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## CATEGORIES AND PREDICATIONS

### 1. *Introduction*

In contemporary philosophy both the problem of the *identity* of the primary categories of beings and the problem of the conditions of *identification* of such categories are widely discussed. The issue is posed with characteristic clarity by Lowe<sup>1</sup>, whose main concern is to show that

First, ontological categories are hierarchically organized and, second, ontological categories are individuated by the distinctive existence and/or identity conditions of their members<sup>2</sup>.

The aim of the present paper is threefold: firstly, to contrast the ontological framework proposed by Lowe with the corresponding framework introduced by Aristotle in the first five chapters of the *Categories*; secondly, to give an account of the crucial differences that occur between these two general pictures; thirdly, to argue for the advantages provided by Aristotle's view.

#### 1.1. *Lowe's Square*

At a first sight, two crucial distinctions can help us to identify the basic ontological categories:

- the distinction between *instantiable* and *non-instantiable* entities, which seems to coincide with the classical distinction between universal and particular entities;
- the distinction between *attributable* and *non-attributable* entities, which seems to coincide with the classical distinction between attributive and substantive entities.

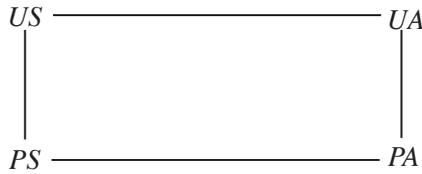
These distinctions allow us to construct the following ontological square, which involves: (i) universal substances: *US*; (ii) universal attributes: *UA*; (iii) particular substances: *PS*; (iv) particular attributes: *PA*.

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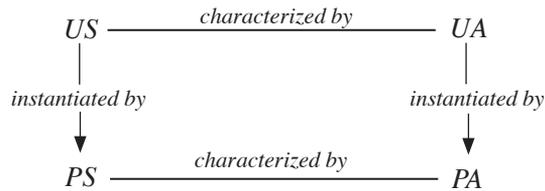
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<sup>1</sup> E.J. LOWE, *The Four-Category Ontology. A Metaphysical Foundation for Natural Science*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2006.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibi*, p. 6.



According to Lowe, the basic formal relations between the entities belonging to these categories are of two kinds: universal entities are *instantiated* by corresponding particular entities; substantive entities are *characterized* by corresponding attributive entities. In schema:



In addition, the formal relations are primitive and distinguished in terms of different basic kinds of ontological dependence along the following lines<sup>3</sup>.

1. *PS* are *identity*-independent of entities in other categories, but can be *identity*-dependent on entities of the same category.
2. *PA* are *identity*-dependent on *PS*, since a particular attribute is what it is precisely because it is an attribute of a certain *PS*.
3. *US* are *identity*-dependent on *UA*, since a universal substance is what it is precisely because it involves certain essential *UA*.
4. *UA* are *identity*-independent of entities in other categories, but can be *identity*-dependent on entities of the same category.
5. *PS* are rigidly *existence*-dependent on *US*, since they only exist in so far as they rigidly instantiate certain *US*.
6. *PA* are rigidly *existence*-dependent on *UA*, since they only exist in so far as they rigidly instantiate certain *UA*.
7. *US* are non-rigidly *existence*-dependent on *PS*, since they exist in so far as they are non-rigidly instantiated by certain *PS*.
8. *UA* are non-rigidly *existence*-dependent on *PA*, since they exist in so far as they are non-rigidly instantiated by certain *PA*.

Here, an entity is said to be *identity*-dependent on other entities when it is individuated in terms of those other entities, while it is said to be *existence*-dependent on other entities when the existence of such other entities is essentially implied by its existence<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> See *ibi*, pp. 61 and 116-117. I can't do justice to the full complexities of Lowe's view here, and so I will limit myself to present the essential points of his position.

<sup>4</sup> Mere necessary implication is indeed not sufficient for a characterization of the notion of existence-dependence. A more precise definition is provided in T. TAHKO - J. LOWE, *Ontological Dependence*, in E.N.

The notion of dependence as to the existence is then further distinguished in rigid and non-rigid dependence, where  $x$  rigidly depends on  $y$  provided that the existence of  $y$  is essential for  $x$  to exist, while  $x$  non-rigidly depends on the  $y$ s provided that the existence of at least one of the  $y$ s is essential for  $x$  to exist. Hence, a particular substance like a tree is *rigidly* existence-dependent on the kind [CHERRY-TREE], since it cannot possibly exist without instantiating that kind, while the kind [CHERRY-TREE] is only *non-rigidly* existence-dependent on a particular tree, since it can exist without being instantiated by that tree, even if it is impossible for it to exist without being instantiated by at least one particular tree<sup>5</sup>.

It is worth noting that these relations of ontological dependence univocally identify the four ontological categories. To be sure, *particular substances* are identity-independent but rigidly existence-dependent entities; *particular attributes* are both identity-dependent and rigidly existence-dependent entities; *universal substances* are both identity-dependent and non-rigidly existence-dependent entities; *universal attributes* are identity-independent but non-rigidly existence-dependent entities. Whence the conclusion that the basic categories are individuated in terms of their mutual relations.

### 1.2. Lowe's Assumptions

In developing his 4-category ontology Lowe assumes that the distinction between universal and particular entities is such that universal entities are not *object-like*, since they are attributive, i.e. non-rigidly existence-dependent. In addition, he assumes that the distinction between substantive and attributive entities is such that attributive entities are *concept-like*, since attribution concerns entities that are essentially attributive. In a sense, then, Lowe accepts Frege's distinction between saturated and unsaturated entities, but improves the general framework by rejecting the thesis that all particular entities are saturated and all universal entities are unsaturated. Hence, Lowe admits of both entities which are saturated but universal, and so non-objectual, being identity-dependent, and entities which are unsaturated but particular, and so non-conceptual, being rigidly existence-dependent.

### 1.3. Lowe's Problems

Lowe is compelled to hold both that the four basic categories are not entities and that the basic categorical relations are not attributes<sup>6</sup>. Thus, for instance, the category of universal substances, or [KIND] in Lowe's terminology, cannot possibly exist. For, if that category existed, then it would presumably be a universal, having kinds as instances. Still, instances of a universal, according to Lowe's square, are to be particular entities, while kinds are universal. Similarly, if a categorical relation existed, then it would presumably be a universal attribute, having pairs of entities as instances. Still, instances of an attribute, according to Lowe's square, are particular attributes, while not all of the items that instantiate a categorical relation are particular attributes. This is a weird consequence, since the structure characterizing what there is seems to have no ontological basis. In addition, Lowe

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ZALTA (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition).

<sup>5</sup> A particular tree is not identity-dependent on the kind it instantiates, since being of a certain kind does not suffice for distinguishing that tree from any other tree of the same kind.

<sup>6</sup> See LOWE, *The Four-Category Ontology*, pp. 40-46.

is compelled to hold a varying position on generic kinds. Thus, sometimes Lowe assumes that generic universals are ontological sub-categories of the ontological category [KIND], so that they should share the same ontological status of this category, i.e. they should not exist<sup>7</sup>. Still, other times Lowe assumes that generic universals are genera of specific kinds, so that they should exist<sup>8</sup>. Being that as it may, it is difficult to see how to put a threshold for distinguishing existing and non-existing generic kind and, in what follows, I will try to show how to solve these problems in the Aristotelian 4-category ontology.

## 2. Aristotle on predication

In *Prior Analytics* 27, Aristotle distinguishes between proper and accidental predication and presents a threefold distinction of entities (ὄντα) depending on the way in which they can be properly predicated (κατηγορεῖσθαι)<sup>9</sup>.

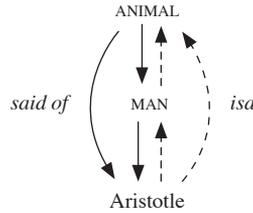
1. Some entities are such that they cannot be predicated of other entities, but other entities are predicated of them.
2. Some entities are such that they can be predicated of other entities and other entities can be predicated of them.
3. Some entities are such that they are predicated of other entities, but other entities cannot be predicated of them.

The realm of entities is thus ordered by a relation of predication, corresponding to the inverse of the *isa* relation used in contemporary classification theory, call it *specification*. In addition, this ordered system is finite, and so there exists a first item in each column of the system. This item is the first and most general genus that determines the identity of that column as a category of homogeneous predication (κατηγορία).

<sup>7</sup> See *ibi*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>8</sup> See *ibi*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>9</sup> See *An.Pr.* 43 a 25-42: 'Ἀπάντων διη τῶν ὄντων τὰ μὲν ἐστὶ πιοαῦτα ὥστε κατὰ μηδενὸς ἄλλου κατηγορεῖσθαι ἀληθῶς καθόλου (οἶον Κλέων καὶ Καλλίας καὶ το καθ' ἕκαστον καὶ αἰσθητόν), κατὰ δὲ τούτων ἄλλα (καὶ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ζῶιον ἐκάτερος τούτων ἐστὶ)· τὰ δ' αὐτὰ μὲν κατ' ἄλλων κατηγορεῖται, κατὰ δὲ τούτων ἄλλα πρότερον οὐ κατηγορεῖται· τὰ δὲ καὶ αὐτὰ ἄλλων καὶ αὐτῶν ἕτερα, οἶον ἄνθρωπος Καλλίου καὶ ἀνθρώπου ζῶιον. ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἔνια τῶν ὄντων κατ' οὐδενὸς πέφυκε λέγεσθαι, δῆλον τῶν γὰρ αἰσθητῶν σχεδὸν ἕκαστόν ἐστι τοιοῦτον ὥστε μὴ κατηγορεῖσθαι κατὰ μηδέος, πλὴν ὡς κατὰ συμβεβηκόσ· φαιμέν γὰρ ποτε τὸ λευκὸν ἐκεῖνο Σωκράτην εἶναι καὶ τὸ προσιὸν Καλλίαν. ὅτι δὲ καὶ ἐτι τὸ ἄνω πορευομένοις ἴσταται ποτε, πάλιν ἐροῦμεν· νῦν δ' ἔστω τοῦτο κείμενον. κατὰ μὲν οὖν τούτων οὐκ ἔστιν ἀποδείξει κατηγοροῦμενον ἕτερον, πλὴν εἰ μὴ κατὰ δόξαν, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα κατ' ἄλλων· οὐδὲ τὰ κατ' ἕκαστα κατ' ἄλλων, ἀλλ' ἕτερα κατ' ἐκείνων. τὰ δὲ μεταξὺ δῆλον ὡς ἀμφοτέρως ἐνδέχεται (καὶ γὰρ αὐτὰ κατ' ἄλλων καὶ ἄλλα κατὰ τούτων λεχθήται)· καὶ σχεδὸν οἱ λόγοι καὶ αἱ σκέψεις εἰσὶ μάλιστα περὶ τούτων. (transl. by J. Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol 1: «Of all the things which exist some are such that they cannot be predicated of anything else truly and universally, e.g. Cleon and Callias, i.e. the individual and sensible, but other things may be predicated of them (for each of these is both man and animal); and some things are themselves predicated of others, but nothing prior is predicated of them; and some are predicated of others, and yet others of them, e.g. man of Callias and animal of man. It is clear then that some things are naturally not said of anything; for as a rule each sensible thing is such that it cannot be predicated of anything, save incidentally, for we sometimes say that that white object is Socrates, or that that which approaches is Callias. We shall explain in another place that there is an upward limit also to the process of predicating; for the present we must assume this. Of these it is not possible to demonstrate another predicate, save as a matter of opinion, but these may be predicated of other things. Neither can individuals be predicated of other things, though other things can be predicated of them. Whatever lies between these limits can be spoken of in both ways: they may be said of others, and others said of them. And as a rule arguments and inquiries are concerned with these things»).



In *Posterior Analytics* 22, Aristotle proposes a precise characterization of the relation of proper predication (κατηγορεῖσθαι) and a distinction between what is predicated in what a thing is and what is predicated as an attribute, like a quality or a quantity<sup>10</sup>. Hence, predication turns out to be divided into

- improper predication (κατὰ συμβεβηκός);
- proper predication in what a thing is (ἀπλῶς and ἐν τῷ τί ἐστίν);
- proper predication not in what a thing is (ἀπλῶς, but not ἐν τῷ τί ἐστίν).

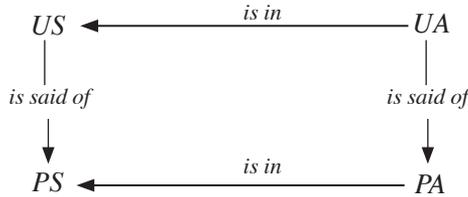
The first distinction, between proper and improper predication, is based on the ontological status of the subject of predication. To be sure, while in the case of proper predication the predicate can be said of the subject in virtue of the fact that the subject is what it is, i.e., a certain kind of substance or a certain particular substance, in the case of improper predication the predicate can be said of the subject only in virtue of the fact that the subject is something which happens to be as the subject says. Thus, while this man is

<sup>10</sup> See *An.Post.* 83 a 1-23: ἔστι γὰρ εἰτεῖν ἀληθῶς τὸ λευκὸν βαδίζειν καὶ τὸ μέγα ἐκεῖνο ξύλον εἶναι, καὶ πάλιν τὸ ξύλον μέγα εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον βαδίζειν. ἕτερον δὲ ἔστι τὸ οὕτως εἰπεῖν καὶ τὸ ἐκεῖνας, ὅταν μὲν γὰρ τὸ λευκὸν εἶναι φῶ ξύλον, τότε λέγω ὅτι αἱ συμβέβηκε λευκῶι εἶναι ξύλον ἐστίν, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς τὸ ὑποκείμενον τῷ ξύλῳ το λευκὸν ἐστίν· καὶ οὔτε λευκὸν ὄν οὔθ' ὅπερ λευκὸν τι ἐγένετο ξύλον, ὥστ' οὐκ ἐστίν ἀλλ' ἢ κατὰ συμβεβηκός. ὅταν δὲ τὸ ξύλον λευκὸν εἶναι φῶ, οὐχ ὅτι ἕτερον τί ἐστίν λευκὸν, ἐκεῖνοι δὲ συμβέβηκε ξύλῳ εἶναι, οἷον ὅταν τὸ μουσικὸν λευκὸν εἶναι φῶ (τότε γὰρ ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος λευκός ἐστίν, αἱ συμβέβηκεν εἶναι μουσικῶι, λέγω), ἀλλὰ τὸ ξύλον ἐστίν τὸ ὑποκείμενον, ὅπερ καὶ ἐγένετο, οὐχ ἕτερον τι ὄν ἢ ὅπερ ξύλον τί. εἰ δὴ δεῖ νομοθετῆσαι, ἔστω τὸ οὕτω λέγειν κατηγορεῖν, τὸ δ' ἐκεῖνας ἦτοι μηδεμῶς κατηγορεῖν, ἢ κατηγορεῖν μὲν μὴ ἀπλῶς, κατὰ συμβεβηκός δὲ κατηγορεῖν. ἔστι δ' ὡς μὲν τὸ λευκὸν τὸ κατηγορούμενον, ὡς δὲ τὸ ξύλον το· οὐ κατηγορεῖται. ὑποκείσθω δὴ τὸ κατηγορούμενον κατ'ἰσορροπία ἀεί, οὐ κατηγορεῖται, ἀπλῶς, ἀλλὰ μὴ κατὰ συμβεβηκός· οὕτω γὰρ αἱ ἀποδείξεις ἀποδεικνύουσι. ὥστε ἢ ἐν τῷ τί ἐστίν ἢ ὅτι ποιὸν ἢ πορὸν ἢ πρὸς τι ἢ πάσχον ἢ πού ἢ ποτέ, ὅταν ἐν καθ' ἑνὸς κατηγορηθῆι. (transl. by J. Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol 1: «We argue universally, as follows: one can say truly that the white thing is walking, and that that large thing is a log, and again that the log is large and that the man is walking. Well, speaking in the latter and in the former ways are different. For when I say that the white thing is a log, then I say that that which is accidentally white is a log; and not that the white thing is the underlying subject for the log; for it is not the case that, being white or just what is some white, it came to be a log, so that it is not a log except accidentally. But when I say that the log is white, I do not say that something else is white and that that is accidentally a log, as when I say that the musical thing is white (for then I say that the man, who is accidentally musical, is white); but the log is the underlying subject which did come to be white without being something other than just what is a log or a particular log. Well, if we must legislate, let speaking in the latter way be predicating, and in the former way either no predicating at all, or else not predicating *simpliciter* but predicating accidentally. [What is predicated is like the white, and that of which it is predicated is like the log.] Thus let it be supposed that what is predicated is always predicated *simpliciter* of what it is predicated of, and not accidentally; for this is the way in which demonstrations demonstrate. Hence when one thing is predicated of one, either it is predicated in what a thing is or it says that it has some quality or quantity or relation or is doing something or undergoing something or is at some place of time»).

white in virtue of the fact that it is a particular substance which happens to be white, say Callias, this white thing is a man only in virtue of the fact that something else, say Callias, which happens to be white, is a man. The second distinction, between predication in what a thing is and predication of an accident, seems to be a primitive one: some predicates are such that they determine the identity of the subject, thus being essential to it.

2.1. *Aristotle's Square*

The previous analysis of the relation of predication helps Aristotle to introduce a general distinction between four kinds of entities. In *Categories* 2, Aristotle proposes such a distinction in terms of a relation of predication and a relation of inherence.

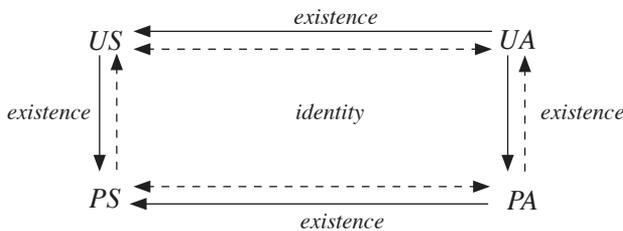


These kinds can be exemplified as follows:

ENTITIES	<i>substantial</i>	<i>accidental</i>
<i>universal</i>	man	wisdom
<i>particular</i>	Aristotle	this wisdom

Let us say that an entity  $x$  is an instance of another entity  $y$  precisely when  $y$  is said of  $x$  and that entity  $x$  is characterized by another entity  $y$  precisely when  $y$  is in  $x$ . Thus, in the previous example, Callias is an instance of man and is characterized by this wisdom, which in turn is an instance of wisdom. Then, in terms of ontological dependence, these relations seem to be determinable as follows:

- *instantiation* relates entities in such a way that the instantiating entity depends, as to its identity and determinate existence, on the instantiated entity, while the instantiated entity non-rigidly depends, as to its existence, on the instantiating entities.
- *characterization* relates entities in such a way that the characterizing entity rigidly depends, as to its existence and identity, on the characterized entity, while the characterized entity depends, as to its identity and determinate existence, on the instantiating entities.



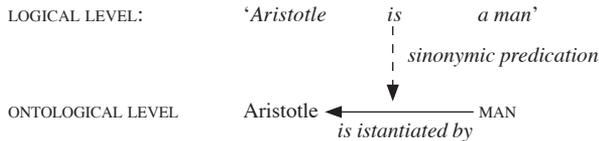
Finally, it is worth noting that the relation of *instantiation* is just the relation of *specification* that relates *ultimate items* and universals. Hence, in saying that Aristotle is a man and that man is a substance, what we are saying is that Aristotle specifies the type [MAN], being an *ultimate* specification of that type, and that [MAN] specifies the type [SUBSTANCE], being a *non-ultimate* specification of that type. In both cases, the relation at work is the relation of specification, but in the first case what specifies the universal is a particular entity, an ultimate item in the corresponding category.

2.2. Aristotle’s Assumptions

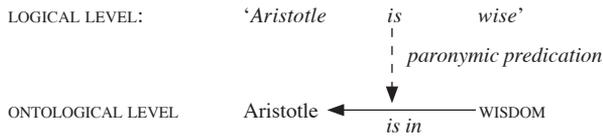
The interpretation I want to suggest is that here Aristotle is working with three distinctions: (i) a distinction between logical and ontological predication; (ii) a distinction between ontological instantiation and ontological inherence; (iii) and a distinction between *synonymic* and *paronymic* predication, i.e., predication as of a subject and predication as in a subject:

- predication ‘in the what it is’: primary, *synonymic*;
- proper predication ‘not in the what it is’: derivative, *paronymic*.

The ontological relation of being said of a subject is a genuine kind of predication, *synonymic* predication, since what is logically predicated of a subject is, in this case, a term that refers to what is also ontologically predicated of the subject. By contrast, the ontological relation of being in a subject is not a kind of predication, but only corresponds to *paronymic* predication, since what is logically predicated of a subject is, in this case, a term which is derived from the term that refers to what is inherent to the subject. In a schema:



By contrast



In conclusion, Aristotle’s ontology seems to be such that the distinction between substantive and attributive entities coincides with the distinction between items classified in a category and ontological relations of predication. In fact, all categorical entities, that is particular and universal substances and particular and universal accidents, are *object-like*, while the only attributive entities, in Frege’s sense, are the relation of specification, or being part of the essence of, and the relation of characterization, or being in.

### 2.3. Aristotle's Problems

Aristotle conception of essential predication seems to be subject to a serious drawback: since Aristotle is a man, man is a kind and the relation of specification is transitive, it seems to be necessary for Aristotle to be a kind, which is absurd.<sup>11</sup> The classical solution to this problem is based on a distinction between two notions expressed by the term 'man':

Consider «universal is predicated of man» and «animal is predicated of man». For the scholastic Aristotelians it is not the term predication but the word man that is ambiguous: in the first case it signifies man-in-the-mind, in the second case it denotes man-in-itself<sup>12</sup>.

Hence, when we say that Aristotle is a man, we are saying that Aristotle specifies the type [MAN], the man-in-itself, while in saying that man is a kind, we are saying that a mental entity, say the mental content [[MAN]], the man-in-the-mind, specifies the type [UNIVERSAL]. Consequently, the predicate of the first proposition is not identical with the subject of the second proposition, and no absurdity follows.

However, this solution seems not to be effective:

Now, philosophers quickly start thinking of many properties that the universal-in-itself has: «to be a nature in itself», «to be distinguished from the nature-in-the-mind and from the nature-in-the-singulars», etc. The advent of these new predications reiterates the problem that Aristotelian logicians faced when they first encountered «universal», «species», and the like. Should one now say that, for example, «to be man-in-itself» applies not to man-in-itself but to «man-in-itself-in-the-mind», thereby expanding the doctrine of the threefold consideration of essences into an endless multiplication of considerations of essences?<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the problem arises as to how to maintain that the relation of specification is transitive while avoiding an infinite regress.

### 3. Discussion

In light of the previous analysis, let us assume that universal substances are to be intended as types and the relation of instantiation is to be defined as a type-token relation. Let us also assume that types are to be intended as structures, or structural universal, and structural universal are to be intended as particular in themselves and universal in their instantiation. This interpretation provides a solution to two problems: (1) Lowe's problem: how to justify the existence of categories and categorical relations; (2) Angelelli's problem: how to justify the fact that *synonymic* predication is *essential* and *transitive*.

As we have seen, Lowe assumes that universal substances are not objects, since being dependent and being universal are sufficient conditions for not being objectual. Accordingly, no universal can instantiate other entities, since only particular entities can instantiate other entities, and so no universal can instantiate other universals and

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<sup>11</sup> A detailed analysis of this problem, in the wide context of the opposition between classical pre-Fregean and Fregean logic is provided by I. ANGELELLI, *Predication Theory: Classical vs. Modern*, in H. HOCHBERG - K. MULLIGAN (eds.), *Relations and Predicates*, Ontos Verlag, Heusenstamm 2004, pp. 55-80, which is based on his previous work, Id., *Studies on Gottlob Frege and traditional philosophy*, Reidel, Dordrecht 1967.

<sup>12</sup> ANGELELLI, *Predication Theory*, p. 62.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibi*, p. 65.

no universal such as [UNIVERSAL] or [SUBSTANCE] can exist. By contrast, in the present construal, Aristotle view is characterized by the following theses.

*Thesis 1:* the relation of specification, i.e. essential predication, is transitive.

*Thesis 2:* the relation of specification, i.e. essential predication, generates a category.

*Thesis 3:* every categorical entity is object-like: particulars are saturated tokens; universals are saturated types.

Plainly, these theses allow us to assume both that categories exist, since a category is the higher universal specified by a certain set of items, and that categorical relations exist, since a categorical relation is one of the ontological relation of predication. In addition, they allow us to assume that synonymic predication is *essential* and *transitive*, since this kind of predication is simply the counterpart of the ontological relation of essential predication, where essential predication is the relation that relates  $x$  and  $y$  when  $x$  is ontologically predicated of  $y$  in what  $y$  is, i.e., when  $y$  is a specification of  $x$ . Hence, in order to obtain such conclusions, we have to defend the theses against the problems raised above.

*Lowe's problem.* If universal substances are universals, then they have instances. Still, if we assume that [MAN] is an instance of [SUBSTANCE], we get a contradiction, since [SUBSTANCE], as any universal, has only particular instances, while [MAN] is a universal.

Here, the distinction between instantiation and specification provides us with a straightforward solution. The problem is given by the fact that [MAN] is a specification of [SUBSTANCE], not one of its instances, such as Aristotle. So the first premise of the previous argument can be challenged.

*Angelelli's problem.* This is harder to confront. Consider

(1) the nature of man is a nature-in-itself.

We have to interpret (1) so as to identify the correct reference of the terms 'man' and 'nature-in-itself'. Angelelli's basic assumption is that (1) can only be true if its subject refers to [MAN], which is precisely the nature-in-itself. But then, by the transitivity of the relation of specification, we obtain

[MAN] specifies [NATURE-IN-ITSELF]

Aristotle specifies [MAN]

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Aristotle specifies [NATURE-IN-ITSELF]

which is false.

However, in this case I think that the basic assumption can be resisted: it is not true that [MAN] specifies [NATURE-IN-ITSELF]. In order to see that, let us consider what follows: [MAN] specifies [SUBSTANCE] as its proper category and every other genus specified by [MAN] is in the same category of [MAN]; thus every other genus specified by [MAN] specifies [SUBSTANCE] as its proper category; but [NATURE-IN-ITSELF] does not specify [SUBSTANCE], since it seems to be something like a difference instead; therefore, [MAN] does not specify [NATURE-IN-ITSELF]. Assuming this conclusion, what we have to say is simply that [NATURE-IN-ITSELF] is not something that is specified by [MAN], but

something that constitutes a necessary accident of [MAN], which is not in contrast with the transitivity of the relation of specification.

In conclusion, in an Aristotelian framework, we are provided with the resources for both admitting of the existence of the basic categories and categorical relations and for maintaining the transitivity of specification. These results give us some evidence for considering the Aristotelian 4-category ontology as worth of further investigation.

*Abstract*

A categorical ontology is a general classification scheme arising from the analysis of the relation of ontological predication. In the last decades, Lowe proposed a specific ontological square which combines the distinction between universals and particulars, based on a relation of essential predication, and the distinction between attributes and substrates, based on a relation of attributive predication. In this paper I briefly contrast Lowe's square with the classical Aristotelian square and argue that the framework proposed by Aristotle allows us to develop a better interpretation of the fundamental entities and relations that constitute the square.

*Keywords:* Categories, Ontology, Ontological Dependence, Essential Predication