Notes on CATEGORIES

In antiquity it was debated whether CATEGORIES belongs to logic or metaphysics. Its present position in the corpus reflects the view that it belongs in logic.

Yet the language seems to me to indicate that it belongs to semantics, since the categories are initially given as things MEANT by things said without combination.

Among these things meant are UNIVERSALS, for example, that which "man" means. In his "Introduction [Isagoge] to the Categories, Porphyry posed a famous question about universals:

Because of the four-level semantics (ON INTERPRETATION 1; written names symbolize spoken names, spoken names symbolize thoughts, thoughts resemble things), the CATEGORIES can generally be understood as pertaining to items on all these levels.

General context: the categories are laid out as structured arrays of objects (meanings). Each array (category) is a [kind of] logical division tree or similar structure in which all the objects (genera, species, differentiae) are related to each other. Predication is explained as naming one object after another (i. e., giving one object another object's name--for example, in "Man is white" we give MAN the name "white", taken from the object "WHITE").

Main difficulties that I find:
(1) It is unclear by what principle the list of the several categories are generated or discovered.
(2) It is unclear whether each category represents a single semantic structure or only a kind of semantic structure (with a certain kind of relational configuration).
(3) The structures of many of the categories are obscure.

CHAPTER ONE

In this chapter Aristotle defines three terms: "homonymous", "synonymous", and "paronymous". These are qualities applied to pairs of objects in relation to some name. Again, the objects in question appear to be semantic objects, or meanings:

"Homonymous": Two objects are homonymous iff they have the same name, but not according to the same "account of substance (or
essence). (We should understand "account of substance" as "definition". This term is used by Socrates in the PHAEDO in the same sense. This is the Platonic sense of "substance" in which the substance of anything is its Form, revealed by thought, as opposed to sense, in the form of a definition.

"Homonymous" is sometimes translated "equivocal".

"Synonymous": Two objects are synonymous iff they have the same name, according to the same account of substance.

"Synonymous" is sometimes translated "univocal".

"Paronymous": A thing is paronymous [on another thing] iff the first thing has a name from something else with a difference in inflection. Examples: something is called "grammarian" from "grammar"; something is called "brave" from "bravery".

"Paronymous" is sometimes translated "derivative".

In these examples, "inflection" is interpreted very broadly, to include the difference between nouns and certain related adjectives.

Although not expressed here (or anywhere in the CATEGORIES explicitly), the context of these definitions, I think, should be understood as follows:

In a [simple] affirmative proposition, one or more individual subjects are in effect given two names--their own "proper" name, which reveals their essence (the "subject"), and either the name of something else (at least some other semantic object) or an inflexion of the name of something else (the "predicate"). It may share the predicate name with its proper owner either homonymously, synonymously, or paronymously.

If what is predicated is a universal over (see below) the subject, the predication is of the name itself and the subject individual and the proper owner of the name are synonymous. If not, the predication is of an inflexion of the name, and the individual subject and the proper owner of the name are homonymously or paronymously.

CHAPTER TWO
Distinction between things said with and without combination.
NOTE: Here there is a difference in terminology from ON INTERPRETATION. *LO-GOI* are there not called "things said" and the term for putting things together is "composition" (*SYN-THE-SIS*), not "combination" (*SUM-PLO-KE*). This means either that the two works are far removed in Aristotle's career or that he is here speaking of things meant being combined rather than things said being composited.

Distinction between being in a subject and being said of a subject.

Being said of a subject is being a universal name which is the name of an individual subject and reveals what the subject is. I. e., SAID OF is the relation of a name to an individual thing whose nature the name signifies.

Being in a subject is being ontologically dependent on a certain subject in such a way that a thing cannot exist except as a manifestation or aspect of that subject. Thus, as I interpret the matter,

BEING IN (SOMETHING) AS SUBJECT is the relation which a necessary or essential accident has to its proper subject--i. e., color to surface.

NOTE: There is a well-known essay on this question by G. E. L. Owen called "Inherence". (In G. E. L. Owen, LOGIC, SCIENCE, AND DIALECTIC, on reserve.) I disagree with Owen and agree with the tradition he is attacking.

Thus we have the four-fold distinction as labelled by Porphyry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSAL SUBSTANCE</th>
<th>**********</th>
<th>UNIVERSAL ACCIDENT</th>
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<td>INDIVIDUAL SUBSTANCE</td>
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Here "accident" is meant in sense (1), as the opposite of substance.

This distinction is generated by a sort of truth table:
NOTE: Bertrand Russell accused Aristotle of confusing the relations of class inclusion and class membership (PRINCIPLES OF MATHEMATICS), and the germ of this appears to be here, where Aristotle seems to say that a higher universal is related to a lower universal and an individual in the same way. I would like to reserve judgement about how thoroughgoing this error is and whether it is a genuine error or merely apparent.

CHAPTER THREE
Aristotle posits two principles here which could possibly be considered axioms.

This is the first occurrence of the word "to predicate" in the work. As stated earlier, it appears that to predicate one thing of another is to apply either the "proper" name of one class of things or an inflection of that name to another class of things, resulting in the things in question being as a pair either homonymous, or synonymous, or the subject being paronymous on that from which the predicate is taken.

AXIOM 1: If B is truly predicated of A, then whatever said of B (i.e., is a universal over B) is also said of A.
AXIOM 2: If B and A are genera neither co-ordinate nor subordinate to each other, then the same differentia can never be truly predicated of both.

Note: Axiom 2 may provide the key to the formal distinctions among the categories, since the categories are genera neither co-ordinate not subordinate to each other. They may be formally distinct by having wholly disjoint sets of differentiae.

CHAPTER FOUR
A list of the ten categories. (Ten categories also occur in TOPICS I, 9.)

Aristotle introduces the categories as the things signified by "things said without combination"—i.e., by nouns, verbs, or inflections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>(OTHER TERMS FOR)</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>substance</td>
<td>man, horse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how much/many</td>
<td>quantity</td>
<td>two cubits, three cubits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how qualified</td>
<td>quantity</td>
<td>white, grammatical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re something</td>
<td>relative</td>
<td>double, half, larger than</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>in the Lyceum, in the agora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>yesterday, last year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to act</td>
<td>action</td>
<td>cuts, burns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be acted on</td>
<td>passion</td>
<td>is cut, is burned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be in a position</td>
<td>position</td>
<td>lies, sits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to have</td>
<td>state</td>
<td>is shod, is armed</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The last two are the categories omitted when they are given as eight.

Aristotle never states the principle by which the list is derived, but does sometimes seem to call them "inflections".

Porphyry questioned why the treatment of "things said without combination" was different from in ON INTERPRETATION (there they were either nouns or verbs), and attributed the difference to whether Aristotle was primarily concerned with things signified or with the terms as terms. He asserted that "substance", "quantity", etc. are terms of "first imposition" while "noun", "verb", etc. are terms of "second imposition". (This distinction became a mainstay of later scholastic logic.)
Trendelenburg (nineteenth century) said that the categories were derived from the parts of speech, thus parting company with Porphyry. By "parts of speech", Trendelenburg meant the traditional, not the Aristotelian parts of speech.

I published a paper in 1993 in which I argued a refined Trendelenburgian position—the categories are derived from the ways words can vary inflectionally—case, tense, number, voice, etc. This connects them with the Aristotelian speech-part INFLECTION. My thesis has trouble with the categories TO HAVE and TO BE IN A POSITION.

Another question concerns the philosophical value of the distinctions between the various categories of accident. However, this question is resolved in the PHYSICS, where most of the categories come to play a distinctive role.

CHAPTER FIVE

This is a central chapter in current discussions of Aristotle's philosophy as a whole, particularly as it concerns Aristotle's theory of universals and ultimate stance vis-a-vis the Platonic Ideas (Forms). This chapter is the source of the interpretation of Aristotle that according to him substance is individual. Yet, although he says that individuals are substances to a greater degree than universals, we must keep in mind that the universal/individual distinction is not the same distinction as the substance/attribute (accident(1)) distinction.

Chapters 5 through 9 seem to have as their main focus the finding of a distinctive mark of each category. The categories cannot be defined by genus and difference because there is no synonymous universal higher than and common to the categories. They are each BEINGS in different senses.

The subjects of these chapters are as follows:
Chapter 5: substance
Chapter 6: quantity
Chapter 7: relative
Chapter 8: quality
Chapter 9: action and passion

There is a break in the text in Chapter 9 and it appears that the rest of the original CATEGORIES has been lost. The succeeding
chapters are usually regarded as spurious (a Peripatetic work not written by Aristotle*) and have been regarded since antiquity as a separate work, the POSTPREDICAMENTA. (The CATEGORIES are in Latin the PREDICAMENTA or PRAEDICAMENTA.)

*The Peripatetic works not written by Aristotle may be valuable sources for Aristotle's views. The term "spurious" should not mislead us as to their value.

(Content of Chapter 5:)

Substance most of all is that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject—e.g., a certain man or horse. Secondarily, things which are said of some subject, but not in a subject are called substance.

If something is said of a subject, then both its name and definition are truly predicated of the subject. (This makes the subject and the thing predicated of it synonymous with respect to the name they share.) If something is in a subject, then usually neither the name nor the definition is truly predicated of the subject. However, in some cases the name is. But never the definition.

Examples:

"Socrates is a man" is true.

Also "Socrates is a footed, two-footed, tame animal".

With respect to "man", Socrates and man are synonymous.

"Socrates talks" is true.

But not "Socrates is the act of talking".

With respect to "talking", Socrates is paronymous on the act of talking.

"Socrates is white" is true.

But not: "Socrates is the empty color".

With respect to "white", Socrates and the color white are homonymous.
One important effect this doctrine has is to bar certain sophistries (apparent arguments) such as

"Socrates is white and white is a color--therefore, Socrates is a color."

All things are either said of primary substances or are in them as subjects. Therefore, if primary substances did not exist, nothing would exist.

THIS IS DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSITE TO PLATO'S THEORY OF FORMS.

Lower universals are more substances than higher--for they are more proper to primary substances.

Of things not primary substances, only species and genera are substances at all, for only they reveal what substances are.

Substance is not in a subject. But this is also true of differentiae.

(Seemingly the thought here is that differentiae are constitutive of substance.)

All things called from substances and differentiae are called so synonymously.

A universal substance really signifies a quality as applied to a certain subject (the genus). (Seemingly this account is also applicable to differentiae.)

Substances have no contrary, but this is also true of quantities. (In the METAPHYSICS, there seems to be contrariety in substance through its contrary differentiae.)

Substance does not admit of more and less.

Substance, while being numerically one and the same, admits contraries.

If we add "through change in itself", to rule out propositions and beliefs (which can change truth value, but only through a change in something else), this is the distinctive mark of substance.