CHAPTER II.

SCHOLASTICISM AND THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE ARISTOTELIAN NOTIONS OF MATTER AND FORM.

WHILE the Arabians, as we saw in the previous chapter, drew their knowledge of Aristotle from abundant though much polluted sources, the Scholastic philosophy of the West began by dealing with extremely scanty, and, at the same time, much corrupted traditions.[24] The chief portion of these materials consisted of Aristotle's work on the 'Categories,' and an introduction to it by Porphyry in which the "five words" are discussed. These five words, which form the entrance to the whole Scholastic philosophy, are genus, species, difference, property, and accident. The ten categories are substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, possession, action, and passion.

It is well known that there is a large and still steadily increasing body of literature on the question what Aristotle exactly meant by his categories, that is, predications, or species of predication. And this object would have been sooner attained if men had only begun by making up their minds to treat as such all that is crude and un-

[24] Prantl, Gesch. der Logik im Abendlande, ii. 4, finds in Scholasticism only theology and logic, but no trace at all of 'philosophy.' It is quite correct, however, to say that the different periods of Scholasticism can only be distinguished according to the varying influence of the gradually increasing Scholastic material (and so, for example, even Ueberweg's division into the three periods of the incomplete, the complete, and the again inadequate accommodation of Aristotelianism to ecclesiastical doctrines, is untenable). In the same place will be found a complete enumeration of the Scholastic material which the middle ages had at their disposition.

certain in the Aristotelian notions, instead of seeking behind every unintelligible expression for some mystery of the profoundest wisdom. It may now, however, be regarded as settled that the categories were an attempt on the part of Aristotle to determine in how many main ways we can say of any object what it is, and that he allowed himself to be misled by the authority of language into identifying modes of predication and modes of existence.[25]

Without entering here upon the question how far we can justify (*e.g.*, with Ueberweg's logic, or in the sense of Schleiermacher and Trendelenburg) the exhibition of forms of being and forms of thought as parallel, and the assumption of a more or less exact correspondence between them, we must at once point out, what will be made clearer further on, that the confusion of *subjective* and *objective* elements in our conception of things is one of the most essential features of Aristotelian thought, and that this very confusion, for the most part in its clumsiest shape, became the foundation of Scholasticism.

Aristotle, indeed, did not introduce this confusion into philosophy, but, on the contrary, made the *first* attempt to distinguish what the unscientific consciousness is always inclined to identify. But Aristotle never got beyond extremely imperfect attempts to make this distinction; and yet precisely that element in his logic and metaphysic, which is in consequence especially perverse and immature, was regarded by the rude nations of the West as the corner-stone of their wisdom, because it best suited their undeveloped understanding. We find an interesting example of this in Fredegisus, a pupil of Alcuin's, who

[25] This latter point is very well shown by Dr. Schuppe in his work, "The Aristotelian Categories," Berlin, 1871. Less forcible seems to me the argument against Bonitz, with regard to the meaning of the expression κατηγορίαι τοῦ ὄντος. The phrase employed in the text seeks to avoid this controversy, which it would here lead us too far to discuss. According to Prantl, Gesch. der Logik, i. 192, what actually exists receives its full concrete determination by means of the elements expressed in the categories.

honoured Charles the Great with a theological epistle 'De Nihilo et Tenebris,' in which that 'Nothing' out of which God created the world is explained as an actually *existing entity*, and that for the extremely simple reason that every name refers to some corresponding thing.[26]

A much higher position was taken by Scotus Erigena, who declares 'darkness,' 'silence,' and similar expressions, to be notions of the thinking subject; only, of course, Scotus also thinks that the 'absentia' of a thing and the thing itself are of *the like kind:* so therefore are light and darkness, sound and silence. I have, then, at one time a notion of the thing, at another a notion of the absence of the thing, in a precisely similar manner. The 'absence,' therefore, is also objectively given: it is something real.

This is an error which we find also in Aristotle himself. Negation in a proposition (ἀπόφασις) he correctly explained as an act of the thinking subject: 'Privation' (στέρησις), for example, the blindness of a creature that naturally sees, he regards, however, as a property of the object. And yet, as a matter of fact, we find, instead of the eyes in such a creature, some degenerate form which has nevertheless only positive qualities: we find, it may be, that the creature moves only with much groping and difficulty, but in the motions themselves everything is in its way fixed and positive. It is only our comparison of this creature with others that, on the ground of our experience, we call normal, that gives us the notion of blindness. Sight is wanting only in our conception. The thing, regarded in itself, is as it is, without any reference to seeing or not seeing.

It is easy to perceive that serious blunders like this are to be found also in the Aristotelian enumeration of the categories; most conspicuously in the category of relation (πρός τι), as, *e.g.*, 'double,' 'half,' 'greater,' where no one will seriously maintain that such expressions can

[26] Prantl, Gesch. der Logik, ii. 17 foll., esp. Anm. 75.

be applied to things except in so far as they may be compared by the thinking subject.

Much more important, however, became the vagueness as to the relation of word and thing in dealing with the notion of substance and the species.

We have seen how, on the threshold of all philosophy, appear the 'five words' of Porphyry—a selection from the logical writings of Aristotle, intended to supply to the student, in a convenient form, what he chiefly needs at starting. At the head of these expositions stand those of 'genus' and 'species;' and at the very introduction of this introduction stand the eventful words which probably aroused the great medieval controversy about universals. Porphyry mentions the great question whether the genera and species have an independent existence, or whether they are merely in the mind; whether they are corporeal or incorporeal substances; whether they are separate from sensible objects, or exist only in and through them? The decision of the problem so solemnly propounded is postponed, because it is one of the highest problems. Yet we see enough to perceive that the position of the 'five words' at the entrance to philosophy is quite in accordance with the speculative importance of the notions of genus and species, and the expression betrays clearly enough the Platonic sympathies of the writer, although he suspends his judgment.

The Platonic view of the notions of genus and species (comp. p. 74 ff.) was, therefore, in spite of all inclination towards Aristotle, the prevailing view of earlier medieval times. The Peripatetic school had received a Platonic portico, and the young disciple on his entrance into the halls of philosophy was at once greeted with a Platonic consecration; perhaps, at the same time, with an intentional counterbalance to a dangerous feature of the Aristotelian categories. For in the discussion of substance (*οὐσία*), he declares that, in the primary and strict sense, the concrete particulars, such as this particular man, this