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# Metaphysics, Dialectic and the *Categories*

*J'examine le statut et la fonction des Catégories dans la philosophie d'Aristote. Le traité n'appartient ni à la philosophie première, ni même à la philosophie tout court, mais à la dialectique. Il ne s'agit pas d'une « discussion dialectique » de l'être, mais plutôt de dialectique en tant que tel : ce traité forme un ensemble avec les Topiques, qui a pour but d'aider le questionneur dans un débat dialectique à décider si le terme donné peut tomber sous la définition proposée ou sous le genre proposé. Bien qu'il y ait un emploi philosophique des Catégories, tout comme de la dialectique en général, l'opposition prétendue entre la théorie de la substance des Catégories et celle de la Métaphysique est fondée sur une méconnaissance des buts différents des deux traités.*

*I examine the status and function of the Categories in Aristotle's philosophy. The work does not belong to « first philosophy, » or indeed to philosophy at all, but to dialectic; not as a « dialectical discussion » of being, but in the strict sense that it is intended, together with the Topics, to help the dialectical disputant to decide whether a given term can fall under a proposed definition or a proposed genus. Although the Categories, like dialectic in general, has uses in philosophical argument, the supposed opposition between the accounts of substance in the Categories and in the Metaphysics depends on a misunderstanding of the different aims of the two works.*

## I

It is notoriously difficult to explain the place of the *Categories* in Aristotle's philosophy<sup>1</sup>. It is not obvious either what subject the book is

1. I will assume that the *Categories* is by Aristotle, and that it is a single treatise, although perhaps not fully preserved in its intended form. But the title « *Categories* » has no autho-

supposed to be treating or what discipline it is supposed to belong to; but it is tempting to say that it is about the substances and other kinds of beings discussed in Chapters 4-9, and, if so, it is tempting to say that the book is a contribution to « first philosophy », that it is at least a sketch (if not a fully developed treatment) of an answer to the same problems Aristotle will later treat in the central books of the *Metaphysics*. It is most often thought that Aristotle gives directly contrary theories of substance in his early and later periods, maintaining in the *Categories* that the primary substances are concrete individuals like Socrates, and in *Metaphysics Z* that the primary substances are forms like the soul of Socrates. I will argue that this comparison and contrast between the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics* rest on a basic misunderstanding of Aristotle's aims in the *Categories* (and also of his aims in the *Metaphysics*). My aim is not to deny that there are contradictions between the *Categories* and *Metaphysics Z*, but to bring out the very different kinds of inquiry to which these two works belong, and the different purposes Aristotle intends them to serve; while these texts may still contradict each other, they do so incidentally, on their way toward answering entirely different questions. I will start by noting some reasons why the *Categories* cannot belong to first philosophy, and then I will use these reasons as a point of departure for determining what discipline the *Categories* does belong to, and what function it serves in Aristotle's philosophy. I will return in the last section to address the comparison between the *Categories* and *Metaphysics Z*, and to draw some morals for how to read the *Metaphysics*.

The *Categories* cannot belong to first philosophy for the same reason that it cannot belong to philosophy at all: it does not consider causes. First philosophy is the study of « the first causes and principles » (*Metaphysics A* 981b28-9, cp. Γ 1003a26-7). More generally, every branch of theoretical philosophy considers some range of beings, and seeks the causes of these beings: first philosophy seeks the causes of beings universally *qua* beings, while other disciplines seek the cause of some particular genus (*Metaphysics E* 1025b3-10, cp. Γ 1003a21-32). All of these theoretical philosophies are *epistêmai*, sciences, and we have *epistêmê* of a thing only when we know its cause (*Posterior Analytics* 71b9-12). Even practical and productive philosophy seek to know the causes of the things

rity (it is only one among many titles current in antiquity), and corresponds badly to the content of the treatise; I will retain it here merely for convenience. Although I believe, like most scholars, that the *Categories* is an early work, I will not rest anything heavy on this assumption.

they study, these causes being our own actions<sup>2</sup>. But the *Categories* says nothing at all about causes, either directly or by implication. The word « cause » itself occurs only in the chapters on priority and simultaneity (cc. 12-13), and only in a rather incidental way; the only explicit example of causality in the *Categories* is that a man is « somehow » the cause of the truth of the sentence « a man exists » (14b18-22)<sup>3</sup>. The *Categories* neither names nor gives instances of any of the standard four Aristotelian kinds of causes. « *Eidos* » means only « species », and there is no hint either of Platonic Forms as causes or of Aristotelianhylomorphism (« *hylê* » does not occur); there is no mention either of natural teleology or of any other teleology. Nor does Aristotle consider the fourth kind of cause, the source of motion: although he gives an explicit classification of motions in c. 14, and uses both *kinêsis* and more particular motion-words elsewhere in the treatise, he consistently analyzes *kinêsis* as an attribute of a *kinoumenon*, and makes no mention anywhere of a *kinoun*. Since the *Categories* does not study the causes of any range of beings, it is not philosophy: even if it surveys the different kinds of beings (and this is not its only, perhaps not its primary, concern), it is not first philosophy, because it does not consider the *causes* of beings *qua* beings<sup>4</sup>.

But if the *Categories* is neither first philosophy, nor any other kind of philosophy, what other discipline might it belong to? I propose to

2. In this sense see *Eudemian Ethics* I 1216b16-25 (about both practical and productive sciences).

3. Aristotle remarks that A can be prior to B, even though neither A nor B can exist without the other, if A is the *cause* of B's existing (*Categories* 14b10ff). This mention of causality is only incidental to Aristotle's discussions of priority, coming as an afterthought after he has mentioned four main kinds of priority; but even if he had said (as he does not) that causality as such is one sense of priority, he still would not be offering a contribution to the scientific inquiry into the causes of a given phenomenon: he would not be seeking the causes *of priority*, and priority is the subject under investigation.

4. I am unimpressed with another reason that has been given why the *Categories* cannot be first philosophy: because, it is said, this treatise dates from a period when Aristotle did not believe in a science of being, because he had not discovered that being is predicated *pros hen*. Even if Aristotle had such a period, the result would be merely that first philosophy would be a science of the causes of substances, and not also of the causes of accidents: *pros hen* predication is invoked (as in *Metaphysics* Γ2) only to allow accidents to be treated alongside substances; it comes into play only once we assume that we already have a universal science of substance. (There is a third argument that the *Categories* cannot be about first philosophy: first philosophy is only about things separate from matter, and the *Categories* says nothing about such things. I think this argument is sound, but the major premise is too controversial and I will not rely on it here. This is consistent with the assertion that first philosophy is about causes of being *qua* being: it is not about *all* causes of being *qua* being, but only about those causes which are separate from matter. I will return to some of these issues briefly below.)

follow the ancient title *The before-the-Topics*, and to say that the *Categories*, like the *Topics* and the *Sophistical Refutations*, is a manual of the art of dialectic. *The before-the-Topics* may well have been the most widespread title for the treatise in antiquity, before it was suppressed by systematizing late ancient commentators; and there is some hope that this title will correspond to the actual contents of the treatise, whereas *Categories* or *On the genera of being* could cover only Chapters 4-9<sup>5</sup>. But before evaluating this description of the *Categories*, we must understand what it implies; we must not confuse it with a much less serious sense in which the *Categories* might be called « dialectical ». We describe some extended passages of Aristotle's scientific treatises (notably *De Anima* I, discussed below) as being dialectical discussions of the subjects they treat (here, of the soul), giving dialectical arguments for and against various theses; these passages are not, of course, giving instruction in the art of dialectic, but rather *using* Aristotle's dialectical skill to teach (or to

5. I do not mean to hang too much on the title, unlikely to be Aristotle's own in any case. But the vulgate title « Categories » is a mistake, and supports a false interpretation of the aim of the book. The different titles are discussed by PORPHYRY, *In Categories*, p. 56-57, SIMPLICIUS, *In Categories*, p. 15-16, with parallels in ELIAS, *In Categories*, p. 132-133 and OLYMPIODORUS, *In Categories*, p. 22; the title *Pro tōn Topōn* is also mentioned by SIMPLICIUS, p. 379, with parallels at ELIAS, p. 241 and AMMONIUS, *In Categories*, p. 14-15 (Porphyry, and Simplicius in the earlier passage, report this title as *Pro tōn Topikōn*). The evidence is reviewed by Michael FREDE, « The Title, Unity and Authenticity of the Aristotelian *Categories* », in his *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, Minneapolis, 1987, p. 17-21, who concludes, very plausibly, that *Pro tōn Topōn* or something like it was the usual Hellenistic title (on Frede's p. 19, « Andronicus » in line 6 is a mistake for « Ammonius »). [Paul MORAUX' ingenious attempt to show that the title *Ta pro tōn topōn* is the result of a post-Hellenistic misunderstanding (*Les listes anciennes des ouvrages d'Aristote*, LOUVAIN, 1951, p. 58-65) does not persuade me. Moraux does not have adequate ground to dismiss Simplicius' testimony that Andronicus argued against earlier writers who used this title, and the texts which say that Herminius or Adrastus favored this title do not say that they were the *first* to do so.] We could make the titles « [Ten] Categories » or « On the Genera of Being » apply only by insisting that at least cc. 10-15 are an addition by a later editor: but we have no right to discard 30 % of the treatise to save a dubious title, a reckless procedure which (according to SIMPLICIUS, p. 379) goes back to Andronicus. The neo-Platonic commentators all reject the title *The before-the-Topics*: they insist that the treatise is an introduction not just to dialectic, but to all of philosophy, and they want the *Categories* to be read not before the *Topics* but before the *De Interpretatione* and the other logical treatises in the now standard order (the *Categories* deals with terms, the *De Interpretatione* with propositions composed of two terms, subsequent treatises with arguments composed of propositions; this marginalizes *Categories* cc. 10-15). Frede rightly rejects the view of the *Categories* as a logic of terms leading into the *De Interpretatione*, and notices many connections between the *Categories* and the *Topics*; but while he grants that it was « not completely misguided to regard our treatise as an introduction to the *Topics* », he also finds it « obvious » that « this does not provide a truly convincing solution to the problem of what actually is the subject matter of this treatise and whether it is a unified work » (p. 20). This is *not* obvious, and I will argue that the *Categories* is in fact to be interpreted as an introduction to the *Topics*.

make discoveries in) some other science. Likewise, it might be thought that the *Categories* is a dialectical discussion of some subject (perhaps of being), using the art of dialectic to construct arguments about dialectical problems (perhaps the same problems that will be discussed more rigorously in the *Metaphysics*). I am saying, by contrast, that the *Categories teaches* the art of dialectic by giving principles for constructing dialectical arguments, no that it *uses* the art of dialectic for anything else; indeed I think it is false to say that the *Categories* is a dialectical discussion, of being or of anything else. A dialectical discussion (like *De Anima* I) should consist of arguments, questions, dilemmas, and so on, all directed toward a single problem; the *Categories*, by contrast, has very little argument of any kind, and simply lays down rules on a wide variety of subjects, supported by examples rather than by serious argument. This approach makes sense if the *Categories* is, like the *Topics* or the *Sophistical Refutations*, an *encheiridion* for the dialectician to use in constructing arguments: the ultimate justification of the rules is simply their success<sup>6</sup>.

Dialectic, as Aristotle describes it in the *Topics*, is that art which enables us (wherever possible) to refute the proponent of some thesis out of his own answers to yes-no questioning, and to avoid being refuted ourselves. The art of dialectic is not restricted to any particular subject-matter; the dialectician can formulate arguments about anything. If dialectical arguments were scientific, then dialectic would be a science of everything, and there would be no room for any other science<sup>7</sup>. But dialectic fails to be science, precisely in failing to grasp the *causes* of the things it considers. Dialectical arguments address dialectical problems:

6. The *Categories* shares with the *Topics* not only its authoritarianism in laying down its rules, but also a cheerful willingness to admit that its rules have counterexamples. Both of these features are explained if the *Categories* has no scientific pretensions, and is intended simply as a tool for the dialectician; I will try to show how it is supposed to work. At the same time, the *Categories* is not a self-contained treatise on dialectic, in the way that the *Topics* and the *Sophistical Refutations* are: it does not specifically refer to the conditions of debate, and its rules are not formulated as imperatives to the dialectician, although (as we will see) they are easily converted into such imperatives. In my view, the *Categories* is not an autonomous *pragmateia* (it lacks an introduction delimiting some subject of investigation), but is simply a collection of background knowledge that the dialectician armed with the *Topics* must presuppose; in this respect it resembles the mini-« treatise » on the predicables, *Topics* I,5-8.

7. ARISTOTLE grants the inference « if there is a science of everything, then there is no other science » at *De Partibus Animalium* I 641a32-b4. (This doesn't imply that first philosophy is the only science, because first philosophy is concerned only with immaterial things; it studies the causes of all beings, but it does not study *all* of their causes. If first philosophy were simply ontology, it would be impossible to avoid the conclusion that are no other sciences.)

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dialectical problems are yes-no questions, either of the form « is X Y or not? », or of the form « is Y the definition [or genus, or *idion*] of X or not? ». The dialectician does not address questions of the form « why is X Y? »<sup>8</sup>. The ultimate result of a dialectical investigation of everything would be (at best) to be able to classify things correctly under their genera, and to have right opinions about what attributes apply to things in different places in the hierarchy, without knowing the causes *why* these attributes apply. By contrast, when science investigates the *hoti*-question « is X Y? », it is seeking a *demonstration* that X is Y (or non-Y): this demonstration will state the cause, and so it will also answer the *dioti* question « why is X Y (or non-Y)? » A dialectical argument may be a formally valid argument from necessarily true premisses (one such argument, at *Topics* 120b3-6, will be discussed below), but it still does not prove an effect through its cause, and for this reason it does not produce *epistêmê*.

## II

But if dialectical arguments do not produce *epistêmê*, what is their philosophical use; and what is the use of the *Categories*, either for dia-

8. So *Topics* I,4; the sample-problems Aristotle raises in the *Topics* confirm that dialectical problems ask only *whether* and not *why* Y belongs to X. Dialectic is by (dialectical) definition the art which enables us to refute the proponent of a thesis out of his own answers to yes-no questioning, and to avoid being refuted ourselves — whatever else this art may turn out to know or to do. (The analysis of dialectic in terms of *endoxa*, given in the first sentence of the *Topics* (100a18-21), should not be overstressed: *endoxa* are simply what people will assent to when faced with a yes-no question, if they have no reason to believe that one answer or the other will favor their side of an argument. Since the premisses available to the dialectician are just whatever his opponent assents to, naturally he needs to know how to construct an argument from *endoxa*. I owe this point, perhaps obvious but widely overlooked, to Robin Smith.) Aristotle agrees with the Plato of the *Sophist* that dialectic examines whether certain elements can combine with each other or not, and that it arranges things under their proper general and species, by the method of division. But Aristotle denies that this art gives scientific knowledge, either of the Forms (since there are no Forms) or of anything else. As Aristotle argues in *Posterior Analytics* II, the method of division cannot demonstrate what something is, because it does not state the cause, as a scientific definition must. [Jacques Brunschwig, in his introduction to ARISTOTE, *Topiques I-IV* (Paris, 1967), p. xxv, stresses that dialectical problems are yes-no questions, and in n. 5 he notes the implication that why-questions are not dialectical problems. But he adds that the question « why is X Y? » can be reformulated to become a dialectical problem « is Z the cause of X's being Y? ». This is un-Aristotelian: the *Topics* gives no instance of such a causal problem. Aristotle consistently assumes (as his method requires) that in a dialectical problem « is A B? », both A and B either fall under genera or are genera (or, if B is proposed as an *idion* or definition, that it includes a genus); this would not hold for « the cause of X's being Y ».]

lectic or for philosophy? The *Topics* tells us (101a36-b4) that dialectic can help the (would-be) scientist to discover the first principles of his science. Aristotle is not thinking of anything very mysterious here, and he is not attributing to dialectic the power to produce either *nous* or *epistêmê*. The first principles of a science include, especially, its definitions, and the whole main body of the *Topics* (Books II-VII) is directed toward a method for testing proposed definitions<sup>9</sup>. Dialectic is useful in finding definitions, not because the dialectician as such can formulate a scientifically adequate definition (he cannot), but because dialectic can help to show us what genus to look for a thing under, and where within this genus to look; it does this chiefly by testing and refuting wrong genera and wrong descriptions or definitions of the thing.

Although the dialectician, as respondent, is called on only to answer yes-no questions, and not questions « what is X? », Aristotle thinks that someone who has the art of dialectic can also offer definitions, not perfect definitions but definitions that avoid the kinds of fault a dialectician can detect. These definitions (call them « dialectical definitions ») are inferior to the definitions that someone with the appropriate science would give, but they still have some value for science<sup>10</sup>. Aristotle regards the kind of definitions current in the Academy (and preserved in the pseudo-Platonic *Definitions*) as being, at best, dialectical definitions: an example is the definition of virtue as « the best disposition » of a thing (*Definitions* 411d1). Aristotle cites this formula in *Eudemian Ethics* II,1 (first at 1218b38) as a typical example of a definition which does not teach

9. The rules about accident (Books II-III), genus (Book IV), and *idion* (Book V), give successively stronger (but still insufficient) criteria that an account must satisfy in order to be a definition: Aristotle makes this point explicitly at the beginning of his account of definition (*Topics* VI 139a24-35; parallel in *Topics* I 102b27-35). At the beginning of his account of genus and *idion*, Aristotle says that these « are elements of [arguments] about definitions », but that « dialectical arguers rarely inquire into them for their own sake » (*Topics* IV 120b13-15; see Brunschwig's note *ad locum*). As Brunschwig says, « the distinction of the predicables is the product of a methodical analysis of the conditions a definition must satisfy » (ARISTOTE, *Topiques* I-IV, p. XLIX).

10. ARISTOTLE describes the kind of definitions a dialectician would give, contrasting them with scientific definitions (physical definitions, where the *definiendum* is a natural thing), at *De Anima* I 403a29-b16. Dialectical definitions do not cite the appropriate matter of the thing, and so, although in some sense they state the form, they cannot give scientific knowledge of it, since the form and matter of each kind of thing are correlative, and neither can be known without the other. These definitions apparently belong to the class of definitions discussed at the beginning of *Posterior Analytics* II, 10, which « signify but do not prove » (93b39-94a1), since they do not state the cause, e.g. the definition of thunder as « noise in the clouds » (94a7-8), contrasted with its scientific definition « noise of fire being extinguished in the clouds » (94a5). *Posterior Analytics* II,8 (93a14-b14) argues that these imperfect definitions can give us a start in looking for a scientific definition.



us *ti esti*, but still helps us to acquire scientific knowledge. Supposing that moral virtue is the best disposition of the soul is like supposing that « Coriscus is the darkest man in the market » (1220a19-20) : « for we do not know what either of these [virtue or Coriscus] is, but being in this condition is useful towards knowing what they are » (a20-22)<sup>11</sup>. Supposing that virtue or Coriscus satisfies such a description does not tell us what or who they are, but it tells us where to look for them (in the market, in the genus « disposition », or « psychic disposition »), and how to recognize them once we spot them (it's the darkest, the best). But dialectic gives us no more than the (at best) true opinion that virtue is the best disposition or that Coriscus is the darkest man in the market: we still have to go look for ourselves, and this is not the task of dialectic. *Nous*, however it is supposed to come about, corresponds to seeing, and only this allows us to formulate a definition expressing what the thing is<sup>12</sup>.

From this sketch of how dialectic contributes to philosophy, we can see more particularly what the *Categories* is supposed to contribute, first to dialectic and thus also to philosophy. If I want to establish a science of X, I must find out what X is, and so I must know (or at least opine truly) what genus X falls under: the science itself cannot deduce this knowledge, since it presupposes it. Dialectic helps by giving tests for whether G can be the genus of X. If we have an exhaustive list of genera, and tests strong enough to rule out every genus that is not the genus of X, then we can discover the true genus of X by a process of elimination. Once we have found a *summum genus* for X, we can divide this genus by its appropriate differentiae, in order to test which lower genera X is in (this is the royal Persian hunting method recommended at *Sophist* 235b-c): but first we need a list of possible *summa genera*, and tests

11. It is not entirely clear what « being in this condition » is: I have supplied « supposing » from 1218b37, but Aristotle has no name for the condition in the present passage (unless it has disappeared into the lacuna marked by Walzer-Mingay in the OCT). « Supposing » may be too weak (even in the earlier passage, where we « suppose » that virtue is the best disposition, we are also told that this is clear from « induction »). But Aristotle may be deliberately avoiding « knowing » as too strong: we cannot *know* that Coriscus is the darkest man in the marketplace until we know who Coriscus is (and who else is in the marketplace).

12. In all this, Aristotle is following the *Meno*: knowing what virtue is and knowing what virtue is like are compared to knowing who Meno or Coriscus is and knowing what he is like. Both Plato and Aristotle apparently share the same solution: we can start with a true opinion about the *poion* (obtained perhaps from authority or *endoxa*, or by refuting all other possibilities), and then, with this opinion as a guide, we can go look and obtain knowledge of the *ti*, and thereby also of the *poion*.

for whether X can belong to each of them. It is the business of dialectic to classify things under their genera, but the *Topics* by itself is not sufficient for this purpose. Its tests for whether X can fall under genus G all presuppose that we are already familiar with G; to apply many of these tests, we must know whether G has a contrary, or any of the other three kinds of opposites, and sometimes whether it receives more and less<sup>13</sup>. Further, if G is not itself a *summum genus*, the *Topics* tells us to check whether the genera superior to G apply to X (*Topics* IV 122a3-30), and, in particular, whether X and G fall under the same category (120b36-121a9); similarly, in problems which are not explicitly about genera, as whether X and Y are the same, we can be asked to check whether they are in the same category (VII 152a37-38). All these tests presuppose that we already know how to find which category any given term belongs to.

In *Topics* I Aristotle explains the different things the dialectician must know before he can apply the particular argument-forms given in *Topics* II-VII, including « the things which arguments are composed of and which deductions are about » (*Topics* I 101b14-15 etc.). These are definitions, *idia*, genera and accidents, which Aristotle distinguishes and explains in *Topics* I,4-8; « but after this we must distinguish the *genê tôn katêgoriôn* [i.e. the categories] in which these four occur » (I,9 103b20-21). *Topics* I,9 consequently gives a list of the ten categories (with examples of terms in some of them), information we will need (alongside the definitions of « definition », « genus » etc.) to apply the procedures of *Topics* II-VII<sup>14</sup>. But we cannot use this list of categories unless we can determine which category a given term belongs to: a failure to do this accurately may leave us at a loss for an argument, or allow us to be victimized by sophisms. Indeed, Aristotle boasts in *Sophistical Refutations* 22 that « since we possess the *genê tôn katêgoriôn* » (178a4-5), he can solve

13. *Topics* IV is devoted to tests for whether G can be the genus of X. The test at 127b18-25 tells us to check whether G admits more and less, but X fails to; 123b1-124a9 gives a series of tests based on checking the contraries of X and G; 124a35-b34 goes systematically through the other three kinds of opposites, the privation, the negation, and the correlative.

14. It may be true (as argued by FREDE, « Categories in Aristotle », in his *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, p. 29-48) that *Topics* I,9 relies on a theory of categories as kinds of predication, rather than as kinds of being (so that in the sentence « white is a color », « color » would not be a quality, since it is predicated in *ti esti*); but the *Topics* clearly also relies on a *Categories*-like theory of categories as kinds of beings (this is presupposed by the tests I have cited, and indeed is also presupposed by *Topics* I,9). It is true, but irrelevant, that the *Topics* does not use « category » as a technical term for these kinds of being: neither does the so-called *Categories*.

sophisms of « figure of speech » that arise when the *poion* is expressed as if it were *poson* or vice versa, the *poioun* as if it were *paschon* or the *diakeimenon* as if it were *poioun* (cf. 166b10-19). Aristotle gives here the example of seeing [*horan*], which is expressed by an active verb and so seems to be an instance of *poiein*, but is in fact an instance of *paschein*: someone who maintains a thesis about seeing can be *apparently* refuted by a questioner arguing from principles about *poiein*; the respondent can avoid admitting defeat, and can persuade the spectators that he has not really been refuted, only if he can recognize that seeing belongs to a different category. To solve such sophisms, or to find the appropriate arguments himself as questioner, the dialectician needs tests for when a term falls under some category. Neither *Topics* I,9 nor *Sophistical Refutations* 22 give such tests: they presuppose that we have already studied the *Categories*.

We can best make sense of the structure of the *Categories*, and of many of its particular points, if we regard it as a manual for testing terms proposed in dialectical argument. Many particular rules in the text, which make no sense as part of a program of ontology, make excellent sense as supplying the needs of a dialectician armed with the *Topics*. Often they serve to supply information which some passage in the *Topics* clearly presupposes, but which the *Topics* itself nowhere supplies, and we can infer that the *Topics* is presupposing the *Categories*; even where this is not the case, features of the text that would otherwise be neglected as insignificant can be seen to have a clear function in instructing the reader in the art of dialectic.

To begin with, we can make sense of the first chapters of the book<sup>15</sup>.

15. For the Greek commentators, the « antepredicamental » and « postpredicamental » material are an embarrassing excrescence (as we have seen, Andronicus suggested that cc. 10-15 were an editorial addition by someone who wanted to connect the book with the *Topics*). The commentators' usual view is that Aristotle is simply explaining terms he uses in the main body of the text, i.e. the discussion of the categories; he puts terms like « paronymous » at the beginning, since otherwise we would not know what the word means and would be unable to follow the discussion of the categories; he can safely put off « prior » and « motion » to the end, since we have at least a rough idea what these mean and can read the text without having them defined, although we will profit by more precise discussions (so AMMONIUS *In Categorias*, p. 14). It is difficult to explain in detail how these discussions are supposed to help clarify the central text, and it is all too obvious that the discussions at least in cc. 10-15 are of the same general nature as the discussions in cc. 5-9. More recently, FREDE has suggested (*Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, p. 23-24) that the treatise is a series of studies of homonyms, these homonyms being just « substance », « quality », « motion » and the like; so that a chapter on homonyms and synonyms and paronyms would be needed as an introduction. Frede himself seems not to take this suggestion too seriously; indeed, Frede apparently thinks that, while the parallel with *Metaphysics* Δ shows that Aristotle did have a single purpose that would lead him to encompass all these topics in a single treatise, we can no longer tell what that purpose was (*ibid.*).

If X is proposed in a dialectical thesis, we want tests for putting it in its appropriate category, so that we can determine what genera and other attributes it has. But not every term is in a category, and c. 1 and the beginning of c. 2 (1a1-19) give preliminary tests for determining whether X falls into a category at all. Only things said « without combination » signify a being in one of the categories (c. 4 1b25-27), and so we must check (c. 2 1a16-19) whether a proposed expression involves combination. Even if it does not, it may not fall under any genus, thus not under any category; so c. 1 gives tests for whether X falls under a genus, and, if not, shows how to replace it with something that does. Homonyms have no genera or definitions, so if a homonym is proposed you should seek clarification rather than risk debating at cross-purposes (*cf. Topics I, 15*). Paronyms also have no genera: *grammatikos* is neither a species of human being nor a species of science, so you should look for the genus of *grammatikê* instead. Homonyms and paronyms are kinds of things, not kinds of words (the classic homonyms are the two Ajaxes, « *homônoumoi* and having equal courage » at *Iliad XVII, 720*), but they are kinds of things only as related to words: since a female grammarian is *grammatikê*, she is homonymous with her art, though a male grammarian is paronymous from it. This distinction would be irrelevant to a study of being *qua* being, but it is important to the dialectician who may have to determine what things are predicated of *grammatikos* or *grammatikê*, or what they in turn are predicated of<sup>16</sup>.

What follows is neither a theoretical study of the kinds of being for their own sake, nor a survey of the kinds of terms, but rather a survey of the kinds of being that a term might signify, with rules for locating any given term<sup>17</sup>. First you must test whether X is *said of* something

16. The example of the homonymous *grammatikê* is from the Greek commentators (PORPHYRY, *In Categorias*, p. 70, AMMONIUS, *In Categorias*, p. 23, SIMPLICIUS, *In Categorias*, p. 37; actually they say *mousikê*). Aristotle says only that paronyms must differ in *ptôsis*, and at first sight it is not obvious that the commentators are right in taking this as « ending » (and not as some deeper feature which might distinguish the abstract from the concrete feminine); but in fact *grammatikê* and *grammatikê* are a perfect case of homonyms, i.e. things which have the same name but different *logoi* (different genera and differentiae, if they are the kind of things that have genera and differentiae). I will come back to this case presently. For a use of paronymy in dialectic, see *Topics II 109b4-7* and context. (The account of paronyms has nothing to do with the doctrine that being is said *pros hen*; paronymous predication and predication *pros hen* are two entirely different phenomena, and must not be run together, as by Günther PATZIG in « Theology and Ontology in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* », *Articles on Aristotle* (Barnes et al. ed., London, 1975), v. 3, p. 38ff.)

17. We can accept the formula of the Greek commentators that the book is not about beings *qua* beings, but about *lexeis* (or *phônai*) *sêmantikai kath'ho sêmantikai* (SIMPLICIUS, *In Categorias*, p. 68-69, etc.). Of course, expressions are *sêmantikai* only insofar as they

else or not, and whether it is *in* something else or not, just by seeing how it sounds: « *hê grammatikê* is *en tô(i) grammatikô(i)* » is correct, « *ho grammatikos* is *grammatikê* » is not. These tests are imperfect, since « *grammatikê* » is said of Aspasia (assuming she wrote Pericles' funeral speech); in such cases, where the abstract and the concrete have the same name, further tests show that they are homonymous. As Aristotle says, « of things which are in a subject, in most cases neither the name nor the *logos* is predicated of the subject; nothing prevents the name from being predicated of the subject in some cases, but for the *logos* it is impossible » (2a27-31)<sup>18</sup>. The *logos* of *grammatikê* which fails to be predicated of Aspasia is its definition composed of genus and differentia, so we can further test *grammatikê* by checking whether its genus and differentia are predicated of Aspasia: the point of *Categories* chapter 3 is not to teach theoretical lessons about genera and differentiae, but to use them to discern which things are synonymously said of a subject and which are merely *in* a subject (it is so applied, c. 5 2a19-34, 3a9-28). Once we know that « X » is said without combination and synonymously of the things in question, these tests allow us to determine what kind of thing « X » signifies.

Chapters 4 through 9 elaborate this system of classification. Each category comes with a list of *idia* by which it can be recognized, and this constitutes the core of each chapter: these *idia* do not make sense as a contribution to studying being *qua* being, but only as a contribution to dialectic. The rule that substance should « signify some this » (3b10) can give only a property of terms and not of a class of beings; the rule that substances are said synonymously (never paronymously) of all the things they are said of (3a33-34), even if it gives a property of things, gives a property that can be verified only with reference to names. Like-

signify beings, and so they « take their differences » from the beings they signify (PORPHYRY, *In Categories*, p. 58); thus the investigation, while primarily about expressions, is also incidentally about the genera of beings (*ibid.*). But the commentators do not seem to be interested in the *Categories* as giving tests and rules for locating a given term; and, as we have seen, they link the book to the *De Interpretatione* and deny any special connection with the *Topics*.

18. Aristotle's example here is *leukon*, which he allows to serve both for the abstract « whiteness » and for the neuter of the concrete « white » : « the *leukon*, which is in the body, is predicated of its subject (for a body [*sôma*, neuter] is called *leukon*), but the *logos* of *leukon* will never be predicated of the body » (2a31-34); since the body and the color share a name but not a *logos*, they are homonymous. The example of *grammatikê* would be exactly parallel. In these cases, the thing in which X exists is homonymous with X; in the majority of cases, it is paronymous; in a few cases, it is neither homonymous nor paronymous, as the man in whom *aretê* exists is called *spoudaios* rather than *aretaios* or the like (ARISTOTLE'S example, *Categories* 10b5-9); but in no case is it synonymous.

wise, the best *idion* of quality is that « similar and dissimilar are said according to it » (11a18-19): this cannot tell us anything ontologically about qualities (surely similarity will be defined in terms of quality, not vice versa), but simply gives a linguistic test for whether X-ness is a quality: « if two things are X, would you say that they are *homoia*? ». Besides these linguistic tests, the *Categories* is obsessively thorough in listing whether items in each category have contraries and whether they receive more or less (and much of the discussion of relatives is about another kind of opposite, the correlative): this feature of the *Categories*, otherwise inexplicable, corresponds to the *Topics*' obsession with contraries (and with other opposites and degrees), and gives us the information we need to apply the *Topics*' tests for whether a given X falls under the proposed category.

If we understand the classificatory function of the *idia* of each category, we can avoid some difficulties that result from taking them as metaphysical theses. If the *Categories* is « at heart a contentious work »<sup>19</sup>, setting out a personal, and perhaps anti-Platonic, metaphysical position, then it is embarrassing, first that there are no details (accidents depend on substances, but how are different kinds of accidents related to each other? how are individual and universal accidents related?), and, more seriously, that there are no arguments. The metaphysical content of the *Categories* seems to reduce to the thesis that « all other things are either *said of* the primary substances as subjects, or are *in* them as subjects » (2a34-35), with its corollary that « if the primary substances did not exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist » (2b5-6). Since it was uncontroversial that qualities and other accidents had to be in substances in order to exist<sup>20</sup>, the controversial metaphysical content reduces to the claim that the species and genera which are said of substances could not exist without the things they are said of.

19. The quote is from Frank LEWIS, *Substance and Predication in Aristotle*, Cambridge, 1991, p. 13; Lewis means that the *Categories* is an attack on the Platonic theory of Forms. This seems to be the current *opinio communis*.

20. Plato, of course, recognized separate Ideas of qualities such as justice. But Plato, and especially Aristotle on Plato's behalf, call the Ideas *ousiai*, and Aristotle takes it as undisputed that anything that exists separately (as the Ideas are said to) must be an *ousia*. (At *Metaphysics* A 990b22-991a8 Aristotle has what is apparently a protest against positing substantial Ideas for non-substantial participants.) No ancient philosopher entertained the thought that qualities could exist without inhering in substances (or without themselves being substances); in Catholic theology the accidents of the Eucharistic bread and wine are held to subsist (by a miracle) without any substance to support them, but as far as I know this is the only context in which it has ever been maintained that accidents can exist without substances.

But Aristotle seems not to intend this to be controversial. He gives no argument for the main thesis that « all other things are either *said of* the primary substances as subjects, or are *in* them as subjects », beyond saying that this is « obvious from the particular examples » (2a35-36, where the examples say only that a genus or a universal accident must be said of [be in] some particulars to be said of [be in] the species, 2a36-b3); and he gives no argument at all that « if the primary substances did not exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist », treating this simply as an obvious corollary. Aristotle's main interest is in the disjunctive classification, not in the corollary about dependence. The impression that he is making a controversial metaphysical claim must come from supposing that he is arguing against Platonic Ideas; but he is not. Aristotle consistently reports it as Platonic doctrine that Ideas are individuals (« the idea is a *kath' hekaston*, as *they* say », *Metaphysics Z* 1040a8-9), sharing a *logos* and not merely a name with the corruptibles<sup>21</sup>; they are not themselves the universals the Platonists attempt to define, but fall under the same universal definitions with other things<sup>22</sup>. The dialectician needs terminology to distinguish universal definienda from the individual substances that fall under the definitions, whether these individuals include Ideas or not; and Plato would surely agree that the second substance horse could not exist if there were neither individual mortal horses nor the individual Idea of horse<sup>23</sup>. Aristotle almost certainly did not believe in Ideas when he wrote the *Categories*, and the *Categories* may be useful in arguing against Ideas (as against

21. After an argument that corruptibles and incorruptibles must be different in genus, Aristotle adds « so it is clear that there cannot be forms, such as some people say: for one man will be corruptible and another incorruptible. But it is said that the forms are the same in species with the particulars [*tois tisi*] and not homonymous; but things which are different in genus differ more than things which are different in species » (*Metaphysics I* 1059a10-14).

22. « It is not possible to define any idea [...] why does none of them give a definition of an idea? If they tried it would be obvious that what we are saying is true » (*Metaphysics Z* 1040a8, b2-4). At *Topics VI* 148a14-22 Aristotle recommends arguing against Platonic definitions by showing that they do not apply to the Idea, as they cannot if they entail mortality or motion.

23. Aristotle says that the species and genera of primary substances *are called* second substances (2a14-19), and explains why this way of speaking is reasonable (2b29-37): it looks as if he is using terms that were standard, presumably in the Academy, as terminology of the art of definition, distinguishing the sense in which (say) soul is a substance from the sense in which (say) Socrates' soul is a substance. The only alternative I can see is to treat *deuterai* quasi-adverbially, so that *deuterai ousiai legontai* at 2a14 and its parallels would mean not « are called "second substances" », but « are, in a secondary way, called "substances" ». But Aristotle does in fact call them *deuterai ousiai* (as at 2b7), and if *deuterai ousiai legontai* does mean « are called "second substances" », then I think it cannot be taken as introducing new terms, but only as recalling established ones.

anything else), but they are not at issue here. When Aristotle does argue against the Ideas, he applies a battery of specific arguments, distinguishing those claims about Ideas that are impossible from those that are too vaguely expressed or those that are simply unproven; he does not think that a single sweeping observation is enough to knock down the theory of Ideas, and this is not the aim of his observation about first and second substances. The rules of the *Categories* need not be immune to metaphysical consequences, but Aristotle's aim in laying them down is to aid the dialectician, not to push for sectarian metaphysical positions.

Besides formal *idia*, Aristotle also gives lists of the highest species within each category, and these too provide a disjunctive *idion* for the category: as *Topics* IV advises, « check if what has been proposed to be in a genus cannot participate in any of its species: for it is impossible for it to participate in the genus without participating in any of the species, unless it is one of the species in the first division [of the genus]; these participate only in the genus » (121a27-30). This explains not only the lists of species in each category, but also some of *Categories* cc. 10-15. Here in *Topics* IV (121a30-39) Aristotle gives the example that if motion is proposed as the genus of pleasure, you should run through the different species of motion to check whether pleasure can fall under any of them (and you should conclude that it cannot). Motion will also frequently be proposed paronymously as an accident of something, when it is said that something is moved: here too you should run through the species of motion (*Topics* II 111b4-11, III 120a38-b3). But the *Topics* does not give a list of the species of motion: this is basic information that the dialectical disputant should come prepared with, and is supplied by *Categories* c. 14<sup>24</sup>.

24. FREDE's only stated reason for finding it « obvious » that the *Categories* is not an introduction to the *Topics* is that « it is difficult to see how the notions of motion and of having are especially relevant to dialectic; in the *Topics*, at any rate, they play no role » (*Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, p. 20). It should now be clear how the *Categories*' discussion of how many kinds of motion there are (and what their contraries are) functions in an introduction to the *Topics*. The concept of motion does play a role in the *Topics*; and there is a properly dialectical study of motion, distinguished from the physical study of motion by the fact that it does not consider the *kinoun*, and hence does not distinguish natural from violent motion. The role of *Categories* c. 15, on having, is less clear. But according to the last sentence of the parallel text *Metaphysics* Δ23, *echein* and *en tini einai* are said in corresponding ways; and in dialectical (but not scientific) argument, we often have to decide whether one thing is *in* another: *Topics* IV 126a3-16 tells us to test whether Y can be predicated of X by checking whether X and Y are *in* the same thing; but the *Topics* has given no account of being-in, of how many kinds it has, or of how to recognize it, and may be presupposing something like *Categories* c. 15. Perhaps a parallel to the last sentence of *Metaphysics* Δ23 has dropped off the end of the *Categories*, or



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At an even more basic level, you cannot apply the procedures of the *Topics* unless you know how to discover and recognize opposites, and to recognize what kinds of opposites these are. *Topics* II says that « since the [kinds of] oppositions are four » (113b15), you should check each of them, but the *Topics* has not itself given an account of these oppositions, and seems to be relying instead on *Categories* c. 10, which distinguishes the kinds of opposites and gives tests for telling them apart. *Categories* c. 10 also gives rules for when contraries have an intermediate (12a1-20), needed for the test at *Topics* IV 123b12-18, and notes that where this intermediate has no name it must be defined by negation (12a21-25), needed for the test at *Topics* IV 123b18-23; *Categories* c. 11 collects rules for arguing about contraries. Similarly, although the *Topics* tells us to check for priority and simultaneity (as in *Topics* VI,4 passim), it gives no account either of how to recognize priority and simultaneity, or of how many kinds they come in: it presupposes the account in *Categories* cc. 12-13.

### III

If we say that the *Categories* is a manual of principles of dialectical reasoning, and that it would reasonably be called *The before-the-Topics*, we do not imply that it is useful only for formal dialectical contests, or that the highest goal it serves is plausible opinion rather than truth. Simplicius objects, against this title, that the treatise is presupposed not only by the *Topics* but by all of Aristotelian philosophy (*In Categories*, p. 15): the neo-Platonists maintain that the *Categories* is an introduction both to logic (already broader than dialectic) and to philosophy as a whole (*ibid.*, p. 13). But since dialectical argument is needed to find the principles of the sciences, and since the *Categories* is needed to apply

perhaps it should simply be understood. The ingenious dialectical arguments of *Physics* III,3 and *Physics* IV,3 depend on general principles about being-in, its division into kinds, and (at *Physics* III 202a28-31) its correlation with having. (Plato's *Parmenides* contains work toward a systematic dialectical study both of motion and of being-in.)

the rules of dialectic, the *Categories* will also be presupposed by the particular scientific treatises. Still, the *Categories* does not supply premisses to be used directly in scientific argument: they will be used only in the preliminary work of determining what kind of thing a proposed object is. This preliminary work ends when the object is defined and (if necessary) divided into its kinds; once we know what the object is, properly scientific work can begin<sup>25</sup>.

It needs stressing that, for Aristotle, the arguments used to place a proposed object X in its proper genus G, and to exclude it from incorrect genera, are merely dialectical and not scientific. An example is the argument at the end of *Topics* III: we can refute Xenocrates' claim that the soul is a number by dividing number into its species: « every number is either odd or even; therefore, if the soul is neither odd nor even, it is clear that it is not a number » (120b4-6)<sup>26</sup>. The argument is valid and its premisses are necessarily true, but it is not scientific, since it does not prove an effect from its causes: it is not *because* the soul cannot be either even nor odd that it cannot be a number, but vice versa. By

25. The principles of the *Categories* are not used *exclusively* in problems « is G the genus of X » or « is GD the definition of X »; they can also be used for other kinds of dialectical problems, although not directly for demonstrations. But the kinds of problems I am discussing here are the most prominent uses of the *Categories*, or at least of the principles about the categories. Apart from these, the categories can be used for arguments about sameness and difference (*Topics* VII 152a37-38, cited above): X and Y cannot be numerically or specifically or generically the same if they are in different categories. The categories also have another connection with sameness, in that they give different senses in which X and Y might be the same: they might be the same in substance (*ta auta* proper), or the same in quality (*homoia*), quantity (*isa*), *pros ti* (proportionals: X is *pros* A as Y is *pros* B), place or time (if X and Y are not the same in substance, Aristotle prefers to say, not that they are the same, but they have attributes which are specifically the same.) From *Categories* 6a26-35 testing for quantity by *ison kai anison*, and 11a15-19 testing for quality by *homoion kai anomoion*, it seems that the system of kinds of sameness and difference was more familiar than the system of kinds of being. Very similarly, the categories give a system of kinds of motion and rest, and are used in this way in *Categories* c. 14, *Physics* V,2, and elsewhere. Systems of kinds of sameness and difference and motion and rest seem to be at work already in Plato's *Parmenides*; the system of kinds of being (going beyond Plato's distinction between substance and quality) may be, in part, the result of Aristotle's reflection on these other systems.

26. Actually here Aristotle wants to argue that number is not even an *accident* of soul. If number were the genus of soul, and if number can only be divided by its primary differentiae odd and even, and by others which fall under these, then soul would be either a species of odd number or a species of even number; so it would be enough for the opponent to disprove the claims « every soul is odd » and « every soul is even ». To show that number cannot belong to soul even as an accident, we have to disprove the claims « some soul is odd » and « some soul is even ». I will ignore these subtleties here.

asking the questions « is the soul odd? » and « is the soul even? » in a dialectical contest, we might shame our interlocutor into admitting that the soul is not even or odd, and so we might force him to admit that it is not a number; similarly, by arguing in the introduction to a scientific treatise that the soul is neither even nor odd, we might awaken in our reader the recognition that the soul is just not the kind of thing to which these predicates could apply; but we cannot *demonstrate* that the soul is not a number before we discover what kind of thing the soul really is. If we already know that X is in genus G, we no longer need to apply *Topics*-style tests to exclude it from other genera at the same level; we might apply such tests to exclude X from incorrect *species* of G, but again we do this only because we lack an adequate knowledge of what X is, and once we discover a scientific definition of X the need for such arguments ceases<sup>27</sup>.

Aristotle uses dialectical arguments in this way especially when he is trying to establish a science of some X whose genus is unclear and contested. The best example is soul: Aristotle assumes at the beginning of *De Anima* II that the soul is a substance, and goes on to investigate what kind of substance it is (it is substance not as matter or composite, like a body, but rather as the form of a body, 412a15-21); but on some of the opinions that Aristotle has discussed and refuted in *De Anima* I, soul would not be a substance at all, but a quantity or quality or motion. So Aristotle says in the first chapter, in reviewing the difficulties of the study of the soul, that « it is doubtless first necessary to divide in which of the genera and what it is, I mean whether it is some this and *ousia*, or *poion*, or *poson*, or some other of the categories which have been distinguished » (402a23-26). Indeed, of the accounts discussed in *De Anima* I, Xenocrates' opinion that the soul is a self-moved number would imply that the soul is a quantity, and so would the doctrine that Aristotle extracts from the *Timaeus* and rejects at 407a2ff, that the soul is a magnitude; similarly, the « doctrine persuasive to many » (407b27-8)

27. It is striking that the syllogism-form of an argument from exclusion (« every B is C or D, no A is C, no A is D, therefore no A is B »; let A = soul, B = number, C = odd, D = even) cannot be reduced to one of the canonical forms of the *Prior Analytics*. Aristotle is not really trying there to give an account of all syllogism-forms, but only of all syllogism-forms which might occur in a demonstration: this form, though valid and useful in dialectic, is non-demonstrative. This is connected with ARISTOTLE's denial that proof by cases is demonstrative (*Posterior Analytics* I 74a25-32), since an argument by exclusion is convertible with a proof by cases (« no odd number is a soul, no even number is a soul, therefore no number is a soul »).

that the soul is *harmonia tis* would imply that it is a quality; and Aristotle rejects the doctrine that the soul is composed of the elements of all the things it knows, on the ground that this would place the soul in all the categories at once (410a13-21). In this last passage Aristotle is using an argument-form recommended by the *Topics* (150a22-26); so also in arguing that motion cannot belong to the soul in its essence or definition because it does not meet even the weaker criteria for belonging as an accident (*De Anima* 405b31ff, 409b11ff), in arguing that the soul cannot be moved because it cannot admit any of the four kinds of motion (406a12ff), and elsewhere in *De Anima* I.

But Aristotle's most interesting use of dialectical arguments to exclude the soul from incorrect categories comes not in the *De Anima* but in the *Eudemus*, which, as an exoteric dialogue, has no scientific pretensions, and uses only dialectical arguments (where it is not using myths) to argue for immortality<sup>28</sup>. It is natural for Aristotle to take the arguments of the *Phaedo* (or of the part before Socrates invokes causal inquiries in answering Cebes at 95e7ff) as his models for dialectical argument; he follows the *Phaedo* in particular in arguing against the objection that the soul need not be immortal, since it may be a harmony of the body. In the *Eudemus* Aristotle gave two arguments against this objection, both arguments in standard dialectical forms, both turning on contraries. The more important argument is the first, which says, as Philoponus cites it, « harmony has a contrary, disharmony; but the soul has no contrary; therefore the soul is not a harmony »<sup>29</sup>. This is a direct application of the rules of the *Topics* for arguing against the thesis « harmony belongs to soul as its genus »: the argument needs only the general principle « if B has a contrary and A does not, then B does not belong to A as its genus » (cf. *Topics* IV 123b30ff), and so it does not depend on any principles about the categories. But as Jaeger saw 70 years ago, the argument is connected with the principle of the *Categories* that sub-

28. Thus ELIAS says that Aristotle argues for the immortality of the soul « by necessary arguments in his acroamatic works, but with probability, by persuasive arguments [*diapithanôn eikotôs* { in some manuscripts *eikotôn* }], in his dialogues » (*In Categories*, p. 114; Ross, *Aristotelis Fragmenta Selecta*, *Eudemus* Fr. 3).

29. The witnesses are collected in Ross, *Aristotelis Fragmenta Selecta*, under *Eudemus* Fr. 7. Only Philoponus is a direct witness to the *Eudemus*. Damascius (whom Ross wrongly calls Olympiodorus: see the introduction to v. 2 of L.G. WESTERINK, *Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, Amsterdam, 1977) is lecturing on the *Phaedo*, and is simply giving cross-references to parallel arguments in the *De Anima* and *Eudemus*, which he has taken from some commentary on the *De Anima* (see WESTERINK, v. 2, p. 208-211).

tances have no contraries, even though the *Eudemus* argument does not explicitly presuppose that the soul is a substance or invoke principles about substance-in-general<sup>30</sup>. But the reader or interlocutor will accept the proposition « soul has no contrary » only because he is implicitly aware that the soul is a substance; and Aristotle is motivated to argue that the soul is not a harmony, not because he is worried specifically about harmonies, but because the main arguments for immortality might be defeated if the soul were anything *like* a harmony, i.e. *if it were a quality*. By arguing dialectically that the soul is not a harmony, Aristotle hopes to elicit the recognition that the soul is not *like* a harmony in the relevant respect, i.e. that it is not the kind of thing which has a contrary, because it is a substance and not a quality; this recognition will be equally useful in the introduction to a science of the soul, or in a non-scientific discussion of immortality.

When we see how the *Eudemus* argument is connected, on the one hand with its parallel in the *Phaedo* (93a11-94b3), and on the other hand with the *Categories*, we can draw conclusions not only about the *Eudemus* but also about the *Categories*. The *Phaedo*'s argument that the soul is not a harmony turns on the claim that a better soul is no more a soul than a worse soul (93b4-6, d1-2), although a better harmony is more a harmony than a worse harmony: this is enough to infer (by *Topics* IV 127b18-25) that harmony is not the genus of soul, since a better soul would be both equally a soul (and thus equally a harmony), and a better harmony (and thus more a harmony), yielding a contradiction. Plato also argues that, since souls are capable of participating in virtue and vice, and since vice is a kind of disharmony, soul cannot be a kind of harmony, since « a harmony, being perfectly just this, a harmony, would never participate in disharmony » (94a2-4): the argument is an application of the rule of *Topics* IV, « check if what has been placed in a genus participates, or is capable of participating, in something contrary to the genus: for then the same thing will participate in contraries simul-

30. Werner JAEGER, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development*, tr. Robinson, Oxford, 1934, p. 40-44. While there is much that is dubious in Jaeger's account, G.E.L. Owen's unfair criticism in « The Platonism of Aristotle » (reprinted in OWEN, *Logic, Science and Dialectic*, Ithaca, 1986, p. 203-205) has caused Jaeger's genuine insights to be neglected. Owen is wrong to suggest (p. 203) that Jaeger was relying on Damascius (or « Olympiodorus »), who imports the word « substance » into his summary of Aristotle's argument: Jaeger mentions this passage only incidentally (p. 44), and he does not take it for more than it is. Jaeger says, rightly, that Aristotle, like Plato in the *Phaedo*, is « implicitly presupposing » that the soul is a substance (p. 41).

taneously » (123a20-22)<sup>31</sup>. What is striking here is not that the arguments from the *Phaedo* and the *Eudemus* fit the patterns prescribed in *Topics* IV, but that they implicitly involve different *idia* of substance given in the *Categories*, namely that substances have no contraries (*Categories* 3b24ff), that they do not receive more and less (3b33ff), and that a single substance is capable of contrary attributes (4a10ff)<sup>32</sup>. The arguments from the *Phaedo* and *Eudemus* each depend on our granting that the soul passes one of these tests and that harmony fails; these dialectical arguments rely on our implicit awareness that the soul is a substance, and they help bring us to recognize this explicitly.

It is not quite right to say that the *Eudemus* is an application of the *Categories*; the point is rather that the *Categories*, like the *Topics*, is an attempt to abstract and formulate principles of dialectical reasoning that were implicit in such works as the *Phaedo* and *Eudemus*. It may not be too much to suggest that Aristotle worked out the three tests of substance we have mentioned, precisely in reflecting on the *Phaedo* and in writing the *Eudemus*: certainly these tests have applications outside psychology, but of all the standard objects of discussion, it is the soul whose genus is most obscure, and whose substantiality most needs to be established, whether for scientific psychology or for an exoteric defense of immortality. Even if the tests were not first elaborated for the case of soul, they fit the soul perfectly, and Aristotle was surely aware of this when he wrote the *Categories* (perhaps in roughly the same period of his career that he wrote the *Eudemus*). So it is wrong to say that Aristotle's primary candidates for substance in the *Categories* were things like Socrates, and were replaced by things like Socrates' soul only in *Metaphysics Z*: Aristotle wrote the *Categories*' account of substance with Socrates' soul in mind<sup>33</sup>, although he seems not to have believed in the

31. Note that the principle presupposed by Plato's argument (and by Aristotle's rule) is non-trivial and rather dubious: Plato's claim is not just that no harmony-of-type-X can participate in disharmony-of-type-X, but that no harmony-of-type-X can participate in disharmony-of-type-Y.

32. These are all *idia* of substance at least relatively to quality (see *Topics* V, 1 for the idea of a relative *idion*). But the last is *malista idion* of substance (*Categories* 4a10-11): so it is legitimate to argue « the soul is capable both of virtue and of its contrary, vice; therefore the soul is a substance ». The other tests do not afford such a direct argument.

33. Soul should pass the other tests for substance, although they do not seem to be designed to prove its substantiality. The only test it might seem to fail is « not in a subject »; but « in a subject » means here « what, being in something not as a part, is incapable of existing apart from the thing in which it is » (*Categories* 1a24-25). If (as I have suggested) the *Categories* is roughly contemporary with the *Eudemus* and *Protrepticus*, the soul will not be in its body as in a subject, since it can exist apart from the body (and is, presumably, a part of the composite animal). Anyway, admitting contrary attributes

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*Categories* that the soul was the form of its body, or that immanent forms in general were one kind of substance<sup>34</sup>. Of course the *Categories* does not say that the soul is a substance, sticking to such uncontroversial examples as « man » and « horse »: this is because the *Categories* is not a treatise on ontology, but a manual of dialectic, collecting the general principles arguers use in classifying things. It is not the function of the *Categories* to decide for the scientist whether some particular X is a substance; but the *Categories* shows the psychologist, or any other would-be scientist, how to make this decision.

## IV

Given this analysis of the function of the *Categories*, we can return to address the comparison with *Metaphysics Z*. Since the investigation in *Z* is philosophical (and specifically metaphysical), it has entirely different aims from the non-causal and therefore non-philosophical discussion of the *Categories*: as Aristotle says, summarizing the project of *Z* at the beginning of *H* (1042a4-6), « we are seeking the causes and principles and elements of substances ». We are seeking the causes of all beings universally, but all other beings depend on substances for their existence, so the causes of substance will be the causes of all beings (*Metaphysics*

is *malista idion*, and is enough to prove that the soul is a substance. (Soul is mentioned in the *Categories* as the subject of grammar and other sciences (1a15ff), indeed it is Aristotle's first example of a subject. This text does not *prove* that Aristotle is thinking of soul as a first subject not present in any other subject; but certainly he gives no hint of any further subject beneath the soul.)

34. If this is right, then there is an important contradiction between Aristotle's beliefs in the *Categories* and in the *Metaphysics* (and to this extent I can agree with the interpretation of Aristotle described in the opening sentences of this paper). But this contradiction is incidental to the purposes of the *Categories*, and must be inferred more from Aristotle's silences than from anything he says in the *Categories*; we are reduced to guessing. For what it is worth, my guess is that Aristotle did recognize immanent forms at the time of the *Categories*, but that he did not regard them as substances, including them instead under the fourth species of qualities, *schēmata kai morphai* (he avoids the word *eidos* in this context because he is using this technically for universals): cf. *Physics* VII,3 (datable very early on other grounds, and plausibly contemporary with the *Categories*), which argues that change in the fourth species of quality is not alteration, *on the ground that it is unqualified coming-to-be*. If immanent forms are qualities, then Aristotle cannot be regarding the soul as an immanent form.

Δ 1071a1-2, 34-35). The *Categories* does not investigate the causes of being, but simply lists different kinds of beings and gives tests for recognizing them; and it does this, not because it is interested in being as such, but because any simple term that might be proposed (unless it is said homonymously) must signify some one of these kinds of being. The treatise may, of course, be useful for the metaphysician, in the same way that it is useful for any other kind of philosopher, but there is nothing to suggest that it was written with the metaphysician especially in mind<sup>35</sup>.

If the *Categories* is comparable to any book in the *Metaphysics*, it is Δ. Δ offers surveys of substance (Δ8, cp. *Categories* c. 5), of quantity, quality and relation (Δ13-15, cp. *Categories* cc. 6-8), opposition (Δ10, cp. *Categories* cc. 10-11), priority and posteriority (Δ11, cp. *Categories* c. 12), and having (Δ23, cp. *Categories* c. 15). But there are crucial differences between the *Categories* and *Metaphysics* Δ, reflecting the dialectical purpose of the former and the metaphysical purpose of the latter<sup>36</sup>. We can see this both in what Δ omits from the *Categories* and in what it adds. Δ omits everything in the *Categories* that is intended to teach us how to place a term under one genus or another: besides skipping the discussions of homonyms, paronyms, and non-simple expressions, it entirely omits all the *idia* of the categories, such as whether each category admits contraries or degrees, as well as such criteria as « signifies some this », which can only be criteria of *terms*. But Δ adds surveys of the meanings of being (Δ7) and of its *per se* attributes such as unity (Δ6), sameness and difference (Δ9); and it gives a newly ontological twist

35. To repeat: my aim is not to deny contradictions between the two texts, but to bring out the different projects and purposes of the *Categories* and of the *Metaphysics*, projects and purposes which are missed when the two texts are brought into direct opposition. (As I have noted above, I believe that the *Categories* does contradict the position of the *Metaphysics* on whether immanent forms are a kind of substance, and on whether the soul is an immanent form; or, at any rate, I believe that when Aristotle wrote the *Categories* he held a different position on these questions than he does in the *Metaphysics*, and that this different position is suggested, although not directly stated, by the text of the *Categories*.) I have no intention of « neutralizing » the *Categories*, or of making it constitutionally unable to contradict a metaphysical text, by assigning it to the art of dialectic. In saying that the *Categories* « simply lists different kinds of beings and gives tests for recognizing them », I mean that this is its intention, and that it does not investigate the causes of beings (which is the intention of the *Metaphysics*); I do not mean that the *Categories* cannot contain or imply controversial ontological opinions (although it certainly puts no stress on any such opinions, and the attempt to read it as a criticism of Plato is based on a misunderstanding).

36. Contra FREDE, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, p. 23: the *Categories* « differs from *Metaphysics* Δ mainly in trying to give some sort of account of the systematic relation of the various things treated ».



to the discussions of contrariety (1018a35-38) and of priority (1019a4-11).  $\Delta$  also adds introductory chapters on principle ( $\Delta 1$ ), cause ( $\Delta 2$ ), and element ( $\Delta 3$ ), treating questions foreign to the *Categories* ( $\Delta 4-5$ , on nature and necessity, continue this survey of causal concepts).

These modifications result from  $\Delta$ 's function as an introduction to an inquiry into the « causes and principles and elements » of being (EZH $\Theta$ ), and of its *per se* attributes such as unity (I):  $\Delta$  starts by describing causes and principles and elements, and then proceeds to describe being and its attributes.  $\Delta$  (or  $\Delta 6-30$ ) stands to the investigation that follows much as the *Historia Animalium* stands to the subsequent biological works; we might call it a *Historia Entium*. The *Metaphysics* is seeking the highest causes, and in particular the divine, which should be found among the highest causes of all; the highest causes should be the causes of the most universal effects, and for this reason Aristotle proposes in  $\Gamma 1$  that metaphysics should study the causes of being and of its *per se* attributes, which are the most universal things of all. But « cause » and « being » and « one » (and so on) are each said in many ways: so the first task is the task of  $\Delta$ , to sort out their different kinds; subsequent books can investigate what kinds of chains of causes, of what kinds of being or unity, lead up to the desired beings, and what chains fall short of them.

If we remember the place of *Metaphysics Z* in this causal investigation, we will not confuse its task with the task of the *Categories*' account of substance. *Z* begins by referring back to  $\Delta$  for the many senses of « being » (1028a10-11); since substances are the primary beings, *Z* investigates the causes of substance, in order to discover whether there are substances apart from the sensible ones, and what these separate substances may be: for we will come to know such substances, if at all, by recognizing them as causes of substances familiar to us. *Z* does not, like the *Categories*, give criteria for substance: this is the business of an introduction to dialectic, not of a treatise on metaphysics or on any other science. The *Categories*, although it gives criteria by which substances can be recognized, does not attempt to apply these principles, to draw up a list of what things are substances; but neither does *Metaphysics Z*<sup>37</sup>. It is not the business *either* of an introduction to dialectic, *or*

37. Although *Z* neither formulates criteria of substance, nor applies criteria to produce a list of substances, it may cite criteria of substance in dialectical argument, relying on something like the *Categories*' list of criteria. But the only places I know where *Z* cites criteria of substance are *Z3* 1029a28 *chôriston kai tode ti* (these are probably equivalent), and *Z13* 1038b15 *to mê kath' hupokeimenou* (the same criterion is dismissed as insufficient

of a treatise on metaphysics (or any other science) to draw up a systematic list of substances: rather, for each X, it belongs to the dialectical preliminaries to the science of X to assign X to its appropriate category. When Z1-2 asks what substances there are, it is not asking whether items on a recognized list of beings fall into the category of substance or into some other category. On the contrary, « the question always asked and always puzzled over, before and now, “what is being,” is “what is substance”»: for *this* is what some people say is one and others more than one, some finitely and others infinitely many » (1028b2-6): the question is and always has been about what beings there are and not about which of them are substances (Aristotle takes it for granted that the beings in dispute will be substances). When Aristotle calls the question « what is being » *aei aporoumenon*, connects it with the old question whether being is one or many, and identifies it with the question of *ousia*, he is deliberately echoing the language of the *Sophist*, and promi-

at Z3 1029a8). The currently popular view that Z proposes « subject » and « essence » as jointly necessary criteria of substance, and examines candidates for conformity to these criteria, has no textual support that I can discover. « Subject » and « essence » are introduced in the first sentence of Z3 as *senses* or *kinds* of substance (not conjunctively, as *criteria* for substance): « substance is said, if not in more ways, at least principally in four: for the essence and the universal and the genus seem to be the substance of each thing, and fourthly the subject » (1028b33-36). The point is just that if you ask *ti esti* X, I can answer either by giving a Y such that Y is X (the subject of X) or a Y such that X is Y *per se* (the essence of X, or a part of the essence); either answer to the *ti esti* question gives in some way the *ousia* or substance of X (and if X is substance *simpliciter*, Y is substance *simpliciter*). If Y is *either* the subject *or* the essence of X, it is the substance of X (as H 1042a32-b8 argues, matter must be substance, since it is a subject and the subject is substance); Aristotle has no need to argue that something is *both* subject *and* essence in order to validate it as a substance. Aristotle does assert that substances have essence more primarily than accidents do (although accidents also have essences), and that substances are identical with their essences (so are accidents, although not substance-accident compounds), but neither of these claims is introduced as a criterion of substance, nor is either so used. [I do not know how the criteria-and-candidates reading of Z arose; it is usually assumed rather than argued for. Owen saw two potentially conflicting criteria of substance in the first sentence of Z1, which describes substance as *to ti esti kai tode ti* (1028a11-12); but it is in fact obvious that the second phrase explains the first, and that Aristotle was not thinking about any possible conflict. Terence Irwin also interprets the first sentence of Z3 to support this reading. Irwin translates « Substance is spoken of, if not in several ways, at any rate in four main cases. For in fact the essence, the universal and the genus seem to be the substance of each thing, and the fourth of these is the subject ». Irwin takes the passage to be suggesting the denial of what it in fact obviously asserts, that substance is said in several ways: he takes essence, universal, genus and subject to be « ostensible criteria » for substance, and « criteria for the same thing », so that Aristotle would be saying that (the chief or only sense of) substance would be something that is *simultaneously* essence, universal, genus and subject (IRWIN, *Aristotle's First Principles*, Oxford, 1988, p. 202-204, with nn. 14 and 16 from p. 554-555). This distorts the sense of the passage in question, and cannot support the overall reading of Z. What other support this reading might have, I do not know.]

sing to take up its question whether only bodies exist, or only incorporeals, or both together<sup>38</sup>. Already in *Metaphysics* B Aristotle had asked « whether we should say that there are only sensible substances, or also others beyond these », and whether these others are as Plato says (997a34ff); now in Z2 he takes up this investigation « whether there are only these substances or also others, or some of these and also others, or none of these but others » (1028b13-15; cp. b27-32).

Aristotle takes up this question in Z and subsequent books by starting with the « substances agreed on by everyone... the natural ones » (H 1042a6-8), and examining their causes, to discover whether some causal chain leads up from sensible substances to an incorporeal substance: as Aristotle says in Z3, « since some of the sensibles are agreed to be substances, we should investigate first among these... for learning always takes place through what is less knowable by nature to what is more knowable » (1029a33-4, b3-5). In Z Aristotle is not yet presenting his own positive proposal (given in  $\Lambda$ ) for a chain of efficient and final causes leading up from natural things to a separate *nous*: he is examining and criticizing Plato's proposal that the Forms, which are supposed to be incorporeal substances in themselves, are also causes of sensible things, just by being *the substance of* these sensible things, that is, their formal cause (B 997b3-5, A 99b1-4; cp.  $\Delta$  1017b14ff on *ousia = aition tou einai*)<sup>39</sup>. The investigation of *the substance of* the agreed-on substances,

38. The *Sophist* says that we are in *aporia* about the question, « what is being », and that this is no *euporôteron* than the questions about not-being (246a1-2), which are *mesta aporias aei en tô(i) prosthen chronô(i) kai nun* (236e3, closely parallel to Aristotle). On the question of being too, *machê tis aei sunestêken* 246c3, and this question is an *amphisbêtêsis peri tês ousias* 246a5. Beyond the archaic question whether being is one or many, and how many (242b6ff, summed up 245d12ff), the current dispute is whether only bodies are beings and *ousiai* (246a7-b3), or only incorporeals such as the Forms (246b6-c2), or both (the right answer, 249c10-d4, where the things in motion are bodies and the unmoved things are incorporeals). Aristotle reserves in principle the right to say that some of the sensible things he has mentioned are not substances, but in fact he takes the list (the simple bodies and living things and their parts, and the heaven and its parts) as agreed, and says so at H 1042a6ff; although Aristotle says in Z16 that the simple bodies and the parts of living things are not substances, he doesn't mean that they fall into some other category: rather, they are substances only *dunamei*, because they are beings only *dunamei*. (So they are *less* substance than what is substance *entelecheiâ(i)*; but in H1 they are again listed as substances.)

39. Aristotle makes his project clear in (among other places) the passage just cited from Z3. He has just dismissed the matter and the composite substance, *not* because they are not substances (they *are* substances, as H1 reaffirms, although they are *less* substance than the form), but because they are « posterior and manifest » (1029a31-2). So Aristotle pursues instead the third kind of substance, the form, « for this is most in *aporia* » (a33) — i.e., Plato says that it exists separately, and other people say that it does not. Aristotle then (1029a33-34, b3-12) explains the project of ascending from sensible things, manifest to

which is the theme of Z, is very different from the non-causal account of substance given in the *Categories*. The *Categories* only gives tests for a thing to be an *ousia*, and does not investigate the *ousia* of a given *ousia*; Z, by contrast, investigates subject and essence because these are in different ways « the substance of each thing » (cf. 1028b35, 1031a18), namely its material and formal causes; these causes of a substance will themselves be substances, and the upward causal chains might lead to the desired separate substances<sup>40</sup>. As Aristotle argues in Z, Plato was wrong in claiming that the substance or essence of each sensible substance is a separate incorporeal substance, and so the results of the causal inquiry of Z are chiefly negative. But Z goes beyond the *Categories* and beyond dialectic, and belongs instead to philosophy, because instead of merely classifying the things that are, it investigates the « causes and principles and elements of substances » (H 1042a4-6); it belongs specifically to *first* philosophy, because it uses this investigation to address the question « whether there is some separate substance, and why and how, beyond the sensibles, or whether there is none » (Z 1028b30-31)<sup>41</sup>.

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us but « containing little or nothing of being » (1029b9-10), to the things best known in themselves; he then turns to the study of the *ousia* of a thing as its essence. This is Plato's procedure for ascending to intelligible realities; Aristotle will follow it, and will show in Z6ff that it does not (as Plato claims) lead to separate Forms. Aristotle's point has been lost partly because of the idea (Jaeger's) that the ten-line passage 1029b3-12 has been misplaced in the manuscripts, and so may not belong in this context at all; in fact it is only the two lines 1029b1-2 that have been slightly misplaced. People seem to feel that, when the lines have been put back in the proper order (1029a33-34, 1029b3-12, 1029b1-2, 1029b13ff), it is the ten lines 1029b3-12 that have been moved, since they have been taken out of Chapter 4 and put into Chapter 3; this feeling is irrational, since the chapter-division is an artifact of the sixteenth century and is not part of the text of Aristotle. Cf. the London *Notes on Book Zeta of Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Burnyeat ed., Oxford, 1979) *ad locum*: « this passage was thought to have no special relevance to its context (whether placed at the end of Z3 with Jaeger or left in Z4), and was not discussed ».

40. The point is not that Aristotle did not have the concept of *ousia tinos* when he wrote the *Categories*: such a concept is presupposed by the phrase *logos tês ousias* in the first sentence of the book, and would in any case be familiar from Plato (e.g. *Phaedrus* 245e2-4). Nor am I suggesting that because the *Categories* does not ask after the *ousia* of a given *ousia*, it cannot contradict *Metaphysics Z* on what *ousiai* there are; the point is just that Z is carrying out a causal investigation, with philosophical and specifically theological ends, and that the *Categories* is not.

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