In her paper, “Hypokeimenon vs. Substance in Aristotle’s Categories and Posterior Analytics,” Karen Wilson argues that, in Aristotle’s Categories, one can drive a wedge between subjecthood and substancehood and that, in his Posterior Analytics, the genuine hypokeimenon serves the role of the ground for essential predication. Throughout her paper, what seems to be assumed by Wilson is that she is presenting a consistent account of Aristotle’s view of hypokeimenon found both in the Categories and the Posterior Analytics. In my comments, I shall raise the following two concerns: 1) that Wilson has not successfully completely severed the tie that seems to exist between the subjecthood and substancehood in the Categories; and 2) that she does not seem to have offered a consistent account of Aristotle’s view of hypokeimenon found in the Categories and the Posterior Analytics.

Let me begin with the first concern; that is, whether or not she was able to drive the purported wedge between the subjecthood and the substancehood by arguing for the view that not all subjects are substances and that not all substances are subjects. I concur with the first part of her view: that substances are not the only things that can be hypokeimenon. This can be clearly seen by the very example that Aristotle himself uses: knowledge-of-grammar as the subject, as Wilson correctly points out. So let me turn to the bone of my contention – the second part of her view: that not all substances are subject.

I shall begin with the crucial passage that she discusses, 2a11-15. Here, contrary to the claim made by Wilson, Aristotle does not state that what is distinctive about substances is that they are hypokeimenon of both said of and in-a-subject predication (page 4). Rather, the primary substances are
identified *negatively*: that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject. In other words, in the *Categories*, subjecthood is not used directly as the criterion of primary substances – the ontologically prior beings. It is at 2b5 that Aristotle explicitly identifies the primary substances as subjects (both in terms of said-of and in-a-subject predication) for all other things. So what seems to be implied by Aristotle is that the distinctive nature of primary substances is that they exclusively serve the role of subject. Now does this mean that all substances are ontological subjects? Wilson is correct to address this question; since it is logically possible that there could be a primary substance that is neither said of a subject nor in a subject and that does not serve the role of subject. But it is not clear that, given her analysis of *hypokeimenon*, she has provided us with a clear counter example: “the perfectly simple divine being found in *Physics* VIII and *Metaphysics* XII”.

The first set of concerns I have in discussing Aristotle’s divine being (or God for short) of *Physics* and *Metaphysics* in the context of his *Categories* is that not only Aristotle does not provide us with any conceptual tools to describe his God of later works but also he identifies the distinctive feature of substancehood that is inconsistent with his conception of God. To understand Aristotle’s view of God (as a form without matter or an actuality without any unrealized potentiality), we need to understand his view of form, matter, actuality and potentiality, which are, as well attested, conspicuously absent from his *Categories* (and from his *Organon* in general). So it is not clear that Aristotle’s notion of God can even be addressed using only the conceptual tools available in Aristotle’s *Organon*. Furthermore, Aristotle’s description of primary substances in the *Categories* does not seem to open any room for his God, for what is distinctive (ἰόν) about substance is that it remains numerically one and the same while able to receive contraries (4b16-7). Since God does not undergo any changes, God is not able to receive any contraries; thus, God fails to exhibit the distinctive attribute that is exclusively reserved for substances (at least in the *Categories*). So it does not seem that Aristotle’s notion of substancehood in the *Categories* is consistent with Aristotle’s view about God found in his texts elsewhere.
The second set of concerns I have about Wilson’s discussion of God is the reasons that she gives to argue for the case that God is not truly a subject of ontological predication: namely, that God has no properties or parts of any kind (page 5). I think these two reasons are problematic. First, whether or not any given thing has parts is not relevant to Aristotle’s view of subjecthood, since he explicitly draws a distinction between things that are in a subject and things belonging to something as parts (1a24-25 and 3a31-32). Consequently, a thing without any part could still be a subject. Secondly, it is far from clear that God has no properties or has no divine attributes. On the contrary, Aristotle seems to provide us with many divine attributes that can be said of or present in God: for example, God is a thinking being (Met XII.7, 1072b18-21). God is an animal (in the sense that God is a living thing) (Met XII.7, 1072b26-27). God is an Unmoved Mover (Met XII.7, 1072a25). God has infinite dynamis (Met XII.7 1073a8). God is eternal (Met XII.7, 1072b28-30). God of Physics VIII even has a location (God exists at the outer most circumference 267b6-9). Etc. So, it is not at all clear why all these “properties” cannot be said of or present in God. For example, just as Aristotle points out that knowledge is in the soul (1a25-26), why can’t God’s thought be in God’s mind in the manner of in-a-subject predication?

Incidentally, there is a manner in which God is not a hypokeimenon – as an underlying subject of change identified by Aristotle in his Physics I.7. This underlying subject is grasped by analogy (as bronze stands to a statue, or wood to a bed) (191a6ff). As we have already noted, God does not undergo changes; thus, God cannot be such a hypokeimenon. But presumably, this is not the notion of hypokeimenon (in the sense that bronze and wood are said to be the underlying subject) that Wilson is defending.

So the conclusion we seem to have reached is this: although Aristotle does not explicitly state that all substances are hypokeimenon, it appears that the default implied view of Categories seems to be that all substances are hypokeimenon. Or at least I cannot think of any counter example (that is consistent with the views found in the Categories) to offer, nor do I know whether there are substances without any properties or attributes that Aristotle introduces in his world view (unless of course we turn to the
possibility of the ultimate matter, which again is the term absent from the *Categories* and also I assume that is not the notion of hypokeimenon that Wilson wants to defend). So it doesn’t seem as though she was able to drive a wedge between subjectionhood and substancehood of the *Categories*.

Let me now turn to my second main concern: whether or not Wilson has provided us with a consistent interpretation of hypokeimenon found in both the *Categories* and the *Posterior Analytics*. According to her analysis, the role of subjectionhood in the *Posterior Analytics* is that the genuine hypokeimenon is the immediate ground for the property which is predicated of it. Let us for the sake of argument, accept this interpretation. In the *Posterior Analytics*, the necessary and universal character of the relationship between the ontological subjects and predicates obtains only if we are dealing with hypokeimenon at the level of universality and not at the level of individual. So if the genuine hypokeimenon is a species, like human being (or person), then we can predicate many necessary and universal predicates, such as “being cultured”. But it is not clear if the hypokeimenon in question is an individual, like Socrates, such a relationship indeed holds. That is, Socrates in virtue of being human (species) can become cultured, but not in virtue of being an individual. So it would appear that Socrates qua individual is not a genuine hypokeimenon of the *Posterior Analytics*, but Socrates qua human is.

The problem in the *Categories* is that hypokeimenon can be both individuals and universals (although Aristotle do not use these terms to draw a distinction between them – instead we find him using the term primary and secondary substances to distinguish them). In fact, it is at the level of individuals that Aristotle identifies the ontologically prior beings, the primary substances that serve as hypokeimenon for all other categories. But in the *Posterior Analytics*, if we accept Wilson’s analysis, then it is at the level of universals that Aristotle identifies the hypokeimenon as the epistemological grounding. I do not know whether this is a problem with her interpretation or that this is the problem that Aristotle himself introduces (albeit implicitly) in the *Organon* that he later explicitly grapples with in his *Metaphysics*. So
the consistency of the treatment of the subjecthood that Wilson seems to be seeking between the

*Categories* and the *Posterior Analytics* seems to remain elusive.