

FOREWORD TO THE *CATEGORIES*

A complete foreword to a book should consider its matter, end, form and author.

THE MATTER OF THE *CATEGORIES*

The title of Aristotle's book, the *Categories*, comes from the Greek word used in the courtroom in accusing someone of some crime. The accuser tries to show that something bad can truly be said of the accused: he is a murderer, or a thief, or something else. When the word was carried over to logic, it kept the general sense of something *said of*, what is called a *predicate* in Latin. But something is always said of something. The *Categories* is about something said of something. But what is being said of what?

The *Categories* is about *names said of things*. A name, however, is a vocal sound that signifies by human agreement. What do the names said of things in the *Categories* signify? And are they names said of one thing or of many things?

The *Categories* is about names said of *many* things, signifying the same *what it is* in each of them.

A name said of many things, signifying one and the same nature or *what it is* in them is either a genus or a species, as we learn in the *Isagoge* of Porphyry. Hence, the *Categories* is about genera and species.

But the *Categories* is about such names when said without the intertwining of them in a statement or any other speech and without the intertwining of more than one thing in their meaning. If the meaning of *chair* intertwines some kind of matter (such as wood) and a shape, the *Categories* is not about such names. For matter and shape are not the same kind of thing in particular or, even in general.

THE END OF THE *CATEGORIES*

The aim of the *Categories* is to begin the distinction and order of these names under the ten highest genera.

The logician can *begin* the distinction and order of these names under the ten highest genera. For the ten genera can be distinguished by diverse ways in which something can be *said of* individual substances and logic is about the ways of being said of. And to distinguish and order are acts of reason. (Hence, Shakespeare defined reason by *looking before and after*). But the completion of the distinction and order of species under genera is a work of the other forms of reasoned out understanding.

The immediate end of the *Categories* is useful for a further end which is definition. The *Categories* is useful for definition in two ways. In giving the highest genera, it begins our knowledge of the first part of the definitions of things which is their genus. And in distinguishing between substance and accident, it gives us a beginning for distinguishing between two kinds of definitions of things. For some things are defined by themselves like substances and there we have the first sense of definition. And other things must be defined like accidents are defined. Since they are something of another thing, they must be so defined. And this is definition in another and lesser sense.

THE FORM OF THE *CATEGORIES*

The form of the *Categories*, as that of any book, is twofold. One is the division and order of the book. The other is how it considers its matter in order to achieve its end.

The *Categories* is divided into three parts. These, using the Latin word for *categories*, are usually called the ante-predicaments (chapters one through four), the predicaments (chapters five through nine) and the post-predicaments (chapters ten through fifteen).

In the ante-predicaments, we learn what is to be divided according to the ten genera (chapter one and the division *of those said* in chapter two), how they can be divided according to the ten genera and how the latter can be distinguished (the division *of beings* in chapter two and the rules of praedicamental order in chapter three), and the distinction of the ten genera (chapter four).

In the predicaments, we learn about substance (chapter five), the three genera of accidents denominating substance intrinsically (chapters six through eight) and very briefly about the six genera of accidents denominating substance extrinsically.

In the post-predicaments, we learn how species and genera can be distinguished by opposites and placed before, or together with, other species and genera where they belong under the ten genera (chapters ten through thirteen). Then, we learn how motion and change can be led back to the genera (chapter fourteen), and how accidents are led back to substance which has them. (Chapter fifteen).

As regards how the matter is considered to achieve the end, it should be known that logic has a remote foundation in things and a proximate foundation in reason. Thus the natures of things are the formal beginning of all that is placed under the ten genera of things and form is the only kind of cause central to this work. (Hence, the logician does not define the continuous in the way that the natural philosopher does.) But as the logician considers things insofar as they are in reason and (as Boethius says) a thing is singular when sensed and universal when understood, and from universality come predicability, the logician especially considers how names are said of something. As the natural philosopher proceeds *per viam motus*, so the logician proceeds *per viam praedicationis*. Hence, the name of this work also touches upon how it proceeds.

THE AUTHOR OF THE *CATEGORIES*

The author of this book is The Philosopher and the Father of Logic, Aristotle, the student of Plato and the teacher of Thomas Aquinas.

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