Abstract:

Many scholars have taken care to characterize Aristotle’s notion of substance with a content independent of his notion of subjecthood. Characterizations of Aristotle’s subjecthood have tended to focus on the way in which it forms a criterion for substancehood in Aristotle’s early works; less effort is given to expounding its independent content or role. This is a lacuna in the literature; my goal in this paper is to provide such a characterization. In section one I drive a wedge between subjecthood and substancehood in *Categories*. In the second section of this paper I show that in *An. Po. A.4 &22* Aristotle argues that for something to be a genuine hypokeimenon it must be the immediate grounds for the property which is predicated of it. In the third section I argue that because of Aristotle’s notion of subject is more directly pertinent to his account of scientific knowledge than to metaphysics; it maps the complex structure of the properties which an object possesses so as to ground the division of sciences. Finally, I argue that what is distinctive about substances in *Categories* is that they are subjects in the privileged inquiry which is metaphysics, the study of beings *qua* beings.

_Hypokeimenon vs. Substance in Aristotle’s Categories and Posterior Analytics_

3991 words

Scholars such as Alan Code and Michael Loux have taken care to characterize substancehood as notion with a content independent of subjecthood.¹ The consensus is that, for Aristotle, “substance” is a term which denotes a role played in an ontology; to borrow a modern parlance, substance is what grounds everything else in an ontology which includes it. Characterizations of Aristotle’s subjecthood have tended to center around the way in which it forms a criterion for substancehood in Aristotle’s early works; less effort is given to expounding its independent content or role, so as to indicate why and how it might seem to Aristotle, at least for a time, to serve satisfactorily as a criterion for substancehood, or what purpose it might serve when he eventually rejects it as a criterion for substancehood, as many have argued he does. My goal in this paper is to try to provide such a characterization, focusing on how subjecthood comes apart from substancehood in *Categories* and *Posterior Analytics*.

In the first section of this paper I summarize how Aristotle presents subjecthood, or being a hypokeimenon, in his *Categories*, and offer evidence which drives a wedge

between substancehood and subjecthood in that treatise. I argue that even in that treatise it is not the case that all substances are subjects, or that only substances are subjects. Aristotle refines his notion of a hypokeimenon in An. Po. A.4 and A.22 when he is distinguishing between essential and accidental predications. In the second section of this paper I show that in An. Po. A.4 & 22 Aristotle argues that for something to be a genuine hypokeimenon its being hoper ti what it is must be the immediate grounds for its having the property which is predicated of it. In the third section I argue that, because of this, Aristotle’s understanding of subjecthood is such that while it can distinguish an object from its properties, more precisely it maps the complex structure of the properties which an object possesses. In order for it to do this, what counts as a subject for Aristotle is in some sense relative to the realm of inquiry in which one is engaging. It is for this reason that, while Aristotle’s notion of subject is important for his metaphysics, it is more directly pertinent to his understanding of scientific knowledge. This is supported by the fact that key features of being a hypokeimenon are presented within the discussion of understanding and science in An. Po. Finally, I argue, what is distinctive about substances in Categories is that they are subjects in the privileged inquiry which is metaphysics, the study of beings qua beings.

§1 Ontological subjects in Categories

Aristotle’s Categories inquires into beings by considering the many ways in which things are said to be or are called beings. It does so by examining the way simple statements in ordinary language carve up the world, and attending to the ontological relations in virtue of which we make true predications. The idea is that linguistic predications, when they are true, point to real metaphysical relations between the items referred to in the predicate. In order for any linguistic predication to be true, the item(s) referred to in the predicate must stand in some appropriate metaphysical relation to the item(s) referred to in the grammatical subject.

In Categories Aristotle mentions both “things that are said” and “things there are.” However, even when ostensibly discussing the “things there are”, he discusses these in terms of predication; he is never careful to distinguish when he is speaking of linguistic predication and when of metaphysical relations. In what follows, for the sake of clarity I will adopt the terminology of linguistic versus ontological predication; for

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4 1a16

5 1a20
something to be ontologically predicable of something else is just for it to stand to its ontological subject, or hypokeimenon, in a metaphysical relation which is such as to make it true to linguistically predicate it of its subject.

Aristotle presents two ways in which something is ontologically predicable of something else: said-of a subject and in-a-subject. In Categories 2 Aristotle introduces said-of a subject with examples which suggest that genera are said-of whatever is included under them. To use Aristotle’s examples, man is said-of an individual man, and knowledge is said-of of a particular kind of knowledge, such as knowledge of grammar. In Categories 3 Aristotle adds to this, saying that said-of predication is transitive. In Categories 5 Aristotle further clarifies that things which are said-of a subject are ontologically predicable of their subject, the hypokeimenon, such that their definitions as well as their names may be truly linguistically predicated of that subject. For example, man is ontologically predicable of Socrates in such a way that it is true both to linguistically predicate the name “man” and the definition of man of Socrates.

Aristotle calls the second ontological predication relation “in a subject,” and introduces it with a definition in Categories 2 as follows: “By ‘in a subject’ I mean what is in something, not as a part, and cannot exist separately from what it is in.” Aristotle illustrates the difference between something being said of a subject and in a subject by using examples; paleness and musicality are predicable of Socrates as in a subject, while color is predicable of paleness and man of Socrates as said-of a subject. These examples show that, for Aristotle, something which is in a subject cannot be said-of the very same subject it is in, for when something is in a subject, “it is impossible for the

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6 1b10-13
7 2a20
8 1b25
9 There is a voluminous literature on this definition, and on the debate about the status of non-substantial individuals which has tended to be rooted in it. The literature begins with Ackrill’s discussion in his 1963 translation and commentary of Categories, and Owen’s challenge to Ackrill’s view in his 1965 “Inherence.” James Duerlinger (1970), Michael Frede (1987), Daniel Devereux (1992), and Michael Wedin (2000) have all made contributions to the debate.
10 Aristotle illustrates the difference between the two metaphysical relations of being and having, or being said-of-a-subject or in-a-subject, not only by providing examples, but also by pointing to the different ways they are (usually) exhibited in speech. He thinks that there are linguistic markers for when one relation or the other is being picked out, and he uses these as support for the metaphysical schema he is proposing. Though he does not argue from the markers, he does present the fact that his schema maps onto certain patterns of speech as an advantage for his view. For example, Aristotle’s discussion of paronyms suggests that when things which are ontologically predicable as in-a-subject are linguistically predicated of their subjects, the name in the grammatical predicate of the sentence has its ending changed so that it is paronymous. Now, this may not always be the case. Nevertheless, the use of paronymous names marks or is distinctive of cross-categorial predication. The ontological relation of said-of, on the other hand, is marked by the fact that when something is said-of something else, its definition can also be truly linguistically predicated.
definition to be predicated” of the same subject. In other words, for Aristotle what something has can never be what it is.

It is clear that in *Categories* Aristotle uses the notion of *hypokeimenon* to characterize the role of substance in his metaphysics. Substances, for Aristotle as for his teacher, Plato, are the ultimate grounds for everything else in his ontology; everything which exists is either what some substance is or what it has or could have. In *Categories* this comes across especially through 2a11-15 and 2b5. At 2a11-15 Aristotle claims that is distinctive of substances that they are *hypokeimena* of both said-of and in-a-subject predication, while all ontological predicates ultimately take a primary substance as a *hypokeimenon*. 2b5 shows that for Aristotle the relations of being said-of and in-a-subject are dependence relations, where what is predicated depends on its *hypokeimena*. Since primary substances are the ultimate subjects of all ontological predication, Aristotle claims that “if the primary substances did not exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist”. Primary substance in *Categories* seem to be primary in the sense that they are metaphysically prior to everything else as *hypokeimena*. It is because of this that commentators often take subjecthood to be the criterion of substancehood in *Categories*, one which many take Aristotle to reject as a criterion in later works.

Nevertheless, we should be careful to distinguish what it is to be a substance from what it is to be a *hypokeimenon* in *Categories*. There is more to being a *hypokeimenon* than being that upon which other things depend. Clearly understanding subjecthood in

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11 2a31
12 So, for example, it is true to say that Socrates is musical or Socrates is pale because musicality and paleness are “in” Socrates; Socrates has musicality and paleness. But it is not the case that Socrates is musicality or paleness; it is false to say “Socrates is musicality” or “Socrates is paleness.”
13 2b5
15 Cf. Markus Kohl (2008), who advances the view that key to Aristotle’s notion of subjecthood is that it is non-reciprocal (pg. 160); subjecthood means “being a subject for a range of items without being predicated of any of these” (pg. 164). For Kohl, this explains both by primary substances are more substances than secondary substances in *Categories*, as well as why secondary substances count as substances at all. The advantage of Kohl’s reading is that it brings secondary substances further into the fold of substancehood. However, it appears that for Kohl this understanding of subjecthood is just subject as that-on-which other
Aristotle will better clarify how being a *hypokeimenon* is suited to serve as a criterion for substancehood in *Categories*, if indeed it does, and what it is for substance to be subject.

Firstly, note that it is an open question in *Categories* whether Aristotle holds that all substances are ontological subjects. In the definition of substance which he offers in the opening line of *Cat. 5*, he claims only that no primary substance is a predicate, not that all substances are subjects.\(^{16}\) It is possible to find one substance which does not seem to also be a subject: the perfectly simple divine being found in *Physics* VIII and *Metaphysics* XII.\(^{17}\) Having no properties or parts of any kind, it is not truly a subject of ontological predication, even though it is the sort of thing upon which other things depend. Given that Aristotle does not claim in *Categories* that all substances are *hypokeimena*, the treatment of the divine being seems to be consistent with Aristotle’s notion of substancehood in *Categories*, despite apparently not being a *hypokeimenon*.

A key text for showing that it is not the case that only substances can be *hypokeimena*, or for arguing otherwise, is 2a19-34 in *Categories 5*. This segment of text comes immediately after Aristotle’s preliminary characterization of substance, and immediately precedes his argument for the claim that “if the primary substances did not exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist.”\(^{18}\) As was mentioned before, this latter claim serves to characterize the role of substance in Aristotle’s ontology within *Categories*. Because of this, it appears at first as though in 2a19-34 he is further elucidating what it is for something to be a substance, especially a primary substance. He appears to be distinguishing substances from their properties by pointing out that even if the names of properties can be linguistically predicated of substances, the definitions of those properties never can. At 2a19 he begins by referencing “what has been said” perhaps what was just said about substance, and continues to claim that “if something is said of a subject both its name and its definition are necessarily predicated of the subject.” The passage after this consists mostly of examples illustrating this claim; the examples of subjects are all substances, while those predicates whose definitions are not also predicated are all properties of those substances. 3a7-13, later in *Categories 5*, where Aristotle says that it is distinctive of substances that they are never in-a-subject, seems to support the idea that in 2a19-34 Aristotle is distinguishing substances from their properties by how they are, or are not, predicated.

However, a closer reading shows that in 2a19-34 Aristotle is not defining substancehood or distinguishing substances from their properties, but further spelling out the rules of ontological predication. Even the reference to “what has been said” seems to point to 1b10 and the discussion in *Categories 2* rather than to the immediately preceding

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\(^{16}\) 2a11-15


\(^{18}\) 2b5
introduction of substances. In 2a19-34 Aristotle tells his reader that the mark of said-of predication is that the definition as well as the name of the predicate is linguistically predicable of the subject, while for in-a-subject predication the definition is never predicable. Both of these are features of ontological predication which Aristotle had not clearly articulated before, but which are needed in order to fill out his claim that “all the other things are either said of the primary substances as subjects or in them as subjects”\(^{19}\), and to argue for this with the appeal to cases Aristotle proposes.\(^{20}\) Still, it is worth emphasizing that what is proposed is a feature of predication, rather than of substances.

Further support of the claim that in Categories it is not the case that only substances are hypokeimena arises when we see that Aristotle uses as examples of hypokeimena items which are not, or not obviously, included in the category of substance. For example, in Cat. 2 Aristotle says that knowledge is said-of knowledge-of-grammar as a subject.\(^ {21}\) Devereux, in his (1992), points out another example: in 4a10-17 “Aristotle says that a particular action which is one in number cannot ‘receive’ both bravery and its opposite; one might argue that since bravery can be predicated of particular actions, it is implied that non-substance particulars may be subjects of the ‘in a subject’ relation.”\(^ {22}\) For a further example, consider 5a38-39, where numbers and language as well as lines, surfaces, bodies, time, and place are subjects which “quantity” [posa] is said of. Of these, only bodies seem to be substances. In the next lines, Aristotle also treats actions and colors as subjects, pointing out that quantity can only be predicated of them accidentally [sumbebekos] rather than strictly [kuriōs]. We find in An. Po. that some of these predications are not predications haplōs [ἀπλῶς]. From this I conclude that just as substancehood can be understood apart from subjecthood in Categories, so also can subjecthood be understood in that text apart from its role in characterizing substances.\(^ {23}\)

\section*{§2: Ontological subjects in Posterior Analytics}

\(^ {19}\) 2b5-6
\(^ {20}\) Note that later in Categories 5 Aristotle does distinguish substances and differentiae from the other categories by pointing out that “all things called from them are so called synonymously” (3a34-35). That is, differentiae and secondary substances (substances which are predicated of a subject) are only said-of a subject, and never in-a-subject. Thus the two kinds of predication do help to distinguish substances from non-substances; not by showing that only substances are subjects, but by showing that substances are not as versatile predicates as non-substances.
\(^ {21}\) 1b1-2
\(^ {22}\) Devereux (1992), pg. 128, footnote 24
\(^ {23}\) Michael Loux in Primary Ousia says that in Categories Aristotle takes substance to be an already-understood term, for which he is searching for a criterion within Categories (pg. 13-17). Alan Code in his (1986) presents a similar understanding of substance in Aristotle. These scholars have taken care to characterize substancehood as notion with a content independent of subjecthood. My goal here is to focus on the content of Aristotle’s notion of subjecthood; I find it to be as important to show how subjecthood is not limited to substancehood in Categories as they have to show that substancehood can be understood apart from subjecthood.
To try to fill out Aristotle’s understanding of *hypokeimenon* further, I turn to his discussion of essential and accidental predication in *Posterior Analytics* A.4. In *Posterior Analytics* A.4 Aristotle is investigating what sort of propositions we can have knowledge [*episteme*] of by thinking about what sort of relations must hold between ontological subjects and predicates in order for propositions about them to be knowable. He argues that the relation must be necessary and universal, and he spells this out by distinguishing between essential and accidental predication, and essential and accidental beings.

In this text, then, Aristotle is once again interested in what sort of relations things in the world stand in when the linguistic predications about them are true, but he is adding one more feature to the consideration. He is interested not only in what is the case when predications are true, but also in how things in the world must be related if they, and propositions about them, are to be knowable. Key to this is Aristotle’s exposition in 73a26-73b16 of the different ways one thing can belong to another *kath’ auto*, *i.e.*, the different kinds of essential predication.

In 73a34-73b5 Aristotle lays out two kinds of essential predication, and distinguishes these from accidental predication. According to Aristotle, something is predicated essentially in one of two ways. In the first way, something is predicated essentially when it appears in the definition of the subject of which it is predicated: “something belongs to another in itself … if it belongs to it in what it is – *e.g.* line to triangle and point to line (for their substance depends upon these and they belong in the

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24 Wedin, in his (2000) *Aristotle’s Theory of Substance*, argues that the *Categories* theory of substance proposes the *explanandum* for the *Metaphysics Z* theory of substance, rather than serving as a rival to it (*e.g.*, pg. 4). On his view, *Categories* raises questions which become the focus of the discussion of *Metaphysics Z*. Whether or not one agrees with the details, I think any scholar of Aristotle could agree with the spirit of Wedin’s proposal: it seems that what comes out of *Categories* foremost are questions, and things to be explained, rather than explanations.

25 Compare this to Parmenides’ claim in Plato’s *Parmenides* that

If someone, having an eye on all the difficulties we have just brought up and others of the same sort, won’t allow that there are forms for things and won’t mark off a form for each one, he won’t have anywhere to turn his though, since he doesn’t allow that for each thing there is a character that is always the same. In this way he will destroy the power of dialectic entirely [τὴν τοῦ διάλεγεσθαι δύναμιν]. (135bc)

“Dialectic” here may mean either the science of dialectic or dialogue and speech more generally. In *Republic* 511b, Plato used the articular infinitive τοῦ διάλεγεσθαι to name the science by which the Forms are grasped, but especially the Good itself, at the top of the line in his Line analogy. The expression there names the highest kind of knowledge. Thus it appears that in *Parmenides* Plato has the character Parmenides suggest that there is no knowledge without Forms. But διάλεγεσθαι is also a word used in ordinary Greek for conversation or discourse, as Cooper reminds readers in a footnote to his edition of *Parmenides* (pg. 369, footnote 12) Because of this, Plato might be making the even stronger claim that not only is knowledge not possible without Forms, but neither is meaningful speech or ordinary conversation. I think that in *An. Po.*, *Cat.*, and *DI* Aristotle is following in Plato’s footsteps.
account which says what they are).”\textsuperscript{26} In the second way, something is predicated essentially when the subject of which it is predicated is in the definition of the predicate, as line belongs in the definition of straight and curved. Jonathan Barnes, in his (1993) commentary on Aristotle’s \textit{Posterior Analytics} summarizes these as follows:

(1) A holds of B in itself \(=\text{df} \) A holds of B and A inheres in the definition of B.
(2) A holds of B in itself \(=\text{df} \) A holds of B and B inheres in the definition of A.\textsuperscript{27}

Aristotle defines accidental predication entirely negatively: “what belongs in neither way I call accidental, \textit{e.g.}, musical or white to animal.”\textsuperscript{28} Accidental predication occurs when something is said of something else, but neither what is predicated nor what it is predicated of belongs in the definition of the other.\textsuperscript{29}

Aristotle builds on his distinction between essential and accidental predication, and on his distinction between the two kinds of essential predication, to distinguish between beings at 73b6-9:

Again, what is not said of some underlying subject – as what is walking is something different walking (and white) while a substance, and whatever signifies some ‘this,’ is just what it is without being something else. Thus things which are not said of an underlying subject I call things in themselves, and those which are said of an underlying subject I call accidentals.

\textsuperscript{“Things in themselves” here translates \textit{kath’ auto}, which I have been rendering as “essential” in this context. Aristotle is distinguishing between essential and accidental things. Accidental beings are such as what is walking, or the walking thing. The walking thing is what it is, walking, because it is also something else. Let us say that in our example the walking thing is a person. Thus there is a walking thing on the sidewalk because there is person there; were there no person there would be no walking thing. In other words, the walking thing is ontologically predicated of the person. A somewhat awkward English idiom is \textit{apropos} here; there being a walking thing is predicated on there being a person. Similarly for the pale thing. Or, again, the walking thing can be

\textsuperscript{26} 73a34-36
\textsuperscript{27} Barnes, Jonathan. \textit{Aristotle: Posterior Analytics}. Oxford, Clarendon Press (1992), pg. 112
\textsuperscript{28} 73b5
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Metaphysics} V.30 offers a similarly negative, but nevertheless more informative, description of the same: And a musical man might be white; but since this does not happen of necessity nor usually, we call it an accident. Therefore since there are attributes and they attach to a subject, and some of them attach in a particular place and at a particular time, whatever attaches to a subject, but not because it is this subject, at this time or in this place, will be an accident. (1025a17-25)
pale because the person who is walking is pale. Accidental beings such as the walking thing and the pale thing are what they are in virtue something else, in the sense that they are themselves ontologically predicated of something else. Essential beings, by contrast, are not themselves ontological predicates. Each of them “is what it is without being something else”; Callias is a man without being something else, for example, a pale thing, however much indoors he is, first.

Building on this, in *An. Po. A.22* Aristotle distinguishes those predications which are predications only qualifiedly from those which are genuine predications. He proposes the following examples: “the white thing is walking,” “the large thing is a log,” and “the musical thing is white” on the one hand, and “the log is large” and “the man is walking” on the other. Aristotle says the following about these two kinds of predication:

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* [haplós] but predicating accidentally [sumbebekos].

Thus he offers “the log is large,” and “the man is walking” as examples of predications haplós, while the other examples are either not truly predications, or predications only accidentally. Consider this example: “the white thing is a log.” There is nothing wrong with the sentence in English or in Greek. The problem with the predication “the white thing is a log” is not linguistic, it is that the sentence’s structure does not mirror or limn the metaphysical relations, the ontological predication relations, which underlie its truth: “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 [hoper leucon ti], it came to be a log, so that it is not a log except accidentally.” The difficulty, in other words, is that while in this sentence the white thing is the linguistic subject, the thing being talked about, it is not the sort of thing which can properly serve as an ontological subject or hypokeimenon for log as a predicate. The white thing is an accidental, a sumbebekós. It is something which is predicated of, or on, something else, the log. The reason the white thing is not a hypokeimenon in this case is that it is not suited to be the grounds for

30 83a15
31 83a9-10
32 The ontological predication of the musical thing of the white thing is a case of what some ancient commentators called an unnatural predication. The thing about unnatural predications, says Barnes, is that “the subject of an unnatural predication is ontologically parasitic on other entities.” (pg. 116) It is ontologically parasitic because it is itself ontologically predictable of something else, for it is an accidental rather than an essential being. It is what it is, e.g., walking, pale, musical, because it is already something else. While the pale thing may in fact be musical, musicality only belongs to the pale thing because it belongs to the person who also happens to be pale. Thus the genuine ontological subject is the person herself.
the predicate log by being just what it is (hoper τι). In fact, it is not suited to be the grounds for being a log at all. In the case of the sentence “the white thing is walking” the situation is no so bad. The white thing is not suited as such to ground the predicate, walking. But insofar as the white thing is also a person, and the person can ground the property of walking, the white thing is accidentally the subject of the predicate, i.e., walking. For the white thing is accidentally the same as the person.33

In his commentary on Physics A William Charlton explains hoper τι [ὁπερ τι] thus: “ὁπερ τι in Aristotle normally means, I think (for a fair selection of examples v. Bonitz 533b39-534a23), ‘precisely what is something’ in the sense in which a certain bodily condition might be said to be precisely what is healthy.”34 A comparable English expression for the sense Charlton gives to hoper τι would be “model”, as the Gilbert & Sullivan’s character used the term when he proclaimed “I am the very model of a modern major general.” (In the play, Major General Stanley is claiming that he exhibits perfectly, lacking nothing, the characteristics of the (ideal) modern major general.) I think Aristotle has in mind something different than this in the An. Po. passage, something which also fits with the other texts Bonitz points out. Something being hoper τι what it is is not so much a matter of it perfectly presenting the characteristics of a type, but rather of its bearing the property predicated of it in virtue of being of that kind. In the example in 83a9-10, the white thing is not a log in virtue of being white, and because of this it is not the subject for the log.

It is tempting to think that in these passages in An. Po. the expression has an even stronger meaning, and is synonymous with kath’ auto. If this were the case, then since substances are the essential beings only substances could truly be hypokeimena. But the point Aristotle is making there is not that the white thing is not essentially what it is, but rather that what it is, as white, does not ground its being a log. Similarly, with the other examples. The problem with the pale thing being musical is not that the pale thing is not musical, but rather that there being a musical thing is not predicated on there being a pale thing. Thus An. Po. provides us with a necessary condition for something being a hypokeimenon in a genuine or unqualified predication; its being what it is, or hoper τι, must ground its having or being what is predicated of it.

Another example of Aristotle’s helps to clarify this. In Physics A.7 Aristotle famously uses the example of a person becoming musical, or, avoiding transliteration, cultured, to explain his account of the principles of change. On my reading of An. Po. A.4, predicating musical of a person counts as a genuine predication. According to Aristotle, humans are distinctively rational creatures, and in virtue of this they are teachable; thus in virtue of being human, a person can become cultured. A person is a genuine hypokeimenon for being cultured, and thus is an important element in the change which is “becoming cultured”. The ontological predication of cultured of a person is

33 Cf. Metaphysics V.9 1017b27-30
genuine in that it reveals the structure of the properties that person has. Similarly, to use a present-day stereotype as a further example, if it some academic were called “loquacious” or “analytical”, these would also be cases of genuine predication, picking out a genuine subject. Having a certain manner of engaging in conversation or a certain analytical bent in reflection are features generally marks or features of a person much of whose life is spent in the academy.

§3: Things other than substances can be hypokeimena:

This is consistent with the Categories treatment, which allowed items such as grammatical knowledge to be hypokeimena. Knowledge of grammar is hoper ti [ὅπερ τι] a suitable subject for some predicates, specifically in the context of a discussion of or inquiry into the different kinds of sciences. In this context, one can ask what its definition is, or what its characteristics are, such as whether it should be taught to children in elementary school; it is itself an object of inquiry. It is treated as something which is something (e.g. a branch of knowledge) and which has various characteristics (e.g., it is important for children to learn it).35

It may be that knowledge of grammar is, from the perspective of the science of metaphysics, ultimately a dependent sort of being. For Aristotle the context of metaphysics may even be a privileged context; other sciences mark off some kind of being, while metaphysics deals with being haplēs.36 But distinguishing substancehood from subjecthood illustrates that the properties a substance possesses can themselves be structured, in such a way that shows the possibility of other sciences.37 Still, metaphysics alone has as hypokeimena items which are not also predicates. This, arguably, is why

35 This helps to explain how Aristotle can treat numbers and magnitudes as genuine subjects of sciences. The case for taking knowledge of grammar as an ὑποκείμενον in a certain context is analogous to the case for taking mathematical items such as numbers and lines as ὑποκείμενα in mathematical science. There is a large literature on the status of mathematical knowledge for Aristotle (e.g. Lear (1982) and Mueller (1970)), some of which helps to illustrate the view of subjecthood I am presenting here. Lear (1982), for example, argues that when describing the subject of the mathematical sciences Aristotle introduces what Lear calls a "qua operator" (pg. 168): “Thus to use the qua-operator is to place ourselves behind a veil of ignorance: we allow ourselves to know only that b is F and then determine on the basis of that knowledge alone what other properties must hold of it.” (ibid) I think that Aristotle treats knowledge-of-grammar and numbers in the same way. Thus, in my view Lear’s qua operator allows us to treat as a hypokeimenon something such as a line or a kind of knowledge which is itself also a predicate, and to ask of it what belongs to it just by its being what it is, or hoper ti. Both mathematical and knowledge of grammar can be ὑποκείμενα, if only in a qualified way in the context of inquiry in which they are the subject of some science.

36 1015a8

37 For example, suppose Sally is an athlete, and also fit. These two properties stand in a certain order; Sally is fit because she is an athlete, or qua athlete. Thus things which are themselves accidentals or properties, dependent sorts of items, can, in virtue of being hoper ti whatever they are, be the bearers of predicates as hypokeimena in genuine ontological predications.
being a subject is presented as a mark of substancehood in *Categories*, whose topic is metaphysical, rather than belonging to any one of the sciences which take only a part of being.