it is obviously is restricted to substances, and, though the text does not explicitly mention categories under this name, parallel passages like 1026^a 36ff., where he does explicitly talk of categories, make it sufficiently clear that Aristotle here at the beginning of *Met. Z* is restricting the category of the what it is to substances. In *Met. Z* 4 1037^a 17ff., Aristotle is quite explicit about the restriction: "For the term 'what it is' in one way signifies substance and the this, in another each of the kinds of predicates, quantity, quality and whatever else there is of this kind. . . . And 'what it is' unqualifiedly applies to substance, whereas it only qualifiedly applies to the other kinds of things."

Why, then, is it that the what it is now is supposed to cover only substances, strictly speaking? To start with we have to take into account that for Aristotle a statement of the form "white is such-and-such a color" can be taken in two ways. It can be taken to tell us what the term "white" signifies or means (*ti sēmainei*). But it also can be taken to tell us what white is (*ti esti*). If taken this way, it is supposed to attribute being or existence to the color white and to specify the kind of being which is attributed to the color white, namely, the being of such-and-such a color. Secondly, the what it is of something is, or is part of, the essence of that thing or, to use Aristotelian language, the what it is to be for that thing. Hence to say of something what it is, is not just to attribute some kind of being to it; it is to specify the kind of being which is essential to it. Third, given Aristotle's developed view of what it is to be for the various kind of entities, it turns out that non-substantial items do not unqualifiedly have any essential being of their own to be specified by saying what they are. For, as we saw, the being of such-and-such a color is just the accidental being we attribute to something when we say that it is colored this way. In this non-substantial items differ from substances which unqualifiedly have an essential being of their

own; their essential being is not just the accidental being of something else. Hence, it is only in a derived and qualified sense that we can speak of the what it is in the case of non-substantial items.

But why should this make us restrict the category of the what it is to substances? After all there still is an extended sense in which the what it is covers all kinds of entities, substances, and non-substances alike. Now it would seem that the truth of statements about non-substantial items rests entirely on truths about substances. In particular, the truth of statements of the being and the what it is of non-substantial items would seem to rest on the truth of statements about substances in the category of the what it is and on statements about substances in the category of the non-substantial item in question. The truths that there is white or that white is such and such a color, e.g., would seem to rest on the truth that some substances are of such and such a kind such that things of that kind are of some color or other, and on the truth about some substance of this kind that it is of such and such a color. Thus, statements concerning the what it is of non-substantial items are not really on a par with statements concerning the what it is of substances. The old category of the what it is collects disparate items insofar as statements of the what it is of non-substantial items presuppose statements of the what it is of substances, and, what is worse, they presuppose statements concerning substances in the other categories. To take account of this secondary and, in a way, parasitical nature of these statements, we restrict the category of the what it is to substances. This in any case is what Aristotle does.

Thus, we may conclude that the fact that Aristotle comes to accept a category of substance poses no threat to our interpretation of the *Topics*. For we can understand this development of Aristotle's doctrine as being due to the fact that Aristotle comes to think of statements of the form "white is such-and-such color" as having a more complex structure than it at first seemed and as being secondary to statements about substances in a rather radical way.

But there is nothing to force us to assume that Aristotle in the course of the development changed his notion of a category, unless one wants to say that the restriction of the distinction of categories to statements about substances amounts to a change in the notion of a category itself. But one should keep in mind in this connection that the distinction of categories was never meant to apply to any statement whatsoever. It hardly was meant to cover statements such as the following: "man is a species." "all species are constituted by a genus and a differentia," "the term 'being' has as many uses as there are categories." It, rather, seems that they were meant to apply to first order statements in which, as Aristotle sees it, an item in the ontology is predicated of an item in the ontology. If, then, Aristotle no longer thinks that a statement like "White is a color" is of this simple kind and, hence, no longer thinks that the distinction of categories applies to it, this in no way indicates a change in the notion of a category itself.

Having thus identified the notion of a category of Aristotle, let us, in conclusion, go back to our text in the *Topics* to look for at least some clarification of this notion. We are told in the first sentence of A, 9 that having distinguished the predicables we next have to distinguish the categories. Obviously our understanding of what the categories are supposed to be would be greatly increased if we had a better understanding of why Aristotle thinks that we have to make this distinction, of how he thinks it is to be made. Unfortunately, Aristotle in the *Topics* does not enter into a discussion of either of these questions. This may suggest that Aristotle relies on the fact that he has settled these questions elsewhere. But I do not think that has to be taken this way. It may very well be the case that Aristotle thinks that it is sufficiently obvious from the practice of the kind of dialectical discussion which is the subject matter of the *Topics* that we have to make that kind of distinction of predications. It would, e.g., seem to be clear to someone who had followed Platonic discussions that we had to distinguish carefully between saying of something what it is essentially and saying something else about it. And it would be clear from practice that one has to distinguish between a predicate which is true of something with reference to something else like “. . . is to the left” or “. . . is a father,” and predicates which do not need that kind of complement. The actual use made of the categories in the *Topics* very much suggests that the crucial distinctions are picked up one by one and that it is long experience with arguments and the analysis of fallacies which will put one into the position to produce one list of such distinctions, filled up and completed by a general consideration of what kinds of things one can say about something, to arrive at a complete list of the various kinds of things one can say about something. For there does not seem to be any one problem whose solution requires the complete list of categories, nor is there any sign of a systematical derivation of the categories, e.g., in terms of a set of formal features. For if Aristotle in the *Topics* knew of such a derivation, we could count on his using it systematically to propose strategies for arguing for or against a statement on the basis of the formal features of the category involved. But one reason why he actually makes so surprisingly little use of the categories in the *Topics* seems to be exactly this, that he does not have a clear view of the logical properties which might serve to distinguish the categories from each other in a systematic fashion.

Nor does it seem that Aristotle arrives at his list of categories by grammatical considerations as has been proposed again recently by Benveniste. It is true that Aristotle thinks that certain grammatical forms tend to go with certain categories; the active form of verbs, e.g., naturally goes with the category of doing and the passive with the category of suffering. But he also is aware of the fact that grammatical form in this respect can be quite misleading, and he thinks that a large number of fallacies are due to this.

It will, of course, be suggested that Aristotle arrives at his list of categories

neither by logical nor by grammatical considerations, but by an ontological inquiry. It will be suggested that Aristotle first established a list of ultimate classes of what there is by an ontological inquiry into what there is and then just assumed corresponding categories. On this view Aristotle, e.g., first determined that there is an ultimate class of entities consisting of all qualities and then introduced a category of quality which is characterized by the fact that the item predicated belongs to the antecedently determined class of qualities. Now, though this matter would require quite a bit of detailed argument, it seems to me that things are exactly the other way round. When Aristotle in the treatise *Categories* tries to give a general characterization of qualities, he relies on the fact that we already know what it is to say of something what it is like. Qualities are just those items which we attribute to something when we say what it is like; quantities are just those items which we refer to if we say of something of what amount it is, and so forth.

On the other hand, it presumably is the case that for Aristotle the different kinds of entities like qualities and quantities differ from each other insofar as it is one kind of thing to be quantified in a certain way and quite a different matter to be qualified in a certain way. And, if we keep in mind that by "predication" Aristotle means here "true predication," it is clear that the distinction of categories just amounts to the distinction of these various ways of being and the corresponding various kinds of entities. And, hence, ontological considerations might well have an effect on the list of categories one draws up.

But if it does not just seem that Aristotle did not arrive at his list of categories exclusively by such ontological considerations, it would also seem that the notion of a category would lose much of its interest if the categories were simply arrived at by some ontological distinction of various ultimate classes of entities. For the real interest of the Aristotelian notion of a category seems to lie in the fact that we are supposed to have one set of notions, or, perhaps, two or three very closely related sets of notions, which do needed work in logic, in grammar, and in metaphysics. A serious study of Aristotle's categories would have to go in that direction. But such a study will not get off the ground unless certain rather simple facts have been straightened out. And I hope that the preceding remarks will be of some help for this preliminary enterprise.³

Individuals in Aristotle

By way of introduction, I offer a few remarks to give an overview of the subject of this paper. Aristotle assumes that, in addition to *objects*, there are *properties* of objects. This assumption is rather stronger than one might think, since it turns out that statements about properties are not just reducible to statements about objects; on the contrary, the truth of at least some statements about objects is to be explained by assuming that there are properties. For example, the truth of a statement like ‘Socrates is ill’ is to be explained by noting that there are not only objects, like Socrates, but that there are also such things as illness; illness is not to be construed as yet another object but as something standing in certain relations to objects, relations on the basis of which one can say of objects that they are ill. Besides this division of things into objects and properties, Aristotle, in the *Categories*, makes use of the distinction between *general* and *particular*, between individuals and universals. Although Aristotle does not, in this treatise, use any term like ‘universal’ (*katholou*), he does speak of ‘individuals’, and he contrasts these with their kinds. These two divisions, into objects and properties, on the one hand, and into particular and general, on the other, do not turn out to be the same. For Aristotle counts as general not only properties but also the kinds, into which objects fall, i.e., the genera, species, and differentiae of substances; and these are to be differentiated strictly from properties. When we say, ‘Socrates is a man’, we are not speaking of any property of Socrates; rather, we are speaking of two substances, Socrates and the species man. When, however, we say, ‘Socrates is ill’, we *are* speaking of a property. The species is something general, yet, unlike illness, it is not a property. (Furthermore, for Aristotle, there is not, in addition to the species man, some property of being a man.) Both properties and kinds, then, turn out to be general. Moreover, Aristotle construes the distinction between general and particular in such a way that the notions of particular and individual are not restricted to objects, but can also apply to properties. Thus, the two distinctions do not collapse into one, they cut across

each other, resulting in a four-fold division, into individual objects, individual properties, general properties, and general objects (cf. *Cat.* 2).

At this point, three difficulties arise. First of all, how is it possible to speak of individuals in the case of properties; second, how can there be a single notion of being an individual that can be applied to objects as well as properties; and third, what sorts of objects are these general objects, the genera and species, supposed to be? These difficulties, especially the first two, will be our concern in the first part of this paper, which deal with the *Categories*.

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle denies that there is anything general—at least, he denies that there are kinds, into which objects fall. Thus, he also abandons the notion of an individual which he had relied on in the *Categories*, since it presupposes that there are general things, that there are universals. Given that Aristotle does not identify properties with the general, denying that there is anything general does not result in the notion of an individual just collapsing into the notion of an object. Rather, the denial that there is anything general has this consequence: now the relation between objects and properties simply cannot be viewed as the relation between individual things and general concepts under which these fall. Because of this, Aristotle faces some odd results concerning what is actually particular, what is actually an individual object, what is to count as primary substance. These results will be our concern in the second part of this chapter.

I. Individuals in Aristotle's *Categories*

Looking at either Lewis and Short's *A Latin Dictionary* or Glare's new *Oxford Latin Dictionary* would lead one to conclude that, in ancient Latin, 'individuum' and 'individuus' were not used in the sense of 'individual'.¹ This conclusion, however, would be completely erroneous; for we find 'individuum' and 'individuus' used in precisely this sense rather frequently in later antiquity, especially in Marius Victorinus (*Adv. Ar.* I; 34, 20) and Boethius (*In de int. alt.* p. 334, 2 Meiser), but also in St. Augustine (*De trin.* VII, 6, 11), Martianus Capella (VI, 352), and Cassiodorus (*Inst.* II, 14; 123, 9), as well as in various grammarians, e.g., Priscian (*Inst.* II, 25; p. 58, 25).

The origin of this use of the word can be explained quite easily: it is simply the result of translating literally the Greek word "atomon," which can be used in just this sense of 'individual' or 'individual thing'. Aristotle, in the *Categories* (1^b 6; 3^a 34, 38, 39; 3^b 2, 7, 12), is the first to use the term in this way. However, for reasons of which I shall speak later, he seems to have given up this use of atomon in his later works. It is only with the increasing influence of the *Categories* in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. that this term comes again to be used by Greek philosophers, albeit rather sparingly (cf. Plotinus VI, 3, 1, 15). Galen (*De Plat. et Hipp. dogm.* VIII, 2 p. 664, 6–7 (Müller)), tell us that

philosophers were in the habit of calling, e.g., Dion an individual substance. From the fact that Galen finds this worthy of comment and from the fact that he uses *atmētos* here, whereas the philosophers actually use *atomos*, we might infer that, in Galen's time, the philosophical use of this term was still rather rare (but, cf. Alexander *In Met.* 211, 30 and *passim*). At any rate, because of the influence of the *Categories* and Porphyry's introduction to the *Categories*—in which Porphyry speaks rather frequently of individuals (cf. 2, 18; 3, 3)—its use does come to be firmly established. This use, then, is simply taken over by the various Latin authors. The translations of the *Categories* and of the *Isagoge* by both Marius Victorinus and Boethius were, no doubt, of special importance in introducing and securing this use of the term in Latin.²

At any rate, it is especially these two, and authors depending on them, who use 'individuus' in the sense familiar to us. And the continued use of this term in this sense was assured by the prominent position in the curriculum of the schools the *Categories* and Porphyry's *Isagoge* came to occupy and continued to occupy till the very end of the Middle Ages.

If Aristotle, then, is the first writer to call individuals 'individuals', the question arises what is it he had in mind when he calls them 'indivisible'; for that is just what 'individuum', rather, "atomon" means. And given that "atomon" and "atomos" had already been used in two different philosophical contexts—atomists of all sorts had used the term for indivisible magnitudes, e.g., atoms, and Platonists had used it for *infimae species*—this question becomes all the more pressing.

Aristotle provides some indication of the answer when, in the first passage in which he speaks of individuals (*Cat.* 1^b 6–7), he offers "and that which is one in number" as a gloss on "individuals" (cf. also 3^b 12). As a matter of fact, Aristotle does, in various places, invoke the principle that that which is one is, as such, also indivisible; and so, we may assume that it is somehow with respect to their being one that individuals are said to be indivisible. However, being one is not a *proprium* of individuals: species and genera, i.e., the kinds into which objects fall, also have a kind of unity. One can, for example, count the species of a given genus. The kind of indivisibility characteristic of individuals must, then, be a special kind of unity. And it seems reasonable to suppose that the expression "in number," in the phrase "that which is one in number," serves precisely the function of pointing out the special kind of unity and so, too, the kind of indivisibility characteristic of individuals.

Now, Aristotle uses the expression "one in number" more frequently by way of contrast with "one in kind or species" and "one in genus." Two or more things are one in kind, if both belong to the same species. Thus, Plato and Socrates are one in kind, namely, man. Plato, Brunellus, and Fido, however, are only generically one, namely, animal. Since Brunellus is a donkey and Fido a dog, they do not belong to the same species and thus are one only in genus.

Now let us suppose that a genus is the set of objects that are generically one, and correspondingly, that a species is the set of objects that are specifically one. We could go on to say that the kind of unity that characterizes genera, i.e., that makes one genus *one* genus, is generic unity and, correspondingly, that the unity characteristic of species is specific unity.

If we go on to connect this division, of kinds of unity, with the notion that that which is one is, as such, also indivisible, we get the following result: something that has generic unity cannot be divided insofar as it has *this* unity. If we consider, for example, Socrates, Plato, Brunellus, and Fido only insofar as they are generically one and the same, namely, animal, we cannot distinguish them. They cannot be divided according to their genera. But, to the extent that Socrates, Plato, Brunellus, and Fido lack specific unity, we can distinguish them and divide them into their species, viz., into the sets of men, donkeys, and dogs, respectively. Now, if we go on to the set of men, Socrates and Plato, we cannot distinguish between them and cannot divide them as long as we consider them as a specific unity, i.e., as long as we consider Socrates and Plato insofar as they are one and the same, namely, man. Since, however, this set lacks numerical unity, we can indeed divide it, viz., according to number. And what we end up with, when we divide the set in this way according to number, are just the individuals.

In the *Categories*, then, Aristotle seems to be relying on a notion of division according to which genera and species, in a certain respect, *are* one and, hence, indivisible, but, in another respect, *are not* one and, hence, divisible; individuals, however, turn out to be completely indivisible on this schema of division. Indeed, this seems to me to be the explanation for the fact that Aristotle calls individuals 'indivisible' in the *Categories*. Yet, this explanation will be of little help in getting a grip on the notion of an individual as long as we do not have a clearer idea of what sort of division it is with respect to which the individuals are indivisible.

Some indication of what notions of division and part are at work here is provided by Aristotle at 3^b 16–18, where he explains that the species man and the genus animal are not individuals, because they have a plurality of subjects (*hypokeimena*); for there are many things of which one can truly say that they are a man or an animal. This explanation strongly suggests that an individual does not have any actual parts and is indivisible, because it has no subjects. In the relevant sense of 'part', then, x would be a part of y if, and only if, x is a subject of y. To distinguish between this sense of 'part' and the more familiar one, we can avail ourselves of the Scholastic terms 'integral' and 'subjective': a wall is an integral not a subjective part of a house, since we cannot say of it that it is a house; Socrates, though, is a subjective not an integral part of man, since we can say of him that he is a man. An individual, then, is something which has no subjective parts; indeed, it itself is a subjective part of an *infima* species

into which the things having only generic or specific unity are themselves divided.

We shall have understood the relevant sense of 'division' and 'part', if we understand in what sense Aristotle is speaking of subjects here. According to the *Categories*, there are only two ways in which x can be the subject of y : either y is said of x as its subject, or y is in x as its subject. These two relations can be defined as follows:

- (A) y is *said of* x as its subject if, and only if,
- (i) y is truly predicated of x ; and
 - (ii) the name of y occurs as a predicate-noun in the sentence in which y is predicated of x ; and
 - (iii) if, in that sentence, the definition of y can be substituted for the name *salva veritate*.
- (B) y is *in* x as its subject if, and only if,
- (i) y is truly predicated of x ; and
 - (ii) y is not said of x as its subject.

These two definitions would require rather extensive elaboration. We would, for example, need to note that predication is a relation between entities not expressions, and we would need to explain what the name of an object is and what a definition is. I shall, however, restrict myself to providing an example to help clarify these definitions. Let us suppose Socrates is both healthy and white. Socrates, then, is the subject of health and of the color white. Now, health and the color will be in Socrates, as a subject, not said of him as a subject: for, when we predicate health of Socrates we do not use the name of health, viz., 'health', but the corresponding adjective; we do not say that Socrates is health but that he is healthy. As for the color, while we do use its name when we say that Socrates is white, we find that here the third condition is not satisfied; for we cannot replace 'white' by its definition and say that Socrates is such-and-such a color. If, on the other hand, we say that Socrates is a man, we do use the name of an object as a predicate-noun, viz., the name of the species man, and do not use a corresponding adjective. (If we were to say either that Socrates is manly or that he is humane, we would be saying something quite different and would be referring not to the species man but to the quality either of manliness or of humaneness.) In addition, we can replace the name 'man' by the definition of man; for we can say that Socrates is a rational animal. Thus, man is said of Socrates as its subject.

If we take this distinction as given, we can go on to ask in which way x must be a subject of y for x to be a subjective part of y . There are three possibilities:

- (i) x is a subjective part of y if, and only if, x is a subject of y , regardless of which way it is a subject of y , i.e., x is a subjective part of y if, and only if, y is truly predicated of x .

- (ii) x is a subjective part of y if, and only if, x is a subject of y in this manner: y is *said of* x as its subject.
- (iii) x is a subjective part of y if, and only if, x is a subject of y in this manner: y is *in* x as its subject.

The third possibility can be easily eliminated. Genera and species quite obviously have subjective parts, viz., individual substances, but they are not in anything as their subjects. The first possibility can be ruled out as well, for the following reason. As we can see from the second chapter of the *Categories*, Aristotle not only assumes that there are individual substances, but also that there are non-substantial individuals, individual qualities, and quantities. In addition, Aristotle assumes that an attribute, say, a quality, will belong to an individual substance as its subject in all and only those cases where this quality also belongs to the species and the genus of the individual substance. Aristotle can make this assumption, because (i) he takes a sentence of the form 'a man is running' to be a sentence about the species; and (ii) he believes a sentence of the form 'a man is running' is true only if a sentence of the form 'this man is running' is also true; and (iii) he believes that if a sentence of the form 'this man is running' is true, then sentences of the form 'a man is running' and 'an animal is running' also must be true. A result of these assumptions is that any attribute, whether it is individual or general, has at least two subjects, namely, an individual substance and a kind of substance. That, however, means that there could be no individuals in categories other than substance, if being an individual were only a matter of something having a plurality of subjects independently of which way these subjects are subjects. But since Aristotle wants to distinguish between individuals and their kinds also in the case of non-substances, and since this distinction can only be maintained if we distinguish between the two ways in which something can be the subject of something, only the second possibility remains.

We thus arrive at the following result: x is a subjective part of y if, and only if, y is said of x as its subject. Corresponding to this, we could define an individual in this way: x is an individual if (i) it is the subjective part of something, and (ii) it itself has no subjective parts. This definition seems to capture what Aristotle takes to be an individual in the *Categories*.

Two things strike me as worthy of note here. First, the negative character of this definition is surprising. Aristotle seems to proceed as if, quite independent of the distinction between individuals and non-individuals, it were clear what is to count as an entity, and the only problem was to make a cut within this given set of entities. And this cut is not made by using a positive condition for what is to count as an individual so that everything that fails to meet this condition is a genus or a species; rather, a condition is given for being a species or a genus—having subjective parts—and everything that fails to meet this condition counts as an individual. I shall return to this point briefly later.

Second, it is worth noting that this definition, together with the assumption that there are things besides substances, implies that not all individuals are substances. If, for example, there are properties or qualities, then, on this definition of individuals, there must also be individual qualities. For, suppose Q is a quality; either Q is itself an individual or it has subjective parts. If Q has subjective parts, these are either substances or non-substances. They cannot be substances, since substances are not qualities; at best, they have qualities. So, either Q is itself an individual or it has only subjective parts that are not substances. If Q has only subjective parts that are not substances, then it has parts that are individuals and not substances.

That this should be a consequence of a definition of individuals is by no means obvious, for we can easily imagine either a definition of individuals according to which only objects or substances are individuals or a definition which leaves the matter open. The definition implicit in the traditional definition of the universal is of this sort: according to *De int.* 7, the universal is that which is by its very nature predicable of a plurality of subjects. Since there is no requirement here that the subjects be of such a kind that the universal can be said of them as their subject, there can be properties without there being individual properties, since all the subjects of the properties could be substances.

The assumption that there should be, in addition to individual substance, individuals in other categories is difficult to get a grip on for a very simple reason. What makes the concept of an individual so readily available to us is the simple fact that the nouns for kinds, which objects fall under, can also be used in the plural, and that, when they are used in the plural, they apply not to kinds but to individuals: 'man' designates a kind, under which certain objects fall, and it forms the plural 'men'; when we speak of men, we are not speaking of kinds but of individuals. Moreover, we can use the plural with number-words. What we count in that case are again individuals not kinds. In counting, we have the problem of how to ensure that we count only those objects we mean to count, that we distinguish between the objects and not mistake two for one, and, finally, that we not count anything twice, having overlooked that we have already counted it. Thus, from the mere fact that we can count, we have access to a very rich notion of individuals when we are dealing with objects. By way of contrast, the definition of individuals arrived at above seems virtually contentless.

When we turn to non-substances, we do not quite know what to make of the notion of an individual. Let us, for example, consider qualities, to which I shall restrict myself in the following discussion. Terms for qualities, *nomina abstracta*, do not readily assume the plural. We do not speak of healths or courages, we form no plurals for 'warmth', 'anger', or 'paleness'. And even in those cases where there are plurals of terms for qualities, they do not seem to refer to individuals in the category of quality; rather, they seem to refer either

to kinds of the quality, which, while they are qualities, are still general, or to examples of (having) the quality, which, while they may be individuals, are not qualities but only instances of (having) them. Thus, illnesses are kinds of illness, ways in which one can be ill; colors are general ways in which something can be colored. Beauties, on the other hand, are individual instances of beauty and, fortunately, not qualities but, say, persons like Helen or Alcibiades. Stupidities are instances of behavior that shows stupidity, not properties. Similarly, treacheries are not properties, but examples, instances of treachery or treacherousness; there are no treacherousnesses. These relatively simple facts about language seem to make it so difficult to understand what individual properties or qualities are supposed to be.

Given this state of affairs, there are at least two options. Either we can give up speaking of individual properties and turn, rather, to developing an adequate concept of individuals for objects, or we can insist that our difficulties with non-substantial individuals are just the result of, on the one hand, myopically focusing on the individuality of objects, and, on the other, giving excessive weight to these linguistic phenomena, which, as a matter of fact, are themselves subject to considerable variation. For if there had not suddenly been so terribly many abstract nouns in Greek, one could have continued with the attractive custom of referring to properties by neuter adjectives; in that case, all terms for properties would have had plurals. We could then, following Eudoxus, consider properties, in a manner analogous to homoiomerous things like gold, either as a single individual, scattered throughout the world, or we could say that the plural of the adjective actually refers to the scattered parts, and thus that it is these scattered parts which correspond to individual objects.

It would hardly be appropriate to ascribe the second position to Aristotle in the *Categories*. The explanation for Aristotle's position in the *Categories* seems, rather, to be that here he is taking a first step in making the distinction between objects and properties central for ontology. This distinction played virtually no role in Plato, and it was, in any case, completely overshadowed by the distinction between general and particular. It is the attempt to maintain this Platonic distinction between general and particular in addition to the new distinction between objects and properties that leads to our difficulties.

That Aristotle's schema of genera, species, and individuals amounts to Plato's distinction between particular and general is already suggested by the fact that, with one exception, the view in the *Categories* hardly differs from the Platonic theory of forms in the *Philebus*.³ In the *Philebus*, Plato asks how forms can be both one and many. The answer is that they are at once one, many, and unlimitedly many; one, insofar as they are genus; many, insofar as the genus consists of many species; and unlimitedly many, insofar as unlimitedly many things are subsumed under the various species. Here we have not only the division into genera, species, and individuals, but also the notion that species and individuals

are parts of the genus or form; the relation between genus and species, and between species and individual, seems to correspond exactly to the relation of being said of something as a subject; the individuals are again viewed negatively as what remains after one has divided the genus as far as it can be divided into species. The idea of things being one in genus seems to derive from the *Philebus* (12E), and in the *Philebus* (15A) forms are divided in just the way required here. The only difference is that Aristotle reverses the priority relation between forms and particulars. And this reversal seems to be a simple consequence of his giving precedence to the object/property distinction over the general/particular distinction.

Yet, if this is so, i.e., if Platonic forms include individuals as parts, and if the participation relation is precisely the converse of the relation of being said of something as a subject, there must also be non-substantial individuals, since there are forms not only of objects. Thus, we can give a historical explanation for Aristotle's countenancing non-substantial individuals—despite the obvious problems these seem to bring with them—by noting that he tries to maintain the Platonic distinction between general and particular, a distinction not restricted to objects.

Some philosophers, of course, do not shy away from the difficulties non-substantial individuals seem to involve; on the contrary, they seem positively enthusiastic about this notion.⁴ They want to maintain not only that Socrates is an individual but that his wisdom also is, that is, the wisdom with respect to which we say of Socrates that he is wise. This wisdom, they maintain, is Socrates' and not Plato's. Similarly, that which makes Socrates healthy is not Plato's health but his own. Thus, it is claimed there are individuals also in the case of properties, namely, properties individuated by their bearers: the wisdom which is precisely Socrates' wisdom is an individual. And just such a view is ascribed also to Aristotle by almost all of his more recent interpreters. The only contemporary writer who has so far opposed this interpretation, Owen, can, thus, indeed speak of a dogma here, especially since the view was already accepted in later antiquity.⁵ The reactions to Owen's criticisms of the received view show just how appropriate his choice of the word 'dogma' was.

Looked at from another aspect, of course, 'heresy' seems like a more appropriate term. Among the theses that Bishop Tempier condemned in his notorious decree of 1277 was that God cannot create any accident or attribute without its subject. Tempier seems here to be attacking a position like St. Thomas Aquinas' according to which properties are individuated by their bearers and, hence, cannot exist independently of them. What the ecclesiastical authorities were concerned with is the apparent incompatibility of this view of the individuation of properties with the doctrine of transsubstantiation. The doctrine of transsubstantiation seems to require that an object, say, the bread, have certain visible properties which, however, are not tied to the object, since they remain wholly

unaffected by the change of the substance of the bread. But if, following transubstantiation, the bread no longer remains, but its accidents do remain, then the identity of these accidents can hardly depend on their subject.

In the years following 1277, there are a large number of attempts to individuate properties independently of their bearers, of which some proved to be quite fruitful, e.g., the suggestion that properties be individuated according to their intensity.⁶ Temperature or warmth is a universal; in any individual instance, however, warmth always appears with a particular intensity. And it is the degree of intensity—measured in Celsius, Fahrenheit, Reaumur, or whatever—which makes any given warmth the individual warmth it is. This suggestion presupposes a notion of intensive magnitude which Aristotle, presumably, did not have; however, the view that properties could be treated as intensive magnitudes was no doubt helpful in the mathematicization of physics. My concern here, of course, is only to show, on the basis of an episode in the history of philosophy, that the view, that if there are to be individual properties these must be individuated by their bearers, is by no means as natural and obvious as our recent Aristotle interpreters would have us believe.

I also do not intend to take up in all detail the reasons why it seems clear to me that a more careful reading of the relevant passages in the *Categories* not only does not require the standard interpretation but, in fact, precludes it. The received view, according to which properties are individuated by their bearers relies on an interpretation of 1^a 24–25. Here, Aristotle supposedly is giving a definition of the relation of 'x is in y as its subject'; and it is supposed that this can be rendered by something like this:

- (C) x is in y as its subject if, and only if,
 (i) x is not a part of y, and
 (ii) x cannot exist independently of y.

According to this definition, a property can belong to an individual thing, say, Socrates, as its subject only if it could not exist independently of this individual thing. Yet, this implies that the properties which a particular thing has are peculiar to it and are not shared by any other thing; for if a property, e.g., a particular color, were shared by several objects, it would be difficult to see why this color should cease to exist as soon as one of the objects having it ceased to exist. Thus, this definition implies that we can attribute only such properties to individual things that are peculiar to them; and so, we end up with individual properties, properties peculiar to only one individual thing. Accordingly, then, individual things would have only individual properties as properties, while general properties, strictly speaking, would only have general things, like genera and species, as their subjects. But this cannot be Aristotle's view.

At 2^b 1–3, Aristotle says that one can only say that there is color in body if there is also color in a particular, individual body. A comparison with the im-

mediately preceding sentence shows that he is speaking here of color in general and body in general, and that it is the universal color that is said to have the universal body as its subject only if there is also some individual body that color has as its subject. Color in general, then, is spoken of in a way as if it could and must have an individual object as its subject. Moreover, at 2^b 3ff., Aristotle says that all entities can be divided into two classes, individual objects or primary substances, on the one hand, and entities that are said of or are in these individual objects as their subjects, on the other. So, individual objects here are the subjects for everything else that there is; “everything else,” however, includes general properties; hence, general properties, too, must have individual objects as their subjects. Finally, at 2^b 37ff., Aristotle explains why the genera and species of objects can also be called objects or substances. Just as the individual objects are the subjects underlying all properties, so too the species and genera underlie all properties as subjects. Since this is what makes substances, species and genera also deserve to be called substances. Again Aristotle speaks as if properties—regardless of whether they are universal or individual—have individual objects as their subjects; in addition, he also speaks here as if properties, both individual and universal, have universals as their subjects, namely, the species and genera of individual objects. After all, it is only this that justifies calling genera and species substances; they, just like the individual objects, underlie everything else. Nor can we charge Aristotle, either in this passage or in the preceding ones, with just expressing himself imprecisely. For his argument depends, in the one case, on the claim that all properties have individual objects as their subjects and, in the other case, on the claim that all properties, even the individual ones, have genera and species as their subjects.

We shall, therefore, have to find another interpretation of 1^a 24–25. These lines, it seems to me, do not provide a definition of the relation “x is in y as its subject”; rather, they provide a definition of the class of entities that are in something as their subject. What is characteristic of the members of this class is that, for each of them, we can specify at least one subject of which it is true that it could not exist without that subject. With one exception (which I shall come to later), this is not the case with entities that are only said of something as their subject and not also in something as their subject. While the species man would not exist, according to Aristotle, if there were no men, it is irrelevant to the existence of the species which men actually exist—as long as some do. There is no particular person, no one subject of the species man, to whom one could point and say that the species could not exist without this person as its subject. The same is true of the genus animal. The genus requires species and individuals as subjects to exist. None of these subjects, though, is so privileged that one could say of it, without it the genus could not exist.

In the lines following the definition, Aristotle tell us how matters stand with things that are in a subject. In 1^a 25–28, he explains how a particular knowledge

of grammar and a particular white are the sorts of things that are in a subject (he does not even find it worth remarking that they are not said of a subject): “. . . and the particular white is in the body as its subject. For every color is in body (hapan gar chrōma en sōmati).” The last sentence is obviously meant to provide the explanation of *how* the body, mentioned in the preceding sentence, is the relevant subject with respect to which the particular white turns out to be something that occurs in a subject. Of course, it is not clear how we are to understand this explanation. At least initially, we might suppose that the explanatory sentence says that, for every color, we can specify some body that has this color; for if there were no body of this color, this color, too, would not exist. Applying this to the case at hand would lead us to suppose that for this particular white, too, some particular body can be specified which has just this color; this body, then, would be the relevant subject with respect to which we can say, of the particular white, that it is in a subject. Of course, the very language of the sentence seems to rule out such an interpretation. Both in this chapter and in the next, Aristotle—by using a special and rather unusual idiom—takes great pains to indicate when he is speaking of individuals: a particular, individual man is referred to by *ho tis anthropos*, a particular, individual white, by *ti leukon*. Thus, if Aristotle had intended, in this passage dealing with the difference between universals and particulars, to say “. . . and the particular white is in a particular body as its subject,” he would have written: *kai to ti leukon en hypokeimenō men esti tō tini sōmati, hapan gar chrōma en tini sōmati*.

Instead, the language Aristotle uses here is exactly like what he employs only a few lines later, at 1^b 1, where he is speaking of knowledge in general and soul in general, and what he employs at 2^b 1–3, where he is speaking of color in general and body in general. This strongly suggests that the body spoken of in 1^a 28 is not some particular, individual body but body in general, i.e., the genus body; it is thus parallel to 1^b 2, where he is referring to soul in general, not to some particular soul. But how are we now to understand the explanatory sentence? It must be saying that every color is in the genus body as its subject. Whatever, in any particular case, it may be that is colored, and whatever color it may be that it has, it must always be a body that has a color. Thus, if there were no genus body, there would also be no colors. Yet, the genus body is also the subject of every color, and this in accord with the rule previously mentioned: everything that is in an individual object as its subject also is in the genera and species as its subjects. How, though, does the fact that the genus body is the subject of every color explain the fact that the genus body is the relevant subject with respect to which one can say, of the particular white, that it is *in* a subject, that it is the kind of thing that occurs in a subject? The explanation is simple: things that are in a subject were defined (in 1^a 24–25) as those for which there is a subject without which they could not exist. For color in general, for any particular color and, hence, for a particular white, the relevant subject is body,

that is, body in general or the genus body. If we assume—something we will need to assume in Aristotle for various reasons anyway—that, for every property, there is a species or genus outside which the property cannot occur because of how its range of possible objects has been defined, we shall be able to specify some universal without which the property cannot occur. Only living things are healthy or ill, only certain kinds of living things are male or female, only human beings are foolish.

It is important to note that 1^a 24–25 does not say that if something is in something else as its subject, it cannot exist independently of it. While it is natural and presumably also correct to assume that *en hō estin* in 1^a 25 refers back to *en tini* in 1^a 24, the reference of *en tini* is not fixed by the preceding words. As we have seen, everything that occurs in a subject must already have a plurality of subjects, at least some individual object and its species and genera. What is being claimed in 1^a 24–25 is not that for each of these subjects the property could not exist without it. What is being claimed, rather, is that if something is the kind of thing that occurs in a subject, then there is at least something, at least one subject, without which it cannot exist.

But is it even true that something which occurs in a subject differs from something which is said of a subject in this regard: for the former, we can specify at least one subject without which it cannot exist? As suggested earlier, with one exception, this is true; it is the case with genera and species; *differentiae*, however, at least *differentiae* on the schema of the *Categories*, form the exception. For, from the third chapter, we can see that Aristotle maintains that a *differentia* can occur only in a single genus and not in two independent genera. If ‘rational’ were the *differentia specifica* that constitutes the species man, ‘rational’ could not also, at least not in the sense relevant to the species man, appear in another genus; but this implies that we can specify a subject for the *differentia* without which it could not exist, viz., the species it constitutes. For the *differentia* is said of this species and, hence, has it as its subject.

Now it seems as if Aristotle wishes to rule out precisely this case by requiring, in 1^a 24–25, not only that there must be a subject, without which the thing in question could not exist, but also that this thing must not be a part of its subject. The *differentia specifica*, however, is a part of the species, since it constitutes it. This interpretation presupposes that Aristotle is thinking of ‘conceptual’ parts, when he is speaking of parts in 1^a 24–25. As we can see from Bonitz’s *Index* (455^b 32ff.), Aristotle uses ‘part’ in this sense quite frequently. And it seems as if we must ascribe this use of ‘part’ to Aristotle here also, in 1^a 24–25. For there is a passage in the *Categories* where he explicitly refers back to 1^a 24–25; 3^a 29–32 (cf. *elegeto*, 3^a 32). There he is saying that the claim that parts of substances are substances is indeed compatible with the claim that what occurs in a subject is not a substance; for parts of substances are not *in* substances, in the sense of “being in a subject,” just because they are their parts. If we were

to suppose that Aristotle is thinking of physical parts of substances in 3^a 29–32, these lines would make little sense in the context either of what comes before or of what follows. For both the preceding as well as the following lines deal with genera, species, and differentiae. Thus, the continuity of the passage is preserved if we assume that, in 3^a 29–32, Aristotle is thinking of conceptual parts of substances. But if that is the case, then conceptual parts are also what he was thinking of in 1^a 24–25, as the line (3^a 32) referring back to the passage shows. At any rate, this part of 1^a 24–25 was so construed already in antiquity: cf. Plotinus, *Enn* VI 3, 5.8–9 and 25–27, and Simplicius, *In Cat.* 97, 14ff.

This interpretation of 1^a 24–25 has a further advantage. We no longer need to assume that the definition is circular because of the second occurrence of ‘in’ in the definiens. The ‘in’ in the definiens does not do any work, as we can see from the fact that we can also formulate our definition thus:

- (D) x is in something as its subject, if there is a subject y such that
- (i) x is not a part of y, and
 - (ii) x cannot exist independently of y

If we adopt this interpretation of 1^a 24–25, there is no longer any need, on the basis of the text, to assume that individual properties are peculiar to the individual whose properties they are. Furthermore, it is clear that individual properties also are not peculiar to the individuals whose properties they are; they are shared, at least, by the genera and species of the individuals. And nothing prevents individual properties from having a multitude of individual subjects. What is ruled out is that they should have a multitude of subjects which they are said of.

Moreover, the notion that individual properties are peculiar to their bearers seems itself an unsatisfactory one. It may be that people are struck by the thought that properties can occur in infinitely many variations so that, strictly speaking, it is never, say, the same illness that two different people have. And it may be that certain forms of empiricism rely on the idea that no schema of concept formation, however refined, can do justice to this infinite variability, rather, what is needed is experience and familiarity with individual cases. However, even if one wants to regard matters in this way, the result, at best, is that it is highly unlikely that the same property occur in two objects; but the standard interpretation requires not that it merely be highly unlikely but that it is impossible that individual properties ever occur in more than one object. Yet, the only way to ensure this is by assuming that properties are individuated by their bearers, that Socrates’ health is the particular health it is, because it is Socrates’ health and not anyone else’s.

Such a view strikes me as wholly unsatisfactory. Its plausibility derives, it seems, merely from a special use of property-terms. Without question, it is my

negligence, not someone else's, which caused the accident; no amount of philosophical argument will convince the police that negligence is something general and has nothing to do with me in particular. It is Plato's illness that causes his family concern, however much empathy they may feel toward others who have the same illness. The plausibility that the view in question derives from examples like these, however, evaporates as soon as one sees that the property-terms in these examples refer not to properties but to nominalizations of sentences in which the subject is the bearer of the property; and this creates the impression that the property-term, in these cases, is referring to some property uniquely possessed by the individual. It is the fact that I was negligent that explains why the accident occurred; it is the fact that Plato is ill in this way that causes his family concern. The assumption, then, that there are individual properties that are individuated by their bearers, is by no means as obvious or natural as its proponents would have us believe. Certainly it is not just a matter of common sense to suppose that there are such individual properties and to assume that they are what Aristotle has in mind when *he* speaks of individual properties. On the contrary, common sense, history, and the text itself seem to tell against this interpretation.

Summarizing this part of our investigation, we can say that, in the *Categories*, Aristotle wishes to maintain two distinctions, (i) that between objects and properties, which had been neglected by his predecessors and which he wishes to emphasize, and (ii) the Platonic distinction between general and particular. While it might have seemed natural to ground the notion of an individual in the notion of a thing or object, Aristotle grounds it in the notion of a particular. Thus, he ends up with non-substantial individuals and, indeed, his peculiarly weak notion of an individual; this strikes us as all the more strange, since we are inclined to ground our notion of an individual in that of an object. Individuals, in the *Categories*, are the parts into which a genus ultimately can be divided (where parts are to be construed as subjective parts.) In this sense of 'part', the individuals themselves have no parts and are indivisible and thus are called 'individuals'.

II. Individual Substances in the *Metaphysics*

Aristotle seems to have given up using 'individual' in the sense discussed. We find the term employed systematically only in the *Categories*, the *Topics*, and in *Metaphysics*, B and I; it does not appear at all in the central books of the *Metaphysics*. We can, though, easily explain this. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle denies that there are genera or species, that is, he denies that universals really exist (cf. Z13). Yet, if there are no genera and species, individuals no longer can be taken to be the ultimate, indivisible parts of genera.

Though Aristotle denies the existence of universals, he does not assume that only individual objects really exist. He continues to maintain that properties exist. This has a strange consequence for the notion of an individual object which Aristotle arrives at in the *Metaphysics*. He continues to hold (cf., especially Z3) as he had in the *Categories*, that objects can be called substances because they underlie everything else that exists in such a way that everything else owes its existence to them. Illness, for example, exists only insofar as there are objects that are ill. However, while Aristotle had proceeded in the *Categories* as if the idea, that substances underlie everything else, were quite unproblematic, in the *Metaphysics*, he begins to draw out some implications of this notion for what is actually to count as an object or substance. As we can see from *Met. Z3*, he considers whether the substance that underlies everything else is the matter or the form; in the *Categories*, he had still spoken as if substances were the concrete particulars of ordinary experience: tables, horses, trees, and human beings. We must ask, why is it that Aristotle is no longer satisfied with the answer of the *Categories*?

He now sees that it cannot be the ordinary objects of experience that underlie the properties, if there are to be properties in addition to the objects; for the ordinary objects of experience are the objects together with their properties—an ordinary object has a certain size, weight, temperature, color, and other attributes of this kind. So, if we ask what is it that underlies all these properties and makes them the properties of a *single* object, we cannot answer: just the object. For the object, as ordinarily understood, already is the object together with all its qualities; what we, however, are looking for is that which underlies these qualities. Thus we can see why Aristotle now considers answers like “the form” or “the matter” when considering the question, what actually is the underlying substance.

An adequate answer to this question will need to satisfy at least these conditions: the substance must be the sort of thing that will allow us to understand why the object, whose substance it is, has the properties it has. Since an object can change its properties but still remain the same object, the substance should be the sort of thing that will enable us to see if the object, whose substance it is, is the same object despite any changes it may have undergone. Let us call the history of the changes an object has undergone, the history of the object; we shall want the substance of an object to be such that with reference to it we can explain how, despite all the changes, it is the history of *one* object. We also think an object might have had a history quite different from the one it actually had yet have been the same object; this, too, is to be explained in terms of substance. Furthermore, the substance must be an individual, since we are looking for the real individuals in the category of substance which are to explain the individuality of ordinary individual objects. Finally, there must be some sort of asymmetry between substances and properties, on the basis of which we can say of proper-

ties and everything else that exists that they depend on substances for their existence, but that substances do not, in any way, depend on properties for their existence. These are the requirements Aristotle lays down in the *Metaphysics*, when he says a substance must be a subject (hypokeimenon), “a this” (tode ti), and an independently existing entity (chōriston).

According to Aristotle, the *form* satisfies these requirements and thus is the substance. This, at least, is strongly suggested by those passages in *Met. Z* when Aristotle speaks of the form as substance and contrasts it with the derivative, composite substance (1037^a 29–30; 1037^a 25–26). At 1040^b 23–24, he seems to distinguish between two uses of ‘substance’, one picking out the form, the other the object having this form. At 1032^b 1–2, Aristotle says that, by form, he means primary substance, that is, what is substance first of all. In two passages (1037^a 28; 1037^{ab} 1), at least, he speaks as if the form were the primary substance. At 1037^a 5, he says that in the case of man, the soul, i.e., the form of man, is the primary substance. At 1037^b 3ff., he defines primary substance in such a way that forms satisfy the definition, but not composites of form and matter, much less ordinary objects. And at the very end of Book Z, Aristotle concludes that it is the *nature* of an object, that is, the form of a natural object, which is the substance. Aristotle, thus, does indeed seem to want to answer the question of *Met. Z.1*, 1028^{b4} – what is substance? – by saying it is primarily the form.

How the form is going to satisfy all the conditions for substancehood laid down earlier is far from clear, though it is clear that Aristotle thinks it does satisfy these conditions. For example, it is clear that he thinks that the form is “a this” (*Met.* 1017^b 25; 1042^a 29; 1049^a 28–29; *De gen. et corr.* 318^b 32). Part of what Aristotle means when he says something is “a this” is just that it is an individual. That Aristotle really does think that the form of an object is an individual and not something general which all objects of the same kind share, we can see not only from the fact that he says the form is “a this” but also from the fact that he thinks the form’s existence is temporally limited (cf. *Met.* 1039^b 24–26, 1070^a 22ff.). In at least one passage, Aristotle explicitly says that different things of the same kind each have their own form (*Met.* 1071^a 27–29; cf. 1071^a 21ff.; 1071^a 36–b1). What we are interested in, for present purposes, however, is only to understand how Aristotle could think that an individual substance really is a form. In connection with this, it will be of some use to discuss, at least briefly, Aristotle’s notion of a form.

Aristotle thinks objects have a function. We can readily understand what he means in the case of artifacts: they are constructed the way they are constructed to fulfill a certain task or to exhibit a certain kind of behavior. Fulfilling this task or exhibiting this behavior is their function; and if they do exhibit this behavior, we say they are functioning. Aristotle, like Plato before him, extends the notion

of function to natural objects, especially to living things. If a living thing is functioning, it will behave in a certain, characteristic way; to behave in this way is its function.

In addition, Aristotle thinks that the capacity of an object to behave in this characteristic way depends on its organization, structure, and disposition, indeed, he thinks that it is just this disposition or organization that enables the object to behave the way it does. Now, for Aristotle, the form is this disposition or organization, while the matter is what is thus disposed or organized.

How could the form, so construed, satisfy the requirements laid down for being a substance? An important requirement was that the substance was to explain why, despite all the changes an object had undergone, it still is the same object. How the form could satisfy this requirement, we can see from the ancient example, expanded by Hobbes, of Theseus' ships, *Theoris*, which for centuries has been sent to Delos on an annual pilgrimage and whose return Socrates, in the *Phaedo*, must await before he may drink the poison.

Over the years, the ship is repaired, plank by plank, always, however, according to the original plan. Now, let us suppose there is a shipwright who keeps the old planks. After all the old planks have been replaced in *Theoris*, he puts them together again according to the original plan and thus has a second ship. It seems obvious to me that this ship, even though it is constructed from all the old planks and according to the original plan, is not the old ship, *Theoris*, but a new ship; the ship constructed from the new planks is, in fact, the old ship. No insurance company, presented with a policy written for *Theoris*, would pay for damages suffered if the ship constructed from the old planks had been shipwrecked. Moreover, this would be so even if the planks had been changed all at once, not over many years; it would be even so if the ship constructed from the new planks were constructed according to a modified plan so that, perhaps, only the ship constructed from the old planks was constructed according to the original plan.

What makes for the identity of the repaired ship with the original ship is obviously a certain continuity. This is not the continuity of matter, or of properties, but the continuity of the organization of changing matter, an organization which enables the object to function as a ship, to exhibit the behavior of a ship. An object, then, exists as the object it is only as long as its capacity for functioning, i.e., for behaving in the way characteristic of it, has not been irretrievably lost.

This notion of the continuity of organization is even clearer if we consider living things rather than artifacts. It is presumably no accident that, in the *Metaphysics* Aristotle talks as if living things really are substances rather than artifacts. In the case of a living thing, its organization is such as to enable it to have a good chance of continuing to function for some time and so to stay in existence; such an organization will allow the living thing to change, for exam-

ple, its place, to take in food or to evade an enemy, or adjust its temperature to the temperature of the environment.

The continuity of the organization, then, is part of the very notion of the organization characteristic of living things. In the case of living things, it is also clearer that this continuity of organization or capacity for functioning constitutes the identity of the thing over time. It is when a living thing has lost this capacity that we say it is no longer alive or no longer exists. All other changes in the thing—changes of matter or changes of properties—bear on the identity of the thing only to the extent that they influence its capacity for functioning. Since this capacity, in the case of living things, is the capacity for leading a certain kind of life, Aristotle calls this capacity, organization, or form, the “soul.”

The substance is not only supposed to account for the identity of an individual object; it itself is supposed to be an individual. Against the view that the form or the organization of an object is an individual, it will be objected that, in the case of the two ships, for example, it would be much more natural to say that we have two individuals, say, *Theoris* and *Theoris II*, which have the *same* organization since they are built according to the same plan; this organization, then, is something general, since it can be realized in many objects. And there is no need to assume that in addition to this organization there also is an individual organization, peculiar to each ship. Likewise, then, with living things: we have many individuals, organized in the same way, but there is no reason to posit more than one, general form of organization common to them all. There might be any number of objects organized in the same way at the same time; and so, just as when several objects have, say, the same temperature, we feel no inclination to say that, in addition to this temperature, there are individual temperatures which each of them has (and these are completely alike), so too we should not feel inclined to suppose that, if several objects are of the same kind, in addition to one general form of being organized as this kind of thing, there are individual ways of being organized which each of them has. Looking at matters this way will lead one to the view that substantial forms, i.e., the forms of objects, are universals; that means that all living creatures of a certain kind, say, men, have one and the same soul.

Adopting this line presupposes, however, that the way in which an object has a form is relevantly similar to the way in which it has a temperature. One would need to assume that there is *one* object over some period of time that has a particular organization over this period of time just as it has a particular temperature over this period. This assumption, however, is false, if we want to hold—and this is what the example of *Theoris* suggested to us—that this *one* object, organized in a particular way over a period of time, in a certain sense, does not really exist, because, what is organized in this way, the matter, is continually changing or, at least, could be changing. We only have an individual object in

virtue of the continuity of a particular organization; it is only the identity of this organization that makes the object the individual it is. Thus, if several objects have the same temperature or size, we are able to say that it is *one* size or temperature they have, because these objects are the objects they are quite independently of whether they have this particular size or temperature. But we cannot say there is only *one* form or organization which several objects of the same kind have, since these objects only are the objects they are because each has its own, individual organization.

If forms are individuals, the question arises, in what sense are they individuals. A condition that forms will need to satisfy, if they are to be individuals, is that forms of different objects of the same kind must be distinguishable and identifiable. That seems to involve certain problems. We certainly cannot individuate forms on the basis of the objects whose forms they are; for the objects themselves are to be individuated by the forms. Putting the matter differently, Socrates' soul is not Socrates' soul because it is the soul of Socrates, rather, Socrates is Socrates because of the soul he has. What, then, distinguishes Socrates' soul from Plato's soul?

This difficulty arises for the following reason. On the one hand, forms are supposed to be things like ways of being organized, dispositions, or capacities. Yet, it seems as if dispositions or capacities quite generally are individuated in such a way that any particular disposition or capacity is the sort of thing that can be had by several things. However detailed a specification of a capacity we come up with, it always seems to be such that more than one thing could have this capacity. On the other hand, the form is supposed to be an object, a substance, and, as such, not shared by several objects. Thus, in individuating a form, we shall need to go beyond a specification of a disposition or capacity, if we are to have an individual substance.

I am not at all certain that this difficulty results merely from our line of interpretation. It seems, rather, to arise whenever we consider the question, just what is it that makes an object precisely the object it is rather than another one of the same kind. My copy of a book, for example, is this copy and not the one borrowed from the library, because it is the one I purchased so many years ago in such and such a store, and because there is a continuous history linking the book purchased then with the one I now have. This history could be traced back to before the time of my purchase, say if all copies were numbered at the printing press, and mine were copy 100. Still, it is clear that this copy would have been the very same copy even if I had not purchased it then but the library had, and I was now borrowing it. If we do not want to posit anything which this copy has that makes it the copy it is and not another one, we shall need in some sense to go beyond the object to individuate it. One needs to point to some episode

of its history or even pre-history, which, however, is not essential to its identity, since it still could have been the same copy even if its history had been quite different.

These considerations suggest that it is perhaps not problematic to go beyond the form in individuating it. Even if all the forms of a given kind were completely alike, we could distinguish between them on the basis of their histories. Now, of course, we are faced with a whole new set of difficulties. We need to ask in what sense can we speak of the history of a form. It is of no use that the history of the form is in a certain respect just the history of the object having this form, since we want to explain the identity of the object in terms of that of the form and not vice-versa. A detailed discussion of this difficulty would require, among other things, consideration of Aristotle's views in the *De Anima*. We would then see that the forms at least of ensouled things are not subject to change, at any rate, not in the sense in which Aristotle's natural philosophy approaches changeable objects, though they are principles of change and can have a very rich history, simply because the characteristic capacities of a living thing—which are what constitutes the soul, i.e., the form—can at various times be exercised or not exercised. If one sees something, it is not strictly speaking the soul which is undergoing some change but the living organism; nevertheless, the soul is a different soul, if one sees or has seen something.

For our present purposes, though, it should be sufficient to suppose that a form can have a history to the extent that it can be realized in different matter at different times. This seems clear enough in the case of living things; if it seems problematic in the case of artifacts or works of art, we can say that even in these cases the constitution of the matter is subject to at least minimal changes, induced, say, by wear.

We would thus be able to distinguish between various forms of the same kind on the basis of their histories, and between various forms of the same kind at a given moment, on the basis of the present stages of their histories—for example, we can say this form is realized in this matter, that one in that matter. This is possible only because, though Aristotelian matter can be identified only by means of the form of an object and hence be identified only with respect to a form, this form need not be the form of the matter at the time of its identification; for example, the gold of this statue can be identified as the gold of this statue but also as the gold of that crown which was melted down. Thus, we can distinguish forms on the basis of matter without getting involved in the circle that this matter, in turn, can be distinguished only on the basis of the objects and hence the forms.

This interpretation on which individual substances are primarily substantial forms of objects leads to other difficulties as well. Yet not all of these difficulties

tell against our interpretation. Aristotle himself seems to grapple with some of them. A problem, for example, is that Aristotle frequently talks as if knowledge, strictly speaking, were knowledge of the general or universal and as if knowing something were knowing its form or essence. But this seems to commit him to the view that the form of an object is something general, that the only thing that can be known, in the case of an object, is its form, because only it is universal, while the matter is what is peculiar to the object. However, *Met.* B 6, 1003^a 13–14 and the relevant parallel passages show that Aristotle sees a problem here precisely because, on the one hand, he is inclined to think that the form, as the principle of substance, is individual, while, on the other, he does not want to say that there is no knowledge of that which strictly speaking is real, i.e., the form. This seems to explain why Aristotle, when he comes to *Met.* M 10, where he tries to solve this aporia, argues that knowledge is knowledge of the particular and only potentially also knowledge of the general.

This interpretation does not only lead to difficulties; it also helps shed some light on some old problems, e.g., the problem how Aristotle can claim (*Met.* E 1, 1026^a 28–32) that theology also includes ontology, that *metaphysica specialis* and *metaphysica generalis* are the same discipline. Obviously, part of the explanation of this identification will involve explaining that a theory of substance will also be a theory of all being as such—however problematic that may be in all its details. But, then, the second part of the explanation will involve explaining why the theory of a certain kind of substances, namely, those studied by theology, will also be a theory of substance in general and thus also of being in general. This second part of the explanation—for which there is little direct textual support—could proceed from the fact that the predicate ‘substance’ does not have a single use either, just like the predicate ‘being.’ Though the use of ‘substance’ may seem relatively simple—especially compared to ‘being’—closer analysis shows that here, too, there are several uses. That Aristotle thinks there are several uses of ‘substance’ seems evident from *Met.* Z. He arrives at a conception of substance on which primarily natural objects are substances (1041^b 28–30), while artifacts count as substances as best in some extended sense of substance. In addition, *Met.* Z 3 and *Met.* A and H quite generally seem to allow for three different uses of substance even in the case of natural substances, uses that are systematically related: for the matter, the form, and the composite can be called “substance.” However, of these uses, the one for forms is primary and the others are explained in terms of it.

In *Met.* Z there are various indications that we are dealing here with material substances, because these are known to us, but that our actual interest is in immaterial substances insofar as we want to know what substance is (cf. *Met.* 1029^b 3–10, transposing with Jaeger; 1037^a 10ff.; 1041^a 7–9). If we consider that immaterial substances are pure forms and that they do not, for example, give rise to the problems about individuation discussed above, it seems reason-

ble to suppose that Aristotle could have thought that the idea of substance applies primarily to pure substantial forms, like God, then to substantial forms of natural objects, then to these objects and to their matter, insofar as it is potentially these objects, and only last to artifacts. Pursuing this line of thought will be the topic of another chapter.