

## ON THE PRIMACY OF PRIMARY SUBSTANCE IN ARISTOTLE'S *CATEGORIES*

The problem of substance and essence in Aristotle is notorious<sup>1</sup>. Although Aristotle refers to it chiefly in the *Metaphysics*, the basis of our present reflection is the early *Categories*. The dispute over the accurate interpretation of themes throughout the development of a philosopher's thought is not only Plato's privilege<sup>2</sup>. As J. L. Ackrill points out, the *Categories*, one of the treatises comprising the *Organon*, constitutes «only a first step in an investigation of Aristotle's ideas about categories»<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, more recently M. Frede has convincingly proposed that the notion of the categories themselves, which is best to be found in the *Topics* instead of the homonymous treatise, does not change throughout the Stagirite philosopher's intellectual development<sup>4</sup>. Such a view is the corollary of Frede's account of the categories as denoting «kinds of predication»<sup>5</sup> and not different predicates, as the traditional approach, expressed e.g. by W. D. Ross<sup>6</sup>, would like to hold. What in fact changes in the Aristotelian doctrine of the *Metaphysics* is the acknowledgement of a category

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1. Cf. Ch. WITT, *Substance and Essence in Aristotle. An interpretation of Metaphysics VII-IX*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1989. For an extensive bibliography, both older and more recent, on this important and controversial issue, cf. the relevant entries of the bibliographical section of S. M. COHEN, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in E. N. ZALTA (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2012 edition; forthcoming URL=<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>; accessed on 17/06/2012.

2. Cf. e.g. G. E. R. LLOYD, *Aristotle: the Growth & Structure of his Thought*, Cambridge, CUP, <sup>1</sup>1968, (repr. <sup>3</sup>1980).

3. Introductory note in *Aristotle's Categories and De Interpretatione*, translated with Notes by J. L. ACKRILL, Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, <sup>1</sup>1963 (repr. <sup>2</sup>1968 and in 2002 with a Glossary, within the «Clarendon Aristotle Series»: general editors J. L. ACKRILL and L. JUDSON), p. 70. Accordingly, at this stage we should also not expect to find hints to the Aristotelian «hylomorphic» theory, initially introduced in the *Physics* (and the other pertinent Aristotelian works).

4. M. FREDE, *Categories in Aristotle*, in his *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, Oxford, 1987, (pp.29-48), *passim*; especially pp. 30, 31, 33, 46.

5. Cf. *ibid.*, e.g. p. 33 and *passim*.

6. See Sir D. ROSS, *Aristotle*, London, Methuen & Co Ltd, <sup>1</sup>1923; <sup>5</sup>1949, (repr. <sup>5</sup>1971; <sup>2</sup>1974), pp. 23-24.

of substance, since, according to Frede's innovative approach, even such an idea is absent (!) in the *Categories*<sup>7</sup>. Nonetheless, the point on which there is consensus among the various interpreters, starting from the late Antiquity<sup>8</sup>, is that «Aristotle relies greatly on linguistic facts and tests, but his aim is to discover truths about non-linguistic items»<sup>9</sup>.

Having in mind this basic hermeneutical agreement and, for our present aims at this stage, overlooking the recent refinements of the relevant research, there are two preliminary elements that must be stated about the content of the *Categories*. The first is the introduction of the ten categories (of being), *i.e.* kinds of *predication* with Frede, which are: «ἢτοι οὐσίαν... ἢ ποσὸν ἢ ποιὸν ἢ πρός τι ἢ ποῦ ἢ ποτέ ἢ κεῖσθαι ἢ ἔχειν ἢ ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν»<sup>10</sup>. The second equally important feature is the classification of things with respect to the way of their relation to their subjects<sup>11</sup>. Thus, there are: a) things that are *said of* a subject, but they are not in a subject<sup>12</sup>; *e.g.* man in general is said of a particular man-Socrates. This class of things constitutes what is called *secondary substance*, and consists of the *genera* and *species* of the various particular entities. b) On the other hand, there are things in a subject, but not said of a subject, such as an individual instance of the colour white, which exists necessarily within a body. These are the (primary) accidentals/concomitants/properties/nonsubstances that exist by accompanying a particular object. c) There is another class of things which could be called as «secondary accidentals», since it consists of things that can be both in a subject and said of a subject; *e.g.* colour in general is said of the different colours, the white, the black etc., whereas it can be also found in the coloured things, such as a sculpture or the human body. d) The final class is that of the «primary substance», which can neither be in or said of any other subject. Hence it is the class of the autonomous existence of the «individuals», like Socrates or this

7. Cf. FREDE, *op. cit.*, pp. 39, 40, 44.

8. Cf. PORPHYRY, *In Aristotelis categorias expositio per interrogationem et responsionem* [*On Aristotle Categories*, translated by S. K. STRANGE, Duckworth, 1992], *e.g.* (vol. 4.1) 57, 20-58, 29, esp. 57, 5-6: «The subject of this book is the primary imposition of expressions, which is used for communicating about things. For it concerns simple significant words insofar as they signify things...»; 58, 27-29: «So our inquiry is incidentally concerned with the generic *differentiae* of beings, while primarily it is about significant expressions...»; cf. also, 91, 20-21. On Porphyry's distinction between «primary imposition» of words and «secondary imposition» («πρώτη» καὶ «δευτέρα θέσις») cf. Strange's note 23 in *op. cit.*, p. 34.

9. J. L. ACKRILL, *op. cit.*, p. 71. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 75.

10. *Categories*, 1b 25-27: «Of things said without any combination, each signifies either substance or quantity or qualification or a relative or where or when or being-in-position or having or doing or being-affected».

11. Cf. *ibid.*, 1a 20-1b 9.

12. *Ibid.*, 1a 20-21: «... καθ' ὑποκειμένου τινός λέγεται, ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ δὲ οὐδενὶ ἐστίν...».

concrete horse, *viz.* Boukephalas, *i.e.* the subjects of every other predicate/predication.

Even from the above description, it is not difficult for one to ascertain the special status of the primary substance in the Aristotelian *Categories*<sup>13</sup>. However, it is noteworthy that primary substances are not the only «individuals» in the *Categories*; there are also the non-substantial individuals, *viz.* the primary accidentals, which nonetheless do not have independent existence outside the substantial entities<sup>14</sup>. Whereas this «division» of individual entities might seem bizarre, Frede makes the crucial historical remark that Aristotle, on the one hand, aims to preserve the «said of» relation as was already exposed in Plato's *Philebus*, *i.e.* the scheme of genera-species-individuals<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand, Aristotle for the first time introduces the distinction between a (substantial) object and its (accidental) properties, which appears to be absent in Plato<sup>16</sup>. Exactly because this latter distinction can be instantiated only in the level of the individual-sensible entities, where the accidental properties have no independent existence, Aristotle is led to reverse the participation relation between genus-species-individual, and give priority to the individual, as the necessary subject of its «said of» relation with the species and the genus<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, from this perspective, we can view the first steps of Aristotle's attempt to overpass the massive influence of the Academy, as being directed more towards a Democritean notion of individual/indivisible/«atom», rather than towards the Platonic individual of «infima species». In other words, Aristotle, without being a materialist, aims to base his notion of unity not on

13. Cf. *ibid.*, (§5), 2 a 11-14: Οὐσία δέ ἐστιν ἡ κυριώτατά τε καὶ πρώτως καὶ μάλιστα λεγόμενη, ἥ μήτε καθ' ὑποκειμένου τινὸς λέγεται μήτε ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τινί ἐστιν, οἷον ὁ τις ἄνθρωπος ἢ ὁ τις ἵππος.

14. Cf. also M. FREDE, Individuals in Aristotle, in his *Essays...*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

15. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 56-57. Additionally, although irrelevant to Aristotle, and due to our having in the past consulted K. M. SAYRE's account of *Parmenides' Lesson: Translation and Explication of Plato's Parmenides*, Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1996, one could suspect that the answer to the *Philebus*' question about how Forms could be both one and many (cf. M. FREDE, p. 56) might be also interpreted as a hint to Plato's revised Pythagoreanism [cf. K. M. SAYRE, *e.g.* pp. 95-97 and 305. However, this is only one suggestion among a manifold of interesting interpretations. Moreover, some scholars, the paradigmatic example being M. M. McCabe, have successfully challenged the view of a strictly doctrinal Plato, focusing on the dialogical aspect of his philosophy; see *e.g.* M. M. MCCABE, Plato's Ways of Writing, in G. FINE (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, Oxford, OUP, 2008, pp. 88-113].

16. Cf. M. FREDE, *op. cit.*, p. 56. Perhaps in following Frede we are too strict with Plato here. As Dr Raphael Woolf has suggested to us, a closer look at the Platonic corpus, *e.g.* the *Euthyphro*, 4 b 7-9; 10 a 1-11 b 1, esp. 11 a 7-9, could show that Plato had already considered this dimension as well, (not, however, in the systematic way that is presented by Aristotle here).

17. Cf. also M. FREDE, p. 57.

a descending scale from a generality to *multiple* concrete entities, but reversely, *i.e.* on the various, or even at least one, ultimately *concrete* entities that can be the subject of more general terms.

Nonetheless, we repeat that, according to Frede's account, the individual of the *Categories* is not only the primary substance, but also the primary accidental property. Now, then, that we have discerned why Aristotle is positively predisposed towards such a notion of individual, we can proceed on ascertaining more systematically why the Stagirite philosopher attributes special primacy to the primary *substance*. Roughly speaking, we can extract three related reasons, plus an indirect hint, from the fifth chapter of the *Categories*. The first reason has already been repeatedly pointed out. Aristotle stresses that if the primary substances, *e.g.* Socrates, did not exist, then it would be impossible for the other classes of things to exist, too, since primary substance is the necessary subject/«receptacle» of the existence of all other things, *viz.* secondary substances and accidentals<sup>18</sup>. Of course, this statement reminds us of the classic «universalia in rebus» theory of Aristotle. However, the present formulation raises some difficulties. As Ackrill remarks, «it may well be doubted whether [*sc.* Aristotle thinks that] primary substances could exist if secondary substances and items in other categories did not do so»<sup>19</sup>. It is the same objection that Porphyry cites stating that if we eliminate «man» we have simultaneously eliminated «Socrates»<sup>20</sup>. And the Neoplatonist commentator's answer is that «individual substance does not mean just one of the particulars, but rather all of the particular men, from whom we conceive the man that is predicated in common...»<sup>21</sup>. Porphyry's reply reveals his assuming «that the secondary substances of *Cat.*, §5 are not Platonic Forms..., but abstractable universals present in things»<sup>22</sup>.

Another less doubtful assertion by Porphyry is that «the *Categories* is about ordinary sensible substances»<sup>23</sup>. And we regard it as an accurate remark

18. Cf. *Cat.*, 2 a 34-2 b 6c, especially 2 b 6b-6 c: «ὥστε μὴ οὐσῶν τῶν πρώτων οὐσιῶν ἀδύνατον τῶν ἄλλων τι εἶναι». Cf. also PORPHYRY, *op. cit.*, 89, 17-18: «μὴ οὖν τῶν πρώτων οὐσιῶν, οὐδὲν ἄν τῶν ἄλλων ὑπάρχοι».

19. J. L. ACKRILL, *op. cit.*, p. 83. Cf. also, *ibid.*, p. 88: «... much that he [*sc.* Aristotle] has said [*sc.* until 3 b 10] provides a strong temptation to think of species and genera of substance as somehow existing in their own right like Platonic Forms». For Aristotle's attempt to «remedy» this view clearly, cf. the third reason of the primacy of primary substances, *infra*, p. 4.

20. Cf. PORPHYRY, *op. cit.*, 90, 19-20.

21. *Ibid.*, 90, 33-91, 1. In subtle defense of Aristotle, Dr Woolf has also suggested to us that «it may be significant here that Aristotle gives as his example ὁ τις ἄνθρωπος (2 a 13) rather than, say, ὁ Σωκράτης».

22. Cf. S. K. STRANGE, *op. cit.*, p. 81, n. 176 (cf. also *infra*, last remark of our final n. 45).

23. *Ibid.*, p. 92, n. 221. Hence, always according to Porphyry, whereas this holds in respect to «significant expressions», regarding nature it is the intelligible substances (*viz.* the Platonic Forms) that we should regard as primary. Cf. PORPHYRY, *op. cit.*, 91, 25-27.

since it fits well with Aristotle's second reason for assigning primacy to the primary substance. More precisely, the Stagirite philosopher stresses the *non-reciprocal* relation between genus-species-primary substance regarding their ability for predication<sup>24</sup>. That is, every more general notion is predicated *only* to a *less* general notion, like the genus to species and both to the primary substance. The conclusion is that every more particular entity is also «more a substance» since it is more «informative», *i.e.* it can have a more concrete (and thus more precise/adequate) explanation for its specific being. Hence, it is obvious that Aristotle's notion of primacy is oriented towards what is closer to our sensible reality; the species is closer than the genus, whereas the individual primary substance marks the end of this descent to particularity<sup>25</sup>. Nevertheless, Ackrill is again critical of the ancient philosopher's argument, since he points out that Aristotle himself in *Cat.*, 15 a 4-7 refers to a specific sense of priority exemplified by the priority of genera to species «since they do not reciprocate as to the implication of existence»<sup>26</sup>.

In any case, Aristotle's specific orientation in the first chapters of the *Categories* is also confirmed by his third reason for justifying the primacy of primary substance, and this is that the latter signifies a certain "this"-«τόδε τι», whereas the secondary substances at best denote a certain qualification-«ποιόν τι»<sup>27</sup>. It is a fact that Ackrill acknowledges Aristotle's explicit attempt to differentiate his position on substance from the respective Platonic one, but the modern commentator objects to the use of «qualification» in terms of secondary substance, since there can be terminological confusion with the accidental category of quality<sup>28</sup>. Nonetheless, what we have to keep in mind is that, as a matter of fact, the Aristotelian view, *contra* Plato, clearly prefers

24. Cf. *Cat.*, 2 b 7-22. Cf. PORPHYRY, *op. cit.*, 92, 7-93, 20 and 97, 21-23.

25. Cf. *e.g.* *Cat.*, 2 b 15-17: «ἐπὶ αἱ πρῶται οὐσίαι διὰ τὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἕκασιν ὑποκεῖσθαι καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄλλα κατὰ τούτων κατηγορεῖσθαι ἢ ἐν ταύταις εἶναι διὰ τοῦτο μάλιστα οὐσίαι λέγονται».

26. J. L. ACKRILL, *op. cit.*, p. 84. Cf. our comments *infra* in n. 45. As for the third part of the *Categories* (11 b 16 ff.- *Postpraedicamenta*), Ackrill's view (p. 70) is that «there is no reason to doubt its authenticity, but probably it was not a part of the original *Categories* but was tacked on by an editor». (We do not need to doubt the modern editor's verdict either).

27. See *Cat.*, 3 b 10-23. Cf. also PORPHYRY, *op. cit.*, 96, 7-8: «οὐκέτι γὰρ ἐπὶ τῶν δευτέρων οὐσιῶν ἔστιν φάναι τὸ τόδε ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τὸ τοιόνδε».

28. J. L. ACKRILL, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89. It is also interesting that concerning the status of *differentia* («διαφορά») – to which we have decided not to refer (cf., however, *infra*, n. 35) – Porphyry, after having stated that «differentiae belong to species and genera, not to individuals» (*op. cit.*, 95, 8-9), he defines it, hence, as «essential quality» («ποιότης οὐσιώδης»; *ibid.*, 95, 19; cf. *ibid.*, 95, 17-20). What is more, from this point of view one could see the pair: primary substance-[primary and secondary] accidental property as somehow analogous to the pair: secondary substance-differentia (specifica) (cf. also *infra*, pp. 4-6).

the particularity of the individual –numerically one primary substance to the secondary substances’ generality of «one over many».

Besides, it is a fact that we have already frequently ascertained Aristotle’s orientation towards the individual, and especially the individual substance, since it is the necessary subject for the existence –and hence the predication– of both the secondary substances and the accidental qualities. However, it is also a fact that, since our first reference to the four classes of entities, we have not mentioned the «secondary accidentals». Nevertheless, in all our references to (primary) properties it is implied that the secondary properties necessarily accompany the primary ones, as in the case of primary and secondary substances. Now, nonetheless, it is interesting for one to think about the relationship between secondary properties and secondary substance, especially since Aristotle claims that «colour is in body and therefore also in an individual body...»<sup>29</sup>. In this phrase we take the «colour» as denoting secondary property, «body» as signifying secondary substance, and of course individual body as primary substance. According to our view, such a formulation forms a fourth *indirect* reason justifying the primacy of primary substance, since it spells out that there cannot be any direct predication of secondary property to secondary substance (see «colour is in body»), unless there is the necessary mediation of the primary substance. Since the latter implies necessarily the secondary substance, the primary substance will provide the necessary bridge for the *indirect* relationship between secondary property («colour») and secondary substance («body»).

Therefore, from this point of view we are afraid that Ackrill is too strict with Aristotle when the former accuses the latter of being «careless» in his formulation, on the grounds that Aristotle «speaks as if, because colour is in body, colour is in an individual body. Strictly, however, it is not colour, but this individual instance of colour, that is in this individual body»<sup>30</sup>. According to our own approach, if one reads the Stagirite’s formulation from the point of view of the proper-*indirect* relationship between the secondaries substance and property, then the outcome is not a «careless» account in need of clarification, but, conversely, it becomes itself illuminating both of the relationship of secondary entities, and, hence, of the necessary priority of the primary substance.

29. *Cat.*, 2 b 1-2: «πάντα τὸ χρῶμα ἐν σώματι, οὐκοῦν καὶ ἐν τινὶ σώματι».

30. J. L. ACKRILL, *op. cit.*, p. 83. From a separate, but interrelated, point of view, (to which we are referring in the next paragraph of our main text –and in n. 32), G. E. L. OWEN, *Inherence, Phronesis*, 10, 1965, pp. 100-101, is critical of Ackrill’s aforementioned assertions, as well (Owen’s important article has been included in his posthumous volume: IDEM, *Logic, Science, and Dialectic. Collected Papers in Greek Philosophy*, M. NUSSBAUM (ed.), Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1986).

Nevertheless, we, too, should not be too strict with the modern commentator, since his objection raises the crucial issue of the proper status of primary accidentals. In one of his following remarks Ackrill also states that «it is now implied not only that generosity can be described as in Callias (though generosity could certainly exist in the absence of Callias), but also that generosity can be described as in man simply on the ground that some one man is generous (and not, as it strictly should be, on the ground that all instances of generosity are in individual men)»<sup>31</sup>. Apparently, such a statement declares that the primary-«individual» properties are «individuated by their bearers», *e.g.* Socrates' wisdom is distinguished by other instances of wisdom because it is Socrates' and not, say, Plato's. However, again, such a view has been challenged very convincingly by Frede's aforementioned innovative account<sup>32</sup>. According to Frede, the Aristotelian view allows room for an individual property (*e.g.* Socrates' wisdom) existing somehow independently of a *concrete* individual substance (Socrates)<sup>33</sup>. In fact, the Stagirite philosopher aimed to expound that since what is said to be *in* a (primary) substance is implied to be also in secondary substance, there is *at least* one subject without which an individual property cannot exist<sup>34</sup>. Nonetheless, potentially all the individual substances, which have as subject a common species (*viz.* a secondary substance said of its various individuals), could be attributed this very individual property. What is definitely excluded is that there could be more than one genus/species (of a property) said of this individual property<sup>35</sup>.

Now, of course, it seems like Frede's account eliminating (a part of) the primacy of the individual/primary *substance*, since the individuation of the

31. J. L. ACKRILL, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

32. Cf. M. FREDE, *Individuals in Aristotle, op. cit., passim*. IDEM, *op. cit.*, p. 57 (and n. 5 in p. 367), acknowledges the affinity (but not identity) of his approach to Owen's, *op. cit.* (cf. *supra*, n. 30). For a review of the various positions on this issue, cf. S. M. COHEN, *op. cit.*, section: «Nonsubstantial Particulars», which forms a Supplement to (section 1.5.: «A Recent Debate» of) P. STUDTMANN, *Aristotle's Categories*, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, op. cit.*, Fall 2008 edition, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/aristotle-categories/>; accessed on 17/06/2012.

33. Cf. M. FREDE, *op. cit.*, *e.g.* pp. 58, 62.

34. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 60.

35. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 62. From this point of view the boundaries between property and *differentia* become even thinner. According to M. Frede (*op. cit.*, pp. 52 and 61), *differentia* forms a «conceptual»/«subjective» part of a (secondary and therefore of a primary) substance; it can only occur in *one* and the same genus and, therefore, be said of only one species (including its various individuals), since *differentia* (*specifica*) is what differentiates the various species of one genus. In an analogous way, regarding the «in relation» the (individual) property is not a subjective part of the individual substance in which it is said to be, but it can occur only in one and the same secondary genus/species (of this individual property).

primary accidental is not due to the latter's relation to the former<sup>36</sup>. However, we should bear in mind that such a view is the corollary of Aristotle's «peculiarly weak notion of individual»<sup>37</sup>, which as we have formerly stressed includes both substances and accidental properties<sup>38</sup>. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that Frede's approach refers essentially to problems of the *identity* of an individual, whether it is substance or accidental. Still, Frede would not be opposed to the primary reason of the priority of primary substance; it is our firm belief that he does continue to maintain the ontologically fundamental function of the individual/primary substance as being the necessary (existent) subject for the *existence* of all other classes of things, and hence of the individual properties, even if the individual substance is not responsible for the individuation (*viz.* specific identity) of the property itself<sup>39</sup>.

Having made some inevitable comments owing to Frede's illuminating distinction, there remains to make the following remark: generally, as we have already seen, in the fifth chapter of the *Categories* there are various cases in which primary substance is opposed, and hence is superior, both to accidental properties and to secondary substance. However, there are also other cases in which Aristotle speaks of substance (without qualification) as opposed to the concomitant properties. Picking up on the aforementioned (fourth) indirect reason for justifying the superior importance of primary substance<sup>40</sup>, we could ascertain that even in those latter cases Aristotle's examples refer to the primary substance; and it is because these statements can hold in relation to primary substance that we would infer that the same holds in relation to its secondary substances.

Two final examples will suffice: a) Aristotle claims that substance (without

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36. And, indeed, from such a perspective, as in the *Metaphysics* the tracing of the cause of the individuation of sensible substances is still problematic (cf. also *infra*, in n. 39), it seems that neither in the early *Categories* we should expect to find a provisional answer at least to the «mystery» of the individuation of the primary accidental properties...

37. Cf. M. FREDE, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

38. Cf. *supra*, p. 3.

39. Perhaps, such a remark could have also some slight «proleptic» bearing on the differentiation between C. Witt and M. Frede considering the substance of the *Metaphysics*, although this is not the primary subject of the present paper. Nevertheless, as Witt notes (*op. cit.*, p. 144, n. 1): «More recently, Michael Frede (Substance in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*..., *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-95) presents a particular forms [*sic.*] interpretation that is similar to mine in several respects. The basic difference concerns the function assigned to forms or essences. According to Frede, individual forms function as principles of *identity* for objects; its form... My interpretation differs from both Frede's and Hartman's with respect to the issue of the function of Aristotle's *individual essences*... Rather, the essence is the cause of being of a substance; the central function of essence is to explain the actual *existence of a unified substance*» [the emphases are ours].

40. Cf. *supra*, pp. 4-5.

qualification), which «is numerically one and the same [,] is able to receive contraries», giving as an example, among others, an *individual* man [again «ὁ τις ἄνθρωπος»] who «becomes pale at one time and dark at another»<sup>41</sup>. As Ackrill aptly remarks, «what Aristotle gives here as distinctive of substance is strictly a characteristic of primary substances... (It will then be distinctive of secondary substances that the individuals of which they are said are capable of admitting opposites)»<sup>42</sup>. b) The same holds for Aristotle's next observation regarding a potential counter-example to his previous ascertainment. Whereas the truth-status of statements/beliefs can change while the verbal expressions have not, it is not that the change has been initiated by the statements themselves. Only «in the case of substances [*sic* –without qualification] it is by themselves changing that they are able to receive contraries»<sup>43</sup>. And again, one of the Stagirite's examples is a substance becoming dark instead of pale<sup>44</sup>. For Aristotle's example to make sense to his readers, such an entity most presumably is the same *individual* man of the former (a) instance<sup>45</sup>. At any rate,

41. Cf. *Cat.*, 4 a 10-21; cf. also PORPHYRY, *op. cit.*, 98, 3-5, who calls «τὸ μίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν οὖσαν ἀριθμῶ δεκτικὴν εἶναι τῶν ἐναντίων» as being «most of all the *proprium* of substance» («μάλιστα οὐσίας λέγοιμεν ἴδιον εἶναι»).

42. J. L. ACKRILL, *op. cit.*, p. 89. Let us also note that Ackrill is critical towards Aristotle's first counter-example of a particular instance of a colour; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

43. Cf. *Cat.*, 4 a 22-b 19. See also Porphyry's interesting comments in *op. cit.*, 98, 23-100, 10. Among else, the Neoplatonic philosopher reminds us that, in fact, the contraries referred to by Aristotle here correspond only to accidental properties (cf. esp. *ibid.*, 99, 3-13).

44. Or «becoming dark *from* (being) pale», since following J. L. Ackrill's rendering of the Greek «ἐκ» as «instead of» might be a bit misleading.

45. It is not only the continuity of (b)-case with (a) that guarantees this assertion, especially in the light of our previous remarks (the fourth/indirect reason for primary substance's primacy), but also the plain fact that Aristotle's examples come from our own experience, (albeit it is also our experience that is in need of explanation): thus, even if it might be the case that the species «human» (secondary substance) becomes tanned (dark from being pale), it is because we have the experience of say Socrates' becoming tanned (*i.e.* of a primary substance), that we can generalize with respect to secondary substance. It is such a kind of priority, lying at the heart of Aristotle's «naturalist» methodology (which is another major issue that cannot be touched here), that must have underlain his attitude in asserting the primacy of primary substance. In the terminology launched in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, (I, 2, 71 b 33-72 a 1), we could claim that primary substance is primary, or prior and more familiar in relation to us, whereas secondary substance (*i.e.* the universal) is prior by nature. «I call prior (πρότερα) and more familiar (γνωριμώτερα) in relation to us (πρὸς ἡμᾶς) what is nearer to perception, prior and more familiar *simpliciter* (ἀπλῶς) what is further away. What is most universal (τὰ καθόλου μάλιστα) is furthest away, and the particulars (τὰ καθ' ἑκάστα) are nearest; and these are opposite to each other» (*ibid.*, 72 a 1-5; the translation is by J. Barnes and is included in *The Revised Oxford Translation of The Complete Works of Aristotle*, J. BARNES (ed.), vol. 1, Bollingen Series LXXI 2, Princeton, PUP, <sup>1</sup>1984; <sup>6</sup>1995, where J. L. Ackrill's translation of the *Categories* can be found, as well).

coming to an end, let us however be cautious: all these positions are not going to be Aristotle's final words about (primary) substance. Rather, they should be seen as the starting point of a fascinating-vacillating intellectual journey passing through the *Physics* and leading to the *Metaphysics*...

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## ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΥΠΕΡΟΧΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΡΩΤΗΣ ΟΥΣΙΑΣ ΣΤΙΣ ΚΑΤΗΓΟΡΙΕΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΟΥΣ

### Περίληψη

Τὸ παρὸν ἄρθρο ἀσχολεῖται πρωτευόντως μὲ τοὺς λόγους σύμφωνα μὲ τοὺς ὁποίους ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης, στὸ πρῶμο ἔργο του *Κατηγορίες*, ἀποδίδει ὑπεροχή στὴν «πρώτη οὐσία» ἔναντι τῆς «δευτέρας οὐσίας» (δηλ. τοῦ εἶδους καὶ τοῦ γένους) καὶ τῶν συμβεβηκότων. Ὁ συγγραφέας, λαμβάνοντας ὑπ' ὄψιν τόσο συγχρόνους ὥσο καὶ ἀρχαίους σχολιαστὲς, ξεκινᾷ τὴν προσέγγισή του μὲ ὁρισμένες γενικὲς εἰσαγωγικὲς παρατηρήσεις γιὰ τὸ περιεχόμενο τῶν *Κατηγοριῶν* καὶ τὴ θέση τους στὸ Ἀριστοτελικὸ *corpus* καὶ σύστημα. Ἐπίσης, προσδιορίζει βασικὲς ἔννοιες, καθὼς καὶ ἰδιαιτερότητες τῶν Ἀριστοτελικῶν ἀπόψεων. Ἐν συνεχείᾳ, ἔχοντας ἐπιχειρήσει σύγκριση τοῦ Σταγειρίτη μὲ τὸν Πλάτωνα, προβαίνει στὴν κριτικὴ ἐξέταση τριῶν ἀλληλένδετων λόγων σχετικῶν μὲ τὴν ὑπεροχὴ τῆς πρώτης οὐσίας, καθὼς καὶ ἑνὸς

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However, recalling that the view expressed in the *Analytics* (another treatise of the *Ἔργα*) is better compatible with the *Metaphysics*, it seems that the world-view of the *Categories* takes what is «prior to us» to be also «prior by nature», although as we have seen *supra* on the issue of priority (e.g., p. 4 on n. 26), Aristotle is at the same time ready to acknowledge a «by nature priority» of secondary substance. Such reflections must have led Plato's disciple to modify his metaphysical (and epistemological) views. On the other hand, it is equally interesting that in the last chapter of *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle will famously (and puzzlingly) declare that «it is necessary for us to become familiar with the primitives by induction; for perception too [accepting Barnes' reading of καὶ for ἡ –cf. *op. cit.*, p. 166, n. 54] instills (ἐμπροί) the universal in this way» (*Post. Anal.*, II, 19, 100 b 4-5.) Even if the final Aristotelian outlook has been reshaped and modified with respect to the dialectic between particularity and generality, as we also stress in our main text, to a certain extent and manner the *Categories'* primacy of primary substance does survive in Aristotle's mature work (which is one of the reasons that presumably enabled the Neoplatonic Commentators to give a unifying reading of Aristotle, as they did with Plato, and to make the Stagirite be in agreement with his teacher –cf. also *supra*, p. 162: main text on nn. 21-22, and G. E. KARAMANOLIS, *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement? Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry*, Oxford, OUP, «Oxford Philosophical Monographs», 2006).



ἔμμεσου τέταρτου λόγου. Ἡ πρώτη οὐσία εἶναι τὸ ἀναγκαῖο ὑποκείμενο στὸ ὁποῖο κατηγοροῦνται τόσο ἡ δεύτερη οὐσία ὅσο καὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα. Ἐπομένως, α) ἡ πρώτη οὐσία εἶναι ἀναγκαῖα γιὰ τὴν ὑπαρξὴ τῶν ὑπολοίπων (δευτέρων οὐσιῶν καὶ συμβεβηκότων). β) Ἡ σχέση πρώτης οὐσίας μὲ τὴν δεύτερη οὐσία δὲν εἶναι ἀμφίδρομη. Ἡ πρώτη οὐσία εἶναι ἓνα «ἄτομο», μὲ τὴν ἐννοία ὅτι δὲν κατηγορεῖται σὲ ἄλλο ὑποκείμενο, ἀλλὰ παραμένει ἡ ἴδια τὸ ἔσχατο ὑποκείμενο τῶν κατηγορήσεων. Συνεπῶς, γ) ἡ πρώτη οὐσία εἶναι ἓνα «τόδε τι», καθὼς ἀποτελεῖ τὴ μεγαλύτερη δυνατὴ συγκεκριμενοποίηση ἑνὸς ὄντος. Ἐπίσης, ὁ συγγραφέας ἀνευρίσκει, στὴ διαμεσολαβητικὴ θέση τῆς πρώτης οὐσίας ὡς ἀναγκαῖας γέφυρας σύνδεσης μεταξὺ «δευτέρου συμβεβηκότος» καὶ δευτέρας οὐσίας, τὸν τέταρτο ἔμμεσο λόγο τῆς ὑπεροχῆς τῆς πρώτης οὐσίας. Μετὰ ἀπὸ ἓνα ἐκτενὲς σχόλιο γύρω ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀριστοτελικὴν ἐννοία τοῦ «ἀτόμου» καὶ τὴ λειτουργία τῆς πρώτης οὐσίας ὡς πρὸς τὴν ἐξαιτομίκευση (δηλ. τὴν ταυτότητα) καὶ τὴν ὑπαρξὴ τῶν δευτερουσῶν ιδιοτήτων, ἡ προσέγγιση ὁλοκληρώνεται μὲ μὴ ἐπιβεβαίωση τοῦ προαναφερθέντος τετάρτου ἔμμεσου λόγου μέσα ἀπὸ περιπτώσεις/παραδείγματα ὅπου ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης δὲν φαίνεται νὰ κάνει διαφοροποίηση μεταξὺ πρώτης καὶ δευτέρας οὐσίας.

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