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Aristotle's *Categories* in the 19th Century¹

Abstract: This chapter explores interpretive debates about Aristotle's *Categories* in the 19th century. The interpretation of this text became the *locus* to pursue the further philosophical aim of defending logic against an epistemological recalibration of concepts such as that found in the transcendental and metaphysical deductions of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. As Colin Guthrie King argues, this was the ultimate philosophical ambition of Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg's interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine of categories, but perhaps more important than this project itself were its derivatives: a model for the proper philosophical interpretation of an ancient philosophical text, and an exemplary model of how to defend such a text against an influential anachronistic interpretation.

I Interpreting Aristotle in the 19th Century

The 19th century was a productive one for the study of Aristotle. As amply noted by previous authors, the preparation of the first modern critical edition of Aristotle's works in Greek at the Prussian Academy of Sciences coincides roughly with a renewed philosophical interest in Aristotle which in good part was due to Hegel; and both of these were, in different but intersecting ways, initiators of the flood of editions, commentaries and interpretive literature which ensued after the publication of the first volume of Bekker's Aristotle in 1831.² Conspicuous in this general boom of Aristotle scholarship is the attention paid to Aristotle's *Categories*, an attention which seems incongruous by the lights of contemporary scholarship. Trendelenburg's *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre* and the main lines of discussion it caused (criticism from Bonitz but also a very independent

1 For helpful criticism of this chapter in various stages of its development I would like to thank Gerald Hartung, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Anthony Jensen, Stephen Menn, Christof Rapp, and Denis Thouard.

2 For a helpful overview of the enormous scholarly productivity on Aristotle in the 19th century, see the introduction in Thouard (2004), 9–21; there is a useful bibliographic index at the back of the volume of the principal editions, commentaries and editions of commentaries on Aristotle in the 19th century. Stephen Menn (2010), in his discussion of “Zeller and the Debates about Aristotle's *Metaphysics*”, traces Hegel's influence on these debates and on Zeller in particular. Ferrarin (2009) presents evidence for the prominent place of Aristotle in Hegel's historiography of philosophy.

dissertation under Trendelenburg's direction by Franz Brentano) are well known; lesser known discussions of the theory of categories continued throughout the century in scholarly journals and in prominent parts of various histories of ancient philosophy.³ The attraction to the *Categories* is symptomatic of an association which 19th century readers of Aristotle could hardly put to rest, it seems: that with Kant's appropriation of the term 'category' for the *a priori* concepts of understanding.⁴ This bit of Kantian borrowing, along with Kant's use of Plato's 'idea' as the term for the *a priori* concepts of reason, would give rise to a consistently recurring historiographical model in which Plato played ancient philosophy's Idealist and Aristotle – whose criticism of Plato's theory of ideas was not hard to see – took on the role of antagonist. The model was persistent: Plato's ideas would be introduced in one early 19th century handbook of the history of philosophy as *a priori* concepts of pure reason; at the century's end, Paul Natorp would write a work on *Plato's Theory of Ideas* with the subtitle "An Introduction to Idealism".⁵

The Kantian reading of Plato as Idealist *avant la lettre* is a frame which would have many implications (sometimes even contradictory ones) for the interpretation of Aristotle. It is by reference to this frame that Aristotle would figure prominently as a vehicle for criticism of Hegel at the hands of such diverse figures as Trendelenburg, Marx and Kierkegaard.⁶ This has a certain irony, of course, as Hegel figures so importantly in the renewed reception of Aristotle; and the frame did not keep certain writers such as Zeller from interpreting Aristotle in an unrepentantly Hegelian way as the more sophisticated, as it were re-

3 See Apelt (1891) for a synoptic discussion of this literature and its main questions: What is the metaphysical status of the doctrine of categories? What is being distinguished with the categories? Why does Aristotle use a plurality of different terms to refer to categories, and what are these? What is the relationship between Kantian and Aristotelian categories? And what is the origin of Aristotle's theory?

4 KrV B106–107 and *Prolegomena* § 39, which I discuss below at length.

5 See Buhle (1797), 96: "Die Platonischen Ideen sind Vernunftbegriffe *a priori*, durch welche das Wesen der Dinge gedacht wird, die aber selbst in einer Vernunft ihren Grund haben, und nicht außerhalb derselben existiren." Natorp (1903), viii–ix, sees Idealism in the position of an endangered philosophical position at the time of his writing, one which must be re-won through its progenitor: "Es ist das Verständnis des Idealismus, welches unsrem Zeitalter, man muß es sagen, so gut wie abhanden gekommen ist... Platos Ideenlehre, das ist die Geburt des Idealismus in der Geschichte der Menschheit; welchen richtigeren Eingang zum Idealismus könnte es also geben als durch das Nacherleben dieser seiner Geburt in der Entwicklung der Philosophie Platos?"

6 See Berti (2004) and Thouard (2004b).

formed, Idealist.⁷ More importantly perhaps, Hegel is (in stark contrast to Kant) the figure who makes the history of philosophy central to the systematic character of philosophy itself. Appropriating the philosophical past is, in this view, an act which is part of the process by which thought comes to itself through history.⁸

Still, for those with Aristotelian sympathies, interpreting the thoughts in Aristotle's *Categories* proved challenging in the philosophical present of the 19th century. The text of the *Categories* is much more difficult than it seems; but 19th century philosophy brought further expectations to bear on it which made matters even more difficult. The then current idea that epistemology precedes and grounds logic perhaps led many an interpreter to place fond hopes of finding such a grounding at the beginning of the *Organon* in this slender work. The history of the interpretation of the *Categories* in the 19th century is thus often also a history of attempts to either extricate Aristotle from, or harmonize Aristotle with, this particularly dominant Idealist assumption concerning the relationship between logic and epistemology. The two tendencies (one of extrication, one of implication) could easily co-exist in one interpretation, and of course proponents of one tendency could agree on much with proponents of another.

My main purpose here is to situate the work of Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg in the 19th century reception of the *Categories*. The history of this text's reception in the 19th century is itself of basic philosophical interest, as it illustrates how substantive issues concerning the relationship between language and thought, and concepts and things, played out in the nascent historiography of ancient philosophy. For this historiography and these issues, Trendelenburg's influence was very great. It was through writing history of philosophy that Trendelenburg brought views on the relationship between thought, world and language to bear. And Trendelenburg is a seminal figure in the historiography of ancient philosophy for another reason. In his writings and the reception of them, issues concerning the proper *use* of the history of philosophy arise again and again. The

7 This is shown by Menn (2010) with respect to Zeller's interpretation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (and metaphysics) in particular. Menn traces the disappearance of explicit references to Hegel through the three editions of Zeller's *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, the title of which already belies Hegelian influence.

8 See Hegel (c. 1825/1970), 23, Fussnote 10 (addition by Michelet from the Berliner Vorlesungen): "Die Geschichte, die wir vor uns haben, ist die Geschichte von dem Sich-selbst-Finden des Gedankens, und bei dem Gedanken ist es der Fall, daß er sich nur findet, indem er sich hervorbringt, ja, daß er nur existiert und wirklich ist, indem er sich findet. Diese Hervorbringungen sind die Philosophien. Und die Reihe dieser Hervorbringungen, diese Entdeckungen, auf die der Gedanke ausgeht, sich selbst zu entdecken, ist eine Arbeit von dritthalbtausend Jahren". Thus Hegel sees himself as thinking the thought of three and a half millenia through (to its end).

issues are discussed against the background of an ongoing debate concerning the role of the history of philosophy with relation to the philosophical present. The history of the interpretation of the *Categories* in the 19th century, written as it was in the shadow of Kant and Hegel, is rife with such reflections, for the authors are (for the most part) well aware that their own conceptual vocabulary is largely determined by Kantian and Idealist assumptions. The lasting legacy of Trendelenburg is, in this connection, to have gone very far in extricating himself at least from these background assumptions in his exegesis of Aristotelian texts, though he clearly and intentionally implicated these texts in contemporary debates concerning the place of logic in philosophy and the grounding relationship between concepts, language, and the world. In order to illustrate how he both extricates and implicates Aristotle's *Categories* in his own philosophical present, it will be necessary to focus as much on the Kantian and Idealist background and its influence in later historiography of ancient philosophy as on Trendelenburg. My aim in doing so is not to provide a complete doxography of the scholarship on the *Categories* in the 19th century, but rather to observe the interaction between the style and substance of the interpretations involved.

II Aristotle's *Categories* in Kant's Architectonic of Reason

There is an inconspicuous passage at the end of the second edition of *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* which is arguably one of the seminal statements for a certain modern approach to ancient philosophy. The passage is seminal in its system-driven approach to understanding past knowledge, an approach which would hold sway in the historiography of philosophy long after system-philosophy itself ceased to be paradigmatic.⁹ It is to be found in the final chapters of "transcendental theory of method" (*transzendente Methodenlehre*), where Kant formulates the demands of pure reason for the ordering of knowledge.¹⁰ The rule of reason demands that knowledge be organized in a system. In characterizing the negative correlate to the systematic constitution of knowledge, Kant uses a pregnant metaphor. He characterizes unsystematically existing knowledge as "rhapsody":

⁹ See Geldsetzer (1965) as well as Hartung/Pluder (2015).

¹⁰ These chapters were added in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787).

Under the government of reason our knowledge must not be rhapsody, rather it must constitute a system in which only our knowledge supports and carries its own essential ends. Now by system I understand a unity of diverse kinds of knowledge under an idea (KrV B860).¹¹

This notion of “rhapsody” recurs conspicuously in Kant’s criticism of Aristotle’s theory of categories. As a cipher for Aristotle and ancient philosophy, it carries many different possible associations, suggesting the theory it describes is inspired, creative, productive – but also primitive and blind. In the *Methodenlehre*, Kant’s intention is to derive from this concept of ordered knowledge principles for the interpretation and ordering of the knowledge of others. As no one attempts to found a science without an “idea”, we are warranted to explain and determine the sciences and existing knowledge according to this idea, and not according to the description of that science which its author gives:

No one attempts to found a science without basing it upon an idea. But in the development of a science it only seldom comes to pass that the schema or even the definition of the science corresponds to the idea. For this idea lies hidden in reason like a germ in which all the parts are still enfolded and barely recognizable, even to microscopic observation. Hence all sciences – being devised from the viewpoint of a certain universal interest – must be explicated and determined not according to the description which their originator gives of them, but according to the idea that, judging from the natural unity of the parts which the originator brought together, is based in reason itself (KrV B862).¹²

Kant ends the second edition of the first *Critique* with a view of the ruins which populate the history of pure reason: a place in the system of philosophy which Kant marks, but does not fill (KrV 880). The few schematic remarks in the *Methodenlehre* concerning the history of philosophy are inconsequential. But the

11 “Unter der Regierung der Vernunft dürfen unsere Erkenntnisse überhaupt keine Rhapsodie, sondern sie müssen ein System ausmachen, in welchem sie allein die wesentlichen Zwecke derselben unterstützen und befördern können. Ich verstehe aber unter einem Systeme die Einheit der mannigfaltigen Erkenntnisse unter einer Idee” (KrV B860). This and the following translations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are my own.

12 “Niemand versucht es, eine Wissenschaft zu Stande zu bringen, ohne daß ihm eine Idee zum Grunde liege. Allein in der Ausarbeitung derselben entspricht das Schema, ja sogar die Definition, die er gleich zu Anfange von seiner Wissenschaft giebt, sehr selten seiner Idee; denn diese liegt wie ein Keim in der Vernunft, in welchem alle Theile noch sehr eingewickelt und kaum der mikroskopischen Beobachtung kennbar verborgen liegen. Um deswillen muss man Wissenschaften, weil sie doch alle aus dem Gesichtspunkte eines gewissen allgemeinen Interesse ausgedacht werden, nicht nach der Beschreibung, die der Urheber derselben davon giebt, sondern nach der Idee, welche man aus der natürlichen Einheit der Theile, die er zusammengebracht hat, in der Vernunft selbst gegründet findet, erklären und bestimmen” (KrV B862).

principle of interpretation which Kant introduces here has far-reaching consequences. The principle states that we are warranted to interpret previous knowledge within the framework of a system, the *idea* of which is derived from a better informed philosophical present.

We may observe this principle and its application in Kant's own approach to Aristotle's theory of categories. Kant frames Aristotle's categories in an influential way by treating them as the deficient ancestors of his own notion of the pure concepts of understanding, "reine Verstandesbegriffe". His systematization of Aristotle's rhapsodical categories is a salient example of the use of an idea of pure reason to organize existing knowledge in the realm of metaphysics. The most famous, but not the only passage in which Kant proceeds in this way is in the "Transcendental Analytic" of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There, Kant is concerned with deriving systematically, or with a so-called *Leitfaden*, the conceptual basis for our judgments concerning experience. He derives this basis from the pure concepts of understanding, which we apply universally and *a priori* to objects, regardless of how they affect our senses. Thus these concepts are such that we have not derived them from the objects themselves, rather, we need them in order to conceptualize the objects of sensory experience in the first place.

A main object of the argument of the transcendental analytic is a completeness claim regarding the concepts of the understanding. Kant says there are precisely twelve such concepts, and that they may be "deduced" or derived from exactly as many forms of judgment (KrV B 95–107). It is within the context of this first, "metaphysical" deduction of the categories that Kant acknowledges Aristotle for having brought together certain fundamental concepts ("Grundbegriffe"), while criticizing him for not finding the right ones, and not looking in the right way:

This, then, is the list of all the original pure concepts of synthesis that the understanding contains *a priori*, and because of which it is a pure understanding; for through them alone can the understanding grasp something in the manifold of intuition, i. e. think an object of intuition. This division of the categories is systematic and based upon a common principle, namely the capacity to judge (which is the same as the capacity to think). It has not been derived rhapsodically, by the search for pure concepts by luck. There, we can never be sure that the concepts derived are complete in number, as they are derived by induction and without a thought for the fact that, in proceeding in this way, we may never understand why precisely these and no other concepts inhere in pure understanding. To search for such basic concepts was a move worthy of a very sharp man, and it was Aristotle's. But having no principle, he snatched them up as they occurred to him, and came up with ten, which he called categories (*predicamenta*). Afterwards he thought he came up with five more, which he added as *postpredicamenta*. Moreover, we find among these some modes of pure sensibility (*quando, ubi, situs, as well as prius, simul*), and an empirical

mode (*motus*), none of which belong to the register of the root concepts of understanding. Or they are derivative concepts (*actio*, *passio*) which do not belong to the original concepts, and some of the original concepts are completely missing (KrV B106–107).¹³

Aristotle's categories are wrong, because they are inadequate when interpreted as concepts of pure understanding: The categories of “quando”, “ubi”, and “situs” (i.e. κείσθαι) are concepts derived from pure forms of sensation, and “motus” is just an empirical concept. Kant repeats this critique of Aristotle's categories in point of the method of their derivation in his remarks in § 39 of the *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können* (1783). There, two procedures for the derivation of categories are contrasted: one which simply collects general concepts, and which thus consists in nothing more than “deriving from a given language rules concerning the actual use of words, in order to thus assemble the elements of a grammar” (A118); and another procedure, precisely Kant's own, which traces the categories back to a principle. The one procedure is arbitrary, because merely linguistic; the other is explanatory, since it gives an account of the place of categories in the most basic discursive functions of mind, those which make experience of objects possible (A120–121).

The alternative presented here between a merely linguistic derivation of concepts on the one hand and a properly systematic and scientific metaphysical one on the other would long haunt the conception of language and its relation to thought and things, and with that, the interpretation of Aristotle's *Categories*. The Kantian metaphysical framework would inform later readers of Aristotle

13 “Dieses ist nun die Verzeichnung aller ursprünglich reinen Begriffe der Synthesis, die der Verstand a priori in sich enthält, und um deren willen er auch nur ein reiner Verstand ist; indem er durch sie allein etwas bei dem Mannigfaltigen der Anschauung verstehen, d.i. ein Objekt derselben denken kann. Diese Einteilung ist systematisch aus einem gemeinschaftlichen Prinzip, nämlich dem Vermögen zu urteilen (welches eben so viel ist, als das Vermögen zu denken), erzeugt, und nicht rhapsodistisch, aus einer auf gut Glück unternommenen Aufsuchung reiner Begriffe entstanden, von deren Vollzähligkeit man niemals gewiß sein kann, da sie nur durch Induktion geschlossen wird, ohne zu gedenken, daß man noch auf die letztere Art niemals einsieht, warum denn gerade diese und nicht andre Begriffe dem reinen Verstande beiwohnen. Es war ein eines scharfsinnigen Mannes würdiger Anschlag des Aristoteles, diese Grundbegriffe aufzusuchen. Da er aber kein Principium hatte, so raffte er sie auf, wie sie ihm aufstießen, und trieb deren zuerst zehn auf, die er Kategorien (Prädikamente) nannte. In der Folge glaubte er noch ihrer fünf aufgefunden zu haben, die er unter dem Namen Postprädikamente hinzufügte. Außerdem finden sich auch einige Modi der reinen Sinnlichkeit darunter (quando, ubi, situs, imgleichen prius, simul), auch ein empirischer (motus), die in dieses Stammregister des Verstandes gar nicht gehören, oder es sind die abgeleiteten Begriffe mit unter die Urbegriffe gezählt (actio, passio), und an einigen der letzteren fehlt es gänzlich” (KrV B106–107).

due to the manner in which Kant appropriates two terms from ancient philosophy. “Idea”, the Platonic term, is used to designate the concepts of pure reason, which are not applied to objects of sense, whereas “categories” are said to be pure concepts as applied to sensible objects. This gives Aristotle a problem which Plato does not have: namely “the problem of explaining how we can apply to objects concepts which we have not taken from the objects”.¹⁴ As Stephen Menn has shown, this would prove influential for the interpretation of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* in the mid-19th century. Hegel, in this very much a Kantian, thinks of the main problem of ancient philosophy after Plato as the problem of the relation of concepts to objects; and Zeller and Schwegler interpret Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* in this light, as a series of problems resulting from Aristotle’s critique of Plato on the ontological status of concepts.¹⁵ Insofar as the *Categories* are considered to belong to Aristotle’s metaphysical project, and up until and even after Bonitz tries to debunk this in 1853 this is generally so, this conception affects the interpretation of the *Categories*, too. How this is so, we shall see in a moment. But first we should note the character of Kant’s remarks on Aristotle’s categories as a methodological position for understanding past knowledge.

Kant’s remarks belittling the merely linguistic derivation of categories are to be understood against the background of the architectonic of pure reason. According to this architectonic, Aristotle’s theory of categories belong to an era of pre-scientific philosophical methodology. The relativisation of a theory in this way is a hallmark of interpretation in the architectonic mode. Such interpretation invokes the principle of the ordering of unscientific or subscientific knowledge by organizing this knowledge through an idea of the science to which it belongs as a primitive root. It is architectonic in the sense that it assigns past theory a specific place in a modern system of knowledge. Architectonic interpretation thus involves a tacit acknowledgement but also subordination of the thing so interpreted.

III Trendelenburg on Categories and *Categories*

Kant’s architectonic appropriation of the term “category” for his own metaphysical purposes had two immediate consequences for subsequent interpretations of Aristotle’s *Categories*. First, it creates the assumption that Aristotle’s catego-

¹⁴ Menn (2010), 106.

¹⁵ Menn (2010), 109–110.

ries are concepts (“Begriffe”) as applicable to things.¹⁶ Second, it puts pressure on future interpreters to provide some *Leitfaden* or guiding thread for their derivation, or at least to show that the derivation of Aristotle’s categories is not completely arbitrary. Later interpreters would accept both these challenges, discharging them in different ways, while nevertheless resisting or rejecting architectonic interpretation. Rather than ordering past knowledge through the idea of a system, interpreters such as Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg and Franz Brentano sought to use ancient philosophy, and in particular Aristotle, as a *corrective* to contemporary philosophy. Trendelenburg writes programmatically about this interpretive goal in the preface to the first part of his *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre*:

The author seeks, in these “historical contributions to philosophy”, to contribute to the research and evaluation of past systems, and to use the results for the contemporary challenges in science; for history, rightly understood, provides us in this area with sufficient warnings and indicators.¹⁷

History (*rightly* understood) is sufficient as a corrective of contemporary metaphysics. One can infer from this and many statements like it that contemporary metaphysics will not provide the framework, architectonic or otherwise, for the right understanding of philosophy’s history. But how do we understand this history rightly?

This question is addressed, in an exemplary piece of both philosophical and philological exegesis, in Trendelenburg’s *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre* (1846). This work has two parts: a detailed reconstruction of the doctrine using all relevant texts of the Aristotelian corpus, particularly the *Metaphysics*; and a history, in outline, of category theories before and after Aristotle. Whereas Trendelenburg characterizes his own procedure in the first, exegetical part of his project as the collection of fragments of a theory (e.g. in Trendelenburg (1846), 196), the second part is presented as a sketch of cross-sections of historical systems of philosophy, made with a view to a systematic endeavour (Trendelenburg (1846), 196). The first part is probably the most thoroughly argued and carefully execut-

¹⁶ According to Kapp (1942), 29–30, the use of the word “concept” in relation to Aristotle goes back to Latin comments on the first chapter of *De interpretatione*, and originally meant “a notion of a thing produced by the thing in the soul and indicated by a word”.

¹⁷ “In den vorliegenden ‘historischen Beiträgen zur Philosophie’ wünscht der Verfasser für Erforschung und Beurtheilung des Geschichtlichen in den Systemen zu wirken und das Ergebniss für die gegenwärtigen Aufgaben der Wissenschaft zu verwenden; denn die Geschichte enthält, richtig aufgefasst, auf diesem Gebiete Warnungen und Hinweise genug” (Trendelenburg 1846, vii).

ed interpretation of Aristotle's theory of categories in the 19th century. It is also a *tour de force* of the history of concepts, *Begriffsgeschichte*.¹⁸ The second part is notable in its use of the history of reception and interpretation of category theory as an integrated part of the interpretation of that theory. This approach Trendelenburg employs to track and criticize contemporary metaphysical theories (particularly Hegel's) against the background of a history of category theory. This part of the project is architectonic, but in a way different from and perhaps even opposite to Kantian architectonics: with Trendelenburg, contemporary theories are interpreted and critically evaluated against the background of a series of connections which carry ancient philosophy into the present. Trendelenburg writes that, like "ancient works of art", ancient philosophical theories inform the critical evaluation of the philosophical present, not immediately but through a series of connections; and only those who can survey these connections know the meaning of the theories at their beginning.¹⁹ Understanding the liaisons connecting philosophical past and present is, in this way, a necessary condition for understanding the philosophical past.

The two parts of *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre* thus correspond to a two-part movement against interpretation of the architectonic type. In the first, a distinctly philological mode of interpretation reconstructs the semasiological background of Aristotle's concept of category in the *Categories*. Trendelenburg's approach is philological in the sense of the philologist August Boeckh's *Erkenntnis des Erkannten*: as the historical understanding of knowledge and concepts as they were used in their time.²⁰ The second part of his interpretation was philological in this sense, too, as it served to show the time and place of later category theories, with a particular view to the way in which these theories transformed, that is to say: completely changed the Aristotelian concepts they purported to develop. The undercurrent of Trendelenburg's struggle with Hegel becomes explicit here, whereas it remains mostly implicit in the proper

18 On Trendelenburg's contribution to the development of the history of concepts as an approach in the history of philosophy, see Scholz (2006).

19 See Trendelenburg (1846), 197: "Die alten Kunstwerke haben eine bleibende Gegenwart, indem sie, angeschaut, den Geist befriedigen, den allgemeinen Geschmack bilden und die Empfänglichkeit zu neuen Schöpfungen erregen. In einem ähnlichen Sinne vermögen auch die Gestaltungen der alten Philosophie zu wirken. Aber nicht so unmittelbar. Zwischen ihren und unsern Auffassungen liegen viele Zwischenglieder; erst durch diese knüpfen sie an unsere Wissenschaft an; und nur wer diese überblickt, erkennt die Bedeutung jener".

20 The famous definition of philology given in Boeckh's posthumously published, but from 1811 until 1860 continually held, lectures, to be found in *Encyclopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften*, cited here as Boeckh (1886), 10–11. Trendelenburg was a student and protégé of Boeckh.

interpretation of Aristotle's theory of categories. In order to understand Trendelenburg's interpretation in its time and place, it is important to briefly touch upon this background, which on Trendelenburg's own account motivated his history of the doctrine of the categories. In the next section (3.1.), I will briefly outline the motivation and object of Trendelenburg's critique of Hegel, and then introduce the Aristotelian theory Trendelenburg sought to employ in making it. Then, we will examine Trendelenburg's interpretation of Aristotle's theory of categories in detail (3.2.) and consider the criticism his interpretation elicited from Herman Bonitz (3.3.).

III.1 Aristotelian Logic vs. Hegelian Dialectic

To appreciate the ambitions of this interpretive project we must first consider Aristotle's theory of categories and its perceived potential for Trendelenburg's own time and place. In the preface of *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre* Trendelenburg states that the question of the scientific value of Hegel's dialectic is the point on which a historical account of the theory of categories ultimately depends.²¹ His occasional remarks against "the abstract" and Hegel in the course of the *History* (for example on pages 90, 115) make it seem as if the purpose of the book were also to confirm through history of philosophy what Trendelenburg had previously attempted through direct critique: to show that Hegel's dialectical derivation of all concepts from two basic ones, *Sein* and *Nichts*, is itself not a scientific procedure, and that it cannot be made consistent and coherent through further interpretation.²² The two *Streitschriften* on the logical question in Hegel's system are a précis and defence of the critique of Hegel's dialectic offered in his *Logische Untersuchungen* (first edition 1840, second expanded edition 1862); and he returns to this critique again in his *History of the Theory of Categories* when he

²¹ Trendelenburg (1846), ix: "Der Gang der geschichtlichen Darstellung musste in der Kategorienlehre auf den Streitpunkt über den wissenschaftlichen Werth der hegelschen Dialektik zurückführen".

²² Trendelenburg (1843). In the first of these (previously printed) polemics Trendelenburg is willing to allow that Hegel's dialectic has a "scientific value", but denies that it is, itself, scientific; see Trendelenburg (1843), 26. The second polemic is in fact a defense against polemics from Hegelian reviewers of his *Logische Untersuchungen*.

expresses the hope that its second part will make the basis of his own system in the *Logical Investigations* more clear.²³

What was at stake in the critique of Hegel and the conflict with the Hegelians? Trendelenburg makes strong statements in this connection in the preface to his *Logical Investigations*. There he notes the (in his view, historically contingent) renewal of Hegelian philosophy in some quarters, and warns of its consequences (1862):

It comes about in such a situation that philosophy, carried along by the times and by nations, is deemed a transitory element of culture, an echo of the changed feelings of the day; and it is banned from the history of the sciences into the history of culture or even of the poetry of a national literature. The philosophy which is called to unite peoples and times in a universal human outlook and in a necessary task of the sciences, as Plato and Aristotle did throughout the Occident and Orient, must leave this shameful position into which it has been driven; the *Logical Investigations* seek to contribute to this.²⁴

What is at stake, then, is the status of philosophy as a universal and scientifically viable discipline. Trendelenburg emphatically claims that the “principles” for this task need not be discovered through unnecessary ingenuity:

The principle has already been found; it lies in the organic view of the world which was founded in Plato and Aristotle, which continued on from them and which must be articulated through deeper investigation of the fundamental concepts in their particular aspects, in concert with the real sciences, and thus be gradually perfected.²⁵

23 Trendelenburg (1846), viii: “Vielleicht trägt der Schluss der vorliegenden Schrift dazu bei, von der Seite der Kategorien den Gedanken des Ganzen, den die logischen Untersuchungen verfolgen, zu deutlicherer Anschauung zu tragen”.

24 Trendelenburg, (1870), viii: “In einem solchen Zusammenhange geschieht es, dass man die Philosophie, von den Stimmungen der Zeiten und Völker getragen, nur als ein vorübergehendes Culturelement ansieht, als ein Echo von den veränderten Empfindungen des Tages und sie aus der Geschichte der Wissenschaften in die Culturgeschichte oder gleich der Poesie in die Nationalliteratur verweist. Die Philosophie, die berufen ist, in einer allgemeinen menschlichen Anschauung und in einer nothwendigen Aufgabe der Wissenschaften die Völker und Zeiten zu vereinigen, wie einst Plato und Aristoteles thaten, durch Abendland und Morgenland hindurchgehend, muss aus dieser demüthigenden Stellung, in die se gedrängt wird, wieder heraus; und die logischen Untersuchungen wünschten dazu mitzuwirken”.

25 Trendelenburg (1870), ix: “Das Princip ist gefunden; es liegt in der organischen Weltanschauung, welche sich in Plato und Aristoteles gründete, sich von ihnen her fortsetzte und sich in tieferer Untersuchung der Grundbegriffe sowie der einzelnen Seiten und in Wechselwirkung mit den realen Wissenschaften ausbilden und nach und nach wollenden muss”.

The interpretation of Aristotle's theory of categories is the project to which Trendelenburg turns after having made such statements, so it is reasonable to assume that he seeks the principles for the scientification and universalization of philosophy here. This interpretive project is thus about much more than just Aristotle's texts; it aims at shoring up a conceptual foundation which will support the sciences.²⁶ In particular, Aristotelian concepts are recommended as a new basis upon which to begin a discussion between philosophy and the particular (and highly successful) sciences; Aristotelian philosophy provides a model for philosophy as a theory of science; and through its application to the core concepts of all sciences, a renewed and integrating conceptual foundation can be won.²⁷

III.2 The *Categories* as “Connecting Knot” between Logic and Metaphysics

The relevant texts in Aristotle's works are not obviously suited to these purposes. Perhaps the greatest exegetical challenge is posed by the treatise with the title *Categories*, “a work of exceptional ambiguity both in purpose and in content”.²⁸ The title of this work is likely spurious and certainly strange: we get no explication of what categories are, as one might expect; and the term κατηγορία occurs twice and only well into the work, in a passage on οὐσία (3a35, 3a37). It begins, instead, by introducing three relations between things and the linguistic expressions which signify them. These relations are expressed in terms of “names” and “definition of being”, but the object of the *Categories* is not expressions, but things as related to language. Two things are “homonyms” if they have the same name but the definitions of their being are different. Both a human being and the picture of an animal can be said to be ζῷον, but what it is to be an animal is for each of these is different (1a1–6). “Synonyms” are things with the same name and the same definition of being. For example man and cow have, *qua* living things, the same definition of their being. And there is a relation of expressions for things which we might call derivative or denominative, characterized as “paronymy”: it occurs when one word differs from another

²⁶ See Hartung (2006).

²⁷ Thus Hartung (2006), 309, who embeds these aspects of the history of the reception of Aristotle in the 19th century in the context of the revival of a teleological worldview and vision of an over-riding purpose for nature and knowledge, one which is lost in the wake of Idealism's demise.

²⁸ Kneale/Kneale (1962), 25.

only in ending, which in the Greek language is often the case due to the substantive use of adjectives in different genders (see German *der Grammatiker* and *die Grammatik*).

The notion of derivative or paronymic expressions seems to be mainly grammatical, but the other two distinctions are semantic in a general sense, as they concern the relation between expressions and the things they signify. The text continues in a second chapter with the distinctions which group things according to the manner in which they are “said”, i.e. referred to in language. Of “things said” (τὰ λεγόμενα), some are expressed “in combination” (κατὰ συμπλοκὴν), and some “without combination” (ἄνευ συμπλοκῆς). The examples cited for things “in combination” are complex sentences with a substantive and a verb: “man runs”, “man wins” (1a17–18). As examples for expressions without combination the words “man”, “cow” but also the verbs “(he) runs”, “(he) wins” are cited (1a18–19). Though these last expressions could be construed in Greek as sentences, Aristotle seems to think that they are non-propositional expressions, for we will later read that things said outside of combination are not in a “statement” (κατάφασις), and things not in a statement cannot be true or false (2a4–10).

We then find a further two-fold distinction regarding things (τὰ ὄντα), one concerning how they are “said” (λέγεται), another concerning the relation of “inherence”, a relation which holds when something is “in” something else (1a20–1b9). The operative term in both parts of the distinction is the word ὑποκείμενον, which can refer either to a logical subject to which certain attributes are ascribed, or a real subject in which certain properties inhere. Apparently both meanings are fully instantiated in each arm of the distinction. Certain items are said of, or predicated to, a subject, but they are not in one, for example we ascribe the expression “man” to a certain person, but the genus “man” is not “in” something else. The relationship of “being-in” here is technical, but not completely clear. The explanation of the relation in our text states that “by “being-in” I mean that which is in something, but not as a part, and which cannot exist separately from that in which it is” (1a24–25).

The second part of this stipulation, known as the “rule of inseparability”, has been the topic of some interpretive controversy in recent literature, but we can assume the traditional interpretation here. This is as follows. Let A be the subject and B the thing which inheres in it. On the traditional interpretation, the inseparability rule states that B is ontologically dependent upon A, that is: B cannot exist without A. Thus species such as “man” and genera such as “animal” are not dependent for their being on anything. Also individuals, which are neither in something else nor predicated of something else, would be ontologically independent. These two classes of things qualify as substances, and in

the *Categories* it is individuals which qualify as substance in the primary sense. Those things which are “in” something else are thus non-substantial some-things. Those which are said of other things are genera, or general, such as the disposition “knowledge”: it is in a soul, and predicated of a particular kind of knowledge, namely grammatical knowledge. Those things which are in something else but not said of something else are perhaps most controversial, but for now it will suffice to call them individual non-substantial qualities such as the colour of a particular body, or the knowledge of grammar instantiated in a particular person.

The inherence relation and the “being-said” relation would then yield four types of things: 1. substantial individuals, beings in the primary sense; 2. genera and species of substances, beings in a secondary sense; 3. genera and species of non-substantial things such as dispositions (knowledge, virtue); 4. non-substantial individuals such as properties inhering in particular individuals (the white in Socrates’ beard). Chapter 4 of the *Categories* then introduces the list of ten categories which is familiar, and which we otherwise only find in the *Topics*, though references to certain of them, with terminological variation, are plentiful in the rest of the corpus. Those things which are not said in combination “signify”, i.e. refer to, substance, quantity, quality, et cet. (Cat. 4, 1b25–27). In Chapters 5–8, the categories of substance, quantity, quality and relation are treated, before there is a break in the text, or perhaps even two lacunae. Chapter 9 picks up with remarks concerning the last two categories, doing and being affected. Chapters 10–15, which might not belong to the *Categories*, contain remarks on senses in which things can be said to be opposites (chapters 10–11), on how one thing is said to be prior to another (chapter 12), on how things are said to be co-instantaneous (chapter 13), on the kinds of change (chapter 14), and a brief chapter on ways of expressing the notion of “having”, e.g. through a disposition or a state like having knowledge or virtue, or having a quantity like a certain size (chapter 15).

One can easily see how a mixed treatise as this could fall prey to systematizing critique in the wake of Kant. After Kant, a theory of categories belongs to logic, but logic is “the science of the necessary and universal laws of thought”, and does not involve things directly, certainly not how things “are said”.²⁹ We find this concept of logic freely applied in the history of ancient philosophy and particularly in treatments of Aristotle’s logic, where the categories are the

²⁹ This definition of logic is from the early Kantian Ludwig Heinrich Jakob. See Jakob (1792), 23.

first thing to be mentioned.³⁰ Thus Aristotle's logic is understood by Hegel as a descriptive project, a "natural history of finite thought", as expressed in the following passage:

It is the immortal merit of Aristotle to become conscious of the activities of abstract understanding, to have grasped and determined the forms which thought takes in us. For what interests us is concrete thought, thought steeped in external perception: those forms are steeped in this, and such thought is a net of infinite flexibility; and to determine and make conscious these fine threads which run through everything – these forms – is a masterpiece of empirical research, a consciousness of absolute value.³¹

Hegel compares such descriptive activity to the study of an "awful amount of animals, insects, 167 kinds of cuckoo, where one of them has a little bush on its head which is different from the others", and concludes that Aristotle's description of the forms of thought is more worthwhile than such "learned entomology".³² The problem with Aristotle's logic as Hegel conceives it, is not that it is purely formal, but that it is purely "material": as a description of thought, it is not yet informed by the totality of a system which would guarantee its truth. The forms of thought which Aristotle determines have according to Hegel "the mistake that they are too much content". The Kantian critique of Aristotle's theory of categories is given a new turn when Hegel writes:

This content is nothing other than the speculative idea. Concepts of understanding or reason are the being of things, though not for that view (which despises logic, CGK), but in truth; and for Aristotle, too, the concepts of understanding – the categories – are the essen-

30 See e. g. Biese (1835), 45–46: "Den Inhalt dieser Schriften (sc. des Organons) bildet die Denktätigkeit des Verstands; diese wird nach ihren verschiedenen Richtungen empirisch durchforscht, und die geistigen Formen für das Erkennen werden nach einander entwickelt, so dass sich auf diesem Wege gleichsam 'eine Naturgeschichte des endlichen Denkens' ergibt". Biese is citing Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. II, which I consulted in: *Werke*, vol. 19, Frankfurt a. M. 1970, 229.

31 Hegel (c. 1825/1970), 237: "Es ist ein unsterbliches *Verdienst* des Aristoteles, dies Bewußtwerden über die Tätigkeiten des abstrakten Verstandes, diese Formen erkannt und bestimmt zu haben, die das Denken in uns nimmt. Denn was uns sonst interessiert, ist das konkrete Denken, das Denken versenkt in äußere Anschauung; jene Formen sind darin versenkt, es ist ein Netz von unendlicher Beweglichkeit; und diese feinen, sich durch alles durchziehenden Faden – jene Formen – zu fixieren, zum Bewußtsein zu bringen, ist ein Meisterstück von Empirie, und dies Bewußtsein ist von absolutem Wert".

32 Hegel (c. 1825/1970), 238.

ces of being. If they are true in and of themselves, then they are their own content, namely their very highest content; but this is not the case.³³

Here, the Kantian determination of categories as the concepts of understanding is faithfully rendered, but an additional problem is adduced for Aristotle's categories: that they are, as concepts, not true "in and of themselves", since they are not categories of being.

What Trendelenburg confronts in his interpretation of Aristotle's theory of categories is thus not just the real exegetical difficulties raised by the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics*, but also pressure of two kinds emanating from Kant and Hegel: a critique of the method of their derivation, of their character as "system", and subsequently, particularly from Hegel, a question concerning the legitimacy of their character as categories of being. There is also a general difficulty in the wake of Idealism of clarifying the status of concepts in their relationship to objects (be they objects "in themselves" or the objects of perceptual experience), and – thanks to Kant – anything laying claim to being a category would be immediately subject to this difficulty.

Trendelenburg's approach to the exegetical difficulties of his project is at the same time indicative of his answer to these philosophical challenges to Aristotle's theory of categories. An integrated approach to all difficulties, exegetical and philosophical, is characteristic of Trendelenburg as an interpreter of ancient philosophical texts in general, and of his *History of the Theory of Categories* in particular. We find it already in his inaugural lecture *De Aristotelis Categoriais* of 1833, which sets out the problem of interpreting Aristotle's theory in the following way:

If the categories were the things upon which the universal discipline of logic depended as upon a foundation, then the *Analytics* and the book *De interpretatione* would have to refer to them. Yet each of these books goes its own way and ignores that foundation. Though Aristotle wished for logic and first philosophy to cohere as nicely as possible, he placed the *Categories* between each as a kind of connecting knot. The nature of thought, which seems most to be treated in the *Analytics*, having been already discussed, the *Categories* provide a way, as indicators, to those notions which govern, as principles, all of nature, and to the causes of those notions which are the topic of the *Metaphysics*. From this connection be-

33 Hegel (c. 1825/1970), 240: "Dieser Inhalt ist nichts anderes als die spekulative Idee. Begriffe des Verstandes oder der Vernunft sind das Wesen der Dinge, freilich nicht für jene Ansicht, aber in Wahrheit; auch für Aristoteles [sind] die Begriffe des Verstandes – die Kategorien – die Wesenheiten des Seins. Wenn sie also an und für sich wahr, so sind sie selbst ihr eigener Inhalt, und zwar sogar höchster Inhalt; allein dies ist nicht der Fall".

tween the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics* it seems to have come about that the same notions as are treated in the *Categories* are also treated in the *Metaphysics*.³⁴

The theory of categories thus occupies a theoretical space which is neither logical nor metaphysical, but which links these parts of Aristotle's philosophy as an "internodium", a "connecting knot". Trendelenburg correctly identifies a fact often overlooked by those who would have the *Categories* be the beginning of logic: the *Analytics*, which present the theory of syllogistic, make no use of the theory. The placing of the *Categories* at the beginning of the *Organon* seems to have suggested that this little treatise is the way into what would be considered Aristotle's logic. But we have it on the authority of the ancient commentators that both the title of this work and its position in the *Organon* were a matter of some dispute.³⁵

Trendelenburg advances the thesis that the categories are derived from the grammatical analysis of simple propositions, and that the ten categories represent linguistic types which correspond imperfectly with our own grammatical concepts. On this interpretation, οὐσία, "substance", represents the grammatical subject; ποσόν and ποιόν, "quantity" and "quality", represent two types of adjective; ποῦ and ποτέ, "where" and "when", are adverbs of place and time; πρὸς τι, "relation", can be seen as a relative adverb; and the four verbal categories, "doing" (ποιεῖν), "undergoing" (πάσχειν), "being placed" (κεῖσθαι) and "having" (ἔχειν), are plausibly related to different aspects of verbal expression: what we would call the active and passive voices, intransitivity and completed

34 Trendelenburg (1833), 4–5: "Quodsi categoriae eae essent, quibus universa logicae ars tanquam fundamento niteretur: analytica certe et de interpretatione libellus ad categorias redire deberent: sed hi libri suam quisque viam sequentes eiusmodi fundamentum ignorant. Aristoteles, quum logicam et primam philosophiam arctissime inter se cohaerere vellet, categorias fortasse inter utramque quasi internodium posuit. Tradita enim cognitionis natura, id quod analyticis maxime absolvitur, categorias ad eas notiones, quae tanquam principes universam naturam regunt, harumque ad notionum causas, qua re metaphysica continentur, viam parare iudices. Ex qua categoriarum et metaphysicorum cognatione factum esse videtur, ut notionum eaedem in categoriis, eadem in metaphysicis tractarentur". See Zeller (1879), 258 ff., who places the *Categories* between Aristotle's logic and metaphysics, prefacing his treatment of the *Categories* with the remark: "Mit dieser Frage (nach den allgemeinen Gesichtspunkten, aus denen sich das Wirkliche betrachten lässt, den höchsten Gattungsbegriffen) beschäftigt sich die Kategorienlehre, welche im aristotelischen System das eigentliche Bindeglied zwischen der Logik und der Metaphysik bildet".

35 The *Categories* also went by another title in the early history of the editions of Aristotle's works: the *Before-the-Topics* (πρὸ τῶν τοπικῶν), attested by Porphyry (*In Categorias*, 56–57) and Simplicius (*In Categorias*, 15–16). For an interpretation of the work as part of the *Topics*, see Menn (1995).

aspect (Trendelenburg 1846: 23–33). Moreover, Trendelenburg was committed to explaining how the grammatical origins of the theory are related both to Aristotle's logic and his *Metaphysics*, and to analysing the application of the theory of categories throughout the *Corpus*.

Trendelenburg was cognizant of the difficulties of such a project. He admits himself that the logical works which immediately follow the *Categories* in the *Organon* rely in no readily apparent way on the theory of categories. In the *Topics* we find “the kinds of categories” mentioned in connection with the four *praedicabilia*, “accident”, “genus”, “*differentia specifica*”, and the “definition” (Top. 103b20–104a2), but neither work elucidates this connection or the function of the theory of categories. And there are other problems. As Trendelenburg puts it in his inaugural address, the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics* are concerned with the same notions, but not in the same way. There he writes: “the *Categories* provide a way, as indicators, to those notions which govern, as principles, all of nature, and to the causes of those notions which are the topic of the *Metaphysics*” (Trendelenburg 1833: 4–5). He is not only referring here to a problem which is well-known for contemporary Aristotelians, namely the discrepancy between the accounts of substance given in the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics*: in the *Categories*, the individual which cannot be said of something else is determined to be primary substance, whereas in the *Metaphysics* (and in particular *Metaphysics Z*) primary substance is determined as the substantial form of a thing. He is also advertising a more general problem of explaining how the theory of categories relates to Aristotle's metaphysical problems of the relation between δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, matter and form.

Trendelenburg's interpretation of the *Categories* assumes, first of all, that the writing comes down to us as the *Categories* is incomplete, and second, that despite this fact the theory it contains is very important for understanding Aristotle's philosophy. The first assumption has been *communis opinio* since Trendelenburg's day. The second held for Trendelenburg and many other historians of philosophy in the 19th century after him, but holds much less today. Still under the influence of Kant's *Critique*, the debates among historians of philosophy in the first half of the 19th century are not about whether Aristotle's *Categories* is important, but how. But the critique which Bonitz will exercise on Trendelenburg in a publication from 1853 dedicated entirely to criticizing it already provides strong reasons to relativize the importance of the theory of the *Categories* as a metaphysical theory.

In arguing that the theory of categories is grammatical and logical in origin, Trendelenburg takes up the challenge issued by Kant and attempts to show that they are derived with a “grammatischer Leitfaden” (Trendelenburg 1846, 25). Grammar as Aristotle practices it in the *Categories* is relevant to logic, for the

roots of a logical theory concerning forms of judgment is to be seen in a grammatical theory concerning sentences. The guiding philosophical motive in making the connection between language and logic so tight is realism: a desire to root logical relations in distinctions which do not relate to thought, but to things. But Trendelenburg is ready to admit that for Aristotle, the origin is not determinative of the further development of the theory. He seeks to distinguish between the origin and the further development and employment of the theory elsewhere in the corpus, but without offering any developmental hypotheses. Still, he holds that the theory influences Aristotle's reflections upon substance, that the work may be fragmentary but the theory is coherent, and that the order of the categories even serves to express an ontological order (Trendelenburg 1846: 71–78), with a ranking of entities according to the reality of their being in descending order and beginning with substance. This Neo-Platonic picture of a hierarchically ordered ontology not just between substances and non-substances, but including many grades of non-substantial things, would prove important for Brentano and many who were influenced by him.

III.3 Bonitz *contra* Trendelenburg

In accordance with the grammatical “guiding thread” which he sees in the determination of the categories, Trendelenburg interprets them as kinds of predicate.³⁶ There is a problem with this interpretation which Hermann Bonitz will point out: if first substance is that which neither inheres in another thing nor is said of another thing, then the prominent and first category, that of substance, cannot be conceived of as a predicate, even if substance in the sense of genus and species can be predicated.³⁷ To this Bonitz adds the further objection that the term *κατηγορία* need not refer to predication, i.e. the formation of a simple proposition; he cites several examples in which it may only mean the use of the term in a certain sense.³⁸ Both of these objections lead Bonitz to reject the view that the theory of categories is based primarily upon systematic reflection concerning features of language and their relation to entities; he opts, instead, for interpreting the categories as determinations of being based upon our experience of objects.³⁹ This conclusion bears a striking resemblance to the Kantian understanding of Aristotle's categories, and it is clear that this is not so good

³⁶ Trendelenburg (1846), 6, 18, 20.

³⁷ Bonitz (1853), 618.

³⁸ Bonitz (1853), 618–622.

³⁹ Bonitz (1853), 605.

for the status of the theory as a metaphysical one, at least in a neo-Kantian environment, for then it will just seem naive or at least in need of further justification. Bonitz is ready to countenance this conclusion, he even emphasizes it by pointing out that the important metaphysical concepts of matter and form, cause, principle, and potentiality and actuality, have no clear relation to the theory of categories. He also rejects, by way of counter-examples, the grammatical “guiding thread” for the categories and the suggestion that their order implies an ontological hierarchy. Bonitz reads the *Categories* instead as a natural synthesis of previous Greek philosophy, with the prominence of substance being a typical Platonic element. He proposes that the list should be read in two sets of five: the first five categories (substance, quantity, quality, relation, place) concern things insofar as they are considered unchanged, the second set of five categories (when or being placed or having or doing or being affected), relating to things insofar as they are conceived as changeable.⁴⁰ This interpretation amounts to both a historically contextualizing and philosophically deflating reading of the *Categories*.

Trendelenburg's interpretation, by contrast, has explicitly philosophical ambitions; he wishes to use history of philosophy to make a philosophical point. In this he differs from Bonitz in his approach to history of philosophy generally, and the tone of the remarks by Bonitz sometimes indicate that it is this philosophical or issue-driven style of interpretation that provides the real impetus for his critique. One guiding philosophical motivation of Trendelenburg is easily found in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, which preceded his *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre* and in some ways set an agenda for Trendelenburg's historical research. It is to correct, by way of the history of philosophy, a conception of the relationship between logic and metaphysics which comes from Kantian critical philosophy and emerges ever more clearly in the course of in the 19th century. According to this conception, which Trendelenburg identifies with Hegel but which can be traced to Kant, traditional logic is at best a handmaiden to a higher or more fundamental, metaphysical “methodology” which concerns logic's foundation. Trendelenburg's attack on “formal logic” in the first volume of his *Logische Untersuchungen* can be seen as a flanking deflation of such claims to have found such a “method” of analysing pure concepts. It is in this connection that Trendelenburg takes pains to argue that Aristotle was not a “formal” logician.⁴¹ Against this tendency he cites a passage from *Metaphysics* Γ concerning the principle of non-contradiction in order to argue that Aristotle's logic has

⁴⁰ Bonitz (1853), 643–644.

⁴¹ Trendelenburg (1870), 30–33.

its basis in metaphysical principles derived from the nature of things. (T. tellingly refers to the *ontological* version of the principle, which he calls principle of identity.) And as evidence for his interpretation he cites the fact that Aristotle formulates this principle in a non-formal way, namely that it is impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not to belong to the same thing in the same relation (Met. Γ 3, 1005b19–20). The alternative is for logic to have its basis in something psychological, which is what many philosophers and also historians of philosophy in the latter half of the 19th century, including Trendelenburg’s own student Brentano, will accept as true.

IV Brentano on Aristotle’s Theory of Categories

Brentano’s *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* came to be as a dissertation under the direction of Trendelenburg. In it, Brentano attempts to determine the kinds of being which constitute the proper object of metaphysics as first philosophy. Gerald Hartung has described a general tendency of the sort of Aristotelianism with which we are concerned as “die Wiederaufnahme der Aristotelischen Kategorienlehre als Grundgerüst einer Theorie der Wissenschaften und einer Theorie der Wirklichkeit, von denen die Wissenschaften nur Ausschnitte liefern”. This nicely fits Brentano’s famous book, for by recourse to Aristotle’s *Categories* Brentano attempts to establish the categories as the extra-mental object of a “scientific” metaphysics.

An important aspect of his interpretation is that the categories are not part of Aristotle’s logic. The reason for this is that the objects of logic and metaphysics are different in kind: logic treats of truth and falsehood, and these are not attributes of things; they exist only in judgments, and judgments are mental.⁴² Brentano picks up a distinction between four senses of being from *Metaphysics* E 2 (1026a33 ff.) which he takes as fundamental: being in an accidental sense, beings as true and false, being in actuality and potentiality, and being according to the figure of the categories. The four main chapters of his book treat each of these types of being. Brentano uses a typically Aristotelian process of elimination to determine the kind of being which is the proper object of metaphysics. Having eliminated accidental being and being as true and false, Brentano arrives at being in actuality and potentiality and categorially determined being as the proper objects of metaphysics.

⁴² Brentano (1862), 38–39.

Thus the core chapter of Brentano's book is dedicated to an interpretation of Aristotle's theory of categories. He sets up three positions for the interpretation of the theory: 1. Zeller's, who rejected the interpretation of the categories as predicates but also shuns calling the categories "concepts", and describes them instead as providing a "Fachwerk" for conceptual determinations of being; 2. Trendelenburg's interpretation of the categories as predicates; and 3. an interpretation which states that the categories are the highest concepts for being, one which he ascribes to Bonitz, but also to Hegel. Brentano clearly opts for a version of this last interpretation, but with a decisive difference: in arguing that the metaphysician derives and distinguishes the concepts of being by identifying their many senses, Brentano makes the analysis of "meaning" and linguistic relations the basis for metaphysical research. In this way, he also integrates Trendelenburg's interpretation of the categories, and even raises something like semantic analysis to the central method of metaphysics. Yet very much unlike Trendelenburg, the study of the manifold senses of being is an extra-logical enterprise; with Brentano, semantics becomes metaphysical, while logic and metaphysics part ways.

It is striking how little this enormously influential little book is cited in the professionalized *Fachliteratur* of the history of ancient philosophy. Zeller dedicates some condescending remarks to it in the footnotes of the last edition of his *Philosophie der Griechen* of 1879, but Heinrich Maier, who is quite scholarly and explicitly treats the syllogism against the background of "die Unterschiede des Seins", mentions Brentano not at all.⁴³ At least Brentano makes it into two footnotes of Otto Apelt's exhaustive review of the debate at the end of the century, but his interpretation is not discussed. I take this as some indication that explicitly philosophically motivated interpretations of ancient philosophy were not considered to be proper contributions to the history of philosophy. If one considers the lasting influence of Hegel even on scholars such as Brandis, Zeller and certainly Schwegler, whose own histories of philosophy were clearly motivated by the concept of development and certain assumptions from the philosophy of history, this tendency may seem hypocritical. Perhaps it is indicative of a tension between those like Trendelenburg and Brentano who interpret Aristotle in such a way as to make his theories a viable foundation for contemporary research, and those who – like Zeller and Bonitz – read him primarily with an interest in finding the proper place of Aristotle's philosophy in history.

⁴³ Brentano is mentioned cursorily and dismissively in Zeller (1879), 260–261, note 2, and 262–263, note 2.

V Conclusion

A central lesson from this history of the interpretation of Aristotle's theory of categories is this: these two very different interpretive motivations – one with a view to interpreting Aristotle historically in order to make him a feasible contemporary, another with an interest in understanding his theories historically from a certain contemporary point of view – could lead to differences even in points where interpreters agreed in the main points of their descriptions of a theory. It is with respect to this largely subtextual conflict of interpretive interests that small distinctions could make a big difference. In Zeller's account of Aristotle's doctrine of categories, for instance, he argues on textual grounds that the basis of the categories cannot lie in forms of predication (Trendelenburg), experience-based concepts (Bonitz) or real distinctions (Brentano). But of course Zeller's own account of categories does not deny that the categories correspond to kinds of predication, and he affirms that they are not merely subjective, and are based upon a realism.⁴⁴ What he rather wishes to emphasize in determining the categories as a "Fachwerk" for the determinations of the real is the proper theoretical point of contact between metaphysics and logic. Zeller assumes much, of course, about what metaphysics and logic (in Aristotle and generally) are in so doing. These assumptions become explicit at latest when he basically repeats Kant's judgment on the categories as being merely empirically derived, i.e. without principle (Zeller 1879, 264–266); but the theory with its emphasis on the primacy of οὐσία is then explained to have been at least a bit of progress for Aristotle's time. As has been shown by Menn (2010), there is much Hegelian metaphysics behind Zeller's assumptions concerning Aristotle's metaphysics; we have seen that these metaphysical assumptions have wide-ranging consequences for the place of ancient philosophy in the architectonic historiography of philosophy which attends them.

Trendelenburg is a striking and almost subversive figure in the history of the historiography of ancient philosophy because he radically departs from this rather patronizing mode of interpretation of ancient texts. He reads these against the present, giving the interpretation of Aristotle as it were a "critical" function (thus Thouard 2004b). It is true that an important aspect of this critical function was to recover reflections in Aristotle bearing on the relation between thought and language, or logic and grammar.⁴⁵ In this Trendelenburg was both in and before his time: though surely many of his philosophical progenitors and contemporaries

⁴⁴ See his remarks in Zeller (1879), 258–262.

⁴⁵ As emphasized by Thouard (2004b).

had discovered reflection on language as a philosophical resource, it is particularly contemporary historians of Aristotle's philosophy who are concerned to understand how the language-theoretical elements of Aristotle's involve metaphysical assumptions, ones which are perhaps peculiar to the purposes of the *Organon*.⁴⁶ But in his work on Aristotle's theory of categories Trendelenburg was also decidedly against his time. For instead of embedding Aristotle and his categories into a narrative of development within antiquity, he takes it as a work to be understood first and foremost against the background of linguistic usage of his time and the Aristotelian corpus. In the history of the doctrine of categories after Aristotle Trendelenburg studies how subsequent appropriations of the theory came to transform it through the introduction of further questions and concerns. In essence he writes the history of reception of the theory, having first tried his best to make it as viable as possible upon the basis of the texts. In this approach his work remains exemplary.

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⁴⁶ This latter line on the problem is taken up by Menn (1995).

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