

Substance: The Foundation to Aristotle's Metaphysics.

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Abstract:

This article explores an inquiry into substance as the foundation of Aristotle's metaphysics. An analysis of the statue of matter is look at and also the nature of form. It uses elements like: intrinsic animator of nature, the fundamental recruiter, the fundamental character and the pincher of nature that explains the essence of things in light of matter and form. These elements bring the interaction between matter and form and posit that it is centered on the laws of nature. The main argument is that substance is foundational to Aristotle's metaphysics. The possible solutions to the plaque affecting the society are considered.

Keywords: Substance, Aristotle's Metaphysics, Hylemorphism, The Intrinsic Animator of Nature, Fundamental Recruiter, Fundamental Character, and The Pincher of Nature.

Introduction:

Our lives are tilted towards a universal consent. The universal consent is the foundation of our being. This universal consent has a fundamental character that is intrinsic in nature. Aristotle had that kind of fundamental character of substance which seems to be watered down by the unemployment of nature. Today there is screaming in the society for return. In this light, let me set the ball rolling beginning from the Pre-Socratic philosophers till Aristotle. The History of Philosophy brought in scene many pre-Socratic philosophers who had different ideas on the notion of substance. They thought that the substance of the universe consisted in some kind or kinds of stuff. Thales, thought that everything was in a form of water. His idea was not to see water as that which can freeze and evaporate but for the fact that water is the source of living for all created things. So, this substance could change without losing its nature. On these bases, one can see that traditional character found in water as the unity of all things. This set the pace for Aristotle's fundamental character.¹ On the same path, Anaximander posited that substance is indeterminate and could transmute into the various determinate stuffs such as water, air, earth and fire.² The indeterminate substance is divine in nature and takes all form. In spite of that, Anaximenes gave a rarefaction which is the pillar of change. It is air, life and divinity.³ By contrast, the Atomists like Democritus took those determinate particular objects which they called 'atoms'

¹. W.K.C GUTHRIE, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1962, 39-71.

². *Ibid*, 78-101.

³. *Ibid*, 119-127.

to be the substance of the universe.⁴ Atoms are objects in our ordinary sense; they are dogs and cats or tables and chairs. They are the subjects of predication, but they do not change their intrinsic properties. Classical atoms are, therefore, strong instances of the stuffs.

On his part, Plato rejected these materialist attempts to explain everything on the basis of which they came to be. According to Plato, the governing principles were the intelligible Forms which material objects attempted to copy. These Forms are not substances in the sense of being either the stuff or the individuals out of which all else is constructed. Rather, they are the driving principles that give structure and purpose to everything else. In itself, the rest would be, at most, an unintelligible chaos.⁵ With this, Aristotle's main criticism of Plato's Forms was that they are a confusion of universals and particulars. They are no way kinds of realities in concrete term but of artificiality, hence failing. So, Aristotle, in the *Categories*, holds that the primary substances are individual objects and they can be contrasted with everything else while secondary substances and all other predicable are the form or core of the thing in itself; because they are not predicable of or attributable to anything else due to the fact that they can exist and stand on their own. John Warrington in his writings of Aristotle's metaphysics at the introduction posits that the task of Aristotle is also our task in making a philosophical examination of the nature and meaning of being. Aristotle makes the concept of being the foundation of metaphysics. He defines being as that which is reality.⁶ In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle clearly proves his Master Plato's concept of two worlds as unfounded. To him, the concepts of matter and form cannot be separated. Being in his metaphysics is consisting of substance. The substance of a thing is its essence and it is that which make a thing what it is.⁷ For us to better understand substance, we must relate it to being because substance is that which persists when all attributes are removed. For him, we cannot separate the being of a thing from its substance. Substance is that fundamental character which I will show at the nature of substance and that of hylemorphic theory. Before that, I will want to take away ambiguity by defining some key terms. They are:

Substance:

In his philosophical lexicon, Aristotle gives us a definition of substance by describing two senses in which substance is to be understood.

We call substances (1) the simple bodies, i.e. earth and fire and water...and in general bodies and the things composed of them, both animals and divine beings, and the parts of these. All these are called substances because they are not predicated of a subject but everything else is predicated of them. (2) That which, being present in such things as are not predicated of a subject, is the cause of their being, as the soul is the being of animals. (3) The parts which are present in such things, limiting them and marking them as individuals, and by whose destruction the whole is destroyed, as the body is by the destruction of the plane... (4) The essence, the formula of which is a definition, is also called the substance of each thing. It follows then that the substance has two senses, (a) the ultimate substratum, which is no longer predicated of anything else, and (b) that which is a 'this' and separable—and of this nature is the shape or form of each thing.⁸

From the above quote, Aristotle makes it clear that substance is spoken of in two main senses, viz. as the ultimate substratum and as a 'this'. This is his formal meaning of substance. By identifying substance with simple bodies and the things composed of them, Aristotle points to the fact that primary substance is the concrete individual thing. It is "that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject, e. g. the individual man

⁴ . JOHN BURNET, *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato*, Macmillan University Press, London, 1914, 32-99.

⁵ . SOPHIA MACDONALD, *Greek Philosophy*, Great Britain, London, 2009, 123-129.

⁶ . ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, (ed) JOHN WARRINGTON, Jim and Sons Ltd, London 1956, xxi

⁷ . *Ibid*, 18.

⁸ . ARISTOTLE, *Categories*, 5, 2a13-2a14.

or the individual horse.”⁹ Substance is the cause of being because of her fundamental character. Without substance, every other thing will not exist.

Aristotle specified substance in the *metaphysics* as that which has constancy, stability and autonomy in being. He differentiates it from accident which does not exist not even in the majority of cases.¹⁰ From the above, one can say that substance is that which is in itself and not in another thing as a subject of inhesion. He recognizes an absolute priority of substance with respect to accidents. Substance is the first in everything. The metaphysical road begins with the first glance at being. In English, the word being is an ambiguous term which can be a noun, a participle or a gerund (a human being; a being from another planet; and the importance of being earnest). Latin is more precise in this respect, *ens* is the noun and *esse* is the verb but both are declined. *Ens* is that which has the act of being (there maybe something which does not actually exist but have only a possibility) while *esse* is that by which a thing is. Therefore, *esse* is a metaphysical real component or constituent part of the singular concrete being.¹¹ Being is defined as everything real and nothing unreal belongs to the domain of being.¹² This concept has a central place in philosophy from Parmenides to Heidegger passing through Aristotle. Parmenides thinks that being is one and indivisible.¹³ Aristotle defines being as that which is. But what is that which is? It is something real Aristotle linked his metaphysics to that real.¹⁴ Heidegger separates being from the studies of science to metaphysics which studies being in totality. Metaphysics is the first principle or ultimate causes of things of which we are looking. It should be noted that Aristotle's interests in being stems from his interest in biology. For him, to be is to be something that could be defined with exactitude. To illustrate it, Aristotle employed logic and deal with categories.¹⁵ Categories such as quality, relation, posture and place, pre-suppose something to which it predicts. This subject to which all categories apply, Aristotle calls substance.¹⁶ To be then is to be a particular substance. In this way, metaphysics is concerned with being that is, consisting of substance and its causes, the process by which substance comes into being.

Metaphysics:

Aristotle calls metaphysic “first philosophy” in the sense of primary.¹⁷ It is the philosophy which studies being as being and the properties of everything that is real as distinct from what is imaginary or mental. However, this real being is known through the concept of the mind. When we talk about being in metaphysics, we are not talking about any being in particular, but being applied to every real thing. Metaphysics is the study of the ultimate cause and of the first and the most universal principles of reality. It includes everything real within its field of study because it seeks the ultimate cause and fundamental principles of reality.¹⁸ It is derived from two Greek words; *Mata* meaning after and *Physika* meaning physics.¹⁹ Etymologically, metaphysics simply refers to that which comes after the physics. Andronicus of Rhodes was the one who classified the works of Aristotle which led to the term metaphysics. Aristotle considers metaphysics as the science of the first philosophy where he defines metaphysics as the science of being as being or being qua being.²⁰ He calls metaphysics by three names; first philosophy, theology and wisdom.²¹ Heidegger on his part defines

⁹. ARISTOTLE, *Categories*, 5, 2a13-2a14.

¹⁰. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, 1028a

¹¹. JOSEPH DE TORRE, *Christian Philosophy*, 3ed, Sinag-Tala Publishers, Manila, 1980,74-79.

¹². SIMON BLACKBURN, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, 240-254.

¹³. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, 1001a

¹⁴. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, (ed & Trans), John Warrington, xxi-16.

¹⁵. EDWARD F. LITTLE, *Two Essays on the Organs of Metaphysics*, U.S.A Writers club Press, 126.

¹⁶. EDWARD F. LITTLE, *Two Essays on the Organs of Metaphysics*, 133.

¹⁷. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, (ed) JOHN WARRINGTON, xxi.

¹⁸. THOMAS ALVIRA et Al. *Metaphysics*. Sinag-Tala Publishers, Manila 1982, 4-5.

¹⁹. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, (ed) JOHN WARRINGTON, xxi

²⁰. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, (ed) JOHN WARRINGTON, 21.

²¹. *Ibid*, 22.

metaphysics as the ontological enquiry into the *sein*, while Rene Descartes sees metaphysics as the knowledge of things which lies beyond sense experiences of being or is why there are assents.²² Based on the above definition, one can definitely say that metaphysic is that which consists of *ens* and *esse* of a thing. The ultimate reality of a thing is found in the fundamental character of the thing itself.

Substance as the Basic Foundation of Metaphysics

Aristotle's Metaphysics is basically the study of being *qua* substance. But being is spoken of in many ways. Consequently, to understand his consideration of substance, it will be necessary to arrive at the real meaning of substance. As a systematic thinker, Aristotle begins by calling to his aid "those who had attacked the investigation of being and philosophized about ultimate reality before him."²³ Then he progresses by analyzing their views and arriving at his own conclusions concerning ultimate reality, that is, being, which he narrows down to substance. To better understand the concept of substance, it is crucial to know its meaning. For this reason, the etymological meaning of substance and its formal meaning will be elaborated first. Then I will delve into the details of what Aristotle actually means by the concept substance.

The word 'substance' is derived from the Latin noun *substantia*, which comes from the Latin verb *sub-stare*, meaning to exist, or literally 'to stand near or beneath': *sub* - under, beneath and *stare* - to stand.²⁴ Also, the principal term for substance in the writings of Aristotle is *ousia* in Greek. This word occurs in the philosophical writings before Aristotle as a synonym for *phusis*, meaning either the origin of a thing, its natural constitution or structure, the stuff of which things are made, a natural kind or species.²⁵ It is in this sense that the pre-Socratic philosophers conceived substance as their *archē*. Again, the Latin word *substantia* is a literal translation of the Greek word *hypostasis*, "standing under." Another philosophical term, *hypokeimenon*, "that which underlies something," is used by both Plato and Aristotle to refer to that which presupposes something else.²⁶ This leads us into the formal meaning of the concept, "substance."

In his philosophical lexicon, Aristotle gives us a definition of substance by describing two senses in which substance is to be understood. But first, he lists four ways of calling a substance: as simple bodies, as the cause of a being, as the form which limits and marks things off such that if they are destroyed the individual thing ceases to be, and explores substance as the essence of a thing, that which defines a thing. He then makes it clear that substance is spoken of in two main senses, viz. as the ultimate substratum and as a 'this'. This is his formal meaning of substance.

We call substances (1) the simple bodies, i.e. earth and fire and water...and in general bodies and the things composed of them, both animals and divine beings, and the parts of these. All these are called substances because they are not predicated of a subject but everything else is predicated of them. (2) That which, being present in such things as are not predicated of a subject, is the cause of their being, as the soul is the being of animals. (3) The parts which are present in such things, limiting them and marking them as individuals, and by whose destruction the whole is destroyed, as the body is by the destruction of the plane... (4) The essence, the formula of which is a definition, is also called the substance of each thing. It follows then that the substance has two senses, (a) the ultimate substratum, which is no longer predicated of anything else, and (b) that which is a 'this' and separable—and of this nature is the shape or form of each thing.²⁷

By identifying substance with simple bodies and the things composed of them, Aristotle points to the fact that primary substance is the concrete individual thing, just as he had done in his logical work, the *Categories*. It

²². ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, (ed) JOHN WARRINGTON, xxi.

²³. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, I, 3, 983b5.

²⁴. W. W. SKEAT, *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1911, 527.

²⁵. D. J. O'CONNOR, "Substance and Attribute," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 8, 36.

²⁶. *Ibid*, 36.

²⁷. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, V, 1017b10-b25.

is “that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject, e. g. the individual man or the individual horse.”²⁸ Substance is the cause of being. Without substance, every other thing will not exist. Things, other than substance, exist only as secondary substances.

For instance, to say that Wanzeh is dark points to the fact that darkness is not essential to Wanzeh, but rather accidental, without which Wanzeh will still exist. That is why Aristotle clearly spells out that “things are said to be (1) in an accidental sense. (2) by their own nature.”²⁹ In his *Categories*, Aristotle divided being into ten supreme genera to which all predication could be reduced: one substance and nine accidents. By so doing, he made it clear that all categories depended on substance and that substance alone could be subsistent and exist independently, for, “it is in virtue of this category that each of the others is. Therefore, that which is primarily and is simply (not is something) must be substance.”³⁰ Secondary substance is thus wholly dependent on primary substance and as a result is substance only analogically. The *Categories* describe the species and genera in which things are as secondary substance.³¹ So, substance *per se* is primary substance.

The Primacy of Substance

Even though things are said to be primary in various ways, substance, for Aristotle is first or anterior in every sense: in formula, in order of knowledge and in time. This is due to its independence and separability. Aristotle affirms that: “Now, there are several senses in which a thing is said to be primary; but substance is primary in every sense—in formula, in order of knowledge, in time. Concerning the other categories, none can exist independently, but only substance.”³²

According to Aristotle, substance is primary in formula, for, “in the formula of each term the formula of its substance must be present.”³³ The formula here refers to the account or the definition of a term. When talking of anything, the definition of it must necessarily be given in relation to substance, given that it is what a thing is which accounts for its being. To be black or to be a painter, for instance, is always said in reference to substance. To truly define anything, its essence must come out clearly. Hence, substance is primary in formula.

He continues showing that to have knowledge of something is primordial to its understanding. It is the characteristic of the human mind to always seek knowledge of reality so as to satisfy the intellect. This suggests the primacy of substance in order of knowledge. To truly speak of anything or a term, we must first of all have knowledge of it, that is, what it is and only in a secondary sense can we speak of its affections and predications. Aristotle uses the examples of fire and man to illustrate his point, showing that it is not the accidents or affections of a thing that give us knowledge of them, but the substance, the what it is. He highlights:

And we think we know each thing most fully, when we know what it is, e.g. what man is or what fire is, rather than when we know its quality, its quantity, or where it is; since we know each of these things also, only when we know *what* the quantity or the quality *is*.³⁴

It is worth recalling that this anteriority of substance in the order of knowledge was already suggested in the opening words of the *Metaphysics* when Aristotle affirmed that: “all men by nature desire to know.”³⁵

About this anteriority of substance, Aristotle simply states it but gives no explanation of what that means. This, notwithstanding, we can reason out with him that the primacy of substance in the order of time, points

²⁸. ARISTOTLE, *Categories*, 5, 2a13-2a14.

²⁹. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, V, 7, 1017a8.

³⁰. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics* VII, 1, 1028a30-a31.

³¹. ARISTOTLE, *Categories*, 5, 2a13-a22.

³². *Ibid.*, VII, 1, 1028a32.

³³. ARISTOTLE, *Categories*, 1028a32-b2.

³⁴. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 1, 1028a32-b2.

³⁵. *Ibid.*, I, 1, 892a21.

to the before-ness and to the after-ness of this category.³⁶ It is that which underlies an object; that which makes a thing what it is, that which is prior to all other predications of it. Even though it can be the subject of predication, it is itself predicated of nothing else. As a result, substance is prior to all other categories which are accidents and cannot exist without it. Consequently, substance is prior in time. There is still a puzzle left to resolve so as to establish the foundation of substance in Aristotle's Metaphysics. In the beginning of this, we mentioned Aristotle's inquiry into the thoughts of his predecessors, notably, the pre-Socratics and Plato. We concluded that he was not satisfied with their thought pattern and had to reconcile both parties, the materialism of the pre-Socratic and the idealism of Plato. What, therefore, is truly considered as substance by Aristotle? Is it matter, the form, or the composite of matter and form? And why the preference?

The Nature of Substance

This point is very crucial in Aristotle's consideration of substance. At the beginning of *Meta. VII, 3*, Aristotle notes that the word 'substance' is applied at least to four main objects, viz. the essence, the universal, the genus and the substratum. These four objects seem to each have the possibility of being the solution to the question of what substance truly is. Aristotle asserts: "The word 'substance' is applied, if not in more senses, still at least to four main objects; for both the essence and the universal and the genus are thought to be the substance of each thing, and fourthly the substratum."³⁷ His treatment of it shows that his preference of the object of substance is the essence which he will later on use interchangeably with the form. My aim is to investigate which of the four objects listed by Aristotle finally qualifies to be substance primarily.

The Substratum of Substance

Aristotle, in the *Metaphysics*, devotes his treatment of subjecthood as substance in Book VII chapter 3. The idea of substratum or subject has to do mostly with the relationship between substance and accidents. It brings out the fact that substance is that which underlies everything primarily and serves as a support for the accidents. The latter exist only because they bear a certain relation to substance and depend on it for their very existence. Through the notions of matter and form, Aristotle attempts a solution to what is truly substance. He holds that:

The substratum is that of which the other things are predicated, while it is itself not predicated of anything else. And so we must first determine the nature of this; for that which underlies a thing primarily is thought to be in the truest sense its substance. And in one sense matter is said to be of the nature of substratum, in another, shape, and in a third sense, the composite of these.³⁸

Now, substratum is that which is neither said of nor in a subject, it aptly represents Aristotle's substance as primary in all senses. Thus, considering it to be that which stands beneath, he decides first of all to determine its nature. This, he defines substance as "that which is not predicated of a subject, but of which all else is predicated,"³⁹ is not enough but still ambiguous. Therefore, let me proceed to investigate that which explains the substance of a thing as subject.

For Aristotle, it is most logical to begin such a study from that which is given to the senses before moving to the abstract, that is, to the intelligible things. This is what he says: "It is agreed that there are some substances among sensible things, so that we must look first among these. For it is an advantage to that which is more intelligible."⁴⁰ In line with Aristotle, therefore, it is best to begin by looking at the composite of matter and form, the concrete thing.

³⁶. *Ibid*, I, 1, 892a23.

³⁷. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 3, 1028b33-35.

³⁸. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 3, 1028b35-1029a4.

³⁹. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysic*, 1029a7.

⁴⁰. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, 1029a34.

The Hylemorphic Theory

The doctrine of matter and form is known as Aristotle's hylomorphism, where *hyle* is the matter and *morphe* is the form. Aristotle decides to undertake a study of substance only among sensible things. This is usually given to the senses in the form of individual things, for, every single concrete being given to the senses is a composite of both matter and form. Considering that matter and form are always co-principles, they cannot exist independently. Aristotle uses the example of a bronze statue to illustrate his inquiry. The bronze is the matter, the material out of which the statue is made. The shape of the statue is its form, that which informs the matter and it is the compound of these that results in a statue, the concrete thing. Considering that substance is prior in every sense, Aristotle dismisses the possibility of the composite thing as substance. Matter and form are simply ways of accounting for concrete beings. He articulates the following: "The substance compounded of both, i.e. of matter and shape, may be dismissed; for it is posterior and its nature is obvious."⁴¹ The compound of matter and form, the concrete thing, having been rejected as the possibility of it to be substance, now leaves us to explore matter alone and then the form. Inasmuch as we consider the ideas, it is imperative to note that there are some hiding elements that are of prime importance in Aristotle's concept of Substance that set the interaction between matter and form. They are; the intrinsic animator of nature, the fundamental character recruiter, the fundamental character and the pincher of nature. Having outlined the elements, I will then show how these elements act as pivot to matter and form.

Only Matter

Aristotle wonders whether matter alone can be substance. After reiterating the nature of substance in terms of predication, he affirms that to view substance as such will make matter to become the suitable object of this inquiry, for, only matter will seem to be substance. He illustrates this by saying that when bodily dimensions such as the length and breadth and depth are taken away, it may seem to some that only matter is left. He remarks:

We have now outlined the nature of substance, showing that it is that which is not predicated of a subject, but of which all else is predicated. But we must not state the matter thus; for this is not enough. The statement itself is obscure, and further, on this view, matter becomes substance. For if this is not substance, it is beyond us to say what else it is. When all else is taken away evidently nothing but matter remains... For the other elements are affections...and not substance... But when length and breadth and depth are taken away, we see nothing left except that which is bounded by these, whatever it may be; so that to those who consider the question thus matter alone must seem to be substance.⁴²

To better illustrate this, if a table, for instance, is denied all these dimensions and its attributes of four leggedness, only the matter (the wood) from which it was made will remain. But by defining matter, Aristotle quickly dismisses the possibility of it being considered as substance. This is because it lacks the feature of separability and consequently of independence.⁴³ The composite of matter and form, and matter alone, having now been ruled out, leave us only with the possibility of having the form as substance, yet we must show how this comes about. Still, at original base matter has a form which is meaningless and needs the mind to act on it. When the intellect acts on matter, it then gives meaning to matter. This is the interaction between matter and form. The question may arouse on how the interaction takes place. For form (intellect) to act on matter, it must be informed and form is inform by taking notes of the laws of nature. At such, matter opens her door to recruit the fundamental character (form). In effect, the fundamental character can only dwell on matter after ensuring

⁴¹. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 3, 1029a30.

⁴². ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 3, 1029a7-19.

⁴³. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 1029a28.

that there is no pincher of nature. The pincher of nature has characteristics that may be found in matter which disrupt human essence and goes against the laws of nature. If matter is found with pincher of nature like deeply seated homosexual tendencies, then form cannot act on it if well inform by the intrinsic animator of nature. This shows that form cannot disrespect the laws of nature by acting on matter due to the fact that form is the fundamental character that gives meaning to matter. This interaction shows that form is the transformation of substance found in matter and also, the extent to which the fundamental character is recruited.

Forms as the Essence of Substance

Aristotle begins by highlighting that “we must inquire into the third kind of substance [the form]; for this is the most difficult.”⁴⁴ This difficulty becomes evident when, instead of treating the form, the Stagirite immediately delves into a study of the essence. One may ask whether essence is here taken to mean the form. Aristotle himself gives the answer:

But we must distinguish the elements before we begin to inquire; if not, it is not clear whether the inquiry is significant or unmeaning. Since we must know the existence of the thing and it must be given, clearly the question is why the matter is some individual thing, e.g. why are these materials a house? Because, that which was the essence of the house is present. And why is this individual thing, or this body in this state, a man? Therefore what we seek is the cause, i.e. the form by reason of which the matter is some definite thing; and this is the substance of the thing.⁴⁵

From the above quote, we can infer that the form is considered the same as the essence. What definition, therefore, does Aristotle give to the form or the essence of a thing so as to permit its establishment as a potential and consequently as the actual object reflected truly as substance? Also, what sorts of things are considered to have essence?

Clarity of Forms or Essences

Aristotle, in seeking a response to the ‘this’ of things, that is, why certain things are a ‘this’, a house, for instance, notes that it is the same as seeking the essence of things. Thus, he says: “And why are certain things, i.e. stones and bricks, a house? Plainly we are seeking the cause. This cause I consider to be the fundamental character that is employed to give matter the essence it deserves. And this is the essence (to speak abstractly), which in some cases is that for the sake of which.”⁴⁶ Hence, essence and form in Aristotle's inquiry are identical. What, therefore is the meaning of form or essence? “The essence [or form] of each thing is what it is in virtue of itself.”⁴⁷ Put differently, it is the cause of being, that which makes things what they are. The phrase “in virtue of itself” already points to the characteristics of separability and independence which substance alone primarily enjoys. This implies that for every given thing, “essence will belong, just as the ‘what’ does, primarily and in the simple sense to substance, and in a secondary way to the other categories also, not essence simply, but the essence of a quality or of a quantity.”⁴⁸ Thus, Aristotle establishes that only substances have an essence in the primary sense while accidents and their composites do so only in a secondary sense.

Aristotle employs the example of being musical to show that being musical does not make you to be who you are because it is simply a quality of you, an attribute, a secondary substance. But it is what you are in virtue of yourself that is your essence or form. So, one can say that the essence or the form is intrinsic to being or

⁴⁴. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysic.*, 1029a33.

⁴⁵. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 16, 1041b2-9.

⁴⁶. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 17, 1041a28-30.

⁴⁷. ARISTOTLE, *Categorie.*, VII, 4, 1029b13.

⁴⁸. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics* 1030a29-30

reality and points to things-in-themselves. It is their real nature and this is what Aristotle refers to as substance *per se*. But how is it possible that the form should be an ultimate subject given that it appears rather to be an acquired principle, notably by matter, which with the latter is a co-principle and not a substratum or subject in itself? This subsection of the definition of essence can be considered strictly speaking as a logical inquiry into the meaning of essence. The next subsection concerns a metaphysical inquiry of substance as essence, meditating on the nature of substance as form or essence in reference to matter as metaphysical constituents of being.

Form as intrinsic to reality

The form is not only the shape of a thing, as was illustrated in Aristotle's example of the bronze statue in examining the validity and later the rejection of the composite as substance. If this were the case, the form will only be something external to the reality and will not truly testify to the thing in itself, to the ultimate substratum.⁴⁹ Form, therefore, is external as that which is given to the senses empirically and in experience in the like of shape when combined with matter. For example, the square shapes of a box. More so, as substance, form is an intrinsic principle, not an element or an element of a thing, for, it is this that is the primary cause of its being. I have considered form to be the intrinsic animator of nature with a profound fundamental character. Aristotle explains:

As regards that which is compounded out of something so that the whole is one—not like a heap, however, but like a syllable, —the syllable is not its elements... The syllable, then, is something—not only its elements (the vowel and the consonant) but also something else; and the flesh is not only fire and earth or the hot and the cold, but also something else.

Since, then, that something must be either an element or composed of elements...it would seem that this is something, and not an element, and that it is the cause which makes *this* thing flesh and *that* a syllable. Similarly, in other cases; this is the substance of each thing; for this is the primary cause of its being...which is not an element but a principle.⁵⁰

Regarding the nature of substance, therefore, it is the form that truly qualifies as substance *per se* and not the composite or the matter out of which things are made, because “if the form is prior to the matter and more real, it will be prior to the compound also for the same reason.”⁵¹ Two of the four objects that were presented in Book VII, 3, as possible ways of being substance have now been treated with the establishment of form or essence as primary substance. But can primary substance be of primordial importance without the openness and invitation of matter; it is definitely clarify in the following explanation. When form receives the invitation to act on matter, she must make sure that matter has followed the laws of nature. At this point, form which is the fundamental character then sends the intrinsic animator of nature to animates matter by ensuring that matter is remains in line of nature through capturing, nurturing, maturing and then give it the exposure for the fundamental character to act. The fundamental character does not act out of the laws of nature. In recent times, we have witnessed how the society is ensuring the implementation of human rights to allow acts of the pincher of nature but it is cleared that the court of human rights in Strasbourg- France endorsed that there is no right to same-sex marriage.⁵² From that endorsement, one can posit that it is the fundamental character in the forty seven judges that reawaken in them to respect the laws of nature and to fight against the pincher of nature. In spite of what is said, what becomes of the statement “if gold can rusts, what then iron will do.”⁵³ This quote points to the authenticity of being. This being opens her doors for the intrinsic animator of nature to survey

⁴⁹. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 17, 1041b10.

⁵⁰. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 17, 1041b11-1042a1.

⁵¹. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 3, 1029a6.

⁵². <http://www.medias-press.infos>, 16/01/2024, 2:25am.

⁵³. GEOFFREY CHAUCER, *The Canterbury Tales*, George Routledge and sons, London, 1867, 7-27.

before the fundamental character is employed. But if the intrinsic animator fails to survey matter well before responding to the fundamental character to act, then the behaviors of the society will leave us with unanswered questions. To avoid such, the intrinsic animator should inform form of the statue of matter so that the fundamental character can act according to the laws of nature. The fundamental character cannot act on a corrupted matter if fully informed by the animator of nature. We are left with the universal and the genus which we will now consider.

Substantiality of the universe and the genus:

Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* Book VII, chapter 13 begins by first negating the substantiality of universals. According to him, universals cannot be substances. One of the reasons advanced for this negation is, that the substance of a thing must not belong to anything else apart from the thing of which it is the substance. Given, therefore, that universals by nature belong to many things, the human soul for instance belonging to many different men, they cannot be substance. Also, because the universal is always predicable of some subject, it cannot be substance. The Stagirite himself advances the argument thus:

For it seems impossible that any universal term should be the name of a substance. For primary substance is that kind of substance which is peculiar to an individual, which does not belong to anything else; but the universal is common, since that is called universal which naturally belongs to more than one thing. Further, substance means that which is not predicated of a subject, but the universal is predicable of some subject always.⁵⁴

In addition, substantiality is equally denied to the genus.

This is because, while the form is prior to the compound, the genus just as the species is posterior to the composite of matter and form, given that they are but universal composites of matter and form. Aristotle uses the example of the soul of animals in opposition to the concrete animal to show that while the form or soul of animals is prior as substance, the concrete animal is posterior to its soul. Thus, he concludes that, “man and horse and terms which are thus applied to individuals, but universally, are not substance but something composed of this particular formula and this particular matter treated as universal.”⁵⁵ So, neither the universal nor the genus is a substance.

Having considered all that has been developed concerning substance in this article, I have defined it as the ultimate substratum of things and a ‘this’. Also, substance has been understood as primary among the categories and as self-subsistent. In addition, I have seen that substance is prior in all senses—in formula, in order of knowledge and in time. More to that, in establishing a list of four objects that qualified for being substance per se, that is primary substance, I concluded that only the form could be given substantiality.⁵⁶ The latter was considered to be truly substance as that principle which structures and organizes every existing entity.⁵⁷

Since substance has been established as the essence of a thing, as that which makes something what it is in itself, I can say with Aristotle that “indeed the question which both now and of old, has always been raised, and always been the subject of doubt, viz. what being is, is just the question, what is substance?”⁵⁸ All other things characterized as being can only be regarded as secondary substances.

⁵⁴. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics* VII, 13, 1038b8-11.

⁵⁵. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 10, 1035b27-29.

⁵⁶. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 3, 1028b2

⁵⁷. *Ibid.*,

⁵⁸. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VII, 3, 1028b3.

Conclusion:

Thus, the way to keep the society to a citadel of living is to keep in mind that the fundamental came to our very being and brought essences to it which respect the laws of nature. It was established that the fundamental character only acts at the invitation of the intrinsic animator of nature who must have surveyed to avoid any iota of the pincher of nature. That is the utmost solution of a good society. The elements used shows how substance is the foundation to Aristotle's metaphysics which is narrow down to being for the sake of understanding.

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