



# Aristotle: On What There Is



# Overview

## Reminder

### Early ontology

- Background

- The 4-fold division

- 10 categories

### Later ontology

- Questions

# Table of Contents

## Reminder

### Early ontology

- Background

- The 4-fold division

- 10 categories

### Later ontology

- Questions

- science starts with wonder; seeking explanation
- Protrepticus: highest goal is to attain truth about fundamental causes; things that are prior
- **What is fundamental?** – Aristotle returns to this question multiple times throughout his career.
  - early answer (*Categories*): individuals
  - late answer (*Metaphysics*): form

## Reminder

### Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

### Later ontology

Questions

# Table of Contents

Reminder

Early ontology

- Background

- The 4-fold division

- 10 categories

Later ontology

- Questions

- *Categories* is part of the Organon (= tool); suggests that it's not itself part of "philosophy"
- Organon's ordering:
  - 1 *Categories*: deals with terms
  - 2 *De Interpretatione*: deals with propositions
  - 3 *Analytica*: deal with syllogisms (supposed to be basis for acquisition and display of knowledge)
- BUT: this ordering stems from 2nd c. AD – hence it does not tell us what Aristotle thinks they are about.

## Reminder

### Early ontology

#### Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

### Later ontology

Questions

# The Content of the *Categories*

3 parts:

- 1–3: preliminary points
- 4–9: dealing with categories
- 10–15: various things

Various questions about authenticity and unity

NB: the *Categories* is not really about categories, and it is not about terms.  
It is about the basic classification of being.

Reminder

Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

Later ontology

Questions

# The Four-fold Division

## Categories 1a20–b9

Of things there are: (a) some are **said of a subject** but are not in any subject. For example, man is said of a subject, the individual man, but is not in any subject. (b) Some are **in a subject** but are not said of any subject. . . . For example, the individual knowledge-of-grammar is in a subject, the soul, but is not said of any subject; and the individual white is in a subject, the body (for all colour is in a body), but is not said of any subject. (c) Some are both said of a subject and in a subject. For example, knowledge is in a subject, the soul, and is also said of a subject, knowledge-of-grammar. (d) Some are neither in a subject nor said of a subject, for example, the individual man or the individual horse – for nothing of this sort is either in a subject or said of a subject. Things that are individual and numerically one are, without exception, not said of any subject, but there is nothing to prevent some of them from being in a subject – the individual knowledge-of-grammar is one of the things in a subject.

Reminder

Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

Later ontology

Questions

# The Four-fold Division

	said of a subject	not said of a subject
not in a subject in a subject	horse knowledge	individual horse individual knowledge

## Reminder

### Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

### Later ontology

Questions

# 1. “Being in a subject”

## Cat. 1a24f

“By ‘in a subject’ I mean what is in something, not as a part, and cannot exist separately from what it is in.”

- If  $x$  is said to be in a subject, then  $x$  is not a fundamental entity:  $x$ 's existence depends on the subject in which it inheres.
- Entities that are not said to be in a subject are substances
- Entities that are said to be in a subject qualify substances (like properties)
- What is in a subject is accidental to the subject

Reminder

Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

Later ontology

Questions

## 2. “Being said of a subject”

- ‘Being said of’ serves to classify individuals
- Being-said-of-entities are (like) universals
- But: they cannot exist without the entities of which they are said
- If  $A$  is said of  $B$  (without being in  $B$ ), then  $A$  and  $B$  are in the same category and  $A$  is more general than  $B$
- Example: Socrates – man – animal
- What is said of the subject is not accidental, but essential

Reminder

Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

Later ontology

Questions

# The Four-fold Division

	said of a subject	not said of a subject	Reminder
not in S	horse secondary substance classifies substances gives essential features	individual horse primary substance everything else depends on them remains the same through change	Early ontology Background The 4-fold division 10 categories
in S	knowledge; blue must be general not substantial	individual knowledge; particular hue of blue individual not substantial	Later ontology Questions

## Test:

Can you predicate the definition instead of the thing? – if yes, it's said of a subject but is not in it.

“Socrates is a man” → “Socrates is a rational animal” ✓

“Socrates is white” → “Socrates is a [kind of] colour” ×

# The Ten Categories

category	example
Substance	Man, Socrates
Quantity	Two feet long
Quality	White, grammatical
Relative	Double, taller than
Where	In-the-Lyceum
When	Yesterday
Being in a position	Is-sitting
Having	Has-shoes-on
Acting on	Cutting, burning
Being affected	Being cut, being burnt

## Reminder

### Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

### Later ontology

Questions

# Table of Contents

Reminder

Early ontology

- Background

- The 4-fold division

- 10 categories

Later ontology

- Questions

# Metaphysics Z: Candidates for Substance

Individuals are primary in some sense, but not ultimately: they have more fundamental metaphysical constituents.

- if we cannot account for a phenomenon by positing only physical parts, we need to posit metaphysical parts
- e.g., personal identity seems to be such;
- let's posit some metaphysical parts!

We have already established that things consist of matter and form.

Which one is the *real* substance then? The matter, the form, or the composite?

## Reminder

### Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

### Later ontology

Questions

# Candidates for Substance: Matter?

**Reminder:** consider the bed.

- If you plant it, you won't get a "bed tree" but a tree; wood is the matter.
- But, wood is already a compound of form and matter.
- Ever downward, until we get to a primary point, *prime matter*, which is completely formless: it is nothing in itself! Cannot be characterised in any positive terms.



Reminder

Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

Later ontology

Questions

# Candidates for Substance: Matter? No!

## The argument in Meta. VII.3 against matter being substance:

- ① Matter is not a particular, and has no determinate quantity, length, or breadth.
- ② Thus, matter is in itself nothing determinate, actual, or independently existing.
- ③ Substance is something actual, determinate, and independently existing.
- ④ Therefore, matter is not substance.
- ⑤ Corollary: it is not the case that the ultimate subject of predication is substance (given that matter *is* the ultimate subject of predication).

Thus, matter is not substance; substance needs to be something primary, but also a “this something”.

### Reminder

#### Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

#### Later ontology

Questions

# Candidates for Substance: Composite? No!

Substance cannot be the composite either: a substance is identical with its essence, but the composite Socrates isn't.

- Socrates can change while his essence does not change.
- thus, Socrates cannot be identical with his essence.

## Reminder

### Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

### Later ontology

Questions

# Candidates for Substance: Form? Yes!

Therefore, form is substance.

- it captures the essence of the thing
- the definition expresses it
- some open questions: is this a particular form? universal form?  
in-between?

Reminder

Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

Later ontology

Questions

# Open Questions

- Plato has argued that forms are the most basic entities, so how come it's individuals?
- Aristotle, at least later: no individual substance can exist without matter and form (every individual is an individual *something*). But it also seems that no individual can exist without being *somewhere*, at *some time*, etc. – so are primary substances not basic, after all?
- **Did Aristotle change his mind?** – do hylomorphism and categorialism fit together?
  - some interpreters think they don't; Aristotle either didn't notice the incompatibility or he developed hylomorphism later.
- basic idea throughout: there are no free-floating particular qualities nor free-floating independent universals; substance is primary, and it needs to be a “this”, and something definite.

## Reminder

### Early ontology

Background

The 4-fold division

10 categories

### Later ontology

Questions