

Book VII (Book Z)

Thinghood and Form¹

Chapter 1 Being is meant in more than one way, just as we distinguished earlier in the chapters concerning the number of ways things are meant.² For it signifies what something is and a *this*, but also of what sort or how much something is, or any of the other things attributed in that way. But while being is meant in so many ways, it is obvious that the way that is first among these is what something is, which indicates its thinghood (for whenever we say that this or that is of a particular sort, we say that it is either good or bad, but not three feet long or a human being, but when we say what it is, we say not that it is white or hot or three feet long, but a human being or a god), and the other kinds of being are attributed to something that *is* in this way, some of them as amounts of it, others as qualities of it, others as things that happen to it, and others as something else of that kind. And for this reason, someone might be at an impasse whether each thing such as walking or healing or sitting is or is not a being, and similarly with anything else whatever of such a kind; for none of them is either of such a nature as to be by itself nor capable of being separated from an independent thing, but instead, if anything, it is the thing that walks or sits or gets well that is one of the beings. And it is obvious that these *are* more so, because there is something determinate that underlies them (and this is the independent thing or the particular), which is reflected in a predicate of such a kind; for the good or the seated are not meant apart from this. So it is clear that each of those former things *is* by means of this one, so that what is primarily, not being in some particular way but simply being, would be thinghood.

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But then primary is meant in more than one way, but all the same, thinghood is primary in every sense, in articulation, in knowledge, and in time. For none of the other ways of attributing being is separate, but only this one; and in articulation this one is primary (for in the articulation of anything, that of its thinghood must be included); and we believe that we know each thing most of all when we know *what* it

¹ This title for Book VII supplied by the translator.

² See Bk. V, Ch. 7.

028b is—a human being or fire—rather than of what sort or how much or where it is, since we know even each of these things themselves only when we know *what* an amount or a sort is. And in fact, the thing that has been sought both anciently and now, and always, and is always a source of impasses, “what is being?”, is just this: what is thinghood? (For it is this that some people say is one and others more than one, and some say is finite and others infinite.) So too for us, most of all and first of all and, one might almost say, solely, it is necessary to study what this kind of being is.

028b 10 **Chapter 2** Now thinghood seems to belong most evidently to bodies (and therefore we say that animals and plants and their parts are independent things, as well as natural bodies such as fire and water and earth and each thing of that kind, and as many things as are either parts of these or made out of them, out of either some or all of them, such as the cosmos and the parts of it, the stars and the moon and the sun). But whether these alone are independent things or there are also others, or just some of these are, or some in addition to some other things, or none of these but something different, must be examined. And it seems to some that the limits of bodies, such as a surface and a line and a point and the unit, are independent things more so than are a body or a solid. Further, while some believe that there is no such thing apart from what is perceptible, others believe that there are everlasting things that are more in number and that
028b 20 *are* more, just as Plato believed that the forms and the mathematical things are two kinds of independent things, while the thinghood of perceptible bodies is a third, and Speusippus believed in still more kinds of thinghood originating from the one and from each source of thinghood, one source for numbers and another for magnitudes, and next one for soul, and in this way he extended the kinds of thinghood. But some people say that the forms and the numbers have the same nature, and that the other things follow upon them, lines and planes all the way down to the thinghood of the cosmos and the perceptible things.

028b 30 Now about these things, what is said well and what not, and what the independent things are, and whether there are any apart from the perceptible things or not, and in what way these are, and whether there is any separate independent thing, and why and in what way, or

none at all apart from perceptible things, must be examined by those beginning to sketch out what thinghood is.

Chapter 3 Now thinghood is meant, if not in more ways, certainly in four ways most of all; for the thinghood of each thing seems to be what it keeps on being in order to be at all, but also seems to be the universal, and the general class, and, fourth, what underlies these. And what underlies the others is that to which they are attributed, while it is itself not attributed any further to anything else; therefore one ought to distinguish this sort first, since thinghood seems most of all to be the first underlying thing. And in a certain way the material is said to be of this sort, but in another way the form is, and in a third that which is made out of these. (And by the material, I mean, for instance, bronze, by the form, the shape of its look, and by what is made out of these, the statue.) So if the form is more primary than the material, and *is* more, it will also, for the same reason, be more primary than what is made of both.

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So now, in a sketch, what thinghood is has been said, that it is what is not in an underlying thing but is that in which everything else is; but it is necessary not to say only this, since it is not sufficient, for this itself is unclear, and what's more, the material becomes thinghood. For if thinghood is not this, what else it is eludes us, since, when everything else is stripped away, it does not seem that anything is left; for some of the other things are attributes of bodies, or things done by them, or capacities of them, while length, breadth, and depth are certain quantities but not independent things (for how much something is is not thinghood), but it is rather the first thing in which these are present that is an independent thing. But when length, breadth, and depth are taken away, we see nothing left behind, unless it is what is bounded by these, so that, to those who look at it in this way, the material must seem to be the only independent thing. By material I mean that which, in its own right, is not said to be either something or so much or anything else by which being is made definite. For there is something to which each of these is attributed, and of which the being is different from each of the things attributed (for everything else is attributed to thinghood, and it is attributed to the material), so that the last thing is in itself neither something nor so much, nor is it anything else; and it is not even the negations of these, for these too would belong to it as attributes.

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1029b 1 **Chapter 4** But since at the start we distinguished in how many ways we define thinghood, and of these a certain one seemed to be what something keeps on being in order to be, one ought to examine that. And first let us say some things about it from the standpoint of logic,⁴ because what it is for each thing to be is what is *said* of it in its own right. For being you is not being cultivated, since it is not in virtue

³ The last three sentences are misplaced in the manuscripts, after the first sentence of Ch. 4. They are undoubtedly genuine, and form one of the major structural connections of the whole *Metaphysics*. They make it clear that the sort of being found in perceptible things, while it must be first for us, is not first in the nature of things. On this order of study, see also *Physics* Bk. I, Ch. 1, and *Topics* 101a 35–101b 4.

⁴ The rest of Bk. VII, except for Ch. 7–9, is logical in character, an analysis starting from the way we speak and think. For Aristotle, this is always secondary to examining the way things are by nature. (See, for example, *Physics* 204b 3–11.) The last chapter of Bk. VII forms a bridge from the logical to the natural by means of the notion of cause.

of yourself that you are cultivated. Therefore, being you is what you are in virtue of yourself, but it is not even all of this, for it is not what is in virtue of itself in the way that white is in a surface, because being white is not being a surface. But surely neither is the thing made out of both, being-a-white-surface, what it is to be white, because white itself is attached to it. Therefore that articulation in which something is not itself present, when one is articulating *it*, is the statement of what it is for each thing to be; so if being a white surface is being a surface that is smooth,⁵ being, for white and for smooth, is one and the same.

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But since there are also compounds that result from the other ways of attributing being (since there is something underlying each of them, such as the of-what-sort, the how-much, the when, the where, and the motion), one must consider whether there is for each of these a statement of what it is for it to be, and whether what-it-is-for-it-to-be even belongs to them, for example to a person with a pale complexion. Now let's suppose the name for a pale person is "sheet." What is the being of a "sheet"? Now surely this is not even among the things attributed to anything in virtue of itself. But "not in virtue of itself" is meant in two ways, and of these one results from attaching something, but the other from not attaching something. For the former way is stated by sticking the thing one is defining onto something else, as if, when defining being-pale, one were to state the articulation of a pale person; the latter way occurs because something else *is* attached to the thing being defined, as if "sheet" meant a pale person and one defined the "sheet" as pale.⁶ The pale person is of course pale, but what it is for it to be is not what it is for pale to be.

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But is being-a-"sheet" any sort of what-it-is-for-something-to-be at all, or not? For what it is for something to be is the very thing that

⁵ See *On Sense Perception and Perceptible Things* 442b 10–13. Democritus, like Galileo and Descartes in a later time, sought to reduce the proper objects of the senses to mathematical attributes. Aristotle does not think white can be reduced to anything else, but his point is that, even though white by its very nature must be in a surface, being-in-a-surface is no part of the nature of whiteness, whatever that nature might be.

⁶ The statement of what something is in virtue of itself can fail by including too much, or by omitting something necessary. Aristotle is implicitly asking, in the two preceding sentences, why a "sheet" can't be what it is in virtue of itself, so long as one states that properly, and his answer is in the next paragraph.

something is, and whenever one thing is attributed to another, the compound is not the very thing that is a *this*, as in this instance a pale person is not the very thing that is a *this*, if indeed *thisness* belongs only to independent things. Therefore there is a what-it-is-for-it-to-be of all those things of which the articulation is a definition. And it is not the case that there is a definition whenever a name means the same thing as a statement (for then all statements in words would be definitions, since there could be a name for any group of words whatever, and even the *Iliad* would be a definition), but only if the statement articulates some primary thing, and things of this kind are all those that are not articulated by attributing one thing to another. Therefore there will be no what-it-is-for-it-to-be belonging to anything that is not a species of a genus, but only to these (for the species seems not to be meant as something a thing has a share in and is affected by, nor as an incidental attribute); but there will still be a statement for each of the other things as well, of what it means, if it has a name, stating that this belongs to that, or a more accurate statement instead of a simple one, but there will be no definition nor any what-it-is-for-it-to-be.

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Or else, are the definition and the what-it-is-for-something-to-be both alike meant in more than one way? For also what-something-is in one sense indicates its thinghood and a *this*, but in another sense indicates any of the ways of attributing being, how much something is, of what sort it is, and everything else of that kind. For just as the "is" belongs to all of them, though not in the same way, but to one of them primarily and to the rest derivatively, so too the what-it-is belongs simply to the thinghood but in a certain respect to the others; for we might also ask what an of-this-sort is, though not simply but in the same way that, in the case of what is not, some people say logically that what is not *is*, not that it is simply but that it is what is not. It is the same way also with what is of-this-sort. Now one ought to consider how one should speak about each thing, but surely not more than about how the things are; so also now, since it is clear what is meant, the what-it-is-for-something-to-be, in the same way as the what-something-is, will also belong primarily and simply to thinghood, and secondarily to the other ways of attributing being, not as a what-it-is-for-something-to-be simply, but as what it is for an of-this-sort or a so-much to be.

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For one has to say that these are beings either ambiguously or

by adding and subtracting,⁷ in the same way that one can say the unknown is something known, since the right thing to say is that they are called beings neither ambiguously nor in just the same way, just as what is medical is so called not by being something that is one and the same but by pointing to something that is one and the same, and so not in an ambiguous way either. For a medical cadaver, a medical action, and a medical instrument are meant neither ambiguously nor as one thing, but as pointing to one thing.⁸ But it makes no difference in which of the two ways one wants to speak about these things. This is clear: that a definition and a what-it-is-for-something-to-be belong primarily and simply to independent things. It is not that they do not belong to the other things in a way that resembles this, but only that they do not belong to them primarily. For it is not necessary, if we assume this, that there be a definition of whatever means the same thing as a group of words, but only that there be one of what means the same thing as a certain kind of group of words, and this is one that belongs to something that is one, not by being continuous in the way that the *Iliad* is, nor by being bundled together, but in just those ways that one is meant. Now one is meant in the same ways as being, and being signifies in one way a *this*, in another a so-much, and in another an of-this-sort. And for this reason there will be a statement and a definition of a pale person, but in a different way than of pale, or of an independent thing.

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Chapter 5 But there is an impasse: if one denies that a statement that adds things together is a definition, will there be a definition of anything that is not simple but consists of things linked together? For it is clear that it would have to be defined by way of addition. I mean, for example, that there is a nose and there is being-squashed-in, and there is also snubness that means something made out of these two, this one in that one, and it is not incidental that the being-squashed-in or the snubness is an attribute of the nose, but in its own right, nor is it in the way that paleness is in Callias, or in a human being, because Callias, who is incidentally a human being, is pale, but in the way that maleness

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⁷ That is, since a quantity (say) is a being only in a qualified sense (with an addition), it is a being in less than the full sense (with a subtraction).

⁸ See the first paragraph of Bk. IV, Ch. 2.

is in an animal or equality in an amount, and all those things that are said to belong to something in virtue of themselves. And these are those things in which there is present either the meaning or the name of that of which each is an attribute, and which cannot be displayed separately, as paleness can be displayed without a human being, but femaleness cannot be displayed without an animal. Therefore, there is either no what-it-is-for-them-to-be and definition of these things, or, if there is, it is in a different way, just as we have said.

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But there is also a different impasse about them. For if a snub nose and a squashed-in nose are the same thing, then snub and squashed-in will be the same thing; and if they are not, on account of the impossibility of saying snubness without the thing of which it is an attribute in its own right (since snubness is squashed-in-ness in a nose), then it is either not possible to say snub nose, or else the same thing will have been said twice, squashed-in nose nose (since the nose that is snub would be a nose that is a squashed-in nose), for which reason it is absurd that a what-it-is-for-it-to-be should belong to such things, and if it did, it would be infinite, since in a snub nose there will always be another nose present.⁹

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Accordingly, it is clear that definition belongs to thinghood alone. For if it belonged also to the other ways of attributing being, it would have to be by way of adding things together, for instance if there were a definition of the odd, since it is not without a number, nor is there a female without an animal (and by “by way of addition” I mean those statements in which one turns out to have said the same thing twice, as in these instances). But if this is true, there will be no definitions of linked things¹⁰ either, such as of odd number, though this goes unnoticed because our statements are not articulated in a precise way.

⁹ It takes some contortion to see the meaning of snub nose as infinite, but it may be worth the effort. If one simply substitutes “squashed-in nose” for the word snub, then the phrase contains “nose” twice, but only twice; but if one focuses only on the fact that snub contains an implicit reference to a nose, then snub nose becomes snub (nose) nose, which in turn becomes snub [nose (nose)] nose, and so on. From this perspective the phrase snub nose is infinite and therefore unbounded, and so cannot have a definition, which is a boundary.

¹⁰ Chapters 4 and 5 may be said to deal with two kinds of “linked” things, as seen in the examples of a pale human being and a female human being. The *ti ên einai* is what something keeps on being, in order to be at all, and so cannot include paleness, which a human being might happen to lose, or femaleness, which is not necessary in order for someone to be a human being. A human being must have some sort of

But if there are definitions of these, it is either in another way or else, just as was said, one must say that the definition and what it is for something to be are present in more than one way. Therefore in one sense there will not be a definition of anything, nor a what-it-is-for-something-to-be present in anything, except of and in independent things, but in another sense there will be. That, then, the definition is a statement of what it is for something to be, and that the what-it-is-for-something-to-be belongs to independent things alone, or else to them most of all, primarily, and simply, is clear.

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Chapter 6 But one must investigate whether each thing is the same as, or different from, what it keeps on being in order for it to be. For this will contribute in a certain way toward the investigation about thinghood, since it is the case both that each thing seems to be nothing other than its own thinghood, and that what it is for it to be is said to be the thinghood of each thing. Now in the case of things meant as incidental, they would seem to be different, as a pale person is different from being-a-pale-person. (For if they were the same, then also being-a-human-being and being-a-pale-human-being would be the same; for a pale human being is just the same thing as a human being, as people say, so that being-a-pale-human-being and being-a-human-being would also be the same. Or does it not necessarily follow that they are the same in those instances that involve incidental attributes, since the extreme terms are not equated with the middle term in the same way?¹¹ But then perhaps this might seem to follow, that a pair of incidental extreme terms would become the same, such as being-pale and being-cultivated, but this doesn't seem to be so.¹²)

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But in the case of things attributed in virtue of themselves—such as if, for instance, there are some independent things than which no

generative capacity, but either sort, and even a defective instance of it, would still be sufficient.

¹¹ Being-a-pale-human is taken as identical with a pale human by assumption, while a pale human is taken as just the same as a human by loose ordinary speech, which doesn't discriminate between incidental and necessary attributes.

¹² If there was no syllogism in the previous case because of a lack of parallelism of the premises, would it help to make them both predications of incidental attributes? Obviously not, so one can now conclude that an incidental compound such as pale-human-being is not part of what it is to be anything.

- 031a 30 other independent things or natures are more primary, of the sort that some people say the forms are—is it necessary that *they* be the same as what it is for them to be? For if the good itself and being-good were different, or animal-itself and being-an-animal, or being itself and being-being, then there would be other independent things and natures and forms besides the ones that are spoken of, and those other kinds of thinghood would be more primary, if what it is for something to be is its thinghood. And if they are detached from one another, there would be no knowledge of the forms, and what it is for things to be would not have being. (By “being detached,” I mean if being-good does not belong to the good itself, and the good that *is* does not belong to being-good.) For there is knowledge of anything only when we recognize what it is for it to be, and the same thing that holds true with the good holds also with the other things, so that if being-good is not good, then being-being does not have being and being-one is not a unity; and likewise, either for all things or for none, the what-it-is-to-be has being, so that if being-being does not have being, then
- 031b 10 neither do any of the others. What’s more, that to which being-good does not belong is not good. Therefore the good and being-good must be one thing, and so too the beautiful and being-beautiful, and all those things that are not attributed in virtue of anything else but in virtue of themselves and primarily. For this would be sufficient if it were granted, even if there were no forms, and perhaps even more so if there are forms. (And at the same time it is also clear that, if there are forms of the sort that some people say there are, thinghood will not be an underlying thing; for these must be the thinghood of things, but not as underlying things, since the other things will be by means of participating in them.¹³)
- 031b 20 So by these arguments, each thing itself and what it is for it to be are one and the same, in a way that is not incidental, and this follows also because knowing each of them is just this: to know what it is for it to be.

¹³ It was concluded at 1029a 26–30 that thinghood must refer to some sort of underlying thing, but also to something that is separate and a *this*, and so must be the form (or the composite) rather than the material. But if the form is only participated in, or shared in, it cannot properly be said to underlie the particulars. This is not a rejection of the idea of forms, but a fine tuning of one. Aristotle will argue that the form must be at work upon the material in a way that makes the particular thing what it is (Bk. VII, Ch. 17, and all of Bks. VIII and IX); the form therefore underlies the thing in an active, causal way, and is not passively participated in.

Therefore, directly from the setting out of the question, it is necessary that both of them be some one thing. (But of what is attributed as incidental, such as cultivated or pale, it is not true to say that it and what it is for it to be are the same thing, because of its double meaning, since both that to which it is attributed, and the attribute, are pale, so that in one sense it and what it is for it to be are the same thing, but in another sense they are not, for being pale is not the same as being human, or even as being a pale human, but it is the same as being a certain attribute.) The absurdity [of distinguishing the form from what it is for something to be] would be evident if one were to put a name on each kind of thing there is for something to be, for then there would be another one besides that one; for example, what it is to be a horse would be different from what it is to be what it is to be a horse. So even in the first place, what prevents some things from immediately being what it is for them to be, especially since thinghood is what it is for something to be? But in fact, not only are they one thing, but even the very statement of them is the same, as is clear from what has been said; for it is in no incidental way that one and being-one are one. What's more, if they were different, they would be part of an infinite succession; for what it is for one to be would be one thing, and the one would be another, so that there would be the same argument in the case of each of these.

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So it is clear that in the case of primary things, attributed in virtue of themselves, the being of each of them and each of them itself are one thing; as for the sophistical refutations directed at this thesis, it is obvious that they are resolved by the same resolution that applies to the question whether Socrates and being-Socrates are the same, since there is no difference either in the grounds on which one might raise the question, or in those on which one would succeed in resolving it.¹⁴ In what way, then, what it is for something to be is the same as each thing, and in what way it is not, have been said.

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¹⁴ Some commentators take this to mean that, just as Socrates and his soul are identical, so too are the form and what it is for it to be; others take it to mean that, since what it is to be Socrates is identical with humanness in general, and not with him in particular, what it is to be Socrates is obviously different from Socrates, but on grounds that lead to an opposite conclusion in the case of the forms. It is perhaps best to understand Aristotle as saying that the application of the question to composite particulars needs more thorough examination, which Ch. 7–9 provide.

Chapter 7 Of the things that come into being, some come about by nature, some by art, and some as a result of chance, but everything that comes into being becomes something, from something, and by the action of something; by what it becomes, I mean something in accordance with any of the ways of attributing being, for it comes to be either a this, or how-much, or of-what-sort, or where it is. And natural comings-into-being are those of which the origin is from nature, and that out of which they come to be is what we call material, that by the action of which is any of the natural beings, and what they become is either a human being or a plant or anything else of that sort, which in fact we most of all say are independent things—and all things that come into being by either nature or art have material, for each of them is capable of being and of not being, and this potentiality is the material in each—and in general, that out of which they come is a nature and that toward which they come to be is a nature (for the thing that comes into being, such as a plant or an animal, has a nature), and that by the action of which they come to be is the nature that is meant in the sense of the form and is the same in form as what comes into being (though it is in another, since a human being begets a human being).

It is in this way, then, that things come into being that come to be by nature, but the other things that come into being are called products. And all products result from art, or from an aptitude, or from thinking. But some of these things come about also just on their own and by chance, in much the same way as happens among things that come into being as a result of nature; for there too, some of the same things that come into being from seeds are also produced without seeds.¹⁵ These must be looked into later, but it is from art that all those things come into being whose forms are in the soul (and by form I mean what it is for them to be, and their primary thinghood). For in a certain way, the same form belongs even to contrary things, since the thinghood of something lacking is the thinghood opposite to it,

¹⁵ To all naked-eye appearances, a number of species produce offspring “spontaneously,” contrary to the usual course of nature. These include mistletoe, among plants, and a variety of shellfish, among plantlike animals, as well as worms that arise in mud or decaying flesh. Something in the environment appears to play the role of the female generative fluid, and some part of the living thing substitutes for the semen. See *Generation of Animals* 762a 37–763b 16. The discovery, by means of the microscope, of the egg and sperm cells, brings these anomalies into Aristotle’s account of the normal course of nature.

as health is of disease, for it is by the absence of health that there is disease, while health is a pattern and a knowledge in the soul. And something healthy comes into being when someone thinks in this way: since health is such-and-such, it is necessary, if something is to be healthy, that such-and-such be present, for instance uniformity, and if this is to be present there must be warmth,¹⁶ and one goes on thinking continually in this way until one traces the series back to that which, at last, one is oneself capable of making. From that point on, the motion is then called production, namely the motion toward being-healthy. So it turns out that in a certain way health comes into being from health, and a house from a house, the one that has material coming from the one that is without material. For the medical art is the form of health, and the house-building art is the form of a house,¹⁷ and by thinghood without material, I mean what it is for something to be.

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So of the process of coming-into-being and the motion involved in it, one part should be called thinking and the other producing, the thinking starting from the source and from the form, and the producing starting from the completion of the thinking. And it is in a similar way too that each of the other steps in-between comes about. I mean, for example, that if someone is going to be healthy, he needs to be brought into a uniform condition. What, then, is it to be made uniform? Such-and-such, and this will be the case if he is made warm. And what is that? Such-and-such, which is present potentially, and this is already in one's power. So that which produces, and from which the motion of healing takes its origin, if it comes about by art, is the form in the soul, but if it comes about by chance, it is from whatever step it was that was the start of the producing for the one who produced it by art, as, in the doctoring in particular, the start was perhaps from the warming (and one produces this by rubbing). Accordingly, the warmth in the body is either part of health, or else something of a similar kind follows it, which is a part of health, or it follows by a number of steps; and the

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¹⁶ Aristotle compares the internal temperature of an animal to the sun's heat that ripens fruit and the cooking that makes food nourishing. See *Meteorology*, Bk. IV, Ch. 2–3, and *Generation of Animals* 743a 18–743b 18.

¹⁷ We speak of the artist or artisan as a creator, but Aristotle understands the form to be at work upon the soul of the artist, who can then assist its transmission into material. In the famous example of the four causes of a statue, the sculptor is not even its "efficient" cause, except incidentally; the moving cause of a statue is the sculptor's art, a being-at-work of forms. (See above, 1013b 4–9.)

1032b 30 last of these is what produces the part, and is in this way itself a part, of health, or in the case of a house it is, say, stones, and so too in other things.¹⁸ Therefore, just as is always said, coming into being would be impossible if there were nothing present beforehand.¹⁹

1033a So it is clear that some part of the product will necessarily be present from the start, since the material is part of it (for this is a constituent in it and comes to be something). But this is not one of the things included in the articulation of a thing, is it? But we do state in both ways what bronze circles are, stating both that the material is bronze and that the form is a certain sort of shape, and this is the class into which it is primarily placed. So the bronze circle has its material in its articulation. But the material out of which some things come when they are generated is attributed to them not by that name but by one derived from it, as if a statue were not called stone but stony; but the human being grown healthy is not called by the name of that out of which he becomes healthy, and the reason is that he becomes healthy out of a deprivation and something underlying it, which is what we call material (for instance, it's both a human being and a sick person that becomes healthy), though he is more so said to become healthy out of its lack, namely from being sick, than out of being human, and hence the healthy person is not called sick but human, and the human being is called healthy. But those things of which the lack is not apparent and has no name, such as the lack of any particular shape in bronze, or the lack of a house in bricks and lumber, seem to have things come into being out of them in the same way that the person in the earlier example became something out of being sick. And for this reason, just as there that out of which he comes to be is not attributed to him, here too the statue is not called wood but by the derivative wooden instead of wood, or brazen instead of brass, or stony instead of stone, and a house is not said to be bricks but of bricks, since if one were to look very carefully, one would not say simply, either that the statue comes

¹⁸ No chance heap of stones spontaneously turns into a shelter, but if it did, the process would start just where the housebuilder stops planning and starts producing. On the other hand, any friction that warms the body might happen to produce health; the rubbing is already part of health since it starts a sequence of events in which health is brought about. There is no implication that the two cases are alike.

¹⁹ "Nothing comes from nothing" is true, but can easily lead to false conclusions. See *Physics*, Bk. I, Ch. 8.

into being out of wood, or the house out of bricks, since they have to change and not remain what they are, in order for something to come into being. This is why we speak in this way.²⁰

Chapter 8 Now since what comes into being comes about by the action of something (and by this I mean that from which the source of its generation comes), and out of something (and let this be not the lack but the material, since we have already distinguished the way in which we mean this), and becomes something (and this is either a sphere or a circle or whatever it might be in other cases), just as one does not make the underlying thing, the bronze, so too one does not make the sphere, except in the incidental sense that the bronze sphere is a sphere, and one makes that. For to make a *this* is to make a *this* out of the whole of what underlies it. (I mean that making the bronze round is not making the “round” or the sphere but something different, such that this form is in something else; for if one made the form, one would make it out of some other thing, since that was assumed, in some such way as one makes a bronze sphere, in the sense that out of this, which is bronze, one makes this, which is a sphere.) So if one were also to make the underlying thing itself, it is clear that one would make it in the same way, and the comings-into-being would march off to infinity.

Therefore it is clear that the form, or whatever one ought to call the shapeliness that is worked into the perceptible thing, does not come into being, and that coming-into-being does not even pertain to it, or to what it is for something to be (for this is what comes to be in something else, by art or by nature, or by some capacity). But one makes the bronze be a sphere, for one makes it out of bronze *and* out of the sphere, since one brings the form into this material, and it is this that is a bronze sphere. But of being-a-sphere, if there were to be a coming-into-being of it at all, it would be something made out of something. For the thing that comes into being will always have to be divisible, and be not only this but also that—I mean, not only form but also material. So if a sphere is a figure that is equidistant from the

²⁰ Aristotle’s point is not to explain these verbal distinctions, but to explain them away. The material of anything that comes into being is part of its very articulation, of what might seem to be its formal aspect, even when we fail to notice it (by focusing on the lack to the exclusion of the underlying thing that had the lack), have no name for it, or alter its name to reflect its own altered condition.

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center, one part of this would be that in which one puts something, and the other that which one puts in it, and the whole would be a product that has come into being, analogous to the bronze sphere. So it is clear from what has been said that what is spoken of as form or thinghood does not come into being, but the composite whole that is named in consequence of this does come into being; and it is clear that there is material present in everything that comes into being, so that it is not only this but also that.

1033b 20 But is there, then, some sphere apart from the ones around us, or a house apart from bricks? Or would there not even be any coming-into-being if the form were a *this* in that way, but does it instead indicate a certain kind, without being *this* and determinate? So it is rather the case that one makes or begets a certain kind of thing out of some *this*, and when it has been generated it is this-thing-of-this-kind. And the whole *this*, Callias or Socrates, is just like the sphere that is this bronze one here, while human being or animal is just like bronze sphere in general. Therefore it is clear that the causal responsibility attributed to the forms, in the sense that some people are in the habit of speaking of the forms, as if they are certain things apart from the particulars, is of no use, at least in relation to coming into being and independent things; nor would they be, for the sake of these things at least, independent things in their own right.²¹ With some things, in fact, it is even obvious that what does the generating is something of the same sort as the thing generated, though it is not the same one nor are they one in number, but they are one in kind, namely among natural things—for it is a human being that begets a human being—unless something is generated contrary to nature, such as a horse that's half donkey. (And even these cases are of a similar sort, for the narrowest class that would be common to a horse and a donkey does not have a name, but it would presumably be of both kinds, as the half-donkey is.²²) So it is clear that there is no need to go to the trouble of providing a form as a pattern (since they would have looked for it most of all among things

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²¹ Note that this heavily qualified claim rejects only a certain way of arguing for separate forms. Aristotle has already said that the form is a *this* and separate (1029a 27–30 and 1017b 25–28), and will make clear the sense in which *he* means this as the inquiry unfolds.

²² Greek had no separate word for the hybrid, which we call a mule. It was well known that all mules are sterile. (See *Generation of Animals*, Bk. II, Ch. 8.)

generated by nature, for these most of all are independent things), but the begetter is sufficient to produce the things that come into being, and is responsible for the form's being in the material. But the whole, this particular form in these particular bones and flesh, is already Callias or Socrates; and they are different on account of their material (since it is different), but they are the same in form (for the form is indivisible).²³

Chapter 9 One might be at a loss to explain why some things come about both by art and just on their own, such as health, while others, for instance a house, do not. But the reason is that in some things, the material that starts off the coming-into-being in the producing or becoming-something of what results from art, in which some part of the thing produced is present, is of such a sort as to be set in motion either by itself or not, and some of this is able to be moved by itself in a particular way, but some is not capable of it; for many things are capable of being moved by themselves, but not in some particular way, say dancing. So those things whose material is of this sort, such as rocks, are not capable of being moved in a particular way except by something else, but in another particular way, yes they are. This is why some things would not *be* without someone who has an art, while others would, since the latter will be set in motion by those things that do not have the art, since they can be moved by other things that do not have art or by a part of themselves.

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And it is clear also from what has been said that in a certain way everything comes into being from something that shares its name, just as the things do that are by nature (for instance a house comes from a house, insofar as it comes about by the action of an intelligence, since its form *is* the art by which it is built), or from a part of such a thing, or from something having some such part, unless it comes into being incidentally; for the primary thing responsible for making something is, in virtue of itself, a part of what is made. For it is the heat in a motion that produces the heat in the body, and this is either health, or part of it, or some part of health follows along with it, or health itself does; hence it is also said to produce health, because it produces that which

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²³ To the question at the end of Ch. 6, this result would seem to imply the answer: no, Socrates is not the same as what it is for him to be, since then he and Callias would be the same. But perhaps, primarily and in virtue of themselves, they are the same. The topic comes up again in Ch. 11.

health follows along with and is an attribute of.

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Therefore, just as in demonstrative reasoning, thinghood is the source of everything; for syllogisms come from what something is,²⁴ while here generations do. And the things composed by nature are in a condition similar to those produced by art. For the seed produces just as works of art are produced, since it contains the form in potency, and that from which the seed comes is, in some respect, a thing of the same name (unless there is a defect, which is why a half-donkey does not come from a half-donkey), for one needn't look for all things to be just the same as a human being from a human being, since it is also true that a woman comes from a man. And those things that come about on their own in nature come into being just as in the case of art, being those of which the material is capable of being moved by itself in the same motion which the seed sets moving; all those whose material is not of that sort are incapable of coming into being in any other way than from things of the same kind.

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And it is not only about thinghood that the argument shows that the form does not come into being, but in the same way, the argument concerns in common all the primary things, such as how much something is, and of what sort, and the other ways of attributing being. For just as the bronze sphere comes into being, but not sphere or bronze, and also in the case of the bronze if it does come into being (for always it is necessary that material and form be present beforehand), so too in the case of what something is, and of what sort it is, and how much, and similarly with the rest of the ways of attributing being, for it is not the this-sort that comes into being, but a wooden thing of this sort, and not the so-much but so much wood or an animal that is so big. But what is to be understood from these considerations as peculiar to an independent thing is that a different independent thing that is fully at work, and that makes it, must be present beforehand, such as an animal if it is an animal that comes into being; but with what is of this sort or so much, this is not necessary, but only something that is potentially each.

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Chapter 10 Now since the definition is a statement and every

²⁴ This is the ultimate presupposition of any reasoning. See *Posterior Analytics* 90b 31–33.

statement has parts, and as the statement is related to the thing defined, so too is the part of the statement related to the part of the thing, the difficulty immediately arises, whether it is or is not necessary for an articulation of the parts to be present in that of the whole. For with some things they obviously are included, but with others they obviously are not. For the articulation of the circle does not contain that of its segments, but the articulation of a syllable does contain a statement of its letters, even though the circle is divided into its segments just as the syllable is divided into its letters. And further, if the parts precede the whole, while the acute angle is part of the right angle and a finger is part of an animal, the acute angle would take precedence over the right angle, and the finger over the human being. But it is those others that seem to be more primary; for in an account of them, the parts are explained by means of the wholes, and in regard to which of them can have being without the others, the wholes are more primary.

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Or else a part is meant in more than one way, one of which is in the sense of what measures how much something is—but let this sense be left aside; but those things of which thinghood consists in the sense of parts are what one needs to examine. So if material is one thing, and form another, and another is what is made of these, and an independent thing is both the material and the form as well as what is made of them, there is both a sense in which the material is said to be part of something, and a sense in which it is not, but the parts are those things of which the articulation of its form consists. For instance, flesh is not part of being-squashed-in (since this is the material upon which it comes to be), but it is a part of snubness; and of the composite whole of a statue, bronze is a part, but not of the statue described as a form (for what one must state is the form, and each thing must be described insofar as it has form, while what is simply material as such should never be stated²⁵). This is why the articulation of the circle does not contain that of its segments, while that of a syllable does contain a statement of its letters; for the letters are not material but are parts of the form, while the segments are parts in the sense of material upon which the circle is begotten, yet even so they are nearer to the form than is the bronze, in those cases in which roundness becomes present

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²⁵ The material is always to some extent incidental to what a thing is. Aristotle says in *Physics* Bk. II, Ch. 9, that a saw has to be made of iron, but at 1044a 27–29 below he says merely that some materials, such as wood or wool, would not make it a saw.

in bronze. And there is a sense in which not even all the letters will be included in the articulation of a syllable, such as the particular ones in a wax tablet, or the ones uttered in the air, since these also already count as part of the syllable in the sense of perceptible material. For even if a line when it is divided passes away into its halves, or a human being into bones, connective tissue, and flesh, it does not follow that for this reason they are made out of those things in such a way that they are parts of the thinghood of them, but only that they are made out of them as material, and as parts of the composite whole; but this does not go so far as to make them parts of the form or of that which the articulation is about, and for just that reason they are not in the articulations.

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So for some things, the articulation of such parts will be included, but for others it ought not to be included, when the articulation is not of the thing as taking in its material with it; for that is why some things are made out of these parts as sources into which they pass away, while some are not. So as many things as take in the form and material together, such as snubness or a bronze circle, do pass away into them and the material is part of them, but as many as do not take in the material with them, but are without material, the articulations of which refer to the form alone, do not pass away, either not at all or at least not in that way; and so of the former things, these materials are sources and parts, but are neither parts nor sources of the form. And it is for this reason that a clay statue passes away into clay, a sphere into bronze, and Callias into flesh and bones, and even a circle into its segments, since there is a kind of circle which takes in its material along with it; for circle is meant ambiguously, both simply and as a particular one, since there is no special word for the particular ones.

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So even now, the truth of the matter has been stated, but still let us speak still more clearly, taking it up again. For those parts that belong to the articulation of a thing, and into which that articulation is divided, are more primary than it is, either all of them or some of them; and the articulation of the right angle does not have the articulation of the acute angle as a division of it, but that of the acute does have that of the right as a division, for someone defining the acute angle makes use of the right angle, since the acute is that which is less than a right angle. And the circle and semicircle are also similarly related, since the semicircle is defined by means of the circle, and also the finger by means of the whole, since a finger is a certain sort of part of a human

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being. And so all those things that are parts in the sense of material, and into which something divides up as into material, are derivative from the whole; but either all or some of those that are parts in the sense of belonging to the articulation and to the thinghood that is disclosed in the articulation, are more primary than it.

And since the soul of an animal (for this is the thinghood of an ensouled thing) is its thinghood as disclosed in speech, and its form, and what it is for a certain sort of body to be (at any rate, each part of it, if it is defined well, will not be defined without its activity, which will not belong to it without perception²⁶), either all or some of the parts of the soul are more primary than the whole animal as a composite, and similarly with each particular kind, but the body and its parts are derivative from the thinghood in this sense, and it is not the thinghood but the composite whole that divides up into these as into material. Now in a sense these are more primary than the composite, but in a sense they are not (for the parts of the body are not capable even of being when they are separated, for something is not the finger of an animal when it is in any condition at all, but that of a corpse is a finger in only an ambiguous sense), and some of them are of equal primacy with the whole, those that are governing and in which the articulation and thinghood primarily are, whether this is (say) the heart or the brain, for it makes no difference which part is of that sort. But a human being or horse in general, and the things that are in this way after the manner of particulars, but universally, are not thinghood but a certain kind of composite of such-and-such an articulation with such-and-such material, understood universally, while the particular, composed of ultimate material, is already Socrates, and similarly in other cases.

So a part belongs either to the form (and by form I mean what it is for something to be) or to the composite of material and form, or to the material itself. But the parts of a thing's articulation belong only to the form, and the articulation is of the universal; for being a circle and a circle, or being a soul and the soul, are the same thing. But of the composite there is already no definition, for instance of this circle here,

²⁶ The capacity that distinguishes animals from plants is perception, which in some way permeates everything an animal does. An animal is not a plant plus sense organs, but a genuine whole, and perception is not one function among many but a governing one.

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or of any of the particular ones, either perceptible or intelligible—by intelligible ones I mean such ones as belong to mathematics, and by perceptible ones, such ones as are bronze or wooden—but we know them directly by the contemplative intellect or by sense perception, and once these fall away from an active exercise, it is not clear whether they have being or not, but they are always described and known by means of a universal articulation.²⁷ But the material is not known in its own right. And one sort of material is perceptible, the other intelligible, the perceptible, for example, bronze or wood, or any movable material, while the intelligible is that which is present in perceptible things, taken not as perceptible, as for example mathematical things are.

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So how it is with whole and part, and with preceding and following, has been said; and it is necessary to approach the question, whenever someone asks whether a right angle or a circle or an animal is more primary than the parts into which it is divided and out of which it is made, by saying that it is not simply one or the other. For if the soul is the animal or ensouled thing, or each of them is its own soul, and a circle is being-a-circle, and a right angle is being-a-right-angle or the thinghood of the right angle, then any of them must be said to be derivative from something, such as from the things in its articulation, and it is also derivative from its parts if the question is asked about a particular right angle (for this is true both of the one with material, the bronze right angle, and of the one that is in particular lines), but the one without material is derivative from the things in its articulation, but more primary than the parts in each particular, but it is not something that one can state simply. And if the soul is a different thing and is not the animal, in that sense too one must say that some things are more primary than it and that some are not, as has been said.

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Chapter 11 One might reasonably be confused about what sort of things are parts of the form, and what sort are parts not of that but of the all-inclusive composite. And yet so long as this is not clear, it is not possible to define any particular thing, since the definition is of the universal and the form; so if it is not clear what sort of parts are present in the manner of material and what sort not, neither will the

²⁷ This is a very important passage. It says that the universal is a reconstruction in speech of the form, while the form itself is present directly to the perceiving or contemplating soul.

articulation of the thing be evident. Now it seems clear for all those things that are obviously brought into being in materials different in form,²⁸ such as a circle in bronze or stone or wood, that the bronze or the wood does not in any way belong to the thinghood of the circle, because of its being separated from them; but nothing prevents those things that are not seen to be separated from being similar to the others, just as if all the circles one had seen were bronze, since nonetheless, the bronze would in no way belong to the form, though it would be difficult to subtract it in one's thinking. For example, the form of a human being always appears in flesh and bones and parts of that sort: are they then also parts of the form and of its articulation? Or are they not, but just material, though because humans are not brought into being in other materials we are unable to separate them?

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But since this seems to be possible, while it is not clear when it is the case, some people are already at an impasse even about the circle and the triangle on the grounds that it doesn't seem right to define them by means of lines and continuous magnitude, but rather to speak of all these too as if they were similar to the flesh and bones of a human being and the bronze and wood of a statue; and these people trace all things back to numbers, and say that the articulation of a line is that of the number two. And among those who speak about forms, some say the number two is the line itself, others that it is the form *of* the line, for with some things they say that the form and that of which it is the form are the same (such as the number two and the form of twoness), but that this does not extend as far as to the line.²⁹ So it turns out that there is one form of many things of which the form seems different (the very thing that also turns out to be so for the Pythagoreans), and also that it is possible to make out of everything one thing that is the form itself, and make the others not be forms; and yet in this way all things would be one.

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²⁸ One might translate *eidos* here as "kind" or "species," but Aristotle is being very precise. As he says above at 1036a 8–9, material as such is unknowable; we know it only by *its* form.

²⁹ The original identification of the line with the number two is Pythagorean; two points determine a line, which stretches in two directions, etc. The distinction about the forms relates to an understanding that even among the forms there must be something that plays the role of material, to make the line different from two itself.