A DEFENSE OF ARISTOTLE’S CONSTITUENT ONTOLOGY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate School
of the University of Notre Dame
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

David Philip Squires

______________________________
Sean Kelsey, Co-Director

______________________________
Christopher Shields, Co-Director

Graduate Program in Philosophy
Notre Dame, Indiana
July 2017
A DEFENSE OF ARISTOTLE’S CONSTITUENT ONTOLOGY

Abstract

by

David Philip Squires

Is Aristotle’s ontology of sensible substances a constituent ontology? If so, is it—as some critics of constituent ontology assert—unintelligible? What can be said in defense of the coherence and truth of constituent ontology? In this dissertation, I offer a defense of Aristotle’s constituent ontology. This defense is a defense twice over; first, against those who assert otherwise, it is a defense of the claim that Aristotle’s ontology is constituent. Second, against those who assert constituent ontology’s unintelligibility, it is a defense of the claim that Aristotle’s ontology is not only not incoherent, but superior to many versions of Platonism.

My first chapter is an introduction that contextualizes the arguments of my dissertation by reviewing the definitions of constituent and relational ontology and highlighting the features of constituent ontology that will be the focus of the main chapters.

My second chapter defends a constituent reading of Aristotle’s hylomorphic theory against certain contemporary Aristotelian scholars who deny that Aristotelian
substances and accidental unities are composed of real and differentiated ontological parts.

My third chapter investigates Peter van Inwagen’s case against the intelligibility of constituent ontology—viz. that it makes a category mistake by posting genuinely located properties. I show that, according to the most important commentators on constituent ontology—Michael Loux, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Gustav Bergmann—the genuine location of properties is neither an essential nor a coincidentally ubiquitous feature of constituent ontology; van Inwagen’s argument, therefore, fails as a general refutation of constituent ontology.

My fourth chapter explores the possibility that, according to Aristotle, substantial and/or accidental forms are genuinely located, and that, therefore, Aristotle’s constituent ontology is susceptible to van Inwagen’s attack. I argue that it is immune. The demonstration of its immunity involves investigating Aristotle’s notions of *place*, *where*, and *accidental location*.

My fifth chapter argues for the *coherence* and *truth* of constituent ontology; the former is accomplished by showing how certain common aesthetic intuitions lead naturally to the constituent ontological view. The latter is accomplished by defending the soundness of a brief argument whose conclusion is the truth of constituent ontology.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to begin these acknowledgements by thanking my two advisors Sean Kelsey and Christopher Shields, both of whom have ceaselessly inspired and nurtured my philosophical development throughout my time at Notre Dame. Sean’s course on Aristotle’s hylomorphism—excellently planned and executed—as well as two of his papers on *Physics* I.7 and I.8 sparked much of my interest in Aristotle’s hylomorphic theory and were integral to my choice to dissertate on the topic. His approach to Greek philosophy, often different from my own ontological leanings, has frequently challenged me to rethink matters so as to see nuance or difficulties where before I did not, or to engage topics that I might otherwise pass over. His willingness to open his home to his students and to the department as a whole has always made me feel at home in South Bend, despite being a great distance from my family.

Since arriving at Notre Dame, Christopher has fostered my philosophical education as much as anyone. The clarity of his written work has allowed me to achieve a greater understanding of some of the more difficult aspects of Aristotelian philosophy, particularly with respect to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, while his expertise in contemporary metaphysics has helped me to accurately sort out the relationship of aspects of classical philosophy to the current philosophical landscape. He is particularly generous with his time, and he has provided me with numerous opportunities to work on scholarly projects or attend academic gatherings. His willingness, as well as Sean’s, to attend two different Greek reading groups each semester has helped to increase my knowledge of classical Greek.
I am indebted to many others at Notre Dame as well. David O’Connor has helped me to a greater appreciation of the philosophy of Plato, and his courses on the *Phaedrus* and on a selection of Plato’s myths were indispensable for the improvement of my knowledge of classical Greek. John O’Callaghan’s course on Aquinas and dualism, as well as countless conversations with him in the Maritain Center helped to wake me from a certain pre-Socratic slumber with respect to the notion of form in peripatetic philosophy. Michael Rea further animated my interest in hylomorphism by introducing me to a host of contemporary neo-Aristotelian perspectives, and he treated my philosophical interests with seriousness even before I was a member of the philosophy department. Stephen Gersh, more than anyone, has enabled my knowledge of late-antique and medieval adaptations of classical philosophy, and his many and varied course offerings over the years helped to improve my facility with medieval Latin. Michael Loux, always a meticulous and engaging lecturer, also played a role in my dual interest in Aristotle and contemporary metaphysics.

There are other faculty whom I met before my time at Notre Dame to whom I owe much gratitude. To be a true philosopher is difficult, a true priest, no doubt, more so. Ronald Tacelli S. J. is both, and his instruction has been integral to my sustained interest in metaphysics and theology; without the influence of Peter Augustine Lawler and Michael Papazian, philosophy’s gates would have remained closed to me.

I want to thank a number of non-faculty friends for their love and support. Dan Sportiello was as close a philosophical friend as one could ask for in graduate school, and South Bend was never quite home after he graduated. The same is true of Jordan Corwin. I want to thank Irena Lanc for her support and for her loving patience as she endured my
subjecting her computer science and biology friends to discussions of the metaphysics of color or of the unity of physical objects.

I would like to end these acknowledgements by expressing love and gratitude for my family. The moral and intellectual guidance I received from my father and mother was essential for my possessing the capacity to approach philosophy in college. For that guidance, I am eternally in their debt. I may also happen to be temporally in my father’s debt, which financial assistance he graciously supplied when a graduate stipend was not always enough. My mother also frequently lent an ear to conversations that I have come to suspect were not on her favorite subjects; I can almost guarantee that she knows more about constituent ontology or the middle books of the *Metaphysics* than your mom does. That’s not a brag; but it’s sort of a brag. My brother was always there for comic relief and my grandmother for a late-night phone call. It is to my family that I dedicate this dissertation, and to the memory of Peter Augustine Lawler and Ljerka Lanc.
Et cuius mens obscura est ad diiudicandum inter equum suum et
colorem eius: qualiter discernet inter unum deum et plures relationes
eius?

—St. Anselm, *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi*
CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

Several prominent, contemporary metaphysicians have recently written about the nature of constituent and relational ontologies, two general ontological frameworks into which more specific ontologies are said to fall. Michael Loux has made the claim that Aristotle’s ontology of sensible substances is best characterized as a constituent ontology, while Peter van Inwagen has criticized the core concepts and vocabulary of constituent ontology as unintelligible.\(^1\) As an advocate of Aristotelianism with an interest in seeing Aristotle’s ontology further revived in contemporary metaphysics, these claims are of concern to me; is Aristotle’s ontology of sensible substances a constituent ontology?\(^2\) If so, is it, therefore, incoherent? If constituent ontology is not incoherent, can we demonstrate its coherence or even its truth?


\(^{2}\) When I say, “Aristotle’s ontology of sensible substances,” I have in mind both his theory of corporeal substance, as well as his theory of accidental unities, viz. composites of corporeal substance and accidents. In this dissertation, I will use the term “hylomorphism” to refer specifically to the doctrine that corporeal substances are composites of proximate matter and substantial form. When I wish to refer to the case of a substance with its accidents, I will use the term “accidental unities.” When I refer to “Aristotle’s ontology” I am simply shortening “Aristotle’s ontology of sensible substances,” and have both substantial and accidental unities in mind.
In this dissertation, I aim to answer these questions, and in the process to offer a defense of Aristotle’s constituent ontology. I will answer yes to the first question by defending a constituent reading of Aristotle’s hylomorphic theory against a number of contemporary Aristotelian scholars whose interpretations of the doctrine deny that Aristotelian substances or accidental unities are composed of real and differentiated ontological parts; I will answer no to the second question by replying to van Inwagen’s particular charge against constituent ontology, first in the case of constituent ontology more generally, and then in the case of Aristotle’s specific ontology. I will answer yes to the third question by developing arguments for the coherence and truth of constituent ontology that will also raise difficulties for many of its relationalist/Platonist competitors. My defense of Aristotle’s constituent ontology, then, is a defense twice over, first of the fact that it is indeed a constituent ontology, and then of the fact that, by being so, it is not only not incoherent, but better off than many contemporary versions of Platonism.

The importance of this work will require no defense for those already convinced of the value of metaphysical inquiry for its own sake; metaphysical inquiry is a genuine inquiry into beings—such persons will say—an inquiry, moreover, that posits interesting answers to intelligible questions that belong to no other science than metaphysics, nor could.3 To pursue and perhaps even attain such knowledge, merely in order to know about the real, and without regard for any additional payout, is a great good, and to say

3 I use “metaphysical” here in the contemporary sense, such that much of Aristotle’s *Physics* would count as metaphysics. Some Aristotelians will prefer to think of metaphysics in the contemporary sense as consisting of several sciences, only one of which is properly called “metaphysics.”
otherwise is to require that Cleobis and Biton remain in the world of their mother’s concerns instead of obtain the highest blessings to which mortals can aspire.

For those who require a more humane justification for such inquiry, even if not a meaner one, I offer the following: hylomorphism and the act/potency distinction in general are at the core of some of the most interesting philosophical anthropology and natural theology ever conceived in the history of western philosophy—viz. the doctrine that the human being consists of organized body and intellectual soul, and the doctrine of the existence and nature of God. To inquire into the nature of Aristotle’s ontology, then, may already be to begin an inquiry into our own nature, the possibility of personal existence beyond death, and the possibility of our beatitude in God. For anyone inclined to take ancient and medieval philosophy and theology seriously, then, understanding Aristotle’s ontology, as well as defending it, should seem a task of no small importance, for it undergirds much of great importance. For anyone not inclined to take them seriously, let this dissertation be an effort to convert you, not to belief in God or the existence and immortality of the soul—this is a beginning for future discussions of such things, after all, and not a discussion of them—but rather to belief in the worthiness of Aristotelian ontology as a serious competitor to many contemporary versions of Platonism.

In order to fully grasp the questions I aim to answer as well as my answers to them, a brief discussion of the nature of constituent ontology and relational ontology is in order. Let us quickly review these general ontologies so that I can make plain which features of constituent ontology I will focus on in the main chapters of this dissertation.
1.1 The Basics of Constituent Ontology

The distinction between constituent and relational ontology in contemporary metaphysics can be traced to the work of Gustav Bergmann, who distinguished between “complex” ontology and “function” ontology in his book *Realism: A Critique of Brentano and Meinong*. The modified terminology—viz. “constituent” ontology and “relational” ontology—is the creation of Nicholas Wolterstorff who wrote a short article summarizing and critiquing Bergmann’s book. Wolterstorff, who regarded *Realism* as hopelessly obscure, altered the terminology so as to rehearse as little as possible of Bergmann’s style, which he called “fractured, elliptical, and involuted” to the point that “the philosophical world is scarcely ablaze with discussion of Bergmann’s ontology.” It is, nonetheless, still clear that in *Realism* Bergmann aimed to distinguish two—in his mind—fundamentally opposed ontological strategies.

One passage in particular at the beginning of *Realism* is helpful for clarifying the distinction Bergmann had in mind without involving us in the myriad obscurities that Wolterstorff rightly warns us about. To illustrate the difference between complex ontology and function ontology, Bergmann has his reader consider a simple world of several “spots,” items that he treats as examples of familiar sensibles, or to use his preferred term “ordinary things.” Each of them has only two properties, a shape and a

---


6 “Bergmann’s Constituent Ontology,” p. 109

7 Bergmann’s favorite example—viz. “spots”—creates a number of problems from the start. One might wonder whether a spot is a good example of a familiar sensible item. Standard examples of what philosophers call “familiar particulars” or “sensible particulars” include things like cats or wooden tables.
color. One of them, named “α,” is both red and round, while no spot in this world is both blue and oval. Bergmann claims that the spot and the four qualities, red, round, blue, and oval are five different “entities”—a catch-all term for any item of any category. In this simple world, the members of the first pair, red and round, “make a spot,” while the members of the second do not. Bergmann then asks “what is the ontological ground of this difference?” There are, he says, two different general answers to the question:

There are two styles of answering the question. One may hold that α is a complex among whose constituents are the members of the first pair. As you now see, I took this style for granted when asking, a while ago: what are the constituents of an ordinary thing? This is the complex style. In complex ontologies, as I shall call them, some entities are constituents of others. Accordingly, some are simple, some are complex. The former are “in” the latter; or, ignoring for the moment some of the distinctions to come, the former are parts or components of the latter. The characteristic notion of an ontology in this style may be very blurred. Yet it remains clearly distinguished from that of the function style. In function ontologies, as I shall call them, some entities are, as one says, “coordinated” to some others, without any connotation whatsoever of the one being “in” the other, being either a constituent or a part or a component of it. A function is such a coordination.

By asking for the “ontological ground,” Bergmann is asking for an explanation of why, in this simple world, a spot is red and round, but no spot is blue and oval. Both

Is a “spot” the same sort of thing as these? “Spot,” moreover, might be used to describe a location—e.g. “you’re in my spot;” it might also be used to describe what some might consider to be a property, i.e. a patch of color—e.g. “The carpet near the door has a spot of red.” Both of these things are poor examples of familiar particular items, since locations are where familiar particular items are and properties how familiar particular items are. I suggest the reader set these issues aside for the moment, since they need not be answered to have some idea of what Bergmann is talking about.

---

8 Realism: A Critique of Brentano and Meinong, p. 7

9 Ibid.
complex and function ontology are supposed to address this question. The former answers it by making red and round the parts or constituents of the red, round spot, while blue and oval are not the parts of any one item in this world; the latter “coordinates” a spot to red and round (but not blue and oval), but denies that these properties are the parts or constituents of the red, round spot, or anything else for that matter. It is not difficult to detect in these descriptions the kinds of differences in theory and vocabulary that set, say, contemporary bundle theories apart from contemporary Platonisms; the former speak of certain properties such as red and round being the parts or constituents of certain bundles that are identical to sensible particulars, or being “in” them, while the latter speak of sensible particulars as “instantiating” certain properties. Let us set aside the details of relational strategies for the moment and fix our attention on Bergmann’s account of constituent ontology.

There are three features of constituent ontology that I wish to focus on here. First, for Bergmann, constituent ontology is an explanation for what or how something is—e.g. it is an explanation for a spot’s being red or round. Second, this explanation is accomplished by certain items being proper parts or constituents of the things whose what or how is in need of explanation. Third, the items that answer to these explanatory proper parts are often items that would answer to the term “property” in contemporary philosophy.\(^{10}\) If some of them are not properties, then they are at least not the more

\(^{10}\) I am not endorsing any particular theory of properties here, rather I am pointing out that contemporary realists can usually agree that things like red and round are properties, even if they disagree deeply about the nature of properties—e.g. whether they can exist uninstatiated, or whether they are tropes or universals, or whether they are sensible, etc.
commonsense corporeal parts of things—e.g. an ear or an electron. Let us call these three features “the basics” of constituent ontology.

Whatever else philosophers have to say about constituent ontology, the basics frequently feature in their discussions of the difference between constituent and relational ontology. In Michael Loux’s “Aristotle’s Constituent Ontology,” for instance, we meet with all three of the basics:

Proponents of the two strategies differ, then, in their metaphysical characterizations of familiar particulars. Proponents of the constituent strategy take familiar particulars to have a mereological structure other than that we prephilosophically associate with them. As these ontologists see it, ordinary objects are composites, complexes, or wholes made up of or constituted by metaphysically prior items, things that have an essential identity independent of the wholes into which they enter. The items in question are to be contrasted with the common-sense parts of a familiar particular. Indeed, the constituents of a sensible particular are responsible for its common-sense mereological structure no less than any other aspect of its character. Relational ontologists, on the other hand, will deny that familiar particulars have any but common-sense mereological structure. The only parts sensible particulars have are their common-sense parts, whether they be functional parts such as hands, legs, hearts, and lungs or strictly material parts such as the stuffs or particles out of which they are made. Indeed, relationists will typically accuse constituent ontologists of something like a category mistake. They will say that the items responsible for a familiar particular’s character are abstract entities, and they will deny that abstract entities can coherently be construed as constituents, components, or ingredients of concrete particulars. Familiar particulars can, nevertheless, stand in metaphysically significant non-mereological relations with, or be tied to, those abstract entities; and in virtue of doing so, they have whatever character we prephilosophically attribute to them.

As with Bergmann, Loux portrays constituent ontology (as well as relational ontology) as being in the business of explaining what or how something is. Whereas Bergmann spoke of finding the “ontological ground” of “an ordinary thing having a property,” Loux speaks of “familiar particulars” having “character” “in virtue” of something. In the case of constituent ontology, this explanation is accomplished by certain items being the proper parts or constituents of the things whose what or how is being explained. Lastly, the items that answer to these proper parts in constituent ontologies are things that philosophers frequently classify as properties—i.e. things like red and round—or at least they are not the commonsense corporeal parts of things. It is because relational ontologists frequently do not think properties or other non-corporeal items can be parts of ordinary things that they accuse constituent ontologists of, as Loux says, “something like a category mistake.”

Philosophers do not always stick to the basics when discussing constituent ontology, but sometimes add further details to the definition of constituent ontology, details that will affect what counts as a constituent ontology. For example, in “Aristotle’s Constituent Ontology,” Loux provides a list of “framework constraints” for constituent ontology that go well beyond the basics. Even in the above quote from Loux, it may appear that a slight addition to the basics has been introduced, for Loux speaks of the parts posited by constituent ontologists as being “metaphysically prior items, things that have an essential identity independent of the wholes into which they enter.” Depending on what Loux means by “metaphysically prior” and “an essential identity independent of

---

12 Ibid. p. 221.
the wholes into which they enter,” a number of theories that might otherwise count as constituent ontologies may be excluded, since a number of theories that affirm the basics would nonetheless deny that things like red or round can exist without being the properties of something or that they can be defined as to their essence without making reference to the wholes into which they enter.

In “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies,” van Inwagen also goes beyond the basics in defining constituent ontology, for he adds the restriction that for a theory to count as a constituent ontology, the wholes in which exist the parts posited by the constituent ontologist must belong to a different ontological category than the parts themselves.13 As van Inwagen himself notes, with this restriction in place, something like Lauri Paul’s ontology, which may obviously seem to be a constituent ontology, will not count as one, since she affirms that even the things composed of properties are themselves further properties.14

These additions to the basics of constituent ontology are all very interesting and serve their purpose in the work in which such definitions are needed. In the chapters of this dissertation, however, when I speak of constituent ontology I will stick to the basics with one minor addition of my own, which is meant to close the door to certain ontologies counting as constituent.


The addition is this: the parts posited by constituent ontologists are actually and not merely potentially present in the things in which they are present. By this I mean that the parts that are present in a thing are not somehow mixed or blurred with one another. If red and round are the parts of a red, round something, then red is still red and round round, and red and round do not mix together to create something in which they potentially exist, but in which they are not present as themselves. None of the most important contemporary commentators on constituent ontology such as Bergmann, Wolterstorff, Loux, and van Inwagen, nor any of the most famous examples of classical constituent ontologists, such as Hume or Locke, countenance this virtual existence of the parts posited by constituent ontologists.

The reason for this addition is simple. In chapter two, we will encounter scholars of Aristotle who deny the actual existence of matter and form in Aristotelian wholes, and I wish to maintain against them that Aristotle is a constituent ontologist of the actualist sort—i.e. of the only sort.

On the whole, however, my focus will be on the basics. Constituent ontologies are those ontologies that posit in explanation of the what or how of something that the thing in question has certain proper parts or constituents, parts or constituents that are often properties, but if they are not, are at least items that are not the more commonsense corporeal parts of things. Throughout this dissertation, I will use the term “ontological

---

15 Indeed, in the case of constituent ontologies that are bundle theories, the very name “bundle theory” appears to be a denial of this virtual presence, since more common sense instances of bundles are bundles of what is actually present in them—e.g. a bundle of sticks and stones is a bundle of things that are quite actually sticks and stones.
part” to describe the parts posited by constituent ontologists. In terms of the basics, Aristotle is a constituent ontologist, and he is better off than many Platonists for being one, or so I will argue.

1.2 Overview

This Dissertation consists of five chapters. This introduction sets out the basics of constituent ontology. Chapter two introduces a number of Aristotelian scholars whose interpretations of Aristotle’s hylomorphic theory are instances of what I will call “hylomorphic monism.” Hylomorphic monism is incompatible with a constituent ontological reading of Aristotle. My aim in the chapter will be to defeat hylomorphic monism as well as two interpretations of Aristotle that enable hylomorphic monism, even if they are not themselves examples of it. In the course of this critical work, I will be amassing a number of genuine Aristotelian doctrines that I will then use to articulate what I take to be the correct understanding of Aristotle’s hylomorphic theory. I call this “hylomorphic dualism” but take pains to distinguish it from substance dualism. I show that hylomorphic dualism is a constituent ontology in the sense laid out above.

Chapter three introduces a major critic of constituent ontology—viz. Peter van Inwagen. Van Inwagen claims that constituent ontology in general is unintelligible on account of committing a category mistake in the form of positing genuinely located properties. I lay out van Inwagen’s case against constituent ontology, and then show that,

---

16 Van Inwagen speaks of the “ontological structure,” posited by constituent ontologists in addition to the “good, old-fashioned everyday” mereological structure of things; See “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies,” p. 390. I use “ontological part” in keeping with his nomenclature.
according to the most important commentators on constituent ontology—Michael Loux, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Gustav Bergmann—the genuine location of properties is neither an essential nor even a coincidentally ubiquitous feature of constituent ontology. Van Inwagen’s attack on constituent ontology, therefore, will only be effective against the versions of it that make the category mistake which he accuses all constituent ontologies of making.

Chapter four focuses on Aristotle’s own ontology. If Aristotle posits genuinely located forms, then his ontology will be open to van Inwagen’s attack. I argue that neither substantial nor accidental forms are genuinely located in the philosophy of Aristotle. This demonstration will involve investigating Aristotle’s notions of place and where, as well as investigating the possibility that forms are point-located. I also give a brief exposition of Aristotle’s notion of accidental location and show that this doctrine does not contradict the conclusion that neither substantial nor accidental forms are located in the philosophy of Aristotle.

Chapter five sets Aristotle’s particular ontology aside and returns once more to the subject of constituent ontology in general. To have shown that constituent ontology generally and Aristotle’s ontology in particular are not incoherent for the reason posited by van Inwagen is no unimportant task, but it is a rather low bar as compared to what one might show. I aim, therefore, to demonstrate both the coherence and truth of constituent ontology. The former is accomplished by showing how one naturally arrives at the constituent view from the acceptance of certain common aesthetic intuitions. The latter is accomplished by defending the soundness of a brief argument whose conclusion is the
truth of constituent ontology. The defense of this argument will involve a defense of the aesthetic intuitions that lead naturally to the constituent ontological view.

Chapter two completes the first part of my defense of Aristotle’s constituent ontology—viz. a demonstration that it is in fact a constituent ontology. Chapters three, four, and five complete the second part of my defense—viz. a demonstration that neither constituent ontology in general, nor Aristotle’s constituent ontology are incoherent by van Inwagen’s criterion, but rather many versions of constituent ontology are coherent, and one is, no doubt, true.
In this chapter, we will encounter our first kind of opponent of Aristotle’s constituent ontology—the kind who undermines or would deny outright the claim that Aristotle’s substance ontology is indeed constituent.\footnote{By calling such philosophers “opponents” of constituent ontology, I do not mean that all of these authors are engaging directly with scholarly literature on the topic of constituent ontology. I mean, rather, that their views of hylomorphism are anti-constituent as I have defined constituent ontology in the introduction.} Many opponents of this kind claim that it is preferable to understand Aristotle’s hylomorphic theory as what I will call “hylomorphic monism.” Hylomorphic monism is the doctrine that, despite talk of substances being “composites of matter and form” (to ek toutōn), Aristotle in fact posits no actual, in re distinction between proximate matter and substantial form, and thus no genuine ontological parts of substance.\footnote{“actual, in re distinction” will be made precise below; See 4129 for “to ek toutōn,” where “toutōn” refers to matter and form.} My aim in this chapter is to defeat hylomorphic monism and two related views that likewise undermine the claim that Aristotle’s substance ontology is a constituent ontology, and then to articulate the correct view of hylomorphic theory—viz. “hylomorphic dualism,” which is indeed a constituent ontology.

The chapter has five parts: in the first part, 1) I establish the definitions of hylomorphic dualism and hylomorphic monism. In the second part, 2) I describe and criticize the positions of two contemporary interpreters who, though not hylomorphic
monists in the strict sense, may be called friends of monism, since their interpretations of Aristotle, if accurate, weaken hylomorphic dualism’s claim to be the only correct interpretation of Aristotle’s substance ontology. In the third part, 3) I describe and criticize the positions of four contemporary interpreters who are genuine hylomorphic monists. In the fourth part, 4) I articulate my own interpretation of hylomorphism that began to take shape in the first three parts—viz. hylomorphic dualism, though not substance dualism, that gives a proper account of the different ways in which matter is in potentiality in a substance. As we shall see, Aristotle’s hylomorphism and his doctrine of accidental unities are indeed constituent. In the fifth part, 5) I make a few concluding remarks.

2.1 Definitions of Hylomorphic Monism and Hylomorphic Dualism

It may seem obvious that Aristotle’s hylomorphic conception of natural substance entails that substances are composites of numerically distinct constituents—viz. matter and form—and that this doctrine concerns natural substances themselves and not merely our thoughts about natural substances. Indeed, this seems most obvious to me, and yet a number of contemporary philosophers—many of them careful readers of Aristotle—say otherwise. They say otherwise, moreover, for very different reasons. Before we address their accounts, however, some definitions are in order.

Let hylomorphic dualism be the doctrine that, according to Aristotle, substances are composites of numerically two, real, and actual constituents—proximate matter and substantial form (in the case of plants and animals—organized body and soul). A further elucidation of this definition: 1) By “numerically two” I mean that within a substance,
matter and form are numerically different items—one, two. I say nothing yet about their status with respect to Aristotle’s category theory, or whether they are substances or not, or whether they can exist in separation from one other, etc.; I say only that to count them requires counting to two, and that in having so counted, one has not counted the same item twice, but two different items. Thus, whatever matter and form do not have in common with Socrates and Callias—e.g. perhaps they do not have in common with them that they are numerically two substances/“this somethings”—they at least have this much in common with them: they are numerically two.  

2) By “real” I mean that matter and form are constituents in re (as opposed to merely in intellectu); this is to say that matter and form are not merely differences in the way that we think about a substance, but rather are different items within a substance itself.  

3) By “actual” I mean that neither the reality of matter and form nor the difference between matter and form are in any way diminished or effaced by their having the status of “virtual” or “potential” constituents of a substance, for they have no such reality/distinction-negating status; this is to say that they have not been mixed or blurred together in any way that effaces their being numerically different items within a substance; one need not do anything to make them actually numerically different items within a substance, for they already are so. Let hylomorphic monism be any interpretation of Aristotle’s hylomorphism that denies one or more of 1-3. Plainly, any kind of hylomorphic monism is a denial that hylomorphism is a constituent ontology, for to deny the multiplicity of 1 or the reality of 2 is to deny that substances themselves are composed of proper ontological parts at all, and to deny the actuality of 3 is to deny that these proper parts are genuinely distinct in the manner typical of
constituent ontologies and required by the definition of constituent ontology in the introduction. 19

Having defined hylomorphic dualism and monism we are now in a position to investigate several examples of contemporary hylomorphic monism, or, in certain cases, views that enable it or approximate it in effect. Below I will investigate and criticize interpretations of Aristotle by Sean Kelsey, E. J. Lowe, Theodore Scaltsas, Anna Marmodoro, William Charlton, and Wilfrid Sellars, before building a positive account of Aristotle’s hylomorphic theory. I begin with Kelsey and Lowe—our two friends of monism.

2.2 Contra Two Friends of Monism: Aristotle’s Source and Subject Doctrines

2.2.1 Sean Kelsey’s Transpositions of the Language of Dualism

It is not easy to say whether Kelsey is a hylomorphic monist from an inspection of his written work; unlike most of the authors we are examining here, he tends to eschew straightforward pronouncements concerning Aristotelian ontological commitments. It is easy to say, however, that his interpretations of the works of Aristotle sometimes transpose Aristotelian doctrine that entails hylomorphic dualism into terms that would be agreeable to monists. 20 Below I do not aim to refute a particular brand of monism put

---

19 Since we are here concerned with hylomorphism—i.e. the case of proximate matter and substantial form—I assume that anyone denying the duality required by 1, is denying it by saying that things have no ontological parts, rather than saying that they have three or more. Certainly, the monists we will be considering, if they deny 1 are denying it by claiming that there are no proper ontological parts of things.

20 For one such case see Anne Peterson’s discussion and critique of Kelsey’s interpretation of Physics 1.7, which she correctly sees as enabling a non-constituent view of hylomorphism; Anne Peterson,
forward by Kelsey, so much as challenge one of his interpretations of Aristotle that transposes into non-dualistic terms a doctrine that, when rightly understood, entails hylomorphic dualism—viz. his interpretation of Aristotle’s doctrine of nature in “Aristotle’s Definition of Nature.”

It is not difficult to see why Aristotle’s doctrine of nature has often been interpreted to entail hylomorphic dualism. What, after all, does it mean for substance to have a nature?—it means, as per *Physics* II.1, that it has an *internal source of motion*. Putting this definition together with a few other well-known Aristotelian doctrines yields hylomorphic dualism; a brief demonstration: according to Aristotle, 1) *nature is in natural substance* \( (192^b14) \), but 2) *nothing is in itself* \( (210^a34-210^b22) \). Nature, then, is not identical to the substance in which it is found. But then nature is either a proper part of substance, or it is not. If it is not, then it is altogether external to the being of substance, since it is neither identical to substance nor any of its parts—ontological or otherwise. But this is impossible, for, according to Aristotle, 3) *nothing is altogether different than its essence* \( (1031^a29-1032^a5) \), and 4) *nature is essence* \( (412^b10-24) \). This makes sense, after all, since, according to Aristotle, the power to see is not altogether external to the being of the eye—for “as the pupil plus the power of sight constitutes the eye, so the soul plus the body constitutes the animal” \( (413^a2-3) \). Thus, nature is a proper ontological part of substance. But every proper part entails the existence of another

---


proper part, and what else would that proper part be other than proximate matter, which, along with form, constitutes the substance?—nothing else indeed. Thus, substance is a composite of two real parts or constituents—viz. proximate matter and nature—just as the eye is a composite of the organized body of the eye—i.e. what above is called “the pupil”—and the power to see.

In “Aristotle’s Definition of Nature,” Kelsey agrees that, according to Aristotle, nature is an internal principle of motion, but he wishes to further interrogate this claim. He does not find it perspicuous and wishes to know what it means. His quest for its meaning leads him to posit a number of possible interpretations of the doctrine before finally settling on one of them—e.g. he postulates and later rejects that what it means to say that something has a nature is that it is the efficient cause of its own motions, and the ultimate conclusion to his quest is that what it means to say that something has a nature is that it is the proper subject of its own motions. All of his answers, including the one he finally settles on, transpose the idea of having an internal principle of motion into terms which suggest nothing about, internality, source, or parthood, and which, thus, cannot entail anything about hylomorphic dualism. As such, they are monist-enabling transpositions, and so, regardless of whether Kelsey is himself a monist, his interpretation of Aristotle’s doctrine of nature, if correct, lessens the evidence for hylomorphic dualism in the works of Aristotle and does so in one of the very places in the corpus where it appears most evident—viz. the doctrine of nature.

2.2.2 Contra Kelsey

I am content to admit that Kelsey has discovered something interesting and true about natural substances when he notes that natural substances are the subjects of their
own motions. What seems false to me about his interpretation of Aristotle is not this claim, but his assertion that this claim is the meaning of the claim that natural substances have an internal source of motion. The reason for the falsity of this assertion is that it ignores core features of the definition of the term “source” (archē)—i.e. an important piece of Aristotelian technical terminology. To attempt to discover the meaning of the claim that substances having an internal source of motion apart from these core features of the definition of source, will not lead to an elucidation of Aristotle’s definition of nature, but to a misunderstanding of it.

To make my case, it will be helpful to begin where Aristotle begins in the Physics, namely with the task that is set for the natural scientist—the discovery of the sources (archai), causes (aitia), and elements (stoicheia) of natural things—for as with any science, it is only when we know these, according to Aristotle, that we genuinely have a science. From the beginning of the Physics, then, Aristotle is looking for the sources (archai) of natural things.

Immediately after this announcement of the task of the physicist is a detailed discussion of the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides. Let us focus here on Aristotle’s initial remarks concerning why the physicist need not engage Parmenidean monism:

Now to investigate whether what exists is one and motionless is not a contribution to the science of nature. For just as the geometer has nothing more to say to one who denies the sources (tas archas) of his science—this being a question for a different science or for one common to all—so a man investigating sources cannot argue with one who denies their existence. For if what exists is just one, and one in the way mentioned, there is a source no longer, since a source must be the source of some thing or things (ou gar eti archē estin, ei
hen monon kai houtōs hen estin. ἡ γὰρ ἀρχὴ τίνος ἐκ τίνος (184b26-185a4).  

In the final two sentences above, Aristotle calls our attention to a core feature of the definition of source. A source must always be a source of some thing or things, and not just any thing or things, but some thing or things not perfectly identical to the source itself—i.e. somehow different from it. If this were not the case, then Aristotle would not be able to exclude Parmenides from counting as a contributor to the science of nature, for then Parmenides could maintain that a search for source(s) is compatible with his radically unitary conception of being. As it is, though, to search for the source(s) of something is to consider something that has begun or flowed forth and then seek something different than it from which it began or flowed forth. These two items need not be different substances, nor different accidents, nor different parts, etc. They need only be different somehow—for to collapse all difference into unity is to abolish the very idea of a source. Difference between a source and what is from a source, then, is a core


23 Throughout this chapter, when I speak of two things being “different” I am referring to their failure to be identical, and nothing more. If I wish to say more about the nature of the difference, I will spell it out more fully, but if I do not say more, then I have in mind nothing more than the multiplicity that is entailed by the non-identity of items.

24 That the definition of “source” involves difference finds confirmation in Aristotle’s refutation of those who say that the soul is a self-moving number. Such philosophers claimed that the soul was a self-mover and Aristotle interprets this as it being a source of motion for itself. A number, understood as a point with position (thesis), however, cannot be a source of its own motion, says Aristotle, for such a number has no internal difference of any kind, and a difference of some kind is required if there is to be a source: “How are we to imagine a unit being moved? By hat agency? What sort of movement can be attributed to what is without parts or internal differences? If the unit is both originative of movement and itself capable of being moved, it must contain difference” (409a1-4).

25 Wicksteed, in his 1929 translation of the Physics, took great pains to display the multiplicity implied by the definition of source in the last sentence of the above passage: “For a principle must be the principle of some thing or things other than its naked self.” St. Thomas also sees multiplicity as the point
feature of the definition of source, and Aristotle uses the word as piece of technical philosophical vocabulary in his argument for the exclusion of Parmenidean philosophy from the realm of physics.

*Difference* as a definitional feature of source as well as source’s status as a technical term are confirmed by Aristotle’s inclusion of the word in the *Metaphysics V* dictionary—an expansive list of the most important technical terms in his philosophy. In V.1 he lays out six different meanings of the term “source” and gives examples (1012\(b^{34}\)-1013\(a^{16}\)):

1. The part of a thing from which one would start first, (e.g. either of the contrary directions when traversing a road).

2. That from which each thing would best be originated (e.g. the part of a science from which that science is most easily learned).

3. That from which (as an immanent part) a thing first arises (e.g. the foundation of a house, the heart or brain, nature).

4. That from which (not as an immanent part) a thing first arises, and from which the movement or change naturally first proceeds (e.g. a father with respect to a child, abusive language with respect to a fight).

5. That by whose choice that which is moved is moved and that which changes changes (the magistracies in cities, art).

of the passage, for he notes in his *Commentary on the Physics*: “Sed praedicta positio destruit principia naturae; quia si sit solum unum ens, et sic unum, scilicet immobile, ut sic ex eo fieri alia non possint, tolletur ratio principii; quia omne principium aut est principium alicuius aut aliquorum. Ad positionem igitur principii sequitur multitudo, quia alius est principium et alius id cuius est principium; qui igitur negat multitudinem, tollit principia: non igitur debet contra hanc positionem disputare naturalis.” (“But the aforementioned position destroys the principles of nature. For if there is only one being, and one in this way, namely immobile in such a way that from it others cannot come to be, then the nature of a principle is abolished. For every principle is either a principle of some thing or things. Therefore, if a principle is posited, a multiplicity follows, for the principle is other than that of which it is the principle. Whoever, therefore, denies multiplicity abolishes principles. Therefore, the natural philosopher ought not to dispute against this position”).

22
6. That from which a thing can first be known (the hypotheses from which a demonstration proceeds).

In each of these cases it is manifest that there is some difference between a source and what is from a source: a road is different from one of two contrary directions, complete science from that part of science most easily learned, a foundation from a house/a heart from an organism, a father from a child, magistracies from their laws and the changes those laws bring about/art from product of art, hypotheses from demonstration. Difference, then, is a core feature of the definition of source, a feature that even cuts across its many different but related uses described in *Metaphysics* V.

If we look closely, we can see yet another core feature of Aristotle’s understanding of source. What is from a source always depends in some way upon its source, and whatever way it depends is a way in which the source does not depend on what is from it. A road depends upon the existence of contrary directions, though contrary directions do not depend on the existence of a road in the same way. The possession of science depends on there being some point where science is suitably begun, but there being a suitable beginning to the possession of science does not depend on the possession of science in the same way. The existence of a house depends on its first parts having been laid, but the first parts having been laid do not depend on the existence of a house in the same way. A child depends on its father for existence, but not the father on the child in the same way, etc.

“In the same way” is important here. For there may be a number of different dependencies between a source and what is from a source. A father may indeed depend for his existence upon a child, say, if the father is ill and requires the child’s care, but this is not dependence in terms of begetting, and this is the relevant consideration Aristotle
has in mind when articulating how it is that a child, *qua* child, depends on its father. The
first parts of a house being laid may depend on a house, for, according to Aristotle, a
house already exists in a way in the art of housebuilding, but the way in which the first
parts of a house being laid depend upon the art of housebuilding is different from the way
in which a house in the world depends upon its first parts being laid. I do not here intend
to explicate the nature these many different dependencies, but only to point them out.

My claim, then, is that “source” is a technical term for Aristotle that when used
should always call to mind at least two definitional features: 1) In every case of the
term’s use, *difference* is implied between that which is a source and that of which it is a
source, and hence *multiplicity* is implied, and 2) in every case of the term’s use, *some
class of dependence* of that which is from a source upon its source is implied. Let us call
these two points together *Aristotle’s Source Doctrine*. We could add more to it, but this
will be enough for now.

Understanding this doctrine is useful for rejecting certain interpretations of
Aristotle’s philosophy. For instance, should someone say that the soul is a collection of
powers—e.g. growth power, perceptive powers, etc.—we can know that this is not a
legitimate interpretation of Aristotle’s philosophy.26 If the soul were identical to a
collection of powers, it could not be called the source of those powers, for this would
violate the necessary difference between a source and what is from a source. Yet it is

26 For a different argument against the claim that the soul is a set of powers and a list of those who
claim that it is see Rebekah Johnston, “Aristotle’s *De Anima*: On Why the Soul is Not a Set of Capacities,”
called their source by Aristotle (413b10-13), and so the soul is not identical to a collection of powers.

We can also reject Kelsey’s claim that what it means for a natural substance to have an internal source of motion is that the substance is the subject of its own motions. Being the subject of your own motions—i.e. being the very thing in which and for which certain motions take place—neither states explicitly nor even implies anything about a unidirectional dependence of certain motions upon an item both different from them and internal to substance—viz. an internal source of motion.

The only difference or dependence that may even be implied in Kelsey’s claim is certain motions’ difference from and dependence upon some substance which is their subject, but this is not the relevant difference and dependence we seek, for as Aristotle notes in Physics II.1, a substance is not identical to a nature, but is rather something that “has a nature” (echei phusin);27 while it may be true, then, that motion is always different from and dependent upon some substance, this point has nothing to do with the meaning of the doctrine that nature is an internal source of motion, for this point is a point about the relationship of substance and motion, and not a point about the relationship of nature and motion, and the relationship we seek is the latter.

The same point can be made by focusing on the notion of nature’s internality. We seek certain motions’ difference from and dependence upon an item internal to substance, and hence an item not identical to substance, for—as noted above—nothing is

27 A very clear proof text for this is 192b32-192a1. Here Aristotle distinguishes between 1) things that have a nature, 2) nature, and 3) what is by nature, where the examples are fire, its nature, and its going up.
in itself according to Aristotle. Motion’s difference from and dependence upon substance, then, is not the relevant difference and dependence for understanding the meaning of the doctrine that nature is an internal principle of motion.

The correct understanding of the meaning of Aristotle’s definition of nature must therefore account for certain motions being different from an item which is non-identical to substance, but flowing from this item as from something upon which they depend (here for their very existence, whatever that existence amounts to). Any explication of the doctrine that does not incorporate these features in its attempt to elucidate simply ignores the very idea of an internal source, a concept built out of two technical terms that receive a great deal of attention in the works of Aristotle—“source” and “in.”

I conclude, then, that Kelsey is free to maintain that an important difference between natural substances and artifacts is that the former are the subjects of their own motions, while the latter are not—indeed, I think that he is certainly onto something—but he should not say that this is the meaning of the doctrine that natural substances have an internal source of motion, for this ignores and obscures the core features of the definition of the term “source” which Aristotle wields with technical and ontological purpose.

It should be noted that Kelsey—or anyone else—is welcome to attempt to account for nature as an internal source in the way that I have prescribed without reference to ontological parts, but what is it, then, that would be the source of motion in natural

28 I might also add this further point to my criticism of Kelsey; Aristotle certainly had the technical vocabulary to say that a natural substance (ousiai/ta esti phusei) is the subject (to hupokeimenon) of its own motions (hai kinēseis). If this were what he intended, why not simply say it plainly? To couch this meaning in terms of a source, which, in the case of Parmenides and the examples from Metaphysics V, clearly implies difference and dependence, would be to obscure what might otherwise be clearly expressed in technical vocabulary of Aristotle’s own development that makes no reference to a source.
things? Perhaps one could say that it is the natural substance itself or a corporeal part of substance; indeed, Aristotle clearly thinks that one corporeal part of an animal can be a source of motion in another part of the animal.

These suggestions fall flat, I think, upon closer examination. The substance itself cannot be the source described in *Physics* II.1 for the reason stated above—nothing is internal to itself. Nor is it plausible that any corporeal part of the substance is the source described in II.1, since the existence of the corporeal parts of a substance are accounted for in terms of its nature—i.e. nature is the source of the motions that lead to, say, the coming into being of a heart, and so it cannot be a heart which is the nature of a substance.

The most plausible account, I contend, is the ontological parts account—there is a non-corporeal part of substance, namely form, and this is both different from the composite substance, which allows it to be “in” the substance, and different from the motions it inspires, which allows it to be their source. These motions, being inspired, moreover, depend on the form in the way that is demanded by the Source Doctrine; were there no such source, anyway, there would be no such motions, for the motions flow from the source. I do not fault Kelsey for desiring further elucidation of these doctrines; clearly there is room for it.\(^\text{29}\) There is not room for it, however, apart from the core features of the definition of source.

\(^{29}\) We might wonder how these motions flow from form as source, and in particular, how their flowing from form as source is different from their flowing from a corporeal part as source, for Aristotle obviously regards corporeal parts as sources of motions in other corporeal parts of things. Clearly the form is not a source of the locomotion of blood in the same way that the heart is, so then what way exactly is it a source of the motion of blood or the growth of the animal?
“Source,” then, is an Aristotelian technical term with certain important definitional features—some of which are seen at work in the engagement with Parmenides and others in other contexts. Any viable interpretation of hylomorphism must be able to incorporate these features as described, since Aristotle’s discussions of hylomorphism and closely related topics are rife with its use. One cannot seek for the meaning of the doctrine of an internal source of motion, therefore, apart from the difference and dependence demanded by the definition of source, lest one not be explaining the doctrines of Aristotle, so much as explaining them away. The ontological parts account does justice to the source doctrine, and should be accepted barring a novel approach that does equally well; no such approach presents itself. Let us move on to the next friend of monism—E. J. Lowe.

2.2.3 E. J. Lowe’s Two Aristotelian Ontologies

The interpretation from Lowe that we will examine comes from his “A neo-Aristotelian Substance Ontology: Neither Relational nor Constituent” in Contemporary Aristotelian Metaphysics. He makes plain that, since he is presenting the reader with a neo-Aristotelian ontology, he does not care to hang on to every aspect of classical hylomorphism, and in fact he rejects many of its most important tenets, but he does attempt to ground his ontology in the works of Aristotle, hence its status as Aristotelian.

Unlike some of our other interpreters, Lowe does not claim that hylomorphic dualism cannot be found in the works of Aristotle. He freely admits that it can be found

---

there, but he also thinks that something quite different and even contradictory can be

discovered:

Substance ontologies in the Aristotelian tradition are commonly thought of as being constituent ontologies, because they typically espouse the hylomorphic dualism of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* – a doctrine according to which an individual substance is always a combination of matter and form. But an alternative approach drawing more on the fourfold ontological scheme of Aristotle’s *Categories* is not committed to this doctrine and may regard individual (or ‘primary’) substances as having no constituent structure, their only possible complexity residing in their possession, in some cases, of a multiplicity of substantial parts.31

In other words, Lowe subscribes to a developmental theory of Aristotelian

substance ontology. Thus, in the *Metaphysics* we get the constituent ontology and robust hylomorphic dualism that most have come to associate with classical hylomorphism, while in the *Categories* we get a non-constituent picture of substance. Lowe asserts that this other Aristotelian ontology can be found in the “fourfold ontological scheme of Aristotle’s *Categories*” by which he means the distinctions in the second chapter of the *Categories* between things that 1) are said of a subject (kath’ hypokeimenou tinos legetai), but are not in a subject (en hypokeimenō de oudeni estin), 2) are in a subject, but are not said of a subject, 3) are both said of a subject and are in a subject, and 4) are neither said of a subject nor are in a subject (1a20-1b6). It is because his own philosophy mirrors this alternative, non-dualistic ontology that Lowe calls his ontology Aristotelian, though not constituent. Lowe is not a hylomorphic monist, then, but his claim that there

31 Ibid. p. 229.
is a monistic alternative to hylomorphism in the works of Aristotle is a challenge to hylomorphic dualism’s hermeneutical hegemony.

Let us have a closer look at this supposed alternative ontology by comparing it to Lowe’s own philosophy. Lowe’s preferred ontology is, of course, his own four-category ontology popularized in *The Four Category Ontology: A Metaphysical Foundation for Natural Science*. To briefly review this well-known doctrine: beings are divided into four categories, 1) *kinds*, 2) *modes*, 3) *attributes*, and 4) *objects*. *Objects* are sensible particular items—e.g. Socrates; *kinds* are the species universals of objects—e.g. human being; *modes* are troped properties of objects—e.g. an instance of white; *attributes* are the species universals of modes—e.g. whiteness.

Lowe’s claim, then, is that we find a predecessor of his four-category ontology in the second chapter of Aristotle’s *Categories*. In other words, Aristotle’s *secondary substances* which are said of, but not in a subject are Lowe’s *kinds*; Aristotle’s *troped accidents* which are said in, but not of a subject are Lowe’s *modes*; Aristotle’s *universal accidents*, which are said both in and of a subject are Lowe’s *attributes* (i.e. *attributes* are said of *modes*, said in *kinds*); and Aristotle’s *primary substances* which are neither said of nor in a subject are Lowe’s *objects*.

---


33 It is controversial to suggest that Aristotle posits universals in the contemporary sense of the term. I do not think that he does, at least not if these are extra-mental entities. I will not here contest the point, however, since it would only distract from the main considerations.

34 A clear and pictorial summary of Lowe’s ontology and the way in which he supposes it to overlap the supposed ontology of the *Categories* can be found in “A Neo-Aristotelian Substance Ontology: Neither Relational nor Constituent,” pp. 238-240.
Lowe explains why exactly this supposed alternative ontology of the *Categories* is monistic:

How, exactly, are the two ‘Aristotelian’ systems of ontology related to one another? Unsurprisingly, they overlap in many respects, but one key respect in which they obviously differ is that the *four-category ontology*, as I call it, unlike the hylomorphic ontology, does not include the category of *matter*. It might be thought that it also lacks the category of form, but that is not in fact so. For I believe that form, conceived as a type of universal, and more perspicuously termed *substantial form*, is really nothing other than *secondary substance* or substantial *kind*.35

By doing away with matter, the supposed substance ontology of the *Categories* has done away with one of the two ontological parts proposed by the hylomorphic substance ontology. As such, it cannot then be the case that substance is a composite of two proper, ontological parts—matter and form—and we thus have a monism. Form is still included in the *Categories* ontology, according to Lowe, but it is included not as one of two “incomplete” “parts” in need of “combining” with matter to make a substance, but as a species universal that is *instantiated* by primary substances.36 Lowe considers the absence of matter and “incomplete” form to be positive merits of the *Categories* ontology, for he claims to find both concepts baffling and unnecessary.

2.2.4 Contra Lowe

The first thing to note when criticizing Lowe is that Aristotle’s Source Doctrine is of no use against him. Given that he admits the existence of hylomorphic dualism in the

---


works of Aristotle, he can admit that the Source Doctrine is indeed found in Aristotelian ontology, but claim that it pertains to Aristotle’s hylomorphic ontology and has no bearing on the ontology of the *Categories*. The place to begin against Lowe is with Aristotle’s four-fold distinction in the *Categories*.

What seems wrong to me about Lowe’s position is not that he sees the *Categories* as ontologically rich, but that he sees it as failing to contain the hylomorphic dualism which he finds in the other works of Aristotle. Hylomorphic dualism, anyway, can be spotted *in the very passages* that Lowe is using to justify the presence of a supposedly non-dualistic, Aristotelian ontology. Here is the second entry in Aristotle’s four-fold distinction—viz. things said in, but not of a subject:

Some are in a subject but are not said of any subject. (By ‘in a subject’ I mean what is in something, not as a part, and cannot exist separately from what it is in.) For example, the individual knowledge-of-grammar is in a subject (en hypokeimenō), *the soul* (tē psychē), but is not said of any subject; and the individual white is in a subject (en hypokeimenō), *the body* (tō sōmati) (for all color is in a body), but is not said of any subject. (1324-28)

Here Aristotle speaks of a particular knowledge of grammar and particular white using the very same language that he uses to describe a particular man or horse (tis/ti, e.g. tis grammatikē, ti leukon/tis anthrōpos, tis hippos). The claim, then, is that knowledge of grammar and white are indeed “troped;” the knowledge of grammar or white in one subject is numerically distinct from the knowledge of grammar or white in another.

---

37 One ought not to be spooked by the phrase “not as a part” here. Aristotle elsewhere calls accidental forms parts of accidental unities—e.g. 1023b19-22. His note here that some individual knowledge of grammar or some individual whiteness are not parts of things is meant only to convey that they are not quantitative parts of things as in the fancy of Anaxagoras, who imagined bodies whose whatness is nothing but white—i.e. magnitudes whose whatness is white.
Notice, however, what Aristotle names as the *subjects* in which these troped accidents are to be found. Aristotle does not simply claim that the individual knowledge of grammar and individual white are in an individual substance (i.e. Lowe’s objects), rather these individual accidents find their subjects *in the soul and the body respectively.*

Now, I have no doubt that Aristotle asserts that things like instances of Greek-grammatical knowledge and instances of pallor belong *primarily* to things like Socrates, for St. Thomas is surely correct that, for Aristotle, what exists *per se* is what acts *per se*, and what exists *per se* is composite substance, for neither ontological part—by itself—is a complete essence, and neither can act apart from being the ontological part of a complete substance; but I also have no doubt that—right here in the *Categories*—Aristotle is claiming that grammatical knowledge and pallor belong to Socrates by one of them having its subject in one ontological part of Socrates (viz. the intellectual soul) and the other having its subject in a different ontological part of Socrates (viz. the organized human body). That the subject of, say, pallor can be said to be both Socrates and one of his ontological parts is similar to the case where certain powers are attributed both to an organism as a whole and to certain of its corporeal parts, for, *primarily* speaking, what sees is Socrates, though he sees in virtue of his eyes and not his ears; *primarily* speaking, what is pale is Socrates, but he is pale in virtue of his body and not his soul, for

---

38 The claim that certain accidents are in the body as subject and others in the soul as subject is repeated throughout the corpus: (2*30-34), (2*1-3), (210*1), (1032*1), (1049*29-30).

39 Again, the reason not to say that the eye is what sees *primarily*, is that it is not what acts primarily, for substance is what acts primarily, and an eye is not a substance. The eye would neither exist nor act if it were not a part of an organized body, and an organized body neither exists nor acts unless it is one of two ontological parts of a complete human being.
his soul is no more pale than his ear is sighted.\textsuperscript{40} The doctrine that substances contain two
different ontological parts—proximate matter and form—is, therefore, already present in
the \textit{Categories}, and present in the very passages that Lowe is attempting to use to say that
it is not.

The only way around this conclusion in favor of the presence of hylomorphic
dualism in the \textit{Categories} is to posit an even more sweeping developmentalism.\textsuperscript{41} One
might say, for instance, that in the \textit{Categories}, Aristotle has a Platonic notion of soul—a
soul that radically transcends the body and which is not its actuality nor an ontological
part of a human being. At this early date, Aristotle saw Socrates as identical to this
Platonic soul, and only later came to the hylmorphically dualistic picture of the animal
in which Socrates is not only soul, but body and soul together.

Such a posit, I think, is no good for at least two reasons. First, 1) there simply is
no evidence in the \textit{Categories} for a Platonic view of soul. The view, therefore, is \textit{ad hoc},
since it would be to posit a second development in Aristotle’s thought merely to save a
posited first development—a second one that, if we simply reject the first based on the
solid evidence for hylomorphic dualism in the \textit{Categories} at 1\textsuperscript{a}24-28 quoted above, we
would have no need for in the first place. In general, wherever we can spot a graceful
unity of doctrine across a philosophical corpus, we ought to happily embrace that unity,

\textsuperscript{40} I will say more about the claim that what exists \textit{per se} acts \textit{per se} in chapter four, where I
discuss different senses of the term “body” in the philosophy of Aristotle.

\textsuperscript{41} It is the only way around it for Lowe, anyway, for he has already admitted that hylomorphic
dualism is part of Aristotle’s philosophy. Others who have not admitted this might, rather than posit further
development, instead maintain—as Sellars does—that dualistic language does not really entail ontological
dualism. I will deal with this claim below.
rather than posit a second disunity of doctrine to save a claim as to a first. Second, 2)
there is a further reason beyond the mere mention of the soul/body distinction at 1\textsuperscript{a}24-28
to accept that the soul of the *Categories* is one of two ontological parts composing the
animal rather than a Platonic entity. On route to that reason, consider the following
passage:

Thus all the other things are either said of the primary substances as
subjects or in them as subjects. So if the primary substances did not
exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist (2\textsuperscript{b}1-6).

As is eminently clear here, and as I already noted above, Aristotle certainly wants
to say that it is Socrates—a primary substance—who is the subject of, say, pallor and
Greek grammatical knowledge—i.e. instances of “all the other things.” But as we have
also just seen above, the body/soul distinction as well as the idea that body and soul can
be *subjects* find a place in the *Categories*.

Now, if Socrates were—in Platonic fashion—identical to the soul alone rather
than to the soul and body together, it is difficult to see how we could predicate color *both
of body and of Socrates*, as the combination of 1\textsuperscript{a}24-28 and 2\textsuperscript{b}1-6 suggests we should. A
body which is in no way Socrates nor one of his parts would be pale, but in what sense
would this make Socrates pale? It wouldn’t. And we certainly do not want to say that
Socrates’s Platonic soul is pale, for this, being like unto the invisible forms, has no color
at all. If the soul in the *Categories* is Platonic, then Socrates is not pale; this is an
unacceptable result and certainly not something that squares with the philosophy of
Aristotle. If, on the other hand, the body is one of two ontological parts of Socrates, then
indeed he is pale, insofar as he is pale in virtue of one of his two ontological parts being the subject of color—viz. the organized human body.

We ought not to balk at the claim that the whole is $F$ on account of the part being $F$, for we routinely predicate something of a whole on account of predicating it of one of its parts, especially when the parts are of the sort that only exist while in such a whole—e.g. we say that Socrates is in the water, because his legs are in the water, or that Socrates is in pain because he has pain in the stomach, or that Socrates is sighted because his eyes are sighted, etc. If what we call “Socrates’s eyes” were in fact not his eyes, and were in no way a part of him, then we would not say that Socrates was sighted because these things were. We would admit that Socrates is not sighted, but some eyes are. If we want Socrates to be both pale and grammatical, then, we had best not make him identical to either just a body or just a soul; Platonism, then, does not make sense as an interpretation of the soul as presented in the *Categories*, while hylomorphic dualism does. Lowe, then, has not discovered an alternative to hylomorphic dualism in the works of Aristotle; his neo-Aristotelian ontology, then, turns out to be a non-Aristotelian ontology.

In the process of investigating Lowe’s claims, we have also gained another tool for the evaluation of interpretations of Aristotle. Aristotle treats both proximate matter and form (i.e. organized body and substantial form) as *subject-candidates*—items which may, upon inquiry into their particular nature, turn out to be subjects in which further actualities inhere. I here say “subject-candidates” and not simply “subjects” on account of the fact that, while bodies are routinely subjects for many accidental categories, forms quite often cannot be subjects at all according to Aristotle; the specific forms of most animals have no *per se* acts, nor could, and thus are not subjects of further
actualities/forms. The fact that most forms cannot be subjects, however, is not based solely upon the fact that they are forms, for some forms can be the subjects of further actualities as the Categories and other works make plain. Both form and matter, then, are subject-candidates, a fact that any interpretation of hylomorphism must be able to account for. Any interpretation which denies that proximate matter and form—qua proximate matter and form, rather than qua this or that kind of proximate matter and form—are subject-candidates, or entails that they are not, is a false interpretation of Aristotle’s hylomorphism. Let us call this doctrine—that proximate matter and form are subject-candidates—Aristotle’s Subject Doctrine. We will put it to use in what follows.

2.3 Contra Four Hylomorphic Monists: Proximate Matter and Form as Real and Actual

2.3.1 Theodore Scaltsas’s and Anna Marmodoro’s Substantial Holism

Scaltsas is our first example of a hylomorphic monist, for as we will see, he denies that proximate matter and substantial form are actual. He gives a detailed interpretation of hylomorphism in “Substantial Holism,” where the unity of substance is his primary concern.\(^42\) There he claims that there is a distinction between aggregates, related wholes, and substances, where related wholes (e.g. the students in a class) enjoy a unity greater than that of mere aggregates (e.g. ten randomly chosen grains of sand on a beach), and substances (e.g. Socrates) enjoy a unity greater than that of related wholes.

---

Aristotle, he says, is keenly interested in explaining the unique kind of strong unity enjoyed by substances and dedicates important sections of the *Metaphysics* to this task.

One such section is the much-discussed *Metaphysics* VII.17. Here, says Scaltsas, Aristotle is concerned with explaining the unity of those substances composed of a number of other elemental substances—e.g. how is it that flesh is really human substance, and not simply an aggregate of elemental matter, a heap (sōros) of fire and earth? According to Scaltsas, Aristotle realizes that the cause of the existence of flesh cannot be yet another element, for then there would be a need for yet another cause of the unity of our original elements and this new element (and so *ad infinitum*). There must therefore be some non-elemental cause of the unity of natural substances composed of elemental substances—viz. the *form* or *nature* of the thing, which is a principle (archē) rather than an element (stoicheion).\(^{43}\)

This is an entirely standard interpretation of VII.17, but Scaltsas has a further question; let it be the case that form rather than a further element is needed to unify the elements into some non-elemental body, yet how is it that 1) the form and 2) this non-elemental body of which it is the primary cause—being two—are yet one substance?—i.e. how is it that the proximate matter and the form are one substance? Scaltsas believes that Aristotle poses this question for himself and then answers it in *Metaphysics* VIII.6. Where his interpretation is different than most is in what he thinks Aristotle’s answer to this further problem turns out to be.

\(^{43}\) Ibid. p.113
To understand what he thinks Aristotle’s answer amounts to, it is important to grasp that, on Scalsas’s view, any kind of plurality of constituents undermines the unity of substance according to Aristotle. He repeats this claim throughout “Substantial Holism”—e.g. “... the oneness of substance is incompatible with the plurality of its components” and “The paradigmatic unity, namely, substantial unity, is not compatible with being a plurality of many,” and he is explicit in stating that this applies not only to elemental constituents that go into the making of a substance, but also what he calls the “abstract” constituents of substance, by which he means the substantial form and proximate matter of a substance. In other words, according to Scalsas, Aristotle thinks that if matter and form turn out to be actually distinct constituents within a substance, then the unity of that substance has been undermined.

But of course the unity of substance is not undermined, according to Scalsas, for substantial unity is—as noted above—“the paradigmatic unity” according to Aristotle. As such, matter and form cannot be actually distinct constituents within substance. How, then, are they there in substance according to Aristotle? Here is Scalsas’s answer:

For Aristotle, the constituents of a substance, whether concrete or abstract, emerge when we divide the substance up, either physically or by abstraction. What this means is that the entities that emerge from the division of the substance do not exist in the substance but only potentially. Similarly for the constituents that pre-date the substance and go into the make-up of the substance by being incorporated into the substantial whole. They exist before merging into the whole, but not in the whole. It is not that these constituents vanish into thin air when incorporated into the substance; rather, it is that they lose their boundaries and hence their distinctness. To return to the drop of water example, the boundaries that distinguish

---

44 Ibid. pp. 109-110 for the quotes. See pp. 115-116 for a description of the unity problem’s extension to “abstract” constituents and a list of what counts as such constituents.
and individuate the drop of water are lost when the drop becomes a non-distinct constituent of the water in the glass. 45

In other words, Aristotle’s answer to how it is that substance is a genuine unity despite the proximate matter and the form being two different constituents is that the matter and the form are dissolved into the substance and exist there “in potentiality” in the way that the elemental matter is dissolved into the substance and exists there “in potentiality—e.g. in the way that fire and earth are not present in flesh in actuality, but only in potentiality. According to Scaltsas, then, Aristotle’s Mixture Doctrine, set out in detail in On Generation and Corruption I.10 has a very wide scope—so wide in fact that it applies even to proximate matter and form. 46 He extends this same account also to accidental unities such as pale Socrates:

It is not ‘white colour’ that exists in Socrates. Rather, the incorporation of ‘white colour’ into Socrates results in white Socrates. Properties, and other kinds of abstract entity, do not retain their distinctness as components of a substance. Otherwise they would simply be copresent, as elements in an aggregate. 47

In other words, Socrates and pallor exist only in potentiality in pale Socrates. Were this not the case, there would not be a genuine accidental unity, but a mere aggregate. The only way that these abstract entities ever exist somehow other than in potentiality, according to Scaltsas, is when they have been “abstracted” from the wholes


46 That Scaltsas indeed has the mixture doctrine in mind here is plain from his saying: “Similarly for the constituents that pre-date the substance and go into the make-up of the substance by being incorporated into the substantial whole. They exist before merging into the whole, but not in the whole.” The “constituents that pre-date” the coming into being of a substance are, of course, other substances such as the elements. These are precisely the items being discussed in OGC 1.10.

in which they exist in potentiality. Thus, Aristotelian abstraction has ontological implications for Scaltsas. Just as melting flesh causes new items to come to be that were in flesh only in potency, so abstracting a form—e.g. white or the soul—causes new items to come to be that were only in substantial or accidental unities in potentiality. There may be an attenuated sense, then, in which white and soul are constituents of things according to Scaltsas, but they are not constituents in the robust, already differentiated manner imagined by constituent ontologists such as Hume, Locke, Bergmann, Armstrong, Loux, etc.

Marmodoro is also a substantial holist. She makes only a minor alteration to Scaltsas’s doctrine which she describes in a footnote.48 Her contribution to the substantial holist picture, then, consists not so much in sweeping additions to or modifications of the doctrine, but in critiques of interpretations of hylomorphism that run contrary to substantial holism, one of which we will investigate here—viz. that offered in response to Kathrin Koslicki. Koslicki supports what she calls “mereological hylomorphism,” which for our purposes here is identical to hylomorphic dualism. In her paper, “Aristotle’s Mereology and the Status of Form,” she defends the view that Aristotle intends us to think that matter and form are genuine proper ontological parts of substance, and that form is mereologically simple and a principle of unity of the elemental matter that goes

Marmodoro opposes Koslicki’s claim by appealing to the doctrine of *Metaphysics* VII.17:

> There are two reasons why Koslicki’s reconstruction of Aristotle’s view is misguided. Firstly, from *Metaphysics* VII.17 (which we will examine in more detail later) we know that for Aristotle the form is not a further element in the whole on a par with the elements that make up the substance. Even a perfectly simple mereological atom, would not unify the substance by lending its unity to it in the way that Koslicki describes; on the contrary for Aristotle, adding an extra element in the compound for the sake of unifying it will only give rise to an infinite regress of increasing complexity.

In other words, according to Marmodoro, VII.17 refutes Koslicki’s claim that form and matter are “parts” of substance, since this would just be to say that they are elements, and an element is precisely what form cannot be according to VII.17.

### 2.3.2 Contra Scaltsas and Marmodoro

The place to begin against Scaltsas’s Substantial Holism is with Aristotle’s account of mixture in *On Generation and Corruption* I.10, for this is the only place in which he discusses any kind of difference-effacing potentiality *as it pertains to substance*. Scaltsas is correct that Aristotle views non-elemental substantial bodies as containing certain mixtures of elemental constituents, and that the constituents that go into these mixtures exist there only “in potentiality;” they *must* exist there only in potentiality, according to Aristotle, for if they were there in actuality, we would not have

---


51 See 327b22-31
a mixed body so much as a mere juxtaposition of elemental substances—e.g. we would not have blood or bone, but only fire and earth in this or that spatial arrangement. He is also correct that this doctrine of “potential” existence is a way of denying the distinctness of these constituents—for it denies that the constituents are numerically two substances in favor of the view that they went into the making of numerically one substance. The problem with Scaltsas’s account is that Aristotle explicitly rejects applying the OGC I.10 model to the way in which matter and form are present together in the unities in which they are found:

We speak neither of the food as being mixed with the body, nor of the shape as being mixed with the wax and thus fashioning the lump. Nor can body be mixed with white, nor (to generalize) properties and states with things; for we see them persisting unaltered. But again, white and knowledge cannot be mixed either, nor anything else which is not separable. (indeed, this is a blemish in the theory of those who assert that once all things were together and combined. For not everything can be mixed with everything. On the contrary, both of the constituents that are combined must originally have existed in separation; but no property can have separate existence) (327b14-23).

Here Aristotle explicitly denies not only that white and body are mixed so as to exist in potentiality in the mixture, but he also denies that shape and wax are so mixed—one of the central technological examples used in the De Anima as an analogy for the distinction between body and soul (412b5-9); neither body and substantial form, nor body and accident, then, are mixed with one another so as be in the mixture in potentiality.

52 For the doctrine that, not only in the category of substance, but in any category, a thing cannot be both one and multiple in actuality see 1039a3-14.
This interpretation finds further confirmation when we consider what Aristotle means here by “separable” (chōristos). In this passage, we encounter Aristotle’s belief that the items that went into mixtures must have previously existed as separate substances. The reason that we know he speaks here of separation in terms of separate substances and not merely separation in logos (i.e. by abstraction), is that he denies in this passage that white and indeed all properties can be separated. Clearly such things can be separated in logos according to Aristotle, therefore this is not the kind of separation he speaks of here. If the separation he speaks of here is separate substantial existence, however, then clearly neither accidental form, nor substantial form, can be mixed with proximate matter so as to exist in the mixture in potentiality, for as the passage notes, only those things which are capable of separate substantial existence can be mixed, and only with other such things, and obviously neither accidental form, nor substantial form, nor proximate matter is capable of separate substantial existence according to Aristotle.53 Clearly, then, only bodies in the sense of composite substances can be mixed, and only with each other.

That form cannot be mixed with its proximate matter is especially clear only a few passages later:

Thus it is clear that only those things are mixable which are agents that involve a contrariety—for these are such as to suffer action reciprocally. And, further, they combine more freely if small pieces of each of them are juxtaposed. For in that condition they change one another more easily and more quickly; whereas this effect takes a long time when agent and patient are present in bulk (328a32-35).

53 I disregard for the moment the special case of the intellectual soul.
The only things that can be mixed are those which “suffer action reciprocally”—i.e. those which act on something and also are acted upon in turn. Anything which can suffer action, however, is something which can change, and form, according to Aristotle is incapable of change, since, if form could come to be, yet another form would need to be posited to account for this change (i.e. a form would have a form), and so on ad infinitum. Form does not come to be, according to Aristotle, rather it “must either be eternal or it must be destructible without being ever in course of being destroyed, and must have come to be without ever being in course of coming to be” (1043b14-16). As such, it cannot be mixed, and this is why he says that neither health nor the art of health are ever mixed, for these are forms or like forms. Only composite substances, then—i.e. things that when they act are acted upon in turn—can be mixed, and only with one another, according to Aristotle. Indeed, it is substantial bodies and not forms that can be meaningfully spoken of as cut up into “small pieces” and “juxtaposed” or left in “bulk.”

At one point in OGC 1.10, Aristotle even explicitly contrasts the manner in which the elements exist in substance potentially with the way in which body and form exist in it in actuality: “The [elemental] constituents, therefore, neither persist actually, as body and white persist (oute diamenousin oun energeia hōsper to sōma kai leukon); nor are they destroyed (either one of them or both), for their potentiality is preserved” (327b29-31). Forms, then, are never mixed with proximate matter, and since Aristotle does not speak of any other situation in which things exist “in potentiality” in a substance such
that their actual distinction is eradicated, then—contra Scaltsas—form and proximate matter do not exist in substance in potentiality such that their distinction is eradicated.\textsuperscript{54}

It is worth noting that, in addition to all of this textual evidence from \textit{OGC} I.10, we can also bring Aristotle’s Subject Doctrine against Scaltsas’s position. When, for instance, fire and earth go into the mixture that is flesh, their substantial distinctness is effaced as Scaltsas notes. On account of this lack of distinct substantial existence, it is no longer fire and earth which are of such and such a quantity, warm, hard, etc., rather it is flesh which is of such and such a quantity, warm, hard, etc.\textsuperscript{55} The candidate for accidental modification, then, is the mixed body which comes to be when the elements are mixed (or its form, if its form can have further acts), and not the elements themselves, for their existence as distinct subjects has been effaced by their having been mixed. Were matter and form existing in substance in potentiality after the manner of the elements in a mixture, then their distinctness would have also vanished, at which point neither one could be numerically distinct subjects for further accidents. As we’ve seen, however, Aristotle clearly intends both matter and form to be subject-candidates, and candidates for very different kinds of actualities—e.g. color or grammatical knowledge. They thus do not exist in the substance in potentiality after the manner of the elements, lest it be impossible for the subject of color to be the organized body and the subject of

\textsuperscript{54} Aristotle does allow that certain things other than substance exist in potentiality in something such that their actual distinction is effaced, e.g. continuous quantities in a continuous quantity (two lines in a line) or numbers (two units in the number two), but these cases do not deal with \textit{substance}, and so are not relevant to the substantial holist doctrine advocated by Scaltsas. See 1039\textsuperscript{a}3-14 for these examples.

\textsuperscript{55} See 1049a19-1049b1 for a description of the proper subjects of accidental and substantial modifications.
grammatical knowledge to be the intellectual soul as the *Categories* and a great many other works demand.⁵⁶

If Scaltsas’s substantial holism is not an accurate interpretation of Aristotle’s hylomorphism, then neither is Marmodoro’s, since, despite the minor adjustments she makes to his theory, her version of substantial holism still affirms the distinction-effacing, potential existence of matter and form in substance, which has now been shown to be contrary to a great deal of textual evidence. Something should still be said, however, in response to Marmodoro’s critique of hylomorphic dualism in “Aristotle’s Hylomorphism Without Reconditioning,” since, just because her own positive doctrine concerning hylomorphism has been shown to run contrary to Aristotle’s intention, this does not necessarily mean that her critique of Koslicki’s hylomorphic dualism is without force.

In essence, Marmodoro’s response to Koslicki’s brand of hylomorphic dualism is that her notion of form as a “part” of substance is a misinterpretation of Aristotle, since, were form a part, it would be yet another element (since a part and an element are the same thing), and this is exactly what Aristotle precludes form from being in his *Metaphysics* VII.17 argument. The problem with this as a response to Koslicki is that it treats her as though she gave little or no consideration in her paper as to how VII.17 squares with her dualistic picture of hylomorphism; nothing could be further from the truth.

---

⁵⁶ Again, for further proof that both proximate matter and form can be subjects see (2a30-34), (2b1-3), (210b1), (1032a1), (1049a29-30).
Koslicki is well aware of the fact that a hylomorphic form cannot be an element according to Aristotle’s VII.17 argument. The very focus of her paper, after all, is the VII.17 argument. After claiming—in agreement with Marmodoro—that the VII.17 argument proves that form cannot be yet another element, she goes on to argue that, nonetheless, it can be a part of substance, according to Aristotle, and that the anti-mereological reading of hylomorphism—often synonymous with the anti-dualistic reading—is based squarely on a misinterpretation of the VII.17 argument which takes “element” to be just another word for “part.” In support of her conclusion that the VII.17 argument is not meant to exclude form from being a part of substance, she 1) cites the Metaphysics V dictionary where Aristotle indeed calls form a part of a substance (1023b19-22), and 2) gives an argument of her own invention whose conclusion is that form is a part of substance and whose premises are things which she thinks that Aristotle held and that most scholars would agree that Aristotle held. We should, therefore, take one of the central points of Koslicki’s paper to be to call to task the anti-mereological camp’s use of VII.17 in support of their view.

Marmodoro’s response, then, has no force against Koslicki’s interpretation, because it simply does not engage it. To engage it, Marmodoro would need to respond in such a way as to show that Aristotle’s use of “part” always corresponds to his use of “element,” or barring this, she should have at least addressed Koslicki’s reference to the Metaphysics V dictionary or her argument from Aristotelian premises so as to show that they lend no support to the claim that Aristotle thinks that a form can be a part of a substance. By saying that form cannot be a part of a substance because that would just be to make form into another element, something which VII.17 precludes form from being,
Marmodoro has not refuted Koslicki’s interpretation of Aristotle, or attacked any of Koslicki’s supporting evidence, she has only restated the anti-mereological camp’s position and its interpretation of VII.17, a reading which Koslicki gave reasons—and excellent ones at that—to reject as mistaken. Marmodoro’s attempt to use VII.17 against hylomorphic dualism, then, is ineffective. Let us now examine other monistic doctrine.

2.3.3 William Charlton’s Form as Substance

William Charlton is a hylomorphic monist with a very straightforward claim. In his commentary on *Physics* I and II, he claims that, according to Aristotle, form is simply identical to substance (e.g. the soul just is the animal):

> The relation of matter to form is traditionally construed, I think, as a kind of thing-property relationship, like that of a man to knowledge of music, or of bronze (see below) to sphericity; if the authentic model for the matter-form relationship is that of man to thing which knows music, or of bronze to a sphere, the relationship must be construed differently. Evidence telling for abstract expressions has been given above; evidence telling for concrete expressions is, I think much stronger, and since the issue is important, I give it some detail. It suggests that the matter-form relationship is that of constituent to thing constituted.\(^57\)

I am not exactly sure what Charlton means when he says that matter is to form as constituent to thing constituted. Two possible interpretations present themselves, both of which are monisms. First, perhaps Charlton means that the constituent went into the making of the thing constituted, but is not actually in it any longer once it is constituted. If so, then before the form is constituted all there actually is is the matter, and after the

form is constituted all there actually is is the form, and in either case we have monism. On the other hand, perhaps the constituent still actually exists in the thing constituted. If, however, there is not a second constituent (since form is thing constituted and not an additional constituent), then the first constituent is an improper constituent and is, therefore, just identical to the thing constituted, and we have monism. Either way, Charlton’s assertion that form is substance is untenable; below are a number of reasons why.

2.3.4 Contra Charlton

In defense of his admittedly novel interpretation, Charlton musters a number of passages from the various works of Aristotle. Most of the evidence for his position relies on particularly short and/or ambiguous sections of the corpus. My goal here will not be to produce alternative interpretations of these passages, though I will respond to one of his claims so that the reader can see the nature of his evidence. Instead, I will aim show that Charlton’s interpretation of hylomorphism is deeply at odds with unambiguous portions of Aristotelian philosophy whose meaning is well-established among scholars.

Below are six unacceptable results of Charlton’s posit that a primary substance—e.g. Socrates—is identical to a form in the philosophy of Aristotle:

1) *Form is produced:* in *Metaphysics* VII.8, Aristotle unambiguously claims that form is never produced (i.e. form never comes into being on account of something’s agency), but rather a matter-form composite is produced:

   I mean that to make the bronze round is not to make the round or the sphere, but something else, i.e. to produce this form in something else. For if we make the form, we must make it out of something else; for this was assumed. E.g. we make a bronze sphere; and that in the sense that out of this, which is bronze, we make this other,
which is a sphere. If, then we make the sphere itself, clearly we must make it in the same way, and the processes of making will regress to infinity. Obviously then the form also, or whatever we ought to call the shape of the sensible thing, is not produced, nor does production relate to it—i.e. the essence is not produced; for this is that which is made to be in something else by art or by nature or by some capacity. But that there is a bronze sphere, this we make. For we make it out of bronze and the sphere; we bring the form into this particular matter, and the result is a bronze sphere. . . It is obvious then, from what has been said that the thing, in the sense of form or substance, is not produced, but the concrete thing which gets its name from this is produced, and that in everything which comes to be matter is present, and one part of the thing is matter and the other form (1033a31-1033b10/1033b16-19).

In other words, the form never comes into being, at least not in the sense that a statue does, for if it did, it would need to come into being out of some matter and by that matter receiving some form as the statue comes into being out of bronze having received some shape. If this new form of our form also came into being, it too would need to come into being in the same way, and so \textit{ad infinitum}. But there is no such infinity according to Aristotle. The agency of the craftsman or of the parent, then, never produces the form, but only brings it about that some matter has a form; what comes into being, then, is a statue or Socrates, but never a form.

If, however, we accept Charlton’s view that a primary substance is just identical to a form, then—contrary to the detailed and unambiguous claim above that form is never produced—form is nonetheless produced, for form is identical to a primary substance, and primary substances and their analogues are obviously produced according to Aristotle; human beings and brazen spheres come into being and pass away all the time.

2) \textit{The animal is identical to the soul}: if, as Charlton suggests, form is identical to substance, then the soul is identical to the animal, for the soul is the form with respect
living things, according to Aristotle. Aristotle, however, unambiguously denies that the animal is identical to the soul, one instance of which has already been produced above with “as the pupil plus the power of sight constitutes the eye, so the soul plus the body constitutes the animal” (DA413^a2-3). For other clear instances of the same doctrine see: 1037^a5-9, 1037^a22-1037^b7, 1043^a34-1043^b4, 1049^a27-30.  

3) The soul is identical to a body: furthermore, if the soul is identical to the animal, then the soul is a body, for the word “body,” according to one of its meanings in Aristotelian philosophy, refers to natural substances: 

Substance is thought to belong most obviously to bodies, and so we say that both animals and plants and their parts are substances, and so are natural bodies such as fire and water and earth and everything of that sort . . . (1028^b9-11).^{58}

But Aristotle unambiguously denies that the soul is a body: 

Since then the complex here is the living thing, the body cannot be the actuality of the soul; it is the soul which is the actuality of a certain kind of body. Hence the rightness of the view that the soul cannot be without a body, while it cannot be a body; it is not a body but something relative to a body. That is why it is in a body, and a body of a definite kind (414^a16-21).

For other clear instances of the same doctrine see: 412^a16-20 and 412^b5-9. 

4) Form’s Subsistence is Trivially False: in De Anima I.1, Aristotle asks whether the soul (i.e. a form) is capable of “separate” (chōristos) existence. This question amounts to asking whether after the destruction of the animal, the form can continue its existence (i.e. in the same way that after the destruction of Socrates, Plato can continue his existence, for he is existentially “separate” from Socrates in the relevant way), or

^{58} I will say more about the different meanings of “body” in the works of Aristotle in chapter four.
whether the form is necessarily destroyed with the corruption of the animal. This
question is posed as though it were a difficult question that requires close philosophical
scrutiny if it is ever to be solved. Indeed, according to Aristotle, answering this question
requires careful consideration of whether all the activities of animals require bodily
organs or not. If form and substance are identical as Charlton posits, however, then it is
trivially false that the form could survive the destruction of the animal, for nothing can
survive the destruction of itself.

5) Form’s Subsistence is Trivially True: and yet at the same time it would turn
out that form trivially subsists. Why? Consider the following: Aristotle gives us a clear
criterion for subsistence—i.e. “separate” existence: “If there is any way of acting or being
acted upon proper to soul, soul will be capable of separate existence; if there is none, its
separate existence is impossible” (403a10-13). If form is identical to the natural
substance, however, then it is obvious that the soul has many per se activities, since
Aristotle clearly believes that growing and perceiving are obvious per se activities of
living substances. It is trivially true, then, that form subsists on Charlton’s view, a result
no less offensive than its opposite, for the answer to the question about the subsistence of
form is supposed to be anything but trivial.

6) The Source Doctrine is Violated: Charlton’s interpretation violates The Source
Doctrine in a number of ways. For instance, in Physics I.7, matter and form are both
cited as the sources of being of things that come to be and pass away—i.e. both
accidental unities and substantial unities (190b16-22). Charlton indeed has matter and
form, but according to him, form is identical to those things that come to be and pass
away. If form is identical to such things, however, then it cannot be a source of their
being, for—as we have seen—source always implies a difference between a source and what is from a source. Furthermore, Charlton’s notion of form cannot be the internal source of motion of Physics II.1, for this source must be internal to substance, and nothing is internal to itself.

What I aim to have shown here with this list—one which could be extended much further if space allowed—is that Charlton’s understanding of hylomorphism conflicts with many of the most unambiguous and accepted aspects of Aristotelian philosophy. Charlton’s evidence for his own position, on the other hand, does not show that the traditional dualistic interpretation of hylomorphism causes serious problems with the internal consistency of Aristotelian doctrine, but rather suggests that certain brief and often obscure passages might be interpreted to support his reading. For example, and as one of his stronger pieces of evidence, Charlton has us consider a summary passage in Physics II.3:

In the formal classification of causes, 195a16-21, Aristotle says “letters are the cause of syllables, the matter of artefacts, fire and the like of bodies, the parts of the whole, and the hypotheses of the conclusion, as that out of which; and the one lot, the parts and so on, are causes as the underlying thing, whilst the other lot, the whole, the composition and the form, are causes as what the being would be.’ It is hard to understand Aristotle otherwise than as implying that syllables, artefacts, bodies, and wholes are forms, and that the matter-form relation is that of constituent to thing constituted.\(^59\)

\(^{59}\) *Physics Books 1 and 2 Translated with Introduction, Commentary, Note on Recent Work, and Revised Bibliography*, p. 71.
This Aristotelian passage referred to is a bit puzzling, but is it really that hard to understand Aristotle otherwise than as suggesting something that would wreak vast and obvious havoc upon the consistency of his philosophy?—I think not.

The passage in question merely summarizes an earlier list of the four causes (viz. 194b24-195a2) where the examples of the formal cause given are “the definition of the essence, and its genera, (e.g. of the octave the relation of 2:1, and generally number), and the parts of the definition”—none of which sound much like something like Socrates. The formal cause, moreover, is called “to paradeigma” in this earlier list, and however much Aristotle admired Socrates, it is difficult to imagine that he could be an example of the kind of paradigm spoken of here!

Furthermore, it is not particularly difficult to imagine a resolution of this passage favorable to traditional dualism. Though Aristotle usually reserves the phrase “ex hou”—“from which”—to describe the material cause, it is entirely possible that in this highly-condensed summary above he uses “ex hou” to refer to both matter and form, since composite substance may be said to be “from” two items—viz. matter and form—for these are the sources of its being as per Physics I.7 (190b16-22). His point, then, is that the letters, workable matter of the craftsman, fire and the like, the parts, etc. are causes insofar as they can be truly called that “from which” substance or substance analogues come to be and are, but then he immediately goes on to note with “toutōn de ta men hōs to hypokeimenon (hoion ta merē), ta de hōs to tī ēn einai” (“of these, the ones are as the subject (for instance the parts), and others are as the essence”) that of the items “from which” things come to be and are, some belong to the realm of the material cause and others to the realm of the formal cause.
This interpretation is not even a stretch, since Aristotle frequently uses “hothen” ("from which") to discuss the way in which things are from a source—e.g. form/nature.\(^{60}\) Here, rather than mention both “ex hou” and “hothen”—both of which can mean “from which”—he allows “ex hou” alone to describe both of the components “from which” substance gets its being—namely matter and form in the traditional sense. Not only is this interpretation not a stretch, but it also seems entirely necessary, since the passages Charlton quotes along with the sentences immediately after it are apparently a summary of the four causes, and if they are not interpreted in the way that I have suggested, then the formal cause is the only one left off of the list.

All of Charlton’s evidence comes from texts as abbreviated and enigmatic as this one. Even if no reply could be given regarding some of these passages (though in most cases one can easily be given that is as satisfying as the one given above), I submit that it would still be better to be puzzled as to the meaning of a very select group of obscure passages, than to interpret them in a way that causes serious internal inconsistencies in Aristotelian doctrine. The traditional dualistic interpretation of hylomorphism, then, is to be preferred, especially given that it immediately resolves all of the major problems here raised.

\(^{60}\) For instance, this is the term used throughout the *Metaphysics V* dictionary to describe the ways in which things are from a source (1012\(^{b}\)34-1013\(^{b}\)22).
2.3.5 Wilfrid Sellars “Projection” Monism

Sellars is another straightforward hylomorphic monist. According to Sellars, hylomorphism entails that our definitions have a certain duality, but it has no ontological implications for a duality within substance or its analogues:

But how is this "part-whole" relationship to be understood? Clearly a metaphor is involved. How is it to be interpreted? Are we to suppose that as in the ordinary sense the spatial togetherness of two individuals (the parts) constitutes a new individual (the whole), so in the metaphorical sense a nonspatial, metaphysical, togetherness of individual matter and individual form (the "parts") constitutes a new (and complete) individual (the "whole"). The answer, I submit, is no, for the simple reason that the individual matter and form of an individual substance are not two individuals but one. The individual form of this shoe is the shoe itself; the individual matter of this shoe is also the shoe itself, and there can scarcely be a real distinction between the shoe and itself. What, then, is the difference between the individual form and matter of this shoe if they are the same thing? The answer should, by now, be obvious. The individual form of this shoe is the shoe qua: (piece of some appropriate material or other — in this case leather) serving the purpose of protecting and embellishing the feet. The individual matter of this shoe is the shoe qua: piece of leather (so worked as to serve some purpose or other — in this case to protect and embellish the feet). Thus, the "parts" involved are not incomplete individuals in the real order, but the importantly different parts of the formula (piece of leather) (serving to protect and embellish the feet) projected on the individual thing of which they are true.  

Though his example is technological, Sellars intends this description to account for hylomorphism generally. By “projection” Sellars would appear to mean that the thinker or perceiver throws out onto the world a structure whose origin is the mind or senses. Does this mental or sensory framework correspond to genuine structure in the

---

world itself? Presumably not—since, though it is a bit obscure what Sellars means by “individual” here, he appears to be denying any difference whatsoever between matter and form **within substance itself**—for, “there can scarcely be a real distinction between the shoe and itself.” If, however, these two “importantly different parts of the formula” have no implications for a difference within substance (except perhaps concerning the real structure of thought or perception if those turn out to be substances), then we have a hylomorphic monism; there is a shoe or a squirrel, which one may consider according to a material or formal part of a definition, but these parts are **parts of the definition only** and in no way correspond to genuine, ontological parts in the thing defined. In the world, there is only one something—a shoe or a squirrel—and no “incomplete individuals in the real order.”

2.3.6 Contra Sellars

Sellars’s view, I think, is one more easily set aside. Were his view true, it would mean that hylomorphism has no ontological implications with regard to the structure of substances. This does not square well with the evidence. Below are five unacceptable results of Sellars’s projection monism.

1) *An ad hoc asymmetry is required:* to begin, we might ask whether Sellars’s account is only meant to apply to subject and form with respect to substance, or also to subject and form in the sense of substance and accident—i.e. is the case of substance and accident also one where the distinction between subject and form applies only to thought or perception and not to the extra-mental world? If so, this would mean that Aristotle posits no *in re* distinction between Socrates and his pallor, or Secretariat and his shape. This is false, however, since a major reason for developing a work like the *Categories* is
to point out that—contra Parmenides—being is multiple, and—contra Democritus—being is not only multiple in that there are numerically many substances, but multiple in that there are numerically many instances of beings that fall into different categories—many substances, qualities, quantities, etc. If, on the other hand, Aristotle intends a real distinction between subject and form in the case of substance and accident, then why—when he uses the very same language of subject and form with respect the structure of substances themselves—would he not also intend a real distinction between proximate matter and substantial form? Without a very good reason to suppose an asymmetry, one ought not to be supposed, and quite clearly, there is a real distinction between substance and accident in the philosophy of Aristotle.

2) An implausible interpretation of The Source Doctrine is required: next, given Sellars’s monism, what sense can we make of Aristotle’s Source Doctrine? As noted above, in Physics I.7, matter and form are said to be sources of both the being and coming into being of natural things (190b16-22). Yet how could “importantly different parts of the formula projected onto the individual thing” be the sources of that thing’s being? Clearly these “parts of the formula”—as they exist in the mind—are different from the things onto which they are projected, but given that matter and form are sources of being, the individual things would need to depend in some way for their being upon these “different parts of the formula” in the mind. Yet this is clearly not Aristotelian, for
a horse is a horse, or course, of course, even if there were no one around to project
different aspects of a definition onto it.62

3) *The internality of form is violated:* form, moreover, is an internal source of
motion according to Aristotle. How are “parts of the formula” in the mind internal to a
substance? If anything, they are *external*. In fact, the externality of form appears to be a
necessary aspect of Sellars’s position, for the parts of the formula are “projected” onto
the thing; from where are they projected if not from something external to that onto
which they are projected, as a mind and its thoughts are external to the objects thought
about in the sense that they are neither identical to nor a part of the objects that are
defined? The parts of the definition in the mind, moreover, cannot seriously be thought
to be the source (archē) and cause (aition) of motions in a natural thing, unless of course
we mean “parts of the definition” in the richly ontological and genuinely Aristotelian
sense of “the essence,” which Sellars clearly does not intend here. Because Aristotle
sometimes moves seamlessly between speaking about speaking and speaking about
being, Sellars’s doctrine may seem to have an Aristotelian ring to it when he calls matter
and form “importantly different parts of the formula.” Unless, however, by “part of the
formula,” Sellars means a genuine constituent of substance that is a source of its being
and its motion, then he means something quite different from what Aristotle means by
“form.”

---

62 I here speak of human or animal minds or perception and leave aside the question of whether
there must be a Divine Projector, for clearly God is not the projector spoken of by Sellars.
4) **The Subject Doctrine is violated:** next, what sense can we make of Aristotle’s Subject Doctrine? As we saw above, the claim in the *Categories* and elsewhere is that the soul is the subject of grammatical knowledge and the body of white, and that neither white nor grammatical knowledge could exist if they were not in some subject. But on Sellars’s view, “the soul” and “the organized body” are nothing more than “parts of the formula” projected onto something. When Aristotle says that the soul is the subject of grammatical knowledge and the body of white, he clearly does not mean to say that one “part of the formula” is the subject of grammatical knowledge, while another is the subject of white—for then it would be these different parts of the formula in the mind which are white and grammatical; it is not the parts of the formula that are white and grammatical, rather it is Socrates who is, and he is so because one of his ontological parts is the subject of grammar, and the other is the subject of white. If the formula is white and grammatical, it is only in a different sense that it is so, for clearly definitions in one’s mind are neither visibly white nor fluent in Greek.

5) **Implausible answers to core Aristotelian questions are required:** lastly, we might raise some of the same questions that were trouble for Charlton. If there is no real distinction between soul and that which has soul, what could Aristotle even be asking about when he asks whether the soul is capable of separate substantial existence? Could he be asking whether a part of a definition in the mind is capable of having some *per se* activity that makes no use of bodily organs, and as such has separate substantial existence? This is wildly implausible. Rather, when Aristotle asks whether the soul can survive the destruction of the substance, he is asking about some aspect of the substance itself. The question is about whether some part of Socrates survives his bodily death, and
not whether some part of a definition in someone’s mind does. So much, then, for Sellars’s brand of monism.

2.4 Hylomorphism: An Interpretation

The above criticisms of these interpreters are useful in their own right, for they dispose of a number of inaccurate views of Aristotle’s philosophy. I have not only been tearing down, however, but also building up positive doctrine, since I have put on display a number of interesting constraints on any interpretation of Aristotle’s hylomorphism. By reviewing and extending these points I can build a revealing and accurate picture of hylomorphism.

First, any proper interpretation of hylomorphic theory must take stock of Aristotle’s Source Doctrine. This has a number of implications. First, since a source is always different from what is from it as source, The Source Doctrine means that matter must be non-identical to substance, and form must also be non-identical to substance, for these are both sources of substance’s being as per Physics 1.7 (190b16-22).

The Source Doctrine can also be used to demonstrate the difference between matter and form in a substance. As noted in the section on Scaltsas’s and Marmodoro’s substantial holism, in VII.17 form is described as a source of unity of a mixed body. For instance, form is the cause of flesh being a genuinely mixed body and not a heap of fire and earth. There is a genuine difference, then, between this mixed body and its source—i.e. between the proximate matter of an animal and the form. This difference is also particularly clear in passages from the De Anima, for instance: “Given that there are bodies of such and such a kind, viz. having life, the soul cannot be a body; for the body is
the subject or matter, not what is attributed to it” (412a16-19). The body spoken of here cannot be a body other than that of the animal, for bodies such as the elements are not alive. Neither can this body be identical to substance itself, however, for this body is called “matter” (hylē) and matter is not a “this something” (tode ti); only composite substance is a “this something.” The animal, rather, is this body plus the soul, as the eye is the pupil plus the power of sight. Proximate matter and substantial form, then, are also non-identical by The Source Doctrine. 63 A detailed discussion of Aristotle’s notions of “body” and “proximate matter” will be undertaken in chapter four.

I should note explicitly at this point that while every source must be different from what is from it, not every source must be co-present or co-existent with that which is from it—e.g. a father may no longer have any proximity to or causal influence upon a child, or even exist at all for that matter, and yet the child which he has begotten may go on existing and acting apart from the source that was his father. The things that have matter and form as the sources of their being, however, are not of this kind. Quite clearly whenever Socrates exists, so does Socrates’s organized body, and Socrates cannot go on existing without his body as the child does without his father. 64 Whenever Socrates exists, moreover, his body is ensouled. This is plainly entailed by Aristotle’s homonymy principle, for the body that is no longer ensouled is not a human body, but a corpse. Likewise, it is only when a body is ensouled that it undergoes the motions inspired by the

63 The case of the simple elements will need further argument since they are not mixtures, but presumably Aristotle holds that the form is a source of fire’s body just as much as it is a source of animal bodies.

64 Though, according to the De Anima, perhaps a certain part of Socrates can go on existing without a body.
form, and when the form is no longer present, the motions may not go on uninterrupted as
the existence and activity of the child may go on uninterrupted at the destruction of the
father. Matter and form, then, are sources within a substance whenever that substance
exists.

Second, any proper interpretation of hylomorphic theory must take stock of
Aristotle’s Subject Doctrine. Qua matter and form, then, matter and form are subject-
candidates, though upon closer inspection of the particular nature of certain forms, it may
turn out that most of them are not capable of being subjects, though this is due to their
particular nature and not merely their status as form.

Aristotle’s Subject Doctrine also implies a real difference between matter and
form within a substance, for it makes little sense to say that body is the subject of color
while the soul is the subject of grammatical knowledge unless one intends a genuine
difference between these two subjects such that certain accidents are found in one and
others in the other. Even in the case of beings whose forms cannot support further acts,
there must be a real difference between body and form, for it scarcely makes sense to say
that such beings’ bodies can be the subjects of acts, while their souls cannot, unless there
is a real difference between body and soul. The Subject Doctrine, then, provides a second
confirmation of the fact that matter and form are non-identical, beyond that already
provided by The Source Doctrine.

These considerations alone firmly establish that 1) matter is not identical to form,
form is not identical to substance, and matter is not identical to substance. The reasons
given for rejecting Sellars’s account are sufficient for rejecting non-ontological
interpretations of hylomorphism. This establishes that 2) the distinction between matter
and form is a distinction in re—i.e. within substance itself. This is consistent with Aristotle’s insistence that form is an internal source of motion and that matter is an immanent constituent (193a9-12). The reasons given for rejecting Scaltsas’s and Marmodoro’s claim that matter and form exist only in potentiality are sufficient to prevent any conclusion that the distinction between matter and form has been effaced in some way or that it is a distinction only in the sense of what may emerge from substance if it is destroyed or if abstractive reasoning is performed upon it. But then 3) matter and form are actual in the sense that neither their existence nor their distinction has been abolished. To have established these points it to have established hylomorphic dualism as defined above.

I can go further with this explication than merely demonstrating the truth of hylomorphic dualism. Though relatively obvious, it is worth pointing out that hylomorphic dualism is not a substance dualism. By substance dualism, I mean the doctrine that substantial unities (e.g. Socrates) or accidental unities (e.g. pale Socrates) consist of two separable substances—i.e. two items which belong to the category of substance and whose existence is independent of one another in the way that the existence of Socrates is independent from the existence of Callias and vice versa. Let us examine why hylomorphic dualism is not a substance dualism.

In examining Aristotle’s Mixture Doctrine, we have already seen that Aristotle denies that mixed bodies can contain multiple elemental substances in actuality and that the reason for this is that there would be no mixed body at all, but only a juxtaposition
(synthesis) of many elemental substances.\textsuperscript{65} It is not only elemental substance that cannot
be present in act in other substances, however, but any substance whatsoever. This is
particularly clear in *Metaphysics* VII.13 where Aristotle is arguing that no universal can
be the substance of anything:

The conclusion is evident also from the following consideration—
that a substance cannot consist of substances present in it actually
(for things are thus actually two are never actually one, though if
they are potentially two, they can be one, e.g. the double line
consists of two halves—potentially; for the actualization of the
halves divides them from one another; Therefore if the substance is
one, it will not consist of substances present in it); and according to
the argument which Democritus states rightly; he says one thing
cannot come from two nor two from one; for he identifies his
indivisible magnitudes with substances. It is clear therefore that the
same will hold good of number, if number is a synthesis of units, as
is said by some; for two is either not one, or there is no unit present
in it actually (1039a3-14).

From this passage we can see not only that a substance in actuality cannot consist
of multiple substances in actuality, according to Aristotle, but also that in none of the
other categories can a unity in actuality consist of multiple other unities in actuality in the
same category. It is thus no more possible that a substance (e.g. Socrates) be composed
of multiple substances in actuality (e.g., fire and earth, or—hypothetically—body and
soul), than that one quantity (e.g. 3-continuous-inches) be composed of two quantities in
actuality (e.g. one-continuous-inch and 2-continuous-inches). This doctrine is general,
but categorically inscribed in its generality—i.e. no actual xs can be one actual y, where
the xs and y all belong to the same category. Let us call this *Aristotle’s Actuality
Doctrine*.

\textsuperscript{65} For the difference between a mixture and a juxtaposition see 327b33-328a17.
The Actuality Doctrine is one of several important points that Scaltsas gets wrong in his evaluation of Aristotle. Scaltsas treats Aristotle as though he thinks that *any kind of actual multiplicity* whatsoever would disrupt the unity of substance, but this is not what Aristotle says. What he says is that a multiplicity of actual substances in a substance would prevent the unity and existence of that substance, and that a multiplicity of actual quantities in a quantity would prevent the unity and existence of that quantity, etc. Aristotle, then, is quite content with the proximate matter and substantial form both being actual within a substance, so long as these two items are not both substances in actuality, and since he asserts over and over again that things like Socrates are substances, we can infer that he does not regard proximate matter and form as substances, for this would exclude Socrates from being a substance. He may at times call proximate matter and substantial form the “substance of” (ousia ekastou) a primary substance, but he surely denies that they are themselves primary substances after the manner of Socrates, for primary substances are all “this somethings,” while matter considered in its own right is not a this something, and form considered in its own right is a “such” (toionde), but not a this something. Hylomorphic dualism, then, is not a substance dualism, and to assert a real difference between matter and form is not to assert substance dualism, nor to undermine the unity of substance.

Neither is Aristotle’s doctrine of accidental unities a substance dualism. Clearly accidental forms for Aristotle are not substances, for they are not in the category of

---

66 I will, for the moment, ignore special questions that arise in the case of the intellectual soul.

67 For an example of the use of “ousia ekastou” see 1028b35.
substance. pale Socrates, then, is not composed of two substances, but is a substance with an accidental modification. Just as in the case of hylomorphic substance, the real difference between subject and form is not a threat to the unity of pale Socrates, for Socrates and pale do not belong to the same category, and so they do not threaten to violate Aristotle’s Actuality Doctrine.

I ought to say something here about my use of “actual” and “potential” with respect to matter. I have asserted, against Scaltsas and Marmodoro, that the proximate matter and substantial form of a substance are actual, and not potential constituents of substance, and yet clearly the difference between matter and form is supposed to be the difference between potentiality and actuality. Am I not, therefore, committed to something absurd, namely that matter is both actual and potential in a substance at the same time? I answer that, while I have indeed denied that matter exists in potentiality in composite substance, I have only denied it in the sense in which Scaltsas and Marmodoro assert it; there are multiple senses of potentiality, however, in the philosophy of Aristotle.

The sense of potentiality that Scaltsas is dealing with is that in which substances are said to be in potentiality within another substance. Let us call this “The OGC Potentiality” after the work that explains its meaning. With this kind of potentiality, the substantial distinction between substances is effaced, and a new mixed body comes into existence. The things that went into the mixture can be said to be in it in potentiality/power in two senses, though I think Aristotle’s primary point in speaking of their potential existence lies in the latter of the two: 1) they may emerge from it in act when it passes away, and 2) they lend some of their powers and activities to the things they enter into; as illustrations of both, flesh may be dissolved eventually into fire, and
fire’s power and act of heat is lent to flesh into which it is mixed such that it is then flesh’s power and act and no longer fire’s.

There is, however, another sense of potentiality in the philosophy of Aristotle. Let us call this “The Possession Potentiality.” The Possession Potentiality is the potentiality/power to have or not have some form/act. It is this potentiality which is spoken of when we assert that, though Socrates is pale, he is potentially tan; he is powerful for the possession of the form/act of the quality of tan, though he happens not to have it. Socrates has this Possession Potentiality, moreover, even when he is actually tan, for even when he actually possesses the form of tan, he is still powerful for the possession of the form of tan. If you doubt this, consider that were he not potential for (i.e. powerful for) this form even when he had it, then his very possession of the form would, absurdly, be his very impotence for the form. He would be like a radio that is able to be tuned to 99.7FM, except for when it is actually tuned there. Obviously, such a radio is unable to be changed to 99.7FM when it is already tuned there, but it is certainly powerful for being there when it is actually there, or else its very being tuned to 99.7 would absurdly be its inability to be there.

The potentiality for the form when a subject is not yet in possession of it, and the potentiality for the form when it is actually in possession of it are not two different potentialities, but one and the same—viz. The Possession Potentiality—for as Aristotle points out many times in the corpus, this potentiality is for both having and not having, and it is coincidental (kata symbebēkos) to something with this potentiality whether it currently has or has not the form. It is precisely because Plato failed to recognize matter’s capacity both to coincidentally have or have not the form that Aristotle faults his
material theory, for Plato’s matter, according to Aristotle anyway, was not coincidentally privative, but essentially so, and so was impotent with respect to possessing the form.68

The OGC Potentiality and The Possession Potentiality cannot be collapsed into a single definition of potentiality. The reason for this is that the matter that exists in potentiality in a mixture is not said to be potential because it is powerful for the possession of the form of the mixture. Take, for example, fire and earth that went into the making of flesh—i.e. a mixed body. The body which is powerful for the soul—i.e. has The Possession Potentiality for the soul—is not fire or earth, rather it is the mixed body—i.e. flesh—that is powerful for the soul. Fire and earth, then, when they are said to exist in the mixture in potentiality are not said to be there because they are powerful for the possession or privation of the form. They are instead said to be there in potentiality for the reasons listed above—viz. 1) they may emerge from the mixture when it is corrupted, and more importantly 2) they lend their powers and acts to the mixed body, such that these are then the powers and acts of the mixed body itself.

By distinguishing between these two potentialities, I show that I am not committed to the absurd position that proximate matter is both actual and potential in a substance so as to be both actually distinct from form and yet not actually distinct at the same time. I would be asserting this only if I were asserting that the potentiality of proximate matter is the OGC Potentiality. This is what Scalsas and Marmodoro assert. I deny this and assert, on the other hand, that the potentiality of proximate matter in a

68 See Physics I.9 for Aristotle’s criticism of Platonic matter. Whether Aristotle accurately represents Plato’s material theory here is a matter of debate.
substance is the Possession Potentiality. Proximate matter, and proximate matter alone, is the right sort of thing to be powerful for the possession of the substantial form, for it is not just any body that can have, say, the human soul, but only the organized human body. It can, moreover, both have and not have the substantial form. Obviously, it can have it, for it has it when it exists, and it can lose it too, not in the sense that it can lose it and carry on in its existence, but in the sense that it can lose it and, therefore, cease to be. The sense in which I assert that the proximate matter is actual, is that it really does exist in act when informed by its actuality—viz. the soul; in this way, proximate matter is unlike fire and earth in a mixture, which do not exist in act. By calling proximate matter actual in this sense, I am not denying that it is potential in the sense that it has the Possession Potentiality, for it really does possess the soul which is the cause of its existence.

The picture developed in this chapter—as regards both substantial unities and accidental unities—is obviously constituent in nature. A constituent ontology, remember, is an ontology that explains the what or how of certain things, by positing that certain items are parts of the things whose what or how is being explained. These parts are actual and not virtual parts, and they are either properties, or at least they are not the corporeal parts of things. Hylomorphic dualism entails that substantial forms indeed explain the what of something—e.g. they explain the species of Socrates—by being actual and not virtual parts of substances; though these parts are not properties such as red or round, they are certainly not corporeal parts of anything. Likewise, the extension of the framework of hylomorphic dualism to accidental unities entails that accidental forms explain the how of something—e.g. they explain the pallor of Socrates—by being
actual and not virtual parts of accidental unities; these parts are things that philosophers call properties—e.g. red and round—even if they disagree deeply about the exact nature of properties.\textsuperscript{69}

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have not only disposed of a number of inaccurate interpretations of hylomorphism, but have also developed a detailed picture of hylomorphic theory that abides by a number of essential Aristotelian doctrines: The Source Doctrine, The Subject Doctrine, The Mixture Doctrine, and The Actuality Doctrine. This is a picture in which proximate matter and substantial form are numerically two items that are the proper ontological parts of composite substance, both of which parts are subject candidates for accidental modification. The proximate matter of the form is indeed a mixed body in which the elements exist potentially in the sense of OGC Potentiality, but, as per \textit{OGC} I.10, the proximate matter and form are not mixed with one another, for they are not the sorts of things to be mixed and exist in OGC Potentiality in composite substance. Proximate matter, nonetheless, may be spoken of as being in potentiality in a substance, though this is the Possession Potentiality and not the OGC Potentiality. Though I have maintained an actual difference between matter and form within a substance, I have not violated Aristotle’s Actuality Doctrine, and have thus not jeopardized the unity of substance in Aristotelian terms, for according to Aristotle, two can indeed be one, as long

\textsuperscript{69} Again, I am not asserting any particular theory of properties, but merely asserting that whatever one decides the nature of properties is—e.g. abstract objects, tropes, actualities of one kind or another—red and round are the sorts of things that get called “properties.”
as those two differ not by being numerically two substances in act, or numerically two quantities in act, etc., but differ as actuality differs from potentiality. The picture developed here is obviously a constituent ontology. Against the monists, then, Aristotle’s ontology is constituent, both in the case of substances and accidental unities.
CHAPTER 3:
A REPLY TO VAN INWAGEN’S ATTACK ON CONSTITUENT ONTOLOGY

In “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies,” Peter van Inwagen has argued that the constituent ontological strategy is not a viable option. If constituent ontology is not viable generally, then, obviously, Aristotle’s particular constituent ontology is not viable. Below, then, we will encounter a different kind of opponent of Aristotle’s constituent ontology—one who would readily admit that substantial and accidental unities in Aristotle’s philosophy are to be understood according to the constituent paradigm, but who considers this a good reason for rejecting his theories. In this chapter, I defend constituent ontology against van Inwagen’s attack, the scope of which is universal, by investigating constituent ontology’s meaning in contemporary philosophy. In the next chapter, we will look at how Aristotle’s specific constituent ontology fares against van Inwagen’s attack.

This chapter consists of three parts. In the first part, 1) I introduce van Inwagen’s understanding and critique of constituent ontology. As we will see, van Inwagen claims that constituent ontology posits genuinely located properties, by which I mean properties that can themselves be described in their relations to other items by means of some geometry. He regards the genuine location of properties as a category mistake that renders constituent ontology unintelligible. In the second part, 2) I introduce a number of

---

70 On such a theory, something like red or round could be some distance from other things—e.g. 4 feet away.
constituent ontology’s most important commentators—Michael Loux, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Gustav Bergmann. These philosophers have written at length about the nature of constituent ontology and its differences from its counterpart, viz. relational ontology. I demonstrate that according to these commentators—i.e. those who established the meaning of constituent ontology in contemporary metaphysics—the genuine location of properties is neither an essential nor even a coincidentally ubiquitous feature of constituent ontology. In the third part, 3) I draw the obvious conclusion—viz. that van Inwagen’s argument fails as a way of universally undermining the constituent strategy and is effective only against those constituent ontologies that do in fact happen to posit genuinely located properties.

3.1 Van Inwagen’s Claim: Constituent Ontology Commits a Category Mistake byPositing Genuinely Located Properties

In “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies,” Peter van Inwagen offers definitions and examples of both constituent and relational ontologies, and then claims that the constituent strategy is unintelligible. The paper begins with him reminding us that he defines ontology as “the discipline that attempts to answer Quine’s ‘ontological question’—‘What is there?’—in terms of a system of ontological categories.” He then proposes a major division between “monocategorial” and “polycategorial” ontologies, where the former contains only a single category of existent while the latter contains two
The rest of “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies” deals with a major division between polycategorial ontologies, namely *constituent ontologies* and *relational ontologies*. He begins this discussion by establishing a few definitions, and here it will be best to let him speak for himself at length:

Let us say that a relation is *quasi-mereological* if it is either a part-whole relation or is in some vague sense “analogous to” or “comparable to” the part-whole relation and let us say that a *constituent* of an object is either one of its parts or some object that is not, in the strict sense, one of its parts, but stands in some quasi-mereological or part-like relation to it.

Let us say that to specify the *mereological structure* of an ordinary particular (substance, individual, concrete thing) is to specify the other ordinary particulars, if any, that are its parts in the strict and mereological sense – by saying which other ordinary particulars bear the part-whole relation to it –, and perhaps by saying something about how those other ordinary particulars stand to one another in respect of certain relations thought to be “structure relevant” (spatial relations, it may be, or causal relations). And let us say that to specify the *ontological structure* of an ordinary particular (etc.) is to specify the objects in any categories other than “concrete particular” that bear some quasi-mereological relation to it.

A relational ontology is a polycategorial ontology (one of whose primary categories is “concrete particular” or something in the ontological neighborhood, something to very much the same ontological purpose: substance, individual, concrete thing . . . ) that implies that concrete particulars have no ontological structure – that implies that concrete particulars are, in Armstrong’s terminology, blobs. (This is a feature that relational ontologies share with austere nominalism). According to any relational ontology, the only structure that concrete particulars have is good, old-fashioned everyday structure: *mereological structure*. A constituent ontology, like a relational ontology, includes “concrete particular” in its inventory of ontological categories. But, unlike relational ontologies, constituent ontologies imply that concrete particulars have ontological structure: they have constituents (perhaps parts in

---

71 By “category” van Inwagen does not mean Aristotle’s ten categories as discussed in *Categories*. For more on van Inwagen’s notion of a category, see Peter van Inwagen, “What Is an Ontological Category,” in *Existence: Essays in Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 183-201.
the strict sense, perhaps not) that do not belong to the category “concrete particular.”

Van Inwagen then offers examples of both strategies in illustration of the above definitions. Classical bundle theories, he says, are examples of constituent ontologies, for they posit a categorical difference between concrete particulars, things like cats or electrons, and properties (conceived of as either universals or tropes), things like red or round, while at the same time positing that the latter are constituents or parts of the former. He excludes from the constituent approach the “New Bundle Theory” of van Cleve and the ontology of Lauri Paul, the former because it is monocategorial by denying that bundles of properties exist, thus asserting that only properties exist, the latter because it is monocategorial by construing bundles of properties as themselves further properties, asserting, therefore, the same, viz. that only properties exist.

As an example of a relational ontology van Inwagen offers his own “favored ontology,” developed in detail in “A Theory of Properties.” There van Inwagen tells us that properties are one and all abstract objects—“assertibles”—that can be said truly or falsely of objects. These properties are necessarily existing, necessarily non-spatiotemporal objects that things instantiate. The color green, for instance, is a necessarily existing object that all and only green things “have in common” with one another but not with non-green objects. Such an abstract object, says van Inwagen, is no constituent or part of the objects that have them. Green, then, is no constituent or part of

---


a green thing and the relation that a green thing stands in to green is a non-mereological relation. His ontology is thus polycategorial by admitting the existence of both substances and properties, but relational by denying both that the latter are constituents or parts of the former and that the relation which holds between them is mereological.

The rest of “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies” is dedicated to undermining the constituent approach. Van Inwagen’s complaint against constituent ontology is that he finds it unintelligible. He notes that what he presents the reader with is not an argument, but, as he says, “a confession of bewilderment:”

I do not pretend to be presenting an argument. What I am presenting is rather a confession. Just as a confession of faith—one’s recitation of the Nicene Creed, for example—is not a presentation of an argument for the thesis that anyone other than the speaker should accept the propositions the confession comprises, a confession of bewilderment is not a presentation of an argument for the thesis that anyone else should be bewildered by whatever it is that a speaker finds bewildering.74

It is true that van Inwagen presents no explicit argument against constituent ontology in “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies,” but is his confession of bewilderment really all that much akin to an unargued confession of faith, or does his paper contain an implicit argument? As Van Inwagen notes, those confessing the Nicene Creed on a given Sunday are probably not, at the moment of their confession, interested in convincing their fellow believers that their beliefs are true, with or without the use of argument. Instead, they are most likely affirming their commitment to a tradition they already believe (at least to some degree) and marking themselves out as members of a


78
community, which status grants them certain privileges. Van Inwagen’s confession, however, is not made in a like-minded, communal context such as a gathering of fellow believers on Sunday morning, rather it is made in a polemical paper against—i.e. “vs.”—constituent ontology in a journal whose readership has diverse opinions, or perhaps even no opinions at all, about constituent ontology. The polemical nature of his paper van Inwagen himself admits when he says, “I will now give some reasons for preferring a relational to a constituent ontology—reasons for repudiating the idea of ontological structure.”

This is clearly to raise a reasoned polemic against some doctrine in the company of some who may very well not already agree entirely or even in part about the matters at hand, and there is certainly nothing analogous to this in a Sunday morning’s confession of faith.

A better analogy than a faithful Christian on Sunday morning would be a scholar of Late Antiquity who, having recently heard from a certain addled colleague that the disputed author of the Celestial Hierarchy was not Severus of Antioch after all, but, in fact, a prime number, confesses his bewilderment to a group of his scholarly peers. His confession is a rhetorical move of sorts and, if he gives “reasons,” probably an argumentative move to boot, even if not a very explicit one—an effort to get others who may not have yet considered the matter, or considered it at any length, to consider it and come to the same conclusion.

We should regard van Inwagen’s confession, then, not merely as the autobiographical claim that constituent ontology’s vocabulary is unintelligible to him,

75 Ibid. p. 393.
but as the *philosophical claim* that it is unintelligible *tout court*.\(^7^6\) We should also regard his claim with more skepticism than that of our imaginary scholar of Late Antiquity, since, unlike this scholar who contends with a lone, apparently crazed detractor, those with whom van Inwagen contends are many, well-versed in metaphysics, and appear to make some sense of each other’s claims. Given the existence of this many, and the manifest polemical context of the paper, I suggest we should even go a bit further and view van Inwagen’s confession not only as an *invitation* to those who have not given the matter much thought to share in his bewilderment, but as a *challenge* to this legion of constituent ontologists to make some sense of their chosen vocabulary. Here again we can see just how different van Inwagen’s confession of bewilderment is from the Nicene Creed—for whatever the Nicene Creed is, it is certainly not a challenge to anyone of a different creed to make sense of their own vocabulary to outsiders.

Which vocabulary in particular is it, then, that van Inwagen finds unintelligible, and what about that language is objectionable? In particular he cites phrases such as “immanent universal,” “trope,” “exist wholly in,” “wholly present wherever it is instantiated,” and “constituent of.”\(^7^7\) He admits that he is most bewildered when he encounters “language that is used when the constituents of concrete particulars are said to

\(^7^6\) Indeed, the mere fact that the paper is published in a journal of philosophy is evidence that others view its contents as more than mere autobiography. If I do not understand another philosopher’s ideas, this is nothing to write to a journal about and nothing for a journal to be interested in publishing. If I do not understand those ideas, however, because they are unintelligible in principle and unintelligible in a manner that can be made plain, this is both something interesting for a philosopher to write about and for other philosophers to read.

\(^7^7\) Ibid.
be physical quantities with numerical measures.”\textsuperscript{78} As an example of this problematic language he cites an ontology presented by David Lewis, which Lewis does not himself accept, but which he offers as a viable alternative to his own ontology:

[Consider] two particles each having unit positive charge. Each one contains a non-spaitiotemporal part corresponding to charge. [It is a universal and] the same universal for both particles. One and the same universal recurs; it is multiply located; it is wholly present in both particulars, a shared common part where by the two particles overlap. Being alike by sharing a universal is “having something in common” in an absolutely literal sense.\textsuperscript{79}

Lewis’s language is indeed puzzling here, for we hear that a “non-spaitiotemporal part” is “multiply located,” “wholly present in,” “a shared common part,” and that these parts “overlap.” The first term seems to altogethe remove the item being spoken of from space and time, while the rest of it might seem to be best interpreted as language that is only applicable to items that have a spatial location. If something is “multiply located” is it not in more than one location? If some quantity of wine is “wholly present in” a glass, is it not located, and is its location not circumscribed within the location of the glass? Are not “part” and “overlap” terms that we find clearly defined in Leonard and Goodman’s “Calculus of Individuals and Its Uses,” and are not these terms best interpreted as applying to spatially located parts and the manner in which spatially located items share their parts?\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{80} Interestingly, Leonard and Goodman do not restrict their mereology to corporeal parts, but also extend their notion of part to things like time and color. See Henry S. Leonard and Nelson Goodman, “The Calculus of Individuals and Its Uses,” \textit{The Journal of Symbolic Logic}, 5:2 (1940), pp. 47.
One thing about constituent vocabulary that van Inwagen finds bewildering, then—at least as far as Lewis’s use of it goes—is the assertion that properties like unit positive charge are non-spatiotemporal items in conjunction with the use of seemingly spatial language to describe the way that properties are had by the objects that have them. What sense can be given to Lewis’s seemingly spatial language other than the meanings we normally associate with such locative terminology? If the meaning is spatial, however, Lewis is asserting spatial features of items which he himself admits to be non-spatial—an apparently gross contradiction.

But it is not simply that some constituent ontologists apply spatial language to \textit{admittedly} non-spatial items which van Inwagen finds unintelligible, for of the ontological parts posited by some constituent ontologists he writes:

I can see that they can’t be properties (what I call properties) because, if for no other reason, they are supposed to have some sort of presence in the physical world: they can be constituents of physical things and can be located in space (albeit their spatial features are strikingly different from those of the paradigmatic space-occupiers, concrete physical particulars). But if not properties, then what? The features attributed to immanent universals by those who believe in them seem to me to be an impossible amalgam of the features of substances and the features of attributes.\textsuperscript{81}

The “impossible amalgam” mentioned here is not the \textit{explicit contradiction} generated by asserting spatial features of \textit{admittedly} non-spatial items, rather it is the supposed unintelligibility of asserting that ontological parts are “attributes”—something playing property-roles—and then also asserting of these parts that they are genuinely

\textsuperscript{81} “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies,” p. 395.
located. Such a person, according to van Inwagen, is indeed guilty of asserting spatial features of non-spatial items, not because they assert them of items which—on their own view—are admittedly non-spatial, but rather because they assert them of items, which—on van Inwagen’s view—could not cogently turn out to be anything other than the necessarily non-spatial properties of his own or of a similar relational ontology. What van Inwagen wants to know is how a property or something that is supposed to play the roles of a property—e.g. red or round—could be genuinely located, and he thinks that no answer to this question could possibly fail to be absurd, since he thinks that properties are necessarily existent, necessarily non-spatial items. As I noted above, given the manifest polemical context of the paper, he is issuing a *challenge* of sorts—“But if not properties, then what?”—i.e. dear constituent ontologist, please make some sense of these parts you posit! You say that they are properties or like properties, but then how can they be located, as you suggest, since what it is to be a property is to be a necessarily non-spatiotemporal something?

It is not difficult to ask a number of questions that generate a good deal of sympathy for van Inwagen’s position and which he might further use to articulate a challenge. If one asserts, for instance, that the property *being a cat* is genuinely somewhere, then presumably one can point to it. Yet is it not the case that what one can point to is a cat or its parts, but not *being a cat?* How would *being a cat* occupy a place? Is it “point-sized” and multiply-located at every point throughout the cat? Or is it rather extended throughout the whole cat like the ghostly bodies in cartoons that sit up out of the deceased and later wander about? If *being a cat* occupies space, why is it not detectable by the natural scientist, while other spatially located items are easily detected,
or at least easily detected if one has enough grant money? If being a cat is in space, presumably it is also in time. Can being a cat, therefore, change? If not, why not, when other spatiotemporal items obviously change in various ways? And if so, in what manner could it change? Could it change into another property or be modified at certain times by certain properties and at other times others? Could it come into existence out of something or pass out of existence into something as cats and other spatiotemporal things appear to do? Cats and other spatially located items, moreover, apparently have certain efficient causal powers that they sometimes exert on other spatial items. If being a cat is located as cats are, does it have any such powers? If not, why not, when most if not all other kinds of spatially located things do? Perhaps being a cat isn’t a property after all, but it is not difficult to repeat some of these same questions about Lewis’s “unit positive charge.”

Presumably van Inwagen and a great many other philosophers think that these sorts of questions and the answers one might give to them are absurd. And so anyone asserting that a property is genuinely somewhere such that it itself can be geometrically related to other items is making a category mistake. They are applying to necessarily existent, necessarily non-spatiotemporal items the features belonging to concrete particulars—a recipe for an “impossible amalgam” if ever there were one. An ontologist ought not to do this, but instead admit that while things like cats are somewhere, properties or similar items are nowhere. If the ontologist will not admit this, then she should take the challenge and answer some of the above sorts of questions, an endeavor that I presume van Inwagen and many others would think ends badly.
It seems false, then, that van Inwagen offers no argument in “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies.” He indeed offers no explicit formal argument against constituent ontology, but there is an obvious implicit one:

P1) If constituent ontology posits genuinely located properties, then constituent ontology is unintelligible.  

P2) Constituent ontology posits genuinely located properties.  

C) Constituent ontology is unintelligible.

I will not defend the genuine location of properties, rather what I am interested to point out is that Van Inwagen presents genuine location as an apparently essential or at least as a coincidentally ubiquitous feature of the ontological parts posited by constituent ontologists. But is this really true? Constituent ontology has a sizable commentary tradition in contemporary philosophy with three philosophers in particular—Michael Loux, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Gustav Bergmann—contributing hundreds of pages of work to defining and differentiating constituent and relational ontology. I will now turn my attention to some of that work in order to see whether these key commentators—i.e. those who established the meaning of constituent ontology in contemporary metaphysics—view the genuine location of properties as an essential or even an ubiquitous feature of constituent ontology. We will find that there is strong evidence that

---

82 Though it is probably already clear, when I say “properties,” I do not mean properties as van Inwagen conceives them, but rather I mean property-role items whatever their nature turns out to be according to some philosopher. This use of “property” is in keeping with my open-ended use of the term in the introduction. Whatever nature it is that some realist says things like red, or round, or being a cat, answers to, then, if that realist genuinely locates this item, van Inwagen’s implicit argument is aimed at them, and he thinks that constituent ontologists are guilty of this in general; when he says of the parts posited by constituent ontologists that “they can be constituents of physical things and can be located in space,” he does not restrict this claim to some subset of constituent ontologists.
genuine location is not a core feature of constituent ontology and that it is even explicitly
denied by some of our commentators. We will also find philosophers denying the
genuine location of properties who some of our commentators use as premier examples
of constituent ontologists.

3.2 Not All Constituent Ontologies Posit Genuinely Located Properties

When it comes to defining constituent ontology, no one has written more than
Bergman, Wolterstorff, and Loux. As we saw in the introduction, Bergmann is the
originator of the distinction between relational and constituent ontology in contemporary
metaphysics, though his original terminology for the distinction was “complex ontology”
and “function ontology.” The new names, again, are courtesy of Wolterstorff by way of a
paper critiquing the contents of Bergmann’s book *Realism: A Critique of Brentano and
Meinong*. Loux writes extensively about all aspects of constituent ontology and first
makes the claim that Aristotle’s hylomorphism is a constituent ontology.

Of all of our commentators, only Loux says anything that might be construed as
the claim that the constituents posited by constituent ontologists are *essentially* genuinely
located, i.e. that the very definition of “constituent/part”—or at least its definition in any
context where it is applied to items that supposedly constitute ordinary things—requires
the genuine location of whatever the term is truthfully applied to. He might seem to say
this for instance in “Aristotle On Matter, Form, and Ontological Strategy,” while
attempting to show that hylomorphism is a constituent ontology. In one passage in
particular he uncharacteristically speaks in a manner similar to Lewis:

*If a thing is to be a constituent of a sensible particular, it must have
a spatial location; it needs to be where that sensible particular is.*
The proponent of a relational ontology will, of course, deny that a universal can have a spatial location. In some contexts, Aristotle seems to be suggesting that the separation from sensibles the explanatory principles of a relational ontology enjoy just consists in their not being in the same place as any concrete sensible. It is not surprising, then, that Aristotle is adamant in insisting that universals have spatial location. Indeed, he implies that a universal can at a single time wholly and completely occupy several distinct and discontinuous places, as many as are occupied by the objects instantiating that universal, and he is explicit in applying this more general claim to the case of forms.83

Here Loux interprets Aristotelian forms, both accidental and substantial, to be both universals and constituents of ordinary things. His language is strikingly similar to Lewis’s insofar as he asserts that forms are completely present in multiple locations.

It is controversial to claim that Aristotelian forms are universals in the contemporary sense of the word, and it is an equally controversial to claim that Aristotle represents forms as being the sorts of things that can “wholly and completely occupy several distinct and discontinuous places” in an unqualified manner. We simply do not find Aristotle using such language himself. One who is inclined to disagree with Loux about the genuinely spatial features of Aristotelian forms, though, need not even engage these interpretive worries in order to contradict him, for Loux is not quite sure that he agrees with himself. Just as soon as he has said that Aristotelian forms must be multiply spatially located, we find him backing away from the claim. Attached to the above passage is the following footnote:

While it may be true that, for Aristotle, universals can have spatial location, their having this or that location is parasitic on the fact that

the items instantiating them have that location. See, e.g., 211a17-24. I am grateful to Ron Polansky for pointing this out to me.84

What, though, does it mean to say that their spatial location is “parasitic” on the spatial location of the familiar items they belong to? Is this just to say that both the instantiating object and the universal are genuinely located, but that the universal cannot be so located without the instantiating object being there as well? Or does this qualification amount to saying that the universal is not genuinely located at all, though we sometimes use locative language with respect to it on account of some important relationship that it bears to a genuinely spatially located item, as when we might say that “he is at his house,” though the house is legally owned only by his wife? By bearing an important relationship to a homeowner the house is said to be his, though genuinely the house is not his at all.

We need not look far to find famous so-called constituent ontologists (and so-called by our commentators)85 backpedaling from claims about the genuine location of constituents. David Armstrong, a constituent ontologist according to both Loux and van Inwagen, though he admits it strange, was perfectly content to use spatial language to describe the universals he posited:

To bring universals from a platonic realm down to earth, down to space-time, seems to involve saying something rather strange. It seems to follow that universals are, or may be multiply located. For

84 Ibid.

85 Loux explicitly recognizes Armstrong as a constituent ontologist. See “Aristotle’s Constituent Ontology,” p. 227; van Inwagen does the same when he calls ontologies that posit bare particulars constituent ontologies. See “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies,” p. 391.
are they not to be found wherever the particulars that instantiate them are found? 86

Armstrong never abandons this spatial language about universals, but he qualifies it in a way that makes it plain that these items are not genuinely located:

To talk of locating universals in space-time then emerges as a crude way of speaking. Space-time is not a box into which universals are put. Universals are constituents of states of affairs. Space-time is a conjunction of states of affairs. In that sense universals are “in” space-time. But they are in it as helping to constitute it. 87

Negative charge, then, according to Armstrong, would not be located by being genuinely in space-time, but sometimes we may say that it has a location because it somehow constitutes items and states of affairs that are spatio-temporal, namely electrons and the states of affairs we find them in. What, then, should we make of Loux’s use of “parasitic?” Is this just another Armstrongian qualification—viz. well, what we really mean is just that these universals constitute familiar spatial items or spatial states of affairs in some way—or is Loux really maintaining the necessary genuine location of properties? Below are four reasons for thinking that he is not maintaining genuine location, but rather rejecting it.

1) In “Substances, Coincidentals, and Aristotle’s Constituent Ontology,” Loux gives us strong evidence that he rejects the necessary genuine or even happenstance


genuine location of ontological constituents in the philosophy of Aristotle—an ontology which he certainly views as constituent as suggested by the article’s title:

In *Metaphysics* Z.7, he [i.e. Aristotle] tells us that everything that comes to be has both a matter and form (1032\(^a\)11-25) and then goes on both in that and succeeding chapters to tell us that everything that can be characterized in hylomorphic terms is a structured complex whose nonspatial parts or constituents are the relevant parcel of matter and the relevant form (1032\(^b\)30-1033\(^a\)5; 1033\(^b\)11-19;1034\(^a\)26;1034\(^b\)34-1035\(^a\)5).\(^{88}\)

The application of the term “nonspatial” to Aristotelian matter and form—items which Loux clearly regards as ontological parts of familiar particulars—is evidence indeed that Loux regards both of these items as not genuinely spatially located—necessarily or otherwise.\(^{89}\) Unlike his quote from “Aristotle On Matter, Form, and Ontological Strategy,” furthermore, he in no way qualifies this claim. In fact, the non-spatiality of matter and form mentioned here seems to be one of the main features of these items that differentiates them from the other sorts of parts things have—parts which he sometimes calls “functional parts” (e.g. a hand) or “material parts” (e.g. an electron)—for why else would he even mention here that they are non-spatial constituents or parts unless he wishes to clearly and decisively differentiate them from the kinds of items that usually answer to a term like “part.”\(^{90}\) Given that he appears to be singling out non-

---


\(^{89}\) Here Loux presumably has prime matter in mind. If he does not, but instead has proximate matter in mind, then I cannot agree with him about its nonspatiality, for Socrates has some place because one of his two ontological parts has some place, namely his organized body. I certainly agree with Loux, however, that substantial form is *per se* nowhere. We will investigate this very point further in the next chapter.

\(^{90}\) For more discussion and examples of “functional” and “material” parts see “Aristotle’s Constituent Ontology,” p. 209.
spatiality as a core feature which differentiates ontological parts from others kinds of parts, and given that he does not qualify the claim about the non-spatiality of these parts, but does qualify the claim about their spatiality, we ought, I think, to interpret him as saying that spatial language applied to form is acceptable so long as we do not take this to mean that form is genuinely located. This, of course, just is Armstrong’s position elucidated above.

2) In “An Exercise in Constituent Ontology,” Loux gives us even stronger evidence that he does not think that the parts posited by constituent ontologists either must or even often do have genuine location. He here comments on the very same passages in Lewis that van Inwagen does. It is telling that he does not interpret Lewis’s use of phrases like “multiply located” or “wholly present in both particulars” or “a shared common part” to be Lewis contradicting his claim that these property parts are “non-spatiotemporal:”

Unlike Aristotle (who is a presentist), David Lewis uses a temporal parts framework as the backdrop for his characterization of what I am calling the constituent approach and speaks of nonspatiotemporal parts; and while he thinks that the spatiotemporal parts of a material object are every bit as material as the object itself, he takes it to be a defining feature of the constituent approach that nonmaterial things like properties can count as the nonspatiotemporal or metaphysical parts of a material object. Lewis, of course, does not himself favor a constituent approach to character. Indeed, he denies that we need to give a substantive account (whether of the relational or constituent variety) of the phenomenon; but he recognizes that constituent ontology does not, from the very start of the project harbor a category mistake.”

The category mistake here spoken of is presumably none other than the notion that properties have genuine location. While Loux does not offer any commentary on Lewis’s talk of properties being “multiply located,” he obviously does not take Lewis’s use of such language to mean that Lewis thinks that they have genuine location. In fact, he takes Lewis to be quite clear in his understanding that they do not have genuine location, and thus that the constituent approach does not commit itself to a category mistake—the very same category mistake that van Inwagen accuses constituent ontologists of making via Lewis’s work. I sympathize with van Inwagen’s puzzlement over Lewis’s use of “multiply located” immediately after he tells us that something is “non-spatiotemporal,” but I sympathize more with Loux’s more charitable interpretation of Lewis—viz. that whatever Lewis meant by the locative language, it does not mean that constituent properties have genuine location, since if it did, as fine a thinker as Lewis would be guilty of the grossest of explicit contradictions, and not only such a contradiction committed somewhere over hundreds of pages of difficult metaphysics, but one committed in the span of three extremely short sentences. Interpretations of Lewis aside, this second example is, in my opinion, such strong evidence that Loux does not think that ontological parts are genuinely located and does not think that Lewis thinks so either, that I offer other examples for Loux’s denial of genuine location only because of the stark contrast between Loux’s original assertion of necessary genuine location and
this explicit denial. Had he not seemed so adamant about genuine location in the first passage, this passage alone would be enough to show that he denies it.\textsuperscript{92}

3) As an only slightly weaker form of evidence from the same paper consider the following: When discussing the principle of individuation in the context of Aristotle’s ontology, Loux settles on \textit{place} as such a principle:

\begin{quote}
What we need is some principle that will distinguish one portion of water from another; one portion of air from another, and so on. Intuitively, it is easy to say how one chunk of earth, say, differs from another: they differ in their places. Place, it would seem, is the ultimate principle of numerical diversity.\textsuperscript{93}
\end{quote}

Remember that Loux thinks that Aristotle’s forms are universals in the contemporary sense, and so it is numerically one form that is had by different objects of the same type. But if these forms had genuine place, and place is the principle of individuation, then presumably these forms would fail to be numerically one. But \textit{ex hypothesi} they are numerically one, because they are universals on Loux’s view, and so they must not be in place lest they be individuated by place and cease to have the numerical unity of a universal. Loux either 1) does not see this problem looming, or 2) he does not think that Aristotelian forms—i.e. ontological parts posited by what he considers a to be a constituent ontology—have spatial location. As I’ve shown above, there is already reason to believe that he does not think these parts are located, and so

\textsuperscript{92} It is also possible that Loux’s views developed over time as did Armstrong’s, but given his footnote on his stronger spatial language, I suspect that even there he did not intend to assert the genuine location of Aristotelian forms.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid. p. 39.
rather than read him as not noticing an inconsistency, we should simply read him as not positing genuinely located Aristotelian forms, and thus not having a problem at all.

4) As mentioned in the introduction, in “Aristotle’s Constituent Ontology,” Loux details a number of what he calls “framework constraints” of constituent ontology—features that he thinks that all or at least most constituent ontologies exhibit. Importantly, he does not list the genuine location of properties among his framework principles, which we would expect him to do if he thought genuine location necessary or even important to the constituent approach. The entire point of elucidating framework principles is, after all, to make explicit the most important features of constituent ontology. In the case of Loux, then, the most prolific of our key commentators on constituent ontology, it is clear that he rejects the claim that the ontological parts posited by constituent ontologists are genuinely located, and in the case of Armstrong, a philosopher whose ontology Loux frequently represents as an example of constituent ontology, we find yet another straightforward denial that constituents have genuine location.

What of our other important commentators, Wolterstorff and Bergmann? In neither philosopher can one find anything like Loux’s apparently straightforward claim that constituents of sensible particulars must have genuine spatial location. Do either of them even state that constituents simply happen to be so located according to most constituent ontologists?

As with most everything pertaining to Bergmann’s philosophy, there is significant obscurity. One thing that can be said for certain is that Bergmann denies what he calls the “principle of localization.”

An ordinary thing is at each moment at one and only one place. Synonymously, an ordinary thing is localized. The proposition is a
truisms. Replace in it ‘ordinary thing’ by ‘thing’ and you obtain a second proposition. Every thing is localized. This is the so-called principle of localization. A thing is not an ordinary thing . . . Hence the second proposition does not follow from the first. In a world of universals it is false. I of course judge it to be false. Nor do I know of any argument in support of it that does not take advantage of the transition from ‘ordinary thing’ to ‘thing’ by means of which I just transformed a truism into a falsehood.94

His comment here hangs on his distinction between “ordinary things” i.e. everyday objects, and “things” in his technical sense which includes, in his own system, universals, and in other systems, the universals or “perfect particulars” (i.e. tropes) that play the role of properties. Clearly, he intends to deny that each “thing,” in his technical sense, “is at each moment at one and only one place.”

But why are they not at each moment at one and only one place? Is it because these “things” are universals, and are, therefore, in his opinion, genuinely located at more than one place at a single time? Or is it because these “things,” despite being constituents in some sense, are not at any place at any time? The answer to this question is obscure in Realism, unless we simply interpret his use of terms like “constituent” or “in” to entail genuine location, but this begs the question, since it was what we were trying to discover in the first place. Despite the obscurity of Realism, I think that it can still be shown that Bergmann does not genuinely locate his constituents or require that other constituent ontologists do so. Below are three reasons for thinking so.

1) One section of Realism makes serious trouble for the claim that Bergmann’s use of “in” or “constituent” means that he thinks that the ontological parts of his complex

94 Realism: A Critique of Brentano and Meinong, pp 48-49.
ontology are genuinely located. At the beginning of the second chapter of *Realism*, Bergmann tackles the question of the individuation of qualitatively indistinguishable objects. He comes up with three solutions in the constituent strategy. Either 1) a thing’s properties are “perfect particulars,” i.e. tropes, and thus accomplish individuation of objects by way of their own individuality, 2) space and time serve to distinguish objects, or 3) “bare particulars” serve to distinguish objects. Because he endorses universals, Bergman rejects 1 and then argues about whether 2 or 3 is preferable.\(^{95}\) Note, however, the way in which he describes the second of these three alternatives:

There are two ways of solving the problem of individuation. One way, we now see, adds to the things “in” an ordinary thing either one coordinate quality, e.g., a place in a momentary cross section of our world, or a class of such, e.g., a place and a moment. Upon this gambit, all the things “in” an ordinary thing are qualities, belong to the same subcategory (type).\(^{96}\)

The two ways mentioned here are 2 and 3 above, though the content of the passage pertains to 2 alone. Note the language Bergmann employs. On this second constituent strategy, spatial locations or spatial locations paired with times are added to the other qualities “in” objects. These locations or locations/times are thus “in” the object along with its other qualities like red or round. Bergmann explicitly states numerous times that the term “in” in his philosophy is synonymous with “constituent of.”\(^{97}\) Spatial locations then, or alternatively, space-time locations are thus—on this second constituent alternative—constituents of ordinary things.

\(^{95}\) He ultimately settles on 3, which endorses bare particulars.


\(^{97}\) Ibid. p. 6
If this is the case, though, then it is quite impossible that Bergmann intends “in” and “constituent of” to mean simply that the items constituting a familiar particular are located in space along with that item, since, if the words meant this, he would be telling us that spatial locations or space-time locations are located in space or space-time, which is absurd and clearly not his meaning at all. On the contrary, it is not space or space-time points that are “in” space or space-time as being located there, rather they are “in” the objects. How are they “in” the objects? Presumably they are “in” them in the Armstrongian sense—viz. as constituting the existence of these objects in some sense. “In” and “constituent of,” then, do not simply mean that a thing is located in space along with the object whose constituent it is—for they fail to have such a meaning in the case of the spatial or spatiotemporal locations which are constituents of objects and “in” objects on constituent strategy 2.

The only way to avoid this conclusion is to suggest that in the above passage, Bergmann means something different by “in” than he usually means when speaking of the constituents of sensible particulars. To suggest this, however, is ad hoc, since he gives no indication whatsoever that this is the case. On the contrary, he puts the word “in” in quotation marks in order to call to the reader’s mind the technical notion of “in,” which he uses throughout his exposition of his own and other constituent ontological strategies. Bergmann, even more than most philosophers, loves a fine-grained distinction. Anyone who doubts this should labor through the numerous pages he dedicates to differentiating six different notions of possibility with the use of subscripts. He would not change the meaning of “in” suddenly and without warning, especially if he is putting it in quotation marks as he does when he is trying to make the reader
understand that he means it in the technical sense used when doing constituent ontology. If the meaning does not change, though, then, since the meaning of “in” and “constituent of” in the case of the space-time locations of strategy 2 is clearly not spatial, then neither is it spatial in the case of qualities such as red and round in any constituent ontology.

2) One might reply to these points by noting that, even though his use of “in” and “constituent of” clearly mean something more than simply that a property is spatially located along with the object, Bergmann nonetheless thinks that qualities like red and round have genuine spatial location once they are joined to the sensible particulars that have them. I think that this is demonstrably false.

Bergmann treats sensible particulars—his “ordinary things”—as unified wholes. Ordinary things are not just heaps of properties located near one another, but instead are wholes of different properties knit together by what he calls “nexus,” a principle of unity which he thinks is absolutely essential to constituent ontology.\(^98\) This is why he says that whoever does not posit nexus as a principle of unity does not even have the concept of a complex.\(^99\) According to Bergmann’s preferred bare particular version of the constituent strategy, when such a complex is formed, a bare particular “exemplifies” each of the properties that the familiar object has and all of the constituents of the object are knit together by nexus.

It is unfortunately difficult to tell in the case of Bergmann’s preferred strategy whether the bare particular instantiates/has a property or whether the sensible particular

\(^98\) For a description of “nexus” see Realism: A Critique of Brentano and Meinong, p. 9

\(^99\) Ibid. p. 11
item does—i.e. is it the bare particular that is red and round or the ordinary thing? If, on the one hand, it is the ordinary thing, then why does the bare particular need to “exemplify” the property; why can’t a bare particular just be another constituent in an ordinary thing which, instead of qualifying it as, say, red or round, individuates it? If, on the other hand, it is the bare particular that is red or round, then why do we say that the ordinary thing has these properties rather than saying that the bare particular does?

Despite these obscurities, one thing is for certain. For Bergmann, *It is not the case that the properties modify one another.* It is not the case that red instantiates hot or hot instantiates round—rather either 1) the ordinary thing is what is red, round, hot, and individuated from other qualitatively identical red, round, hot ordinary things, or 2) the bare particular is what is red, round, hot, and individuated from other qualitatively identical bare particulars.

If this is the case, then, since Bergmann considers space-time to be relations instantiated by ordinary things/bare particulars, properties will not be genuinely located according to his strategy; red will not be located any more than red will be hot, for the properties and relations do not modify one another, but rather modify ordinary things/bare particulars. And so, not only is there strong evidence that “in” and “constituent of” do not simply mean that a property is located in space along with the item whose constituent it is, but there is strong evidence that Bergmann’s preferred constituent ontology does not give genuine location to properties at all.

3) Wolterstorff’s attitude towards Bergmann’s constituent vocabulary confirms that Bergmann does not posit genuinely located properties. One of his major complaints
about complex ontology is that Bergmann has not given us a definition of what it means for something to be a constituent of a fact:

But I at least do not understand what it is for something to be a constituent of a fact. We know, of course, some of the circumstances under which Bergmann would say that some entity C was a constituent of some entity F. But do we have a concept of constituent of which we ourselves can go ahead and apply? For example, do we know how to go about determining when all the constituents of some fact have been mentioned and when there are yet more to be mentioned? Or consider the fact that this spot is red. Bergmann contends that this contains as constituent the universal quality redness. But may he not be mistaken on this, may it not instead have as constituent the class of all red things? Or the propositional function that it is red? Or a certain particular redness (i.e., case of redness)? But surely we cannot even go about answering these questions until we have some explanation of the concept constituent of a fact. For we do not come to Bergmann’s philosophy with this concept in mind. Yet no such explanation is offered by Bergmann.  

Wolterstorff wants some further definition on the part of Bergmann as to what it means for something to be a constituent of a fact. He acknowledges that Bergmann has told us that facts, i.e. ordinary particulars, have ontological parts, things like red and round, but then he requests more information about what exactly this means. If Bergmann has really said so little about what being a constituent of a fact means, then it is difficult to imagine that he has declared it to mean that his constituents have genuine location or that Wolterstorff regards him as having done so. Neither here nor anywhere else in his article does Wolterstorff speak of Bergmann’s constituents as having genuine location. I suppose that he could, nonetheless, have thought that they are genuinely located, but then he would presumably be a bit less puzzled about what it means for

100 “Bergmann’s Constituent Ontology,” p. 117-118.
something to be a constituent of a fact and “in” a fact. It would mean, as van Inwagen takes “constituent” and “in” talk to mean, that something like red is genuinely located where the ordinary item is located. He would also presumably be less puzzled about when all the constituents of a fact have been mentioned, for they would have all been mentioned when one mentions all the constituents that are located where the fact is located.

It is telling that Wolterstorff’s abovementioned, alternative candidates to Bergmann’s universals are things that are either entirely or in part non-spatial, e.g. classes or propositional functions. If he is willing to allow such non-located things as alternative constituents, then he pretty clearly does not think that constituents must be genuinely located, or at the very least genuinely located in toto. But if they need not be, and if he gives no indication whatsoever that they are, then why think the Wolterstorff regards Bergmann’s properties as having genuine location, or why think that Wolterstorff thinks that constituent ontologists are committed to genuinely located constituents? There is no reason to suppose that he does.

On account of the above evidence, I suggest that we have no reason to think that our key commentators think that the constituents posited by constituent ontologists either must have genuine location or simply happen to in all constituent ontologies. On the contrary, Loux even explicitly denies genuine location to the properties posited by constituent ontologists, and Armstrong denies it in his own system.
3.3 Conclusion

In light of the above evidence, we should regard van Inwagen’s attack upon constituent ontology in general to have failed. It would be one thing if van Inwagen were only aiming at the Lewises out there, who, in their formulation of the constituent approach, might be taken to explicitly posit genuinely located properties, but he is pretty clearly aiming at constituent ontology in general, hence the unqualified scope and title of his paper. His victory over this entire section of ontology, then, has come too cheaply; make all constituent ontologists out to be philosophers who posit genuinely located property parts, either because they must on account of the meaning of the terms “part” or “in” or because they simply happen to; call this unintelligible on account of it being a category mistake; call the fight in favor of the relational strategy. As we have seen, though, none of our key commentators endorse the genuine location of properties as a necessary or even coincidentally ubiquitous feature of constituent ontology, nor do important contemporary constituent ontologists such as Armstrong. If Loux is to be believed, not even the passages of Lewis cited by van Inwagen are meant to endorse genuinely located properties. I am perfectly happy to allow the first premise of van Inwagen’s implicit argument for the reason of not wanting to answer the above-mentioned absurd questions should I not allow it. But the second premise is no good. Each individual constituent ontology, then, must be interrogated as to whether it posits genuinely located ontological parts, and only those that do are open to the charge that they contain a category mistake.
CHAPTER 4:
FORMS AND LOCATION IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ARISTOTLE

Having defended constituent ontology from an attack of universal scope, I now turn to a defense of Aristotle’s particular ontology. As we saw in chapter three, genuinely located properties are neither an essential nor even a coincidentally ubiquitous feature of constituent ontologies. Nonetheless, if Aristotle’s constituent ontology happens to involve genuinely located properties, then it will be susceptible to van Inwagen’s charge of a category mistake. In this chapter, I argue that it does not involve genuinely located properties.

The chapter has five parts. In the first part, 1) I discuss the tendency of some contemporary metaphysicians to implicate Aristotle’s ontology in the positing of genuinely located properties. If the property items in Aristotle’s ontology—viz. accidental and substantial forms—are located, then they will be located either a) by being extended where their substances are located or b) by being unextended but point-located where their substances are located.\(^{101}\) In the second part, 2) I demonstrate that no form is located by being extended where its substance is located. This will require an explication of Aristotle’s notions of *place* (topos) and *where* (pou). In the process, I identify the only items located by extension in Aristotle’s ontology—viz. composite substances by way of their proximate matter. In the third part, 3) I demonstrate that no form is point-located where its substance is located. Since no form is located by extension or point-location,

\(^{101}\) By “point-located” I mean located entirely at each point of their substance.
then no form is located in the philosophy of Aristotle. In the fourth part, 4) I give an accurate exposition of Aristotle’s doctrine of *accidental location* that shows that it does not undermine the previous conclusion that form is not genuinely located in the philosophy of Aristotle. In the fifth part, 5) I make a few concluding remarks.

4.1 Contemporary Metaphysicians on “Aristotelian Ontologies”

Contemporary metaphysicians often *assert* or *imply* that the property-items in Aristotelian philosophy—viz. accidental and substantial forms—are genuinely located. As we saw in the last chapter, Loux sometimes appears to explicitly say that Aristotelian forms are genuinely located. Review briefly his claim:

If a thing is to be a constituent of a sensible particular, it must have a spatial location; it needs to be where that sensible particular is. . . .

It is not surprising, then, that Aristotle is adamant in insisting that universals have spatial location. Indeed, he implies that a universal can at a single time wholly and completely occupy several distinct

---

I here continue to use the term “property” with a quite general meaning. Let a property be whatever items a non-nominalistic philosopher posits to fulfill some of the roles typically assigned to properties—e.g. being those items “instantiated” or “had” by objects, or being that “in virtue of which” objects have a certain character, or being “truly said of” objects, etc. By this definition, classical Platonic Forms, Aristotelian accidents, contemporary universals, non-causal “assertibles,” tropes, and even sets are properties. Aristotelian accidents obviously count as properties in this wide sense, since they include things that many property theorists call properties—e.g. red, round, 6-feet, etc. Substantial forms also count, though they should not be confused with contemporary notions of species properties such as “*being a cat,*” the reason being that, for Aristotle, the definition of the species includes both the proximate matter and the substantial form of the substance defined. The substantial form alone, thus, cannot be the species, but only part of what it is to be the species. Substantial forms are nonetheless properties in my wide sense, since they 1) are had by individual substantial bodies, and 2) their being had by individual substantial bodies is responsible for the character of those bodies, in this case, *what* they are—two common features of properties. An example: Socrates’s body is ensouled (has the substantial form of a human being), and this is responsible for many things about it—e.g. that it is one organized human body and that it has certain further powers and acts. Details aside, surely, if immaterial substantial forms turned out to have genuine spatial location, this would be no more nor less a category mistake than if red or six-feet did. My choice to use the term “properties” throughout this dissertation is part of my attempt to, as an Aristotelian, engage with contemporary metaphysicians who do not share my leanings. I view myself as repeating Aristotle’s own practice. Surely there was much in the Platonic theory of forms that he rejected. He did not, however, simply refuse to use the term “form,” but spoke frequently of forms both when engaging those he meant to criticize and when formulating his own theories.
and discontinuous places, as many as are occupied by the objects instantiating that universal, and he is explicit in applying this more general claim to the case of forms.103

As we saw, however, Loux ultimately denies the genuine location of forms, but statements of this kind can easily lead others to think that it is true, and even uncontroversially true, that forms are genuinely located according to Aristotle.

Other philosophers strongly imply that forms are genuinely located in Aristotle’s ontology. Van Inwagen, for instance—in his rework of “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies” titled “Against Ontological Structure”—calls polycategorial constituent ontologies that posit located ontological parts “polycategorial Aristotelian ontologies,” and he is not alone in the assertion that ontologies that genuinely locate properties are “Aristotelian.”104 Other philosophers—without using the term “Aristotelian”—nonetheless imply that forms are genuinely located in Aristotle’s ontology. For instance, Cody Gilmore writes:

To say that universals are immanent is to say that they exist in their instances, where this is taken to mean that each universal is wholly present at each location at which it is instantiated. Consider for example, charge -1, which is a property of electrons. Constrained as an immanent universal, this property is a multiply located entity, one that can be found, in its entirety, wherever an electron can be found.105


“In” (en), however, is precisely one of the words that Aristotle uses to describe the status of forms with respect to their substances, and “part” (meros)—another descriptor of forms (1023b19-22)—implies immanence no less than “in.” While—given the example of charge -1—Gilmore most likely has Armstrong or Lewis in mind, nonetheless, according to his linguistic criterion, Aristotle and many other classical and medieval philosophers would be positing located properties, for many of them use the language of immanence. Douglas Ehring likewise implies in a slightly different manner that Aristotle’s ontology involves the genuine location of properties:

A non-Platonic theory of universals brings universals into the spatial-temporal world. Instantiated physical universals exist in space and stand in spatial relations to each other on this view.106

Aristotle, of course, is a self-declared non-Platonist when it comes to Platonic forms.107 There are, however, presumably many ways to deny the existence of Platonic forms. One can deny that forms are universals, or that they can exist uninstantiated, or that they are archetypes of which things in this world are images, etc., any of which would amount to a denial in some way of the existence of Platonic forms. On Ehring’s formulation of non-Platonism, however, a philosopher’s acceptance of properties but rejection of Platonic properties just amounts to locating properties in space-time, and


107 See Nicomachean Ethics I.6 (1096a11-1097a14) for Aristotle’s detailed denial of the doctrine that the good is a form participated by many things such that its account will be the same in all of those things that share in it. See also Metaphysics VII.6 (1031a15-1032a11) where Aristotle denies that anything is altogether different from its essence. Since forms are essences or parts of essences for Aristotle—I say “parts of essences” because the definition of physical things includes their proximate matter—the claim that nothing is altogether different from its essence amounts to the claim that Platonism is false, for Plato’s forms are separate substances—i.e. altogether different substances—from the things whose forms they are.
so—even if not named explicitly—Aristotle and many other “non-Platonists” are implicated in the positing of located forms.

While the effort to distinguish constituent ontology from relational ontology goes back to Wolterstorff and Bergmann, one might think that our contemporary philosophers are talking here about a difference in ontological strategy with a far more ancient pedigree, a distinction born in Athens when one philosopher—Aristotle—became a “non-Platonist” by denying the existence of Platonic forms—forms that are “separate” (chōristos) from the things whose Forms they are—and did so by positing instead immanent forms that are “in” (en) the things whose forms they are, because they are genuinely located where those things are located. On such a view, realism about properties coupled with both the use of the language of immanence and the rejection of Platonic properties has—throughout the history of philosophy—often meant the positing of genuinely located properties.

In what follows, I will argue that Aristotle decisively denies genuine location to the property-items in his philosophy—viz. the substantial and accidental actualities of physical substances. I will show that Aristotelian forms are not genuinely located either 1) by being extended where their substances are extended or 2) by being unextended, but point-located at every point of their extended substances. If forms are not genuinely located in either of these two manners in the philosophy of Aristotle, then they are not genuinely located. Demonstrating the former will require the investigation of two key Aristotelian locative terms—viz. where (pou) and place (topos)—important discussions of which occur in Physics IV and Categories. Demonstrating the latter will require investigating De Anima I.5.
4.2 That Forms Are Not Genuinely Located by Extension

If forms are genuinely located by being extended where (pou) their substances are extended, then they will be in place (topos), since—in the philosophy of Aristotle—whatever has some where is in place, and vice versa. If they have no place, however, they will be nowhere at all. We must therefore investigate these two Aristotelian technical terms if we are to determine whether forms are genuinely located by extension.

Let us begin with topos in Physics IV. The opening chapters of Physics IV do not have the doxagrophic character typical of Aristotle’s approach to the introduction of a new topic. A reason is given for not taking stock of the doxa; among the predecessors only Plato attempted to say in any detail what place is. With not much to mention in the way of prior accounts, Aristotle instead leads with a few aporetic considerations. The first chapter gives a number of reasons for thinking that place exists and a number of reasons for thinking that it does not. The second chapter considers a number of reasons for thinking that place is the matter or form of a thing and a number of reasons for thinking that it is neither. In the process of discussing these puzzles that arise from the interrogation of place, Aristotle builds a list of features that he thinks his contemporaries will largely agree belong to place:

- Place exists, which is obvious on account of replacement; in water’s place, now there is air (208b1-8).
- A thing’s immediate place contains that of which it is the place (209a31-209b4).

---

108 For the clearest statement of this see 206a2-3: “alla mēn to ge pou en topō, kai to en topō pou.” (“Surely, what is in place is somewhere, and what is somewhere is in place.”) See also 1067a31-33.
• A thing’s immediate *place* is no less nor greater than the thing of which it is the *place* (209b1).

• *Place* is no part of the thing whose *place* it is—e.g. it is not a part of Socrates in the way that fire, or a hand, or the soul is (209b24-28).

• *Place* can be left behind by that of which it is the *place* and is separable (chōristos) from it (Ibid.).

• *Place* admits of a distinction between up and down and each of the primary bodies is carried to its *place* and rests there—e.g. the *place* of earth is at the center (210a2-5).

In the fourth chapter of *Physics* IV, some of these features are then used to judge between members of a list of four items that Aristotle takes to be the best candidates for being identical to *place* (211b5-9):

1. The shape (morphē/eidos) of a thing—i.e. the extremities (ta eschata) or limits (ta perata) of its extension.

2. The matter (hylē) of a thing.

3. Some sort of extension between the extremities (diastēma ti to metaxy tōn eschatōn) of a thing, which is something over and above the extension of the body (ti para to sōma).

4. The extremities (ta eschata) themselves, though not the extremities (ta eschata) or limits (ta perata) of the thing’s extension, but the extremities/limits of the bounding body/bodies.

For the first three of these, Aristotle offers some *prima facie* evidence in support of its being identical to *place*. E¹) We might regard *place* as a limit of body, but shape is an extremity and limit of a body, so perhaps shape is *place* (209b5-6). E²) We might regard *place* as the extension of the magnitude (to diastēma tou megethouς) of some body. This extension would then be what is limited by shape; but it is matter that is limited by shape or form, so perhaps matter is *place* (209b6-7). Plato is said to have held the position that matter is *place*, lending some plausibility to the view. *Place*,
furthermore, seems capable of receiving different things through a change—e.g. in
replacement the same place that had water in it now has air—and it might therefore seem
to be matter which receives different contraries through a change (211b29-35). E3) We
might think that there is some extension other than the extension of body, and that the
existence of this other extension is useful for explaining replacement, so perhaps this
other extension is place (211b14-17).

Aristotle then endorses reasons for rejecting all three of these candidates. R1) Shape (eidos/morphē) cannot be place, because the shape of a body contained in place is
a limit of that body’s extension, while place is not a dimensional limit in the same sense
(211b12-14). This non-identity of shape and place is especially plain from the fact that,
while a body that undergoes nothing but locomotion abandons its place, it does not
abandon its own dimensional limits, for it changes not with respect to its shape or size,
but only with respect to place; furthermore, the limits of a thing in terms of shape might
be considered parts of it in a sense—e.g. in the way that 6-feet is a part of six-foot-
Alcibiades—but place, as was said, is no part (morion) of a thing, and is separable
(chōristos) from it. Shape, therefore, is not place (209b22-29). R2) The matter (hylē) of
a thing is also not separable from it, and is in a sense a part of it (Ibid.). Furthermore,
matter does not contain or limit anything, but is what is contained or limited by various
forms (209b7-11); matter, then, is not place. R3) There is no extension beyond the
extension of body, for many absurdities would result—e.g. there would be many places

109 It is worth noting here that, though Aristotle uses both eidos and morphē in these passages to
mean the quantitative limits of a thing, he would also reject the notion that the substantial form (eidos) of a
thing can be its place, for one of the same reasons given—viz. the substantial form of a thing is not
separable (chōristos) from it, but a thing can leave its place behind.
in the same thing, and place itself would capable of locomotion (211b14-29). Some other extension beyond that of body, then, is not place.

He decides, then, that place is the fourth option: 4) “the limit of the surrounding body” (to peras tou periechontos sōmatos), understood not as the limit of the contained thing’s extension, but as the limit of the extension of the bounding body; this limit is a surface, but it is not one absolutely, but multiple, since it is not only the surface at which the contained body terminates, but also the surface at which the containing body or bodies begin.113

110 The arguments offered for the existence of many places and the motion of place are brief and obscure. To rehearse them at length here would be distracting. Briefly, as to the former, the idea seems to be that if place were some extension different from, but exactly sized to the extension of some body, and this whole body were to leave such an immobile extension behind when it moves, then so also would all of the body’s parts, thus many overlapping spaces would be left behind. As to the latter, it appears to be assumed that a thing cannot have a place other than the one it has, and thus it must take it with itself when it moves. This assumption is strange given that in the first argument it was said that the extra extension remains (menon).

111 The switch from the plural “perata” (211b7) to “peras” (212a6) is interesting. I suspect that the original plural at 211b7 is used because he has just finished talking about “diastēma ti to metaxy . . .” (“some sort of extension between”), and the notion of between requires one to speak in terms of multiple limits of that extension—viz. where it ends over here and where it ends over there. These “limits,” though, are really just points on a single limit—namely a surface bounding a three-dimensional body, hence the switch to the singular.

112 The singular “body” is also interesting, since most cases of a thing being in place would be ones in which it is not one substantial body surrounding, but multiple substantial bodies. Morison argues that the singular of “body” must be understood to refer to the entirety of the universe. My main reservation about this claim is that it might be taken to treat the universe substantially, as though the cosmos as a whole were a unified corporeal substance in which a three-dimensional continuous quantity could inhere. For the cosmos to be a unity in this sense, however, I take it that it would need to have a substantial form, and this is a doctrine that I cannot find in the works of Aristotle. It could be that the reason for the singular of “body” is just that Aristotle is considering a simplified case of surrounding in which one substance is surrounded entirely by another substance, as in the case of a human being submerged entirely in water. I am also skeptical of Morison’s claim that the immobility (akinēton) of the limit spoken of by Aristotle at 212a21 is anything more than the per se immobility of any continuous quantity in his philosophy. A detailed analysis of Morison’s claims, however, must be the subject matter of another time. His thesis is certainly an interesting explanation of the use of the singular of “body” (here: “sōmatos”) at 212a6. See Benjamin Morison, On Location: Aristotle’s Concept of Place (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

113 The multiplicity in unity had by the surface at which contiguous extended items touch one another finds parallels in other Aristotelian doctrines—e.g. the multiplicity in unity of action and passion, or of the road from Thebes to Athens/Athens to Thebes, or of the convex and the concave. One should be
Topos, then, according to Aristotle is “the limit of the containing body” (to peras tou periechontos sōmatos) as understood in 4 above, and he explicitly notes that “not everything that is is in place, but only the movable body” (ou gar pan to on en topō, alla to kinēton sōma) (212b28-29), so we not only get a definition of place in Physics IV, but a pronouncement concerning its only occupants.114

In giving this answer, Aristotle takes himself to be maintaining an account of place that is in line with important pre-philosophical intuitions about the nature of place; place is a dimensional limit or measure of some kind, but not one which is intrinsic to a thing in the way that the thing’s shape or continuous quantity is. Place does not even belong to the notion of body per se, for if there were but one body, it would—on Aristotle’s conception of place—be in no place at all.

Aristotle’s notion of where (pou) can be understood in light of the meaning of place. In Categories, Aristotle lists where as one of the accidental categories (1b26).

Thus, Socrates has some where because he is in his proper place—his body extends so far and is met at a limit by the surrounding bodies. He may furthermore be somewhere in a looser sense in that the bodies encompassing him may be themselves in place. Thus, the answer to: where is Socrates?—might be 1) in his proper place, or 2) in the Lyceum,

114 Phy.212b28-30. This use of “alla” alone to mean “but only”, especially after negative statements, has many classical examples: e.g. Od. 12.404 “all᾽ hote dē tēn nēson eleipomen, oude tis allē phaineto gaiaōn, all᾽ouranos ēde thalassa. . . .” (“But when we left the island, and no other land appeared, but only sky and sea . . .”). It is frequent in Aristotle, for instance 1176a22: “hēdea d᾽ouch estin, alla toutois chai houtō diakeimenois.” (“But they are not pleasant, but only pleasant to these people and to those in their state”), and 406a20-21 “kineitai gar kai tauta, alla kata symbebēkos” (“For these too are moved, but only accidentally”).
if the bodies encompassing him are encompassed by the Lyceum, etc. *Where* is thus an accident of Socrates, while *place* is an accident of the surrounding bodies—it is their dimensional limits insofar as something like Socrates is encompassed by them.

4.2.1 Which Body Is “the Moveable Body?”

We set out looking to discover whether forms can be genuinely located by being extended *where* their substances are extended. If they are so extended, then they will have a *place*, for to be *somewhere*, according to Aristotle, is to be in some *place*; if, on the other hand, they have no *place*, then they are not extended anywhere at all. By investigating *Physics* IV, we found that the *only* thing that is in *place* and has a *where* is “the moveable body.” The question that faces us, then, is *whether by the expression “the moveable body,” Aristotle could be referring to either an accidental or substantial form.* If so, then forms have *place* and are *somewhere*, if not, then, they are nowhere. The answer to this question is complicated by the fact that the term “body” (*sōma*) in Aristotelian philosophy does not have a single meaning, but three related meanings:115

1. Body in the genus of quantity
2. Body in the genus of composite substance
3. Body as an integral part of composite substance (i.e. as proximate matter)

In order to decisively demonstrate that form is without *place* and nowhere, we must briefly investigate these meanings.

---

115 These distinctions may be called Thomistic distinctions in that St. Thomas points them out with limited commentary in the second chapter of *De Ente et Essentia*, as well as elsewhere. They are, however, not merely Thomistic doctrine, but genuinely Aristotelian distinctions. Below I will point out their presence in the Aristotelian corpus.
4.2.1.1 Body in the Genus of Quantity

In *Categories*, Aristotle uses the term “body” to describe, not a substance, but a quantity: “Discrete quantities are, for example, number and word, while continuous are line, plane, body (sōma), and also, beyond these, time and place” (4\(^b\)23-25). “Body” is here used to describe continuous quantity in three dimensions. According to Aristotle, although every substance will be actually some size or another, there is still a difference in being between a substance and its quantity, for quantity is a different category of being than substance. This is plain from the fact that a thing may change its quantity without changing what it is—e.g. after the feast of Bendis there is more of Socrates, but he is no less of a human being than before, and so to be human and to be such and such a quantity are different. Since the other things that we call body are called so because they possess determinate dimension, the determinate dimension of these things is itself also sometimes called body by Aristotle. This is body in the genus of quantity—i.e. an accidental form.

4.2.1.2 Body in the Genus of Substance

In addition to this quantitative notion of body, Aristotle often uses the term “body” to refer to that which has a nature such that it has body in the quantitative sense—i.e. that which has such a nature that it will have determinate limits in three dimensions. Such things are things in the genus of substance, for it is natural substance—as opposed to immaterial substance such as God—that has such a nature that it will have determinate limits in three dimensions. Things like Socrates or Secretariat or this here silver have such natures that they will have determinate limits in three dimensions, hence we
frequently find Aristotle noting that natural bodies most of all seem to be substances;\textsuperscript{116} it was things of this nature that so many of the pre-Socratics thought to be substance—e.g. elemental stuffs or atomic bodies—and which most of all conform to Aristotle’s own notion of substance in \textit{Categories}—e.g. this individual man or this individual horse.

Still other things that are importantly related to natural substances but are not natural substances are sometimes called bodies in this second sense. The parts of plants and animals are not themselves natural substances, since, as we’ve already seen in chapter two of this dissertation, Aristotle denies that substances can be composed of substances in actuality.\textsuperscript{117} Were they to be so composed, then the unity of the whole would be compromised. Socrates’ snub nose, then, is not a natural substance, nor an animal. Nonetheless it may sometimes be treated \textit{as if} it were a natural substance and a body in the genus of substance, for though it does not have its own substantial form, it does have such a form that it will have determination in three dimensions—viz. it has numerically the same form that the whole Socrates has, and this soul is not a form other than that which confers dimension.\textsuperscript{118} The fact that Socrates’s snub nose can be considered a body in the genus of substance insofar as it is informed by soul is why we often find the parts of animals listed by Aristotle along with true natural substances when he is declaring bodies to be the generally agreed upon substances:

Substance is thought to belong most obviously to bodies; thus we say that both the animals and the plants and their parts are substances, and the natural bodies—for instance fire, and water, and

\textsuperscript{116} See, for instance, 412a12-13, 1028b9-13, 1042a5-11.

\textsuperscript{117} 1039a3-14.

\textsuperscript{118} It must have this soul, or else it would be a nose only homonymously.
earth, and anything of the sort, and as many things as are either parts of these or come from them, either from some or from all, for instance both the heaven and its parts, the stars, the moon, and the sun (1028\textsuperscript{b}9-14).

For our purposes it is important to note that body in this second sense names items that are compounds of matter and substantial form, or are being considered to be such items by analogy or because they are corporeal parts of composite substances.\textsuperscript{119} This second sense of body, then, while itself a species of substance—viz. natural substance—is a genus of other things, for natural substance comes in animate and inanimate varieties, and these are both things which have natures such that they will have determinate limits in three dimensions. As a genus, body is predicated of the whole composite substance, just as animal is predicated of the whole composite Socrates, for it is not just Socrates’s proximate matter or his form that is an animal, according to Aristotle, but rather the composite Socrates who is an animal. In this second sense of body, then, Socrates is a body, as are Secretariat and this here silver, and this is why Aristotle does not hesitate to call matter/form composites—i.e. natural substances such as plants, animals, and inanimate natural substances—bodies.

\textsuperscript{119} By analogy, this sense of body is sometimes extended to artifacts. Artifacts do not in fact possess substantial forms—i.e. natures/internal principles of motion, but sometimes they are treated as substance analogues in order to draw the reader’s mind to the notion of substantial form. Thus, Aristotle notes that if the shipbuilder’s art were in the planks, it would assemble itself in just the way that it does by art (199\textsuperscript{a}26-34). In fact, the art is not an internal principle of motion, but an external principle of motion, but in analogies such as this, the ship under construction or completed can be considered a body in the second sense.
4.2.1.3 Body as an Integral Part of Composite Substance

Aristotle has a further sense of “body” different from either of these first two, for he refers to the *proximate matter* (hē eschatē hylē) of the substantial form as a body. By the proximate matter of the substantial form, I mean that body which is the subject of the substantial form and in which any other matter that went into the substance exists in OGC Potentiality as described in chapter two. It is this body *plus* the substantial form that together are a body in the second sense above—viz. a composite substance. This third use of the term “body” is discoverable throughout the Aristotelian corpus, but it is particularly clear in passages of *De Anima*:

> Given that there are bodies of such and such a kind, viz. having life, the soul cannot be a body; for the body is the subject (hypokeimenon) or matter (hylē), not what is attributed to it (412ª16-19).

As noted in chapter two, the body spoken of here cannot be a body other than that of the animal, for bodies such as the elements are not alive, but neither can this body be identical to composite substance, for this body is called “matter” (hylē) and matter is not a primary substance. We are reminded of the fact that matter is not a primary substance in its own right a mere ten lines before the above quote:

> We say that substance is one kind of what is, and that in several senses: in the sense of matter or that *which in itself is not a this* (hōs hylēn, ho kath’ hauto ouk esti tode ti), and in the sense of form or essence, which is that precisely in virtue of which a thing is called a this, and thirdly in the sense of that which is compounded of both (412ª6-9).

As is noted in *Categories*, if something belongs to the category of substance, then it is a “this something” (tode ti) (3ª10-12). Matter, in its own right (kath’ hauto), however, is not a “this something.” The body referred to at 412ª16-19, then, is the
proximate matter of the form, and not a substance in its own right, for this body is called “matter,” and matter is not a “this something.”

We find further evidence still that Aristotle sometimes identifies body and matter in *De Anima* II.2:

Further, since soul must be an account and essence, not matter (hylē) or a subject (hypoikeimenon). For, as we said, the word substance has three meanings—form, matter, and the complex of both—and of these matter is potentiality, form actuality. Since then the complex here is the living thing, the body cannot be the actuality of the soul; it is the soul which is the actuality of a certain kind of body. Hence the rightness of the view that the soul cannot be without a body, while it cannot be a body; it is not a body but something relative to a body. That is why it is in a body, and a body of a definite kind. It was a mistake, therefore, to do as former thinkers did, merely to fit it into a body without adding a definite specification of the kind or character of that body, although evidently one chance thing will not receive another. It comes about as reason requires: the actuality of any given thing can only be realized in what is already potentially that thing, i.e. in a matter (hylē) of its own appropriate to it. From all this it is plain that the soul is an actuality or account of something that possesses a potentiality of being such (414b12-28).

In this passage, Aristotle again reminds us that he uses the term “substance” in three senses 1) the matter (hylē), 2) the form (eidos), and 3) the composite (to de ex amphoin), and we are explicitly told that matter is potentiality (dynamis) and form actuality (entelecheia). A substantial form, he notes, cannot be realized in just any matter, but must be realized only “in what is already potentially that thing, i.e. in a matter of its own appropriate to it” (en tō dynamei hyparchonti kai tē oikeia hylē). This matter is identical to a body, and “a body of a definite kind” (sōma toiouto).

That “matter” and “body” are here being identified is clear from the fact that his claim that a form must be realized in a matter appropriate to it is supposed to have some
force as a criticism against the Platonic/Pythagorean claim that a soul can be in just any old body. By failing to put the soul in “a body of a definite kind” the predecessors were failing to put it in “a matter of its own appropriate to it.” Were matter and body not identical here, it would be hard to say why his comment about matter at the end of the passage had any bearing on the Pythagorean claim, yet it is clearly meant to have critical force and to be a continuation of his previous remarks against these philosopher’s theories of soul and body. This use of “body,” then, cannot be the same as the second sense above, for this use refers only to matter (hylē) and potentiality (dynamis), while the second sense refers to composite substance—i.e. matter and form together.

It is body as proximate matter that is referred to in Aristotle’s concluding remarks on his famous axe and eye analogies:

Consequently, while waking is actuality in the sense corresponding to the cutting and the seeing, the soul is actuality in the sense corresponding to sight and the power in the tool; the body corresponds to what is in potentiality; as the pupil plus the power of sight constitutes the eye, so the soul plus the body (sōma) constitutes the animal (412b27-413a2).

Animals are examples of composite substances par excellence; but then “body” must here refer only to the proximate matter of the substantial form. If it does not, then the claim will either be 1) that a continuous quantity—i.e. body in the first sense—plus the soul is the animal, or 2) that the composite—i.e. body in the second sense—plus the form is the animal. Both of these are untenable, the first because quantity is not the substance of anything, and the second because animals are composites of matter and form, not composites of composites and form.
The most general statement of the constitution of primary substance from proximate matter and substantial form is found in *Metaphysics* VIII.6: “But as has been said, the proximate matter (hē eschatē hylē) and the form are one and the same thing, the one potentially, the other actually” (1045b17-19). By “one and the same thing” (tauto kai hen) Aristotle does not mean that the proximate matter and the form are identical. We’ve seen numerous reasons in chapter two for why this cannot be the case. He rather means that the proximate matter is the substance in potentiality and the substantial form is the substance in actuality, and both together are the substance—e.g. the human body is the human being in potentiality, while the human soul is the human being in actuality, and both together are the human being. The potentiality here spoken of is the Possession Potentiality; the proximate matter is the only item that is powerful for the form, and the form is the only item that serves as a principle of unity of the proximate matter, such that it is “a body of a definite kind” (sōma toiouto), and not a heap other substances, which are not powerful for the form. Apart from one another, the proximate matter and substantial form are nothing at all, for they cannot exist apart as separate substances each with a complete essence; they cannot even be defined without reference to one another, for to say *what* the proximate matter is, one must say that it is the matter of a certain form, and to say *what* the form is, one must say that it is the actuality of a certain kind of matter. *Hē eschatē hylē*, then, is both matter, for it is the proximate matter of the

---

120 Indeed the very term “hē eschatē hylē” is used to differentiate the matter that the form unifies from the matters that went into the making of that matter. The proximity of the proximate matter is its being actually that item which the form uses as proper subject and tool. The remoteness of other matters is their existing in the proximate matter in OGC Potentiality.
substantial form, and body, for it is the sōma toiouto, which is powerful for the substantial form.

The second sense of body, then, names a matter/form composite that has a nature such that it will have determinate dimension, i.e. it names the composite natural substance, while the third sense names only an ontological part of substance, which, when taken together with the form, yields a body in the second sense. This third sense of body, unlike the second, is thus not predicated of the matter/form composite in the way that a genus is predicated of individuals that fall under it. In the second sense of body, Socrates—a matter/form composite—is a body, while in the third sense he has a body.

4.2.2 Composite Substance Is “the Moveable Body” without Implying the Extension of Form

Which sense of the word “body”, then, is intended in the phrase “the moveable body”—1, 2, or 3? If it is 1—“body” as quantity—then an accidental form will indeed have place and be extended somewhere. If it is 2—“body” as composite substance—then it may appear that a substantial form has been implicated in being somewhere by having a place. The reason this may appear to be the case is that one can quite plausibly take the expression “the moveable body” to refer to both the proximate matter and the substantial form together; on such an interpretation, composite substance is not something “over and above” its two ontological parts, but—after the manner of the “composition as identity” view—is identical to its two ontological parts together. There is certainly a good deal of evidence for the composition as identity view of composite substance; Aristotle himself asserts, for instance, that “there is no whole beyond the parts” (ou gar esti para ta merē to holon) (210a17.) He also asserts, as we have seen, that “the eye is the pupil plus the
power of sight”—i.e. the eye is these two parts together—and as I’ve noted in chapter two, he does not claim that one thing cannot be identical to two, but claims only that one actuality in a category cannot be identical to two actualities in the same category—e.g. one substance in act cannot be identical to two substances in act. And so, if the expression “the moveable body” refers to both the proximate matter and the form together, then one might take his claim to be that the only things that have place are proximate matter and substantial form; substantial form would then be extended somewhere and have place along with its proximate matter.

It is impossible, however, that, in Physics IV, Aristotle intends to convey that either continuous quantity or substantial form are extended somewhere and have place, for he explicitly denies place to both quantity and substantial form in other places in the corpus. The place to find these denials is in De Anima I. Here Aristotle raises the question whether soul—a substantial form—has place while discussing certain predecessors’ accounts of the soul as a self-mover:

The kinds of motion being four—locomotion, alteration, diminution, growth—it [the soul—if it were such as to move] would be moved with one or several or all of these. If it moves non-accidentally, a motion would belong to it by nature; and if this is the case, place too would belong to it by nature, for all the motions mentioned are motions in place. And if the substance of the soul is to move itself, movement will not belong to it accidentally, as it does to white and three cubits; For these are moved, but only accidentally, for that to which they belong is moved, namely the body. *Whence also they have no place.* But there will be a place of the soul if motion belongs to it by nature (406a11-22).

In this passage, Aristotle asks whether the soul has movement and place or whether it is like the accidents white or three-cubits. If it is like these, he says, then it will have no place, for white and three cubits can have no place (topos), and as such, if
they move with any species of movement, they move only in the sense that what they
belong to moves. There is presumably nothing special about white *qua* white or three
cubits *qua* three cubits that prevents them from having a *place*; it is not that white cannot
have *place* but hot can, or that three cubits cannot have *place* but three cubic feet can, and
so the ban on genuine *place* doubtlessly extends generally to *all accidents* whether they
be qualities, quantities, relations, etc. While investigating the possible *place* of the soul,
then, Aristotle has denied that any accidents, including the first sense of body above—
viz. quantitative body—have *place* or are *somewhere*, for, as noted, anything which is
*somewhere* has *place*, and vice versa.

Later in the chapter, Aristotle answers his inquiry about the genuine motion of the
soul by declaring that the soul can be moved only accidentally—i.e. it can be moved and
move itself only insofar as that in which it is can be moved and moved by it.

That the soul can be neither a harmony, nor moved in a circle, is
clear from what has been said. But it can be moved accidentally, as
we said, and even move itself accidentally, which is to say that that
in which it is can be moved, and moved by the soul. But it is not
possible in any other way that it be moved according to place (topos)
(408a29-34).

This passage should be understood not only as the claim that the soul can be
moved *only* accidentally, but also as an affirmation that the soul is like white and three
cubits with respect to *place*, since, were it unlike white and three cubits in that it had a
genuine *place*, there would be no reason why it could not be genuinely moved just as the
body in which it is can be genuinely moved according to any of the four species of
movement enumerated. It is precisely *because* it is like white and three cubits in having
no *place* that it can only be moved accidentally. Soul, then, has no genuine *place* and is
not somewhere. As with white and three cubits, there is nothing about soul \textit{qua} soul that prevents it from being in \textit{place}. The claim, then, is general: substantial form has no \textit{place} and is nowhere. Neither accidental nor substantial forms then have \textit{place}, and thus neither do they have any \textit{where}; they are nowhere at all.

What then is it that is somewhere and has \textit{place} according to Aristotle? We may be tempted to conclude that the only remaining candidate to be “the moveable body” is the proximate matter of the form. The truth, however, is that by the expression “the moveable body,” Aristotle is indeed referring to composite substance, but not in such a way that substantial form is implicated in having \textit{place} and being somewhere. What exactly this means can be best understood by examining parts of the \textit{De Anima}.

In \textit{De Anima} I.3, Aristotle has attacked the claim that the soul moves itself \textit{per se}, and indeed that it is moved \textit{per se} at all. In \textit{De Anima} I.4, however, he raises the question of the soul’s motion yet again, this time in the case of non-locomotive changes that are sometimes attributed to the soul itself:

More legitimate doubts might remain as to its movement in view of the following facts. We speak of the soul as being pained or pleased, being bold or fearful, being angry, perceiving, thinking. All these are regarded as modes of movement, and hence it might be inferred that the soul is moved. This, however, does not necessarily follow. We may admit to the full that being pained or pleased, or thinking, are movements (each of them a being moved), and that the movement is originated by the soul. For example, we may regard anger or fear as such and such movements of the heart, and thinking as such and such another movement of that organ, or of some other; these modifications may arise either from changes of place in certain parts or from qualitative alterations (the special nature of the parts and the special modes of their changes being for our present purpose irrelevant). Yet to say that it is the soul which is angry is as if we were to say that it is the soul that weaves or builds houses. It is doubtless better to avoid saying that the soul pities or learns or thinks, and rather to say that it is the human being who does this with their soul. (408^a29-408^b14).
Anger as we learn in *De Anima* I.1 is an “enmattered logos” (logos enylos), the formal part of which is a felt desire, the material part of which is a bodily state or change of some kind—e.g. “such and such movements around the heart.” As the above passage demonstrates, however, anger is not to be attributed to the soul as though the soul itself is anger’s proper subject and itself characterized by anger, for anger is not a state or motion in the soul itself. To say that it is a state or motion of the soul itself, says Aristotle, would be like saying that it is the soul itself that weaves or builds. The soul itself, however, does neither of these activities, but the human being does them with the soul. “With the soul” here obviously does not mean that the soul takes up hammer and nail, rather we must understand the claim to be the following: the human being weaves or builds with certain corporeal parts of its organized body and is capable of doing so because that body is ensouled.

In asserting this, Aristotle avoids saying that it is merely the proximate matter—i.e. the organized body of the builder or parts of such a body—that builds. While it is true that the subject of the motions of the builder is the body in the sense of the proximate matter of the human being, this organized human body is not something that is capable of existing on its own apart from its form, and thus apart from complete human existence. As such, Aristotle attributes the motions or acts taking place in either ontological part of a human being to the human being as a whole. Aquinas would later express this with the dictum: *per se agere convenit per se existenti*—viz. “to act *per se* belongs to what exists *per se*."

---

This is exactly the same doctrine which we find articulated in the *Categories* and in many other places in the corpus and which I brought against Scalsas’s *substantial holism* doctrine in chapter two. As already noted there, Aristotle does indeed say in *Categories* that all accidental modifications belong to primary substance—i.e. composite substance—but he also points out that some inhere in it by way of having the soul as a subject and others by way of having the proximate matter as a subject. In attributing knowledge of grammar as well as color to the human being Aristotle is thus not claiming that the body knows its letters or that the soul is some color or other. Rather, he is claiming that the human being thinks on account of an act inhering in the intellectual soul and is colored on account of a qualitative act inhering in the proximate matter.

The same is the case with *place* and being *somewhere*. The expression “the moveable body” indeed refers to composite substance, for it is composite substance to which all accidents are ultimately referred, since it is this which exists and acts *per se*, but it is through one ontological part or the other that they are referred to it. Thus, Socrates is in *place* and has a *where*, but he is so because *where*—an accident—finds its subject in his proximate matter—viz. the organized human body. The soul, strictly speaking, is nowhere at all. What is in *place* and *somewhere* then, according to Aristotle, is just what we would expect, namely, things like Socrates, and we find them *somewhere* because they have proximate matter that is extended in three dimensions and surrounded by other things whose proximate matter is extended in three dimensions. In the philosophy of Aristotle, nothing else whatsoever has genuine location by being extended *somewhere*. 
4.3 That Forms Are Not Genuinely Located by Point-Location

It remains to investigate whether it is possible that forms be genuinely located by being unextended but point-located at every point of an extended substance. Aristotle takes this very question up at the end of De Anima I.4. Here he is considering the view of those who said that the soul is a self-moving number (arithmos kinounth' heauton), where “number” is taken to mean a unit or point with position. While the ultimate goal of the argument is to demonstrate that the soul is not a unit or point, Aristotle makes plain his rejection of the idea that the soul is point-located at every point of the substance whose form it is:

If, on the one hand, these [soul] units within the body are different from the points [of the body], the units will be in the same place; for each unit will occupy a point. And yet, if there can be two in the same place, why cannot there be an infinite number? For if things can occupy an indivisible place, they must themselves be indivisible. If on the other hand, the points of the body are the number which is the soul, or if the number of the points in the body is the soul, why have not all bodies souls? For all bodies contain an infinity of points (409a21-27).

The argument presents the reader with a disjunction. Either 1) these supposed soul-points with position are identical to the points of the body, or 2) they are not. If not identical to body-points, then there will be at any position of the body both a body-point and a soul-point. But if two things can be in the same position, why not an infinite number of things? The implication is that there is no reason that, if two are allowed,

---

122 This is indeed a separate inquiry than the previous inquiry into extended items. The reason that it is a separate inquiry is that, if something were point-located only, it would not be in place, for place is a surface, and points are not very small spheres terminating in very small surfaces, but are altogether without extension. No point, then, is in place in Aristotle’s technical sense of the world, though he sometimes says of them that they have position (thesis), or even—speaking loosely, as in the immediately following quote—that they are in place or an indivisible place.
more could not be allowed, and that—this being unacceptable—we are to regard two things occupying the same position to be as absurd as an infinity of things occupying the same position. If, on the other hand, the soul-points are simply identical to the body-points, then all bodies will have a soul, and indeed an infinity of souls, for every magnitude (megethos) is infinitely divisible, according to Aristotle, and thus contains an infinity of points at which it may be cut.\footnote{For Aristotle’s notion of divisibility, see \textit{On Generation and Corruption} I.2.} If all bodies have souls, however, then all bodies ought to be alive, which is contrary to experience, for many things extended in three dimensions are not alive.

The first disjunct of this argument plainly states that it is impossible for the soul to be point-located at \textit{any} point of an extended body, let alone \textit{every} point; Aristotle’s point is perfectly general, however, since any form—whether accidental or substantial—if point-located at any point of the body, would cause the same co-location of items at a single position that Aristotle rejects as impossible. The only thing that is located at a point, then, is the same thing that we discovered to be extended—viz. substances by way of their proximate matter—for three dimensional substances are extended, and in continuous extension there is a point anywhere you like.

It is worth noting that the above passage is not only good for demonstrating that forms are not point-located in the philosophy of Aristotle, but also serves as a second and independent demonstration of the fact that forms are not located by being extended. If forms were located by being extended either in continuous quantities such as lines, planes, or solids, then forms would occupy the same positions as bodies extended in those
continuous quantities. If the doctrine that two different objects can be genuinely located at the same point is so offensive as to be rejected, then presumably so is the doctrine that two different objects can be located in the same line, plane, or solid.

No form, then, whether accidental or substantial is genuinely located in the philosophy of Aristotle, either by being in place and extended where its substance is extended, or by being point-located at every point of an extended substance. Forms, then, have no genuine location in the philosophy of Aristotle; philosophers should, therefore, put an end to the practice of calling philosophies that involve located properties “Aristotelian.”

4.4 The Meaning of Accidental Location

I will close with a few remarks about the concept of accidental location in Aristotelian philosophy. As mentioned above, Aristotle allows that both substantial and accidental forms have place accidentally (kata symbebēkos). I have shown above that no form has genuine location in the philosophy of Aristotle, and I will now give an account of the doctrine of accidental location that shows that it in no way undermines this conclusion.

A clear and complete discussion of what Aristotle means by “accident” and “accidentally” can be found Posterior Analytics I.4. Here he contrasts “per se” (kath’hauto) predication with “accidental” (kata symbebēkos) and lists two meanings of both terms:

A thing belongs to something else per se both if it belongs to it in what it is—e.g. line to triangle and point to line (for their substance is from these things, and substance belongs to the account saying what something is), and also if the things it belongs to
themselves belong in the account that makes plain what it is—e.g. straight and curved belong to line and odd and even to number, and prime and composed, and equilateral and oblong. And in one case line, and in the others number belong to all of these in the account that says what they are. And likewise in the other cases also I say that such things belong to each thing *per se*, but whatever belongs in neither of these two ways I call accidental—e.g. musical or white belong accidentally to animal.

Further, what is not said of some other subject—e.g. the thing that is walking, though walking and white, is something else besides these, while substance, and as many things as signify a this-somewhat, is not what it is by being something else. I call the things not predicated of a subject things *per se*; while the things predicated of a subject I call accidents.

Further, in another way what belongs to each thing on account of itself is *per se*, but what does not belong on account of itself is accidental—for instance if, while he was walking, lightning struck, this is accidental; For it did not strike on account of his walking, but, we say, this just happened. But if on account of itself, then it is *per se*—for instance, if, when its throat is cut, something dies, and dies in accordance with its wound and because of the cutting, then it is no accident that that it died when cut.124

The two notions of accident and accidental in this passage are roughly:

1. Something will be *accidental* in the first sense if it is predicated of something but not predicated of it *per se* in either of the two senses mentioned above. An *accident* in the first sense is whatever is accidental in the first sense. White is an accident of Socrates and is predicated accidentally of Socrates, for it does not belong to Socrates to be white *per se*.

2. Something will be an *accidental* in the second sense if it coincides with something else of which it is not the cause.125 An *accident* in the second sense is whatever is accidental in the second sense. It is an accident that his walk coincided with a lightning strike. His walk is accidental to a lightning strike.

---

124 aPo.73a34-73b17.

125 By “cause” here I mean something which falls into one of the four kinds of causes enumerated by Aristotle in *Physics* II.3.
In which of these two senses of “accidentally” is it that forms are said to be accidentally located? If—in the case of substantial or accidental forms—we do not understand “accidentally” in the second sense above, but rather the first, we will be forced to say that white or three cubits or the soul has a where belonging to them as white belongs to Socrates, for Socrates is accidentally white in the first sense when white belongs to him as its subject. But then white and three cubits will indeed be genuinely somewhere, just as Socrates is genuinely white, for an accidental form—a where—is found in them as a subject and characterizes them, just as an accidental form—a quality—is found in Socrates as its subject and characterizes him. This, however, is exactly what Aristotle is denying when he says that white and three cubits can have no place, for if white and three cubits were the subject of a where, they would indeed have place, since anything characterized by a where is in place, and vice versa.

It is only in the second sense of “accidentally” above, then, that substantial and accidental forms are somewhere. To say that white or three cubits or the soul have place and are somewhere accidentally is only to say that they coincide with an accidental form—viz. a where—by belonging to one and the same body. To say that white or three cubits or the soul move accidentally is only to say that they coincided with a certain where by belonging to one body with that where, and then later coincided with a different where in numerically the same body—i.e. the body swapped its where for a different where while keeping its color, quantity, or principle of unity and life. In no other way than this can forms be properly said to be somewhere or to locomote, and this is the very thing that Aristotle is asserting of the soul when he says that “it can be moved accidentally, as we said, and even move itself accidentally, which is to say that that in
which it is can be moved, and moved by the soul. But it is not possible in any other way that it be moved according to place. (topos) (408a29-34).”

We can further bolster the evidence that this is the correct interpretation of the doctrine of accidental location if we briefly examine an argument in *Metaphysics IV* against those who assert that accidental predication need not bottom out in substance. Here we can find Aristotle hard at work keeping his two definitions of “accidental” properly differentiated:126

But if all statements are accidental1, there will be nothing primary about which they are made, if the accidental1 always implies predication about a subject. It is necessary therefore that it go to infinity. But this is impossible. For not even more than two such terms are combined: For an accident1 is not an accident1 of an accident1, unless because [both are accidental1 to the same thing]2—by which I mean [white is musical and this (i.e. musical) is white because both are accidental1 to man.]2 But Socrates is not musical in this manner—viz. because [both terms are accidental1 to something else.]2 Therefore, since some things are called accidental in the latter sense,1 and some in the former2, as many as are called accidental in the latter1—viz. as white is accidental to Socrates—are not able to be infinite in the upward direction, e.g. something else (is not able to be) accidental1 to Socrates-the-white. For no “one” comes to be from all of them. And neither will there be something else accidental1 to white, for instance musical. For this is no more accidental1 to that, than that to this; and at the same time it was determined that some things are accidental in this sense2, while others are so in the sense that musical is accidental1 to Socrates. And in cases of the latter kind1, an accident1 will not be an accident1 of an accident1, but in cases of the former kind2 it will be, so that not all terms will be said accidentally (1007a33-1007b16).

The argument in this passage makes use both of our above senses of “accidental” and runs thus: as per the *Posterior Analytics*, there are two senses in which an accident

126 For the sake of clarity, I have marked with superscripts throughout this difficult passage the two different senses of “accidental” discussed in the Posterior Analytics.
may be thought to be an accident of an accident: Either 1) as directly belonging to
another accident (or to a substance-plus-accident—e.g. Socrates-the-white), which serves
as its subject. Or 2) as consisting in the coincidentia accidentium which occurs when
those accidents happen to share the same subject. Neither case, however, threatens us
with an infinite regress of accidental predication or accidental inherence—not the first
because it is not possible for even one accident to belong to another (or to substance-
accident composites) as white belongs to Socrates, and not the second because any such
coincidence of accidents will be found upon inspection to involve a substance in which
the two accidents coincide by belonging to it. Infinity is thus halted in both directions—
viz. “downward” because accidents bottom out in substance as their underlying subject,
and “upward” because accidents cannot belong to accidents as white belongs to Socrates.

While this passage gives qualitative accidents such as “white” or “musical” as
examples, it clearly has general import, and thus has implications for genuine location.
Where—being an accident—never belongs to and characterizes white or three cubits, for
this would be a case of accidents being accidents of accidents in the first sense, which
Aristotle deems impossible. Where may be an accident of an accident only in the second
sense—in the sense that it coincides with some other accident in one and the same body.
Though the passage makes no reference to substantial forms, what goes for accidents
goes also for substantial forms; this is plain from the fact that—apart from the intellectual
soul—Aristotle does not regard forms as themselves having further acts—i.e. further
forms. If they did have such acts, then they would be capable of separate existence from
their bodies, for whatever operates per se exists per se, and vice versa. Only the
intellectual soul can be modified by other forms, and these forms are qualitative noetic
forms such as grammatical knowledge, but never a *where*. Forms of any kind, then, are never *somewhere* nor in *place*, except accidentally, where this means *nothing more* than that the form in question coincides with a *where* in one and the same body.

4.5 Conclusion

I have here defended Aristotle’s ontology against any claim that it contains a category mistake in the form of genuinely located forms. This was accomplished by showing that forms are not genuinely located either 1) by being extended *where* their substances are or 2) by being point-located at every point of their extended substances. The only thing that is genuinely located, according to Aristotle, is composite substance by way of its proximate matter. I have also explicated Aristotle’s claim that forms are accidentally located and have shown that this doctrine in no way undermines the previous conclusion that forms are altogether without genuine location in the philosophy of Aristotle. If forms are not “in” their substances and “parts” of them because they are genuinely located wherever those substances are, then why do Aristotelians and other constituent ontologists use the language of immanence at all? Why not abandon terms like “in” and “part” for a relational way of speaking about properties? It is to this question that I now turn.
In the previous two chapters, I have defended Aristotle’s ontology and constituent ontologies more generally against the claim that they involve a category mistake by positing genuinely located properties. To have shown that these ontologies are not unintelligible for the reason suggested by van Inwagen, however, is not yet to have given a straightforward demonstration of the coherence and truth of constituent ontology. In this chapter, I aim to do both.

This chapter has six parts. In the first part, 1) I note one way that a constituent ontologist should not defend the intelligibility of constituent ontology. She should not define the term “part” as it is used by constituent ontologists. In the second part, 2) I describe certain aesthetic intuitions concerning properties and their underlying bearers, which are common to many constituent ontologists, as well as how these intuitions differ from those common to many relationalists/Platonists. In the third part, 3) I demonstrate the coherence of constituent ontology by showing how the constituent ontologist’s aesthetic intuitions lead naturally to, and hence cohere well with, the constituent ontological view. The relationalist, then, should no longer be bewildered as to why someone would assert that property-items can be the parts of things, for, given the acceptance of certain aesthetic claims, the assertion follows naturally. In the fourth part,

---

127 By “aesthetic” I mean “pertaining to the senses or their objects” rather than anything having to do with beauty or the appreciation of beauty.
4) I give a few historical examples of these intuitions’ close relationship to the constituent ontological strategy. In the fifth part, 5) I defend the truth of constituent ontology by way of defending the soundness of a brief argument. This will require a defense of the truth of constituent aesthetic intuitions. In the sixth part, 6) I make a few concluding remarks.

5.1 One Way Not to Defend the Intelligibility of Constituent Ontology

To show that a theory contains a category mistake, as van Inwagen aimed to do in the case of constituent ontology, is one way of demonstrating its unintelligibility, but how should one demonstrate the intelligibility of something for someone who doubts or denies it? The most obvious way to go about this would be to give a definition of the item in question in terms of more basic, intelligible principles involved in its definition. If I wished to demonstrate the intelligibility of triangles to someone unconvinced, I could try to do so by defining a triangle in terms of plane figure, line, point, and angle, and I would hope that these terms would be considered intelligible and useful for the explanation of the item in question. Should we expect the constituent ontologist to make the term “part” as it is used in constituent strategies intelligible in this manner?

I think not. This term is not often defined even in the case of classical mereology, or if it is defined, it is defined in terms of something whose intelligibility is about on par with the notion of part—e.g. Goodman defines “part” in terms of a primitive distinction relation.128 Other systems simply begin with reflexivity, transitivity, and antisymmetry, all of which assume the intelligibility of the term “part.” If we cannot expect a

mereologist concerned primarily with the corporeal parts of things to provide a definition of “part,” then why would we expect the constituent ontologist to be able to do so for the parts they propose?

“Part”, then, like “necessity” and “possibility,” if it is to be explained at all, is best explained reciprocally rather than in terms of more basic principles; just as one would not give an explanation of necessity apart from modal language involving possibility, one should not give an explanation of part apart from mereological language concerning wholes. If a relational ontologist does not find the term “part” intelligible in the context of the constituents posited by constituent ontologists, then, I do not think that the constituent ontologist will be willing or should be willing to give him a definition in terms of more basic principles.

The fact that the ontological parts posited by constituent ontologists cannot be made intelligible in this manner, however, does not mean that the coherence of constituent ontology cannot be defended. Why, after all, have so many philosophers found it attractive to suggest that familiar sensible items are constituted from many properties? Presumably there is some reason for this idea having the appeal that it has had over so many in the course of western philosophy’s history. In what follows, I will not only defend the coherence of constituent ontology by first explaining how certain intuitions common among constituent ontologists lead naturally to the constituent view, and hence cohere well with it, but I will also defend the truth of constituent ontology,

---

129 It is worth pointing out in this context that the “parts” spoken of by Aristotle are identical to “actuality” and “potentiality” and that these terms—bearing some resemblance to necessity and possibility—are also not likely the sorts of terms that are going to find explanation apart from reciprocal explanation.
which will involve a defense of the aforementioned intuitions. I begin this defense, then, with an investigation into the very different intuitions of many constituent and relational ontologists as regards the aesthetic nature of properties and their underlying bearers.

5.2 Different Intuitions about the Aesthetic Nature of Properties and Underliers

Constituent ontologists and relational ontologists are often inclined to very different intuitions about the aesthetic nature of properties and their underlying bearers. According to many constituent ontologists, some of whom we will examine in the historical examples below, some, if not all, properties are per se sensible—i.e. they themselves appear to us sensibly. In other words, each of these properties presents some phenomenon/a to the senses that is that property’s own phenomenon/a, and not that of some other property or other item. To assert this is not to assert that all properties are sensible, nor is it to say that sensible properties could appear to us without appearing along with other sensible properties or without being possessed by some appropriate

---

130 In this chapter, I will frequently use the term “property” in the same wide sense as it was used in previous chapters. In the final part of the chapter, when I wish to refer specifically to Platonist conceptions of properties, I will refer to them as “p-properties.” Their aesthetic nature is not the only way in which the properties and bearers of properties posited by constituent and relational ontologists differ, but it is the salient feature in our discussion of the coherence of constituent ontology.

131 I here speak of a property as “presenting some phenomenon/a” in a way that I intend to be neutral with respect to different theories of perception. A property’s presenting a phenomenon could be our being directly aware of that property, or it could be its presenting us with a certain phenomenal character or sense datum, etc. I say “phenomenon/a”, so as to note that one and the same property may present a number of different appearances under different viewing circumstances—e.g. one and the same color or shape may appear differently in different viewing circumstances. Sometimes a property may not only appear differently in different circumstances, but may even move into the phenomenal range of another property, as when the blue of the now-famous “the dress” appears like the white of a white and gold dress under certain lighting conditions. Even when blue appears as white, it is still blue’s appearing, and not the white’s appearing, for in the case of “the dress,” it isn’t white, but blue. That the phenomenal ranges of properties can overlap is what makes painting possible, for the first thing an artist does whose task is to paint an ubiquitously sky-blue Porsche is mix a number of different blues, and the reason for this is that each of these blues shares parts of its phenomenal range with the one blue of the car.
something. It is also not to assert the genuine location of properties, for it may well be
that the genuine location of a property’s bearer is all that is needed for a sensible property
itself to present some phenomenon/a to sensation.\textsuperscript{132} All that is being asserted is that
properties \textit{themselves} are phenomenologically potent.

For example, one inclined to these views is likely to assert that there is something
that a particular shade of red is like \textit{to sensation}, even if red cannot appear to us sensibly
apart from other sensible properties (e.g. some quantity or shape) or apart from it being
the red of some underlying something (e.g. a rose). Red need not be anywhere,
moreover, to be \textit{per se} sensible, except perhaps in a loose sense—viz. the sense in which
in order to affect the senses of animals, it must be the red of something that is genuinely
somewhere.

On the other hand, for many constituent ontologists, whatever underlying thing
there is that has properties (if there even is such a something) presents nothing to
\textit{sensation \textit{per se}}.\textsuperscript{133} If it can be called sensible at all, it is only because it is the bearer of,
or perhaps even the cause of, certain sensible properties, but as for \textit{it itself}, it eludes
\textit{sensation}. We will see several examples of these intuitions in part four below.

\textsuperscript{132} To assert that the only \textit{per se} location needed for the phenomenal efficacy of a sensible
property is that of its bearer is to assert that not all things that can be causes need be \textit{per se} located.
 Constituent ontologists, especially classical ones, are likely to think very little of the claim that in order to
cause something, an item must be \textit{per se} located; the soul is \textit{per se} nowhere and is the cause of the unity of
the organic body; red is \textit{per se} nowhere and yet it is a cause of some experience in a viewer. Or so say
many constituent ontologists.

\textsuperscript{133} I note “if there even is something” since the bundle version of the constituent theory denies the
existence of underlying substrata or hooks. The only way that there is an underlier in the bundle theory is if
we consider the whole bundle to which each property belongs to itself be a kind of underlier, but clearly
this is something different than what is envisioned by most substratum/substance theorists.
Many relational ontologists, on the other hand, who tend to be Platonists in many
respects, invert these intuitions. The underlying bearers of properties—whatever their
nature turns out to be—are those items which are most familiar to the senses. The
properties they envision, however, do not at all present themselves to the senses; they
cannot be seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or touched. In a number of Platonic dialogues, the
views of Plato’s Socrates serve as a classical example of this position, while van Inwagen
serves as a contemporary example, since he explicitly affirms of the abstract objects he
possits in “A Theory of Properties” and “Relational vs. Constituent Ontology,” that they
are causally and phenomenologically impotent.\textsuperscript{134}

The existence of such Platonist properties, then, is a bit of theory about radically
non-empirical items, which is just to say that when the Platonist argues that there are such
things as Platonist properties, he argues for the existence of what, if it does exist, does not
itself seem to exist to the senses. One can better grasp this point by means of the
following considerations: it might be supposed, for instance, that the senses themselves
(independent of other faculties) present us with the apparent existence of things like
horses,\textsuperscript{135} and, if this is true of sensation, then, when van Inwagen argues in Material
Beings that there are organisms under certain necessary and sufficient conditions, his
arguments—incidentally—would be a defense of the position that some of what seems to

\textsuperscript{134} See “A Theory of Properties,” pp. 135-136. The properties as sets envisioned by Lewis would
also be a good example of aesthetically inert properties envisioned by a noteworthy philosopher; so also
would the properties envisioned by Plantinga.

\textsuperscript{135} For the defense of such a view see Susanna Seigel, The Contents of Visual Experience (Oxford:
be the case according to the senses is in fact the case; it seems to the senses that there are, for example, horses, and, in fact, there are horses.

When he offers an argument for the existence of Platonist properties in “A Theory of Properties,” however, the situation is quite different, since properties themselves, according to him, simply do not make it into our sensory experience. Sensibly speaking, at least, nothing seems to be the case about properties, neither their existence nor their non-existence, and so, if there are Platonist properties, it is not that the world actually is as it seems to the senses, it is just that a certain theory affirming the existence of radically non-empirical items is true.

The first of these two sets of intuitions—let us call them constituent intuitions—lead naturally to, and hence cohere nicely with, the constituent ontological view, or so I wish to claim. Let us have a brief look at how this occurs.

5.3 Reasoning to Constituent Ontology from Constituent Intuitions

The manner in which one arrives at the constituent ontological view from constituent intuitions is straightforward. It begins with the recognition that the world is populated by familiar sensible particulars—e.g. things like pale Socrates or smooth, black Bucephalus. Portraits and photographs are of items such as these. For realists of a constituent or Platonist bent, a question naturally arises; what items in one’s ontology are identical to these familiar sensible particulars? One possible answer to this question is that familiar sensible particulars are identical to the underlying bearers of properties. This is presumably the answer preferred by a Platonist like van Inwagen.
For those inclined to constituent intuitions, however, this answer will not do, and the reason that it will not do is simple: sensible familiar items are themselves sensible. According to those with constituent intuitions, however, underlying bearers of properties are not themselves sensible, and so familiar sensible items cannot be identical to these per se non-sensible items.

To what, then, are they identical? Those with constituent intuitions will want to identify them with something in their ontology which itself presents something to sensibility, and the obvious candidates are sensible properties. It is not just one sensible property, however, to which a familiar sensible item is identical—e.g. smooth, black Bucephalus is not identical to his smoothness alone, nor to his color alone. If the familiar item is not identical to one sensible property, however, the obvious next move will be to say that it is identical to a complex of sensible properties, among other items perhaps. We arrive, therefore, at the constituent ontological view from constituent intuitions along with a few additional premises, and simple ones at that—e.g things like: sensible familiars are not identical to per se non-sensible things.

A few notes on the foregoing: when I say “complex,” I leave open the exact nature of this complex. Perhaps this complex is a mere “heap” of sensible properties, among other items perhaps, or perhaps it is a unity of sensible properties in some stronger sense. If the former, the claim is presumably that familiar sensible items have no more of a unified existence than a pile of sand does for those who deny that such a thing composes. Such a heap of sensible properties may be treated as one in speech or in
thought, but to say or think that it is one does not lend the item any unity *in re.* If the latter, the claim is presumably that sensible familiar items are identical to either 1) wholes that just are some sensible properties taken together, among other items perhaps, or 2) wholes that are something distinct from some sensible properties taken together, among other items perhaps, the difference between 1 and 2 being the difference between a composition as identity view, and a view in which the whole is something in addition to its parts taken together. On any of these three views the term “part” suggests itself for describing the individual properties, among other items perhaps, since either we sometimes speak *as if* they add up to or compose a whole, or they are, taken together, identical to one whole, or they constitute some whole distinct from themselves.

When I say “among other items perhaps,” I leave open whether a constituent ontologist includes other items in the heap or unity of sensible properties which they think is identical to a familiar sensible particular. Bundle theorists like Hume who altogether spurn underliers will include nothing more than sensible properties, while others may include a bare hook or substratum, and others still may include a richer notion of substance, albeit substance that is not sensible in its own right—something very much like what Descartes described as the “wax which is perceived by the mind alone.”

Others may include items whose sole purpose is to tie properties together, such as

---

136 This would be something like the “New Bundle Theory” of van Cleve. He admits that he does not think that anyone actually holds the view. This view would not really be a constituent ontology after all, since these properties would not be genuine constituents of any whole. I mention it here only insofar as it is a kind of “as if” constituent ontology, and insofar as constituent intuitions could lead to such a view, were a philosopher unwilling to grant the unity of bundles of sensible properties.

Bergmann’s “nexus.” There are many options, of course, when it comes to what else might be included in a complex of sensible properties by constituent ontologists, or why it might be included there. What all may be included in addition to sensible properties, while an important topic in its own right, has no bearing on how one may arrive at the constituent ontological view from constituent intuitions, and so I mention it here only in passing and for the purpose of showing that a number of options are open to those who reason from these intuitions to the constituent view.

For clarity’s sake, we can represent some of the most important points above in a short argument:

P1) Familiar sensible particulars are identical to underlying bearers of properties, or familiar sensible particulars are identical to complexes of sensible properties among other items perhaps.

P2) If underlying bearers of properties are not per se sensible, then it is not the case that they are identical to familiar sensible particulars. (familiar sensible particulars are per se sensible)

P3) Underlying bearers of properties are not per se sensible. (constituent intuitions)

C1) It is not the case that underlying bearers of properties are identical to familiar sensible particulars. (P2, P3)

C2) Familiar sensible particulars are identical to complexes of sensible properties among other items perhaps. (P1,C1)

To have gone this far—viz. to have articulated these intuitions about the aesthetic nature of properties and underliers as well as the reasoning that leads to the constituent view from constituent intuitions—is already to have demonstrated the coherence of constituent ontology, for constituent ontology follows naturally from these intuitions, and, hence, coheres well with them. Van Inwagen and similarly-minded contemporary
Platonists may not agree that constituent intuitions are true, but if they are granted for the sake of argument, there is no reason to be bewildered as to how someone could assert that a familiar object is composed of properties, since the properties conjectured as parts are not the phenomenologically inert abstract objects posited by Platonists, from which—presumably—nothing indeed is ever composed.

In what follows, I aim to go further than simply demonstrating the coherence of constituent ontology; I will argue for the truth of constituent ontology. First, however, let us briefly consider a few historical examples, so as to see that the intuitions described above are really those that are frequently behind the constituent view.

5.4 Historical Examples of the Link between Constituent Intuitions and Constituent Ontology

We need not look far to find examples of famous philosophers who hold these aesthetic intuitions about properties and underliers along with the constituent ontological view. David Hume, for example, affirms constituent ontology in the form of a bundle theory of substances:

Tis confest by the most judicious philosophers, that our ideas of bodies are nothing but collections form’d by the mind of the ideas of the several distinct sensible qualities of which objects are compos’d and which we find to have a constant union with each other.138

According to Hume, then, ideas of bodies are composed of ideas of sensible
qualities, and— isomorphically—bodies are composed of sensible qualities. But why
should this be the case? Why would Hume think that “bodies”—those things that van
Inwagen would identify with everyday sensible objects/substances—are collections of
sensible qualities? The answer is presumably that familiar sensible bodies are supposed
to be just that—familiar and sensible—but according to Hume, when one brackets a
thing’s properties from consideration of what presents itself to the senses and considers
only the thing that supposedly underlies those properties, one finds nothing at all
sensible:

In order to reconcile which contradictions\textsuperscript{139} the imagination is apt
to feign something unknown and invisible, which it supposes to
continue the same under all these variations; and this unintelligible
something it calls substance, or original and first matter.\textsuperscript{140}

And again:

But the mind rests not here. Whenever it views the object in another
light, it finds that all these qualities\textsuperscript{141} are different, and
distinguishable, and separable from each other; which view of the
things being destructive of its primary and more natural notions,

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid. p. 146. The two supposed “contradictions” he speaks here of are between 1) the so-called
“simplicity” of a familiar object and its so-called “composition”—i.e. its being made of many parts, and 2)
the “variation” and “identity” of a familiar object, the variation being its gaining or losing certain qualities
and the identity being its persistence through time despite this fact. His point is only that human intuitions
about change and persistence led the ancients to posit a substratum, and this substratum he says does not
exist and is neither perceptible nor knowable.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{141} The qualities he speaks of here and in the lead-up to the previous passage are all examples of
the sensible properties that he says the most judicious philosophers endorse—e.g. he speaks of “the colour,
taste, figure, solidity, and other qualities, combined’d in a peach or melon” (Ibid.).
obliges the imagination to feign an unknown something, or original substance and matter. . .\textsuperscript{142}

Such an “unknown and invisible” something cannot possibly be an object of familiar experience. What then is an object of familiar experience? Quite clearly it isn’t just one sensible quality; a rose is not just its redness. But then the remaining conclusion is that the familiar body is a instead a “collection” of sensible properties.

Despite certain differences when it comes to notions of primary and secondary qualities\textsuperscript{143}, Locke’s philosophy contains similar considerations; Locke admits the existence of sensible properties and famously describes underlying substance as “something, I know not what” on account of its failing to present to us a sensible idea in the manner that individual sensible properties do:

Hence, when we talk or think of any particular sort of corporeal substances, as horse, stone, &c., though the idea we have of either of them be but the complication or collection of those several simple ideas of sensible qualities, which we used to find united in the thing called horse or stone; yet because we cannot conceive how they should subsist alone, nor one in another, we suppose them existing in and supported by some common subject; which support we denote by the name substance, though it can be certain we have no clear or distinct idea of that thing we suppose a support.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{143} I side rather with Pitson in thinking that Hume’s comments of primary and secondary qualities found in the Treatise’s section \textit{Of the Modern Philosophy} amount to Hume’s conclusion that what Locke called secondary qualities are on the same footing with what Locke called primary qualities; both genuinely belong to objects and both sometimes produce veridical experiences of themselves in us that reveal the very nature of the quality, what Locke called “resemblance” and reserved only for primary qualities. See A. E. Pitson, “Hume on Primary and Secondary Qualities,” \textit{Hume Studies} 3:2 (1982), pp. 125-138.

\textsuperscript{144} John Locke, \textit{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding} (London: Balne, 1836), p. 197.
In other words, when we focus in on the idea of substance as that which underlies certain sensible properties, we find, according to Locke, that we are presented with no “clear and distinct” idea of that underlying nature—*it itself* presents us with no characteristic phenomenon. The idea of such a thing, of course, cannot be the idea of a sensible particular item that we are so familiar with, nor could such a thing be the sensible particular item itself, and so, in line with the reasoning presented above, our *intelligible idea of substance* therefore amounts to, as he says, the “complication or collection” of a number of sensible ideas which correspond to the presence of a number of sensible qualities. The idea of a substance—not as an unknown underlier—but as a known familiar item, then, is just a collection or composition of the ideas of certain sensible qualities, and since the same isomorphism as witnessed in Hume between world and idea is present here, so substances are collections of sensible qualities. This will hold even if Locke, unlike Hume, is taken to countenance the existence of some underlier which is the subject of sensible qualities, for this something—substance as unknown underlier—will simply be one of the items in the collection that constitutes substance as a familiar item of experience, though, unlike the sensible properties among which it resides, *it itself* will not enter into sensible experience.

We may even step outside of representationalist views and find others who hold constituent intuitions along with the constituent ontological view that often accompanies these aesthetic intuitions. Ernst Mach’s monism is such a philosophy. Mach views colors, sounds, temperatures, pressures, spaces, times, etc. as sensible properties.\(^\text{145}\) Like

Hume and Locke, Mach thinks that when we abstract from these sensible properties we do not find any *per se* sensible underlier:

> The useful habit of designating such relatively permanent compounds by single names, and of apprehending them by single thoughts, without going to the trouble each time of an analysis of their component parts, is apt to come into strange conflict with the tendency to isolate the component parts. The vague image which we have of a given permanent complex, being an image which does not perceptibly change when one or another of the component parts is taken away, seems to be something which exists in itself. Inasmuch as it is possible to take away singly every constituent part without destroying the capacity of the image to stand for the totality and to be recognized again, it is imagined that it is possible to subtract all the parts and to have something still remaining. Thus naturally arises the philosophical notion, at first impressive, but subsequently recognized as monstrous, of a “thing-in-itself”, *different from “appearance,” and unknowable*. Thing, body, matter, are nothing apart from the combinations of the elements, - the colours, sounds, and so forth – nothing apart from their so-called attributes. That protean pseudo-philosophical problem of the single thing with its many attributes, arises wholly from a misinterpretation of the fact, that summary comprehension and precise analysis, although both are provisionally justifiable and for many purposes profitable, cannot be carried on simultaneously.\(^{146}\)

It is true that from the beginning of *The Analysis of Sensations*, Mach has already decided for himself to take the constituent approach to familiar items, but in this passage, we can see why he feels compelled to do so. Given that some properties are sensible, Mach thinks that if we abstract from these properties and ask what the underlying bearer is like, we can only agree with Locke that it is “something, I know not what,” or using Mach’s preferred Kantian terminology, a “‘thing-in-itself,’ different from ‘appearance,’ and unknowable.” In other words, while sensible properties appear to sensible

\(^{146}\) Ibid. p. 6.
experience, this supposed thing-in-itself remains aesthetically unknown. Such a thing could not possibly be one of the items that we are aesthetically familiar with, and finding the idea of such an underlier odious, Mach opts for the view that “‘Thing, body, matter, are nothing apart from the combinations of the elements.”

We need not even remain in the realm of the bundle theories of modern philosophy to find these same intuitions at work pushing philosophers toward the constituent view. Aristotle holds that forms are parts of familiar items like pale Socrates (1023b19-22), and if one considers carefully his doctrine of perceptibles, it is plain that certain accidents are perceptible in their own right, while substance and matter are not. In the De Anima, for instance, we find that certain accidents are the proper objects of different sense modalities—e.g. the quality of color is the special sensible of the sense of sight (418a26-28), while certain other things are common to multiple modalities—e.g. movement, rest, number, figure, and magnitude (418a16-19). Nowhere among the lists of special or common sensibles do we find substance or matter. Unlike these special or common sensibles which present some phenomenon/a to sensibility in their own right, then, substance and matter do not, except insofar as they are bearers of and indeed causes of sensible species like color, figure, etc. It is clear from the abstractive process in Metaphysics Z.3, anyway, that the substance or matter underlying quantity, quality, relation, etc. is not an object of familiar experience, but rather an item of ontological speculation (1028b33-1029a33). It is substance along with its accidents—i.e. complexes

\[147\] “the elements” of course being the elements of sensation—i.e. colors, sounds, temperatures, pressures, spaces, times, etc.
of substance and accidental forms—then, that are the objects of everyday experience. Thus, even with a classical substance theorist such as Aristotle, who would certainly deny modern bundle theories, underlying substance presents nothing to sensibility in its own right.\textsuperscript{148}

Having defended the coherence of constituent ontology and given a few examples of famous philosophers inclined to constituent intuitions, the natural next step is to demonstrate the truth of constituent ontology. Below, I undertake this demonstration by focusing on certain important epistemic questions facing both constituent and relational ontologists.

### 5.5 The Truth of Constituent Ontology: A Simple Argument

I will here defend the truth of constituent ontology by defending the soundness of the following brief argument:

P1) If there are \textit{per se} sensible properties and the underlying bearers of sensible properties are not \textit{per se} sensible, then familiar sensible particulars are identical to complexes of sensible properties (among other items perhaps).

P2) There are \textit{per se} sensible properties and the underlying bearers of sensible properties are not \textit{per se} sensible.

C) Sensible particulars are identical to complexes of sensible properties (among other items perhaps).

\textsuperscript{148} This very point is important to medieval understandings of the sacrament of the Eucharist. If flesh and blood (i.e. human substance as underlying certain sensible species) had its own \textit{per se} phenomenon/a, how would it not thereby be immediately detectable in the case of the sacrament?
As is plain, the argument is valid, and the conclusion of the argument is the truth of constituent ontology. I will not offer any further defense of the truth of the first premise beyond what has already been offered in part three above. I doubt, anyway, that the Platonists we have been discussing would be motivated to deny it. If the bearers of properties are not *per se* sensible, then these bearers cannot be identical to the familiar items of our experience, and if they are not, then complexes of sensible properties—supposing there are such properties—are indeed the best candidates to replace them, since a single sensible property is certainly not what contemporary philosophers have in mind when they speak of “familiar particulars.”

I will, however, offer a defense of the truth of the second premise—the one that asserts what I have been calling “constituent intuitions”—since it is this premise that, I suspect, will be denied by many relationalists/Platonists. I will first defend the first half of the premise—viz. that a) there are some *per se* sensible properties; then the second half—viz. that b) underlying bearers are not *per se* sensible. My defense of the first half of the premise will involve investigating a certain problem: *The Problem of Terminological Origin*—an essential problem for any realist about properties to answer, and one that those friendly to sensible properties can easily address, which Platonists cannot. As we will see, there are sensible properties, for this is the best explanation of the origin of many property words in our language. My defense of the second half of the premise will involve points established while defending the first half. Throughout the following discussion, I will refer to the 1) *necessarily existent*, 2) *necessarily non-spatiotemporal*, 3) *necessarily phenomenologically inert* properties posited by
relationalist/Platonist philosophers like van Inwagen as *p-properties*—i.e. “Platonist properties.” Let us begin.

5.5.1 That There Exist *Per Se* Sensible Properties

5.5.1.1 The Problem of Terminological Origin

Van Inwagen’s method for concluding that properties exist at all is Quinean. He does not think that property words can be paraphrased out of our language, and with no paraphrase in the works, he thinks that we ought to admit their existence since we frequently quantify over them. This is an interesting method for arriving at their existence, but an additional question must accompany this Quinean method, and indeed any well-developed theory of properties: *how did many of these property words get into our languages in the first place?* Call this *The Problem of Terminological Origin.*

By “property words,” I do not mean the word “property” or its concept. It could very well be that we are biologically/ontologically constituted to possess certain very general categories of perception and thought, and that the substance/property distinction reflects two such categories. Even if we have not reflected on these categories themselves, the world we perceive and think about is framed by them. We human beings may, of course, reflect on them. When we do, we are bound to have some cognitive access to them, name them, and thus obtain a word for them in our language. Someone

---


150 I have nothing much to say in defense of the need to answer this question other than that, if someone denies that it needs answering, so much the worse for their philosophy.
can be ignorant of these categories in the sense that they have not yet reflected on them—
e.g. what exactly their nature is, how many of them there are, whether reflection on them
requires experience, etc.—but no human being can be ignorant of them in the sense that
they experience the world cogently without their experience being framed by them.

I do not ask about the origin of the word “property,” then, but rather the origin of
the words that name many of the far more noetically dispensable species of properties
and their genera that we obtain only through experience of the world, and which are often
thought to be simple, natural properties of things—words like “red”, “spherical”, “salty.”
I would call them “simple, sensible properties,” but I do not wish to be taken to be
asserting that they are per se sensible, which is of course the point in question. The ones
I have in mind, anyway, are the ones the having of which is immediately obvious in an
ordinary, aesthetic encounter with something that has them. For example, that a rose has
the color red is immediately obvious in the moment of an ordinary, aesthetic encounter
with it. The property being-a-youngest-sister, however, if there is such a property, is not
so evident. If one met a certain red rose for the first time, that it was red would be no
secret; if one met a certain woman for the first time, discovering whether she is a
youngest sister would require some sleuthing, and even after it was discovered,
presumably one’s aesthetic experience of the woman would go unaffected.

The constituent ontologist who is a friend of sensible properties has a very
straightforward and compelling response to The Problem of Terminological Origin:
Hume, Mach, and Aristotle are correct that some properties are per se sensible. These
properties themselves enter into our often-veridical sensory experiences, we get
acquainted with them, and, as such, we assign names to them. I have cognitive access to
and the opportunity to name an item such as some determinate red through its presentation to my visual faculty. Likewise, Saltiness is a certain characteristic flavor, and I have cognitive access to it and an opportunity to name it when I taste it. What other accounts of our cognitive access to these properties or their terminological origin in the language could possibly compete with this one?\textsuperscript{151}

I suppose that it might be attractive to certain Platonists to try to develop a story about \textit{direct cognitive access} to objects that are as otherworldly as p-properties, especially if that Platonist is a dualist of a sort that posits a mind that is as otherworldly as p-properties and, as such, might be the right sort of thing to apprehend them directly and without sensation. Such a story, however, seems quite doomed, at least in the standard case of human knowledge of properties, for sensation \textit{of something}, anyway, is obviously necessary for the knowledge of many properties and the acquisition of their reference terms.\textsuperscript{152}

Imagine a world in which there are creatures exactly like us, except for the fact that they do not have visual perception. They navigate the world with only four senses. Would such creatures—supposing that there are not other creatures around capable of

\textsuperscript{151} I am essentially raising something of a Benacerraf problem in the context of properties. See Paul Benacerraf, “Mathematical Truth,” in \textit{Philosophy of Mathematics: Selected Readings} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 403-420. Unlike mathematical objects, however, which might be taken to be essentially intelligible rather than sensible, why think that this need be the case with properties? The problem about our cognitive access to and, therefore, our opportunity to name certain properties is immediately solved if those properties are sensible. If other properties are not sensible, then our access to these may be through our access to those which are sensible.

\textsuperscript{152} I am not claiming here that the only way for some individual to get a reference term for something is for that individual to have perceived it, rather I am only claiming that were there no, say, visual perception at all in human beings, then we would not have certain reference terms in the language—e.g. terms like “red”—unless we could acquire them from other non-human speakers with visual perception.
speech and in possession of visual perception—have a word for red or blue? Certainly not. If two of them were to suddenly gain fully functional sight, the first thing they would need to do in order to discuss their new experience would be to coin some new words. But why should this be the case if they were in possession of Cartesian minds—or any faculties for that matter—that were directly in touch with p-red? If knowledge of red could be obtained in this direct manner, apart from sensation, then even those born blind in our world—unaided by other speakers—could have knowledge of and a term for red, yet who would assert this to be the case? Nothing prevents the blind from birth from talking about red, if they learn its name from others, but without the help of the sighted they would have no knowledge of red’s existence and, of course, no term for it either. If this is true—and it is—then the direct access account of our knowledge of p-properties is not a very good one, and the view that some properties are per se sensible is to be preferred to it.

There are, however, more sophisticated attempts by Platonists to explain our cognitive access to properties—viz. attempts that take far more seriously the fact that perception of something, anyway, is a necessary component of our knowledge of certain properties and our possession of certain property words. Here I will examine two claims by van Inwagen that would be good candidates to serve as answers to the Problem of Terminological Origin, as well as a few modifications to these claims that might improve them and make them available to a wider variety of Platonists who have less restrictive ontologies than van Inwagen. I will argue that van Inwagen’s claims will not work as answers to the Problem of Terminological Origin, and that my modifications of his claims, when they do work, do so only by introducing sensible properties into Platonist
theories of properties. As we will see, the theory that some properties are *per se* sensible remains the best response to *The Problem of Terminological Origin*.

### 5.5.1.2 A Possible Platonist Response: We See “That x is F”

Van Inwagen does not go in for a theory of direct cognitive access to p-properties. He instead admits that perception is necessary for our knowledge of certain properties, but denies that it is perception of properties *themselves*.

Properties, if they are assertibles, are not (as some philosophers have said they are) objects of sensation. If colors are properties and properties are assertibles, then the color white is the thing that one says of something when one says of it that it is white. And this assertible is not something that can be seen—just as extracting a cube root is not something you can do with forceps. We never see properties, although we see that certain things have certain properties.\(^{153}\)

Here van Inwagen states his theory of properties as discussed in chapter three, but he does not take anything like the Platonic theory of direct cognitive contact with p-properties stated above. Instead, while denying that we can see a property such as some *infima* species color, he states that we can see, for example, *that the horse is black*—i.e. that the horse has p-black. This claim, I think, is no good as an answer to our problem, and the way to see this is to ask a question in return—viz. what is it that would answer to this “that the horse is black,” in van Inwagen’s ontology? Two possibilities present themselves: 1) “that the horse is black” might pick out a *proposition*, or 2) it might pick

out something like the fact that a certain substance, namely a horse, bears the instantiation relation to p-black—i.e. that it has this p-property.

Neither of these things, however, can be seen given van Inwagen’s ontology or a great many Platonists’ ontologies for that matter. If we go with 1, then the claim is that we can see a proposition. A proposition according to van Inwagen’s ontology, however, is just as invisible an abstractum as p-black, and so if we cannot see p-black, then we cannot see an abstract proposition. We might theorize the existence of such propositions, and if we hold the popular content view of perception we might even theorize that experiences with certain phenomenal character correspond to or express such propositions, albeit in a different manner than sentence tokens do, but we do not thereby see the proposition itself by having the experience any more than we see the proposition itself by seeing an English sentence token that expresses it. This is what we should expect, moreover, since abstract propositions are not themselves the intentional objects of sensation, and as such do not themselves present any character to experience. On the content view, they may be expressed by an experience with a certain phenomenal character, but experiences with phenomenal character are not experiences as of abstract propositions, but rather experiences as of other items—either substances or properties or both (the decision between these options being in part the subject of this chapter).

If, on the other hand, we go with 2, the claim is that we see that a particular substance bears the instantiation relation to an invisible abstractum. The instantiation relation, I suppose, is just as invisible as any relation is on van Inwagen’s ontology. But then the claim is that I can see that a particular horse, for example, bears an invisible relation to an invisible abstract item.
Now, I may theorize that such is the case, but I just never do see as much, or so I claim. This point can be instructively made by comparing van Inwagen’s theory in which colors are “never” seen to a situation contrary to what those who hold color-physicalist theories of color actually assert. In a certain sense of the word “see” the properties that are colors according to the color-physicalist are never seen with the naked eye, since their true nature is never revealed to the naked eye, but rather only to sophisticated scientific equipment. In another sense of the word, however, the colors of the color-physicalist are indeed seen by the naked eye, for accompanying their presence to the visual faculty is an experience with a certain phenomenal character; this experience indicates their presence to the visual faculty and visual experience is as of these properties even if their true nature is not fully revealed in the experience.

If, however, contrary to what color physicalists actually assert, the properties which they identify with colors were not even seen in this second sense by the naked eye, because they did not present themselves to experience in any way whatsoever, then we would never have any aesthetic access to the fact that objects instantiate them—we would never see that x is F where F is a physicalist-color. But this is exactly the situation concerning the never-seen p-properties posited by van Inwagen—they do not present any phenomenon/a to visual experience; we thus never see that x is F where F is a p-color, though we are certainly free to theorize that x is F where F is a p-color. What goes for representationalist theories of perception, moreover, goes equally well in the case of

---

direct realist theories; if visual perception is not a re-presentation of items, but rather a
direct awareness of them, and yet I am in no way whatsoever visually aware of F, then I
cannot see that x bears any relation to F, though again I am free to theorize that it is so.

I might strengthen the point that we do not see objects standing in relations to invisibilia with an example of a fact involving a thing’s relation to something that I assume most people would agree is an invisibilium. If a copy of the Celestial Hierarchy stood in a relation to an archangel—a radically invisible though admittedly not abstract being—such that the angel could levitate the book at will, we could not see that the book stands in this relation to him.\(^{155}\) We could not even see this fact if he levitated it before our very eyes, since, though we see the book and its motion, neither the angel himself nor his relation to the book presents anything to sensible experience. The supernaturalist is free to theorize the angel in explanation of the phenomenon and the naturalist is free to deny his theory, but both speculate rather than describe visual experiences of objects standing in relations to invisibilia, for we do not ever see such facts. Indeed, if we did see such things, the naturalist’s denial of supernaturalism would not come in the form of a mere alternate explanation—e.g. “a gust of wind lifted it”—but rather in the form of an alternate explanation alongside an affirmation of the existence of an illusion—e.g. “though it seems to my senses that this here angel lifted it, in fact this is an illusion caused by bad humours.” We do not see, then, that x bears any relationship to F, where F is an invisibilium.

\(^{155}\) I use “abstract” here with van Inwagen’s meaning. See “A Theory of Properties,” pp. 108-113. The archangel mentioned is by his reckoning non-physical but “concrete.”
What if we give Platonists more explanatory leeway than van Inwagen’s own theories afford? Perhaps certain Platonists who are more comfortable with causal explanation than van Inwagen, for instance, would like to speak in the manner of Loux—when he first describes relationalist theories to his readers—and say that familiar items have a certain “character.” These Platonists might then say that we see this character or we see “that x has this character” and then we posit the existence and instantiation of sensibly impotent p-properties in explanation of the object having this character. These Platonists might think that this account allows them to have a different understanding of “seeing that x is F”—one that does not mean that they are claiming that we see objects standing in invisible instantiation relations to invisibilia—and that it is on account of this character that we would obtain words like “red” in our language.

Perhaps even van Inwagen could try a non-explanatory version of this story. Sometimes he speaks as though we see that an assertible is “truly said of” something. Perhaps we might take him to be identifying the instantiation relation with the “truly said of” relation and asserting that “seeing that x is F” does not mean seeing that x stands in an invisible instantiation relation to an invisible assertible, but rather means only that we see that x has a certain character. We might then see that x has a certain character and thereby see—or less literally, posit with good reason—that some assertible is “truly said

———


157 It would need to be a non-explanatory version anyway, since van Inwagen eschews explanation in metaphysics. See “Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies,” pp. 398-400.

158 As when he says that “Looking at the pen, one can see that what one says of a thing when one says it’s cylindrical is a thing that can be truly said of the pen.”—i.e. we see that the assertible “being cylindrical” is truly said of x. See “A Theory of Properties,” p.135.
of” x—i.e. that x instantiates F. This view has the benefit of not making the meaning of “seeing that x is F” out to be seeing that x instantiates F where the instantiation relation and F are *invisibilia*.

We ought to meet these assertions as we did before—viz. with a question: what is the ontological status of this “character?” If it has no existence at all, then I’m not sure what “seeing that x has a certain character” means, for the phrase seems to make some real distinction between x and the character it has, thus admitting the existence of characters that will be as difficult to paraphrase away as any property is. But if this character really exists as something distinct from the sensible underlier and its p-properties, then I think that *it is this very character that the friends of sensible properties will identify with the sensible properties of which they speak*—e.g. the friends of sensible properties will say that “red” doesn’t name p-red in most utterances, but rather a certain visible character, namely the red that any child knows and which appears to the senses. After identifying this character with the sensible properties of which they speak, the friends of sensible properties will likely see the addition of p-properties as ontologically superfluous. We don’t need p-red to be the referent of “red,” they will say, since we already found the genuine referent of the term in the visible character now being discussed. Friends of sensible properties, of course, need not think this; they might allow for both this character and p-properties, if they think they have reason to do so, but I suspect that most will find many p-properties to be superfluous *positis* and certainly not the referents of words like “red” or “salty”, nor capable of explaining the origin of such terms in the language.
If the Platonist objects to the friend’s identification of this character with her sensible properties, not by denying its existence, but with the claim that we don’t see this character (since the character itself is invisible), but only see “that x has this character,” the friend can simply repeat the arguments given above against the claim that we see abstract propositions or that we see substances standing in invisible relations to *invisibilia*. I may theorize that substances stand in relations to *invisibilia*, but I simply never see that such is the case.

Ultimately, for the positing of this character to do any work in explaining the origin of particular property words, it must itself enter into our experience, but as soon as this is admitted, the friend of sensible properties will simply identify it with the sensible properties she advocates. I see little hope, then, that “seeing that x is F” will help the Platonist account for the presence of words like “red”, “spherical”, or “salty” in the language without the introduction of sensible properties. The constituent ontologist who posits some *per se* sensible properties, then, still has the upper hand, for they have no problem explaining our cognitive access to these properties and the opportunity to assign them names.

5.5.1.3 Another Possible Platonist Response: The Adverbial Theory of Perception

Van Inwagen will sometimes make use of another theory that might be a good candidate for providing the resources for answering the problem raised—the adverbial theory of perception:

Consider sky-blue—the color of the sky. Let us suppose for the sake of the illustration that nothing—no exotic bird, no flower, no 1958 Cadillac—is sky-blue. (If I say that nothing is sky-blue, it’s not to the point to tell me that the sky is sky-blue or that a reflection of the
sky in a pool is sky-blue, for there is no such thing as the sky and there are no such things as reflections. And don’t tell me that when I look at the sky on a fine day I perceive a sky-blue quale or visual image or sense-datum, for there are no qualia or visual images or sense-data. I may be sensing sky-bluely when I look at the sky on a fine day, but that shows at most that something has the property “sensing sky-bluely”; it does not show that something has the property “being sky-blue.”)

Sensing sky-bluely might be thought to be an excellent candidate for doing the work of granting us cognitive access to sky-blue and getting a word like “sky-blue” into the language. It seems to me, however, that the adverbial theory is not an option for van Inwagen for a few reasons.

First, the adverbial theory is normally taken to be not only a denial of any act-object structure within experience, but also a denial that experience is a presentation as of ordinary things or properties. As Crane and French note:

The adverbialist rejects not just the idea that experience has a genuine act-object structure, but the idea that the character of experience is even a presentation as of ordinary things and qualities. Qualities (i.e. properties) get into the picture, and are constitutive of phenomenal character, but not by being presented from outside of experience as qualities of things, as Openness would have it. How, then, can the adverbialist account even for the appearance of an act-

---


160 I should note that in addressing the adverbial theory here I am not definitively attributing it to van Inwagen. He certainly uses its chosen vocabulary in order to address the philosophical problem with which the above passage deals, and so it is not at all a wild interpretation to suppose that he is endorsing it, though I doubt somewhat that he would unqualifiedly endorse it if pushed. I am also not suggesting that in this passage he is positing the adverbial theory in order to answer what I have called the problem of terminological origin. If he’s willing to put it to use to solve one problem, however, he may well be willing to put it to use to solve another, and it is certainly a candidate for solving the problem I have raised. I address it, then, to show that van Inwagen cannot make easy use of it to solve the Problem of Terminological Origin, if he would indeed intend to, and that, even if he would not, other Platonists cannot make easy use of it.
object structure within experience, for *Openness*? It is unclear how the adverbialist is to answer this question.\(^1\)

If it is unclear, then van Inwagen does nothing to clear it up, something which he should do, since, as noted above, he postulates that we “see that x is F”—a thesis which is not only reasonably taken to maintain an act-object distinction, but also obviously makes experience out to be a presentation *as of* objects possessing properties. These are the very features that the adverbial theory undermines, and so without an explanation for why it does not undermine them, van Inwagen presents us with two incompatible perceptual theories—viz. a theory in which we “see that x is F” and the adverbial theory.

Second, and more importantly, van Inwagen’s two-category ontology is not rich enough to support the adverbial theory of perception, at least not as it has been explicated by philosophers of perception. Adverbialists, after all, believe in the existence of experience and the phenomenal character of experience. Sensing sky-bluely, for the adverbialist, is an experience, and sky-blue the phenomenal character of that experience. Belief in subjects of experience, experience, and the phenomenal character of experience, as opposed to other ontological posits in the philosophy of perception is—as Crane and French note—supposed to be one of the advantages of the adverbial theory:

Part of the point of the adverbial theory, as defended by Ducasse (1942) and Chisholm (1957) was to do justice to the phenomenology of experience whilst avoiding the dubious metaphysical commitments the sense-datum theorists take on in responding to the Problem of Perception. The only entities which the adverbialist needs to acknowledge are subjects of experience, experiences,

---

themselves, and ways these experiences are modified. This makes the theory appear less controversial than the sense‐datum theory.  

But does van Inwagen have room for experiences and phenomenal character (i.e. “ways these experiences are modified”) in his two‐category ontology? It seems to me that he does not.

In the above quote, van Inwagen speaks of “the property ‘sensing sky‐bluely,’” so it appears that he takes sensing sky‐bluely to be a property—something in the category abstract object. Properties for van Inwagen, however, are one and all p‐properties, and whatever a p‐property is, it is manifest that it cannot be identical to an experience with a phenomenal character—e.g. p‐sensing‐sky‐bluely, an admittedly abstract object, cannot, I presume, be an experience with a phenomenal character—for consider how the former differs from the experiences posited by adverbialists:

First, like all p‐properties, p‐sensing‐sky‐bluely is—by van Inwagen’s own admission—a non‐empirical posit. We are not empirically familiar with such things as p‐properties (and we certainly don’t introspect them), but the experiences admitted by the adverbialists—while not themselves the objects of empirical investigation/sensation—are immediately apprehended by the subject whose experiences they are. By being introspectable, they are, in an important sense, very much empirical.

Second, all experiences, according to the adverbialist are experiences of some conscious subject—i.e. there is no such thing as an experience that is had by nothing. p‐properties, however, need no conscious subject in which to inhere, nor even an

162 Ibid. 3.2.1 The Adverbial Theory and the Problem of Perception, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/perception‐problem/#AdvTheProPer
unconscious object, for on van Inwagen’s view of properties, a host of properties exists uninstantiated in the actual world, and there are possible worlds in which perhaps all properties exist uninstantiated.

Thirdly, experiences often serve causal or explanatory functions. It is because Ole Nelly had the experience of being kicked in the belly in the barn that she had a fear of children and a hearty dislike for the Ole Man who said “it wouldn’t do ‘er any harm.” But p-properties—at least on van Inwagen’s view of them—are not explanatory.

Lastly, we might also add to this list that experiences as conceived by most adverbialists—even if qualitatively identical—are numerically distinct, yet p-properties are universals and thus not numerically distinct by being multiply instantiated. Experiences, then, are not p-properties nor other abstracta.

Could they instead be concreta?—not at least in the sense of being visible or invisible substances, for I take it that no one would assert that sensing sky-bluely, Secretariat, and a Seraphim are in the same category, especially given that an experience must be the experience of some subject, while Secretariat and a Seraphim are the sorts of subjects in which experiences inhere. And so while foxes have their dens, and birds their nests, sensing sky-bluely—as it is used by adverbialists—finds nowhere to lay its head in a two-category ontology. Van Inwagen, then, cannot make use of the adverbial theory under his current ontological restrictions. Nothing prevents van Inwagen from attempting to rework the theory without making use of experience or phenomenal character, but he has not even begun this project which already sounds so distant from current adverbial theories that one doubts that it merits the same name.
Most importantly, even if such a project were possible, by getting rid of experience and the phenomenal character of experience, van Inwagen would also destroy the vehicle by which certain property words we possess might have come into our language. If p-sensing-sky-bluely is not an introspectable sensible experience, and p-sky-blue not a sensibly experienced property, then how could anyone ever be cognizant of, in the former case, themselves instantiating it, or in the latter case, it being instantiated by something, and if they are in no way cognizant of either, then how is it that they came to have the term “sky-bluely” or “sky-blue?”

The adverbial theory, in my opinion, should be abandoned merely on the ground that it cannot properly account for the intentionality of experience, but what about Platonists who—abandoning the adverbial theory—still allow for a richer ontology than van Inwagen? Can they account for the origin of property words in the language without making use of sensible properties? Suppose a Platonist posited substances and p-properties, but also allowed for the existence of experiences with phenomenal character. On this view, what was sensing-sky-bluely in the now-abandoned adverbial theory could be better understood to be an intentional experience with a certain phenomenal character, and p-sensing-sky-bluely could be the p-property had by all and only those things which are having the experience with the appropriate phenomenal character. Will this richer ontology do much good accounting for the origin of words like “sky-blue” in the language? It would, I think, but in the process, it would reintroduce sensible properties. To grasp this point, consider first that allowing for the existence of phenomenal character at all is to introduce things like phenomenal sky-blueness. A demonstration of this is easy enough.
It cannot be the case, anyway, that substances alone enter the phenomenal character of our experiences. Why? Consider two experiences of a Notre Dame duck who takes a dip in the Hesburgh reflecting pool that has been dyed blue for ease of reflecting—the first experience before the duck’s swim, the second after. The phenomenal character of the second experience is different than the phenomenal character of the first. Phenomenal duckness, however—if there even is such a thing—cannot be what differs between the two experiences, for both are equally ducky, if ducky at all. No, what differs is that—whatever other character may enter into the second experience—the second experience is characterized by phenomenal sky-blueness, while the first is not. Allowing for the existence of phenomenal character, then, is to allow for things like phenomenal sky-blueness.

But now note that experiences—whether veridical or not—are always presentations as of something; this is why we abandoned the adverbial theory, since it cannot account for this fact. Of what is a phenomenally sky-blue experience an experience as of? Certainly the answer is that it is an experience as of the property sky-blue, and, indeed, the sensible property sky-blue, for it is surely those things that present some characteristic phenomenal character to experience that deserve to be called sensible. As noted above, this point can be agreed upon even by those who disagree about the degree to which the phenomenal character of experience reveals the true nature of that of which it is the experience. Color primitivists, for example, who think that color is a simple sui generis property had by objects often think that naked-eye viewing reveals most if not all of what there is to know about the nature of sky-blue, while color physicalists think that sophisticated scientific equipment is necessary to discover the
nature of the properties which they think are identical to colors. Both camps, however, agree that color is visible, insofar as they agree that the presence of color to the visual faculty presents characteristic phenomenal character to experience. By contrast, a thing’s taste presents no visual phenomenal character and so is invisible.

By introducing experiences with phenomenal character into one’s ontology, and thus things like phenomenal sky-blueness, then, one also introduces sensible sky-blue, for a phenomenally sky-blue experience is an experience as of sensible sky blue. It will be on account of this sensible property and its corresponding phenomenal character that the word for the color enters the language, and it will not enter the language without it, and so even with a richer ontology than van Inwagen’s, a Platonist will not be able to account for the origin of certain property words in the language without the introduction of sensible properties.

“Seeing that x is F” and the adverbial theory, then, cannot help van Inwagen explain the origin of certain property words in the language, and the richer Platonist accounts considered introduce sensible properties in addition to the p-properties posited by Platonists. The conclusion to be drawn, then, is that there exist some per se sensible properties, for the existence of per se sensible properties allows for a straightforward and compelling explanation of our cognitive access to certain properties as well as the origin of certain property words in our languages. If the Platonist thinks otherwise, then let him go back to the drawing board in an effort to answer the Problem of Terminological Origin convincingly. Until a greatly compelling Platonist theory is developed, one ought to believe in existence of per se sensible properties, for that certain property words find
themselves in the language because certain properties are sensible, is a greatly compelling theory.

5.5.1.4 Can the Problem of Terminological Origin Be Turned Around on Its Wielder?

At this point, it is worth noting that The Problem of Terminological Origin cannot be turned around so easily on its wielder. I asked van Inwagen how it is that certain property words entered the language, but then problematized his theories on account of the radically non-empirical nature of p-properties; one might think that he could just as easily ask the friend of sensible properties about how substance words entered the language, and that the friend would be equally baffled. Many friends, remember, either think that there is no substance in the sense of something that underlies its properties (e.g. Hume), or they think that while this substance exists, it is not itself presented to sensible experience, but only its properties are so presented (e.g. Aristotle). How then do we have words like “magnolia,” “tiger,” “human being?” It seems to me that the friend has a far easier time accounting for the origin of our substance words in the language than Platonists do many of our property words.

If sensible properties are in fact presented to us in experience, they certainly are not presented in isolation from one another, rather they go with one another. It is precisely this fact that allows Frank Jackson such an effective criticism of the adverbial theory of perception.\footnote{Frank Jackson, “On the Adverbial Analysis of Visual Experience,” Metaphilosophy 6 (1975), pp. 127-135.} The senses, then, do not only present red and round, for example, but red with round, etc.
If this is the case, however, the friend of sensible properties has an easy account of how substance words get into the language. When certain sensible properties are presented to the senses, certain sensible property unions are also presented to the senses. These common unions will be different from one another insofar as they comprise different sensible properties, and we may not only assign names to the properties that affect us sensibly, but also to the unions of sensible properties—e.g. certain sensible figures, colors, etc. will be united and this union we will call “duck” as opposed to “horse” in which different sensible properties are united.

Let me also adapt this model for the acquisition of substance words to a substance/substratum paradigm, rather than a bundle paradigm: even if it is not the unions themselves that the name is applied to, but to some substratum or substance in which they inhere and which itself is not presented to the senses, this substratum or substance is still named by way of the properties that are unified with one another by inhering in it—i.e. it will receive a name through the presentation to the senses of the union of many sensible properties which it makes possible by being the thing in which they are united.164

In his discussion of how we come to have ideas of and words for “the sorts of substances” Locke illustrates the above points well:

An obscure and relative idea of substance in general being thus made we come to have the ideas of particular sorts of substances, by collecting such combinations of simple ideas as are, by experience and observation of men’s senses, taken notice to exist together; and are therefore supposed to flow from the particular internal constitution, or unknown essence of that substance. Thus we come to have ideas of man, horse, gold, water, &c.; of which substances,

164 In some substance accounts, this substance may be a cause of these properties and their union in a more robust way than simply being a pincushion in which they sit.
whether any one has any other clear idea, further than of certain simple ideas co-existent together, I appeal to every one’s own experience. It is the ordinary qualities observable in iron, or a diamond, put together, that make the true complex idea of those substances, which a smith or a jeweler commonly knows better than a philosopher; who, whatever substantial forms he may talk of, has no other idea of those substances, than what is framed by a collection of those simple ideas which are to be found in them: only we must take notice, that our complex ideas of substances, besides all those simple ideas they are made up of, have always the confused idea of something to which they belong, and in which they subsist: and therefore when we speak of any sort of substance, we say it is a thing having such or such qualities.\footnote{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, p. 194.}

The passage suggests that Locke supports the bundle theory since he notes that the “true” complex idea of a substance is nothing more than the unity of certain simple sensible ideas, but he nonetheless suggests that we cannot help treating—perhaps because we are hardwired to do so—“any sort of substance” as identical to “a thing having such and such qualities”—i.e. as identical to the underlier that does not present itself to the senses. Locke, I suppose, does not believe that there is some underlier that does not reveal itself to the senses, but which is the base of those properties that do, but the passage shows at least that for those who do countenance such a thing, its being named as this or that sort of substance will come from the sensible properties which present themselves to experience in a unified manner by inhering in it and which differ from those presented by inhering in other such underliers.

The friend of sensible properties, then, can have recourse to the unity of many sensible properties in experience to account for the presence of substance words in the language. They also have an elegant way of explaining what is meant by the phrase “I
see that x is F.” This phrase does not assert that I see a radically invisible substratum standing in a relation to a sensible property—something that cannot be seen any more than a substance standing in a relation to a radically invisible p-property can be seen—but rather it asserts that I see that a certain sensible property is united with others—e.g. shades of brown are united with certain continuous quantities, figures, textures, etc., the unity of which we name “horse” (or in the substratum version, the cause of the unity of which we name “horse”). Platonists of the sort we’ve been discussing, however, have no recourse to this method, since properties are *simple abstracta*, not complexes of sensible properties or the substrata in which such complexes inhere and find their unity. The constituent ontologist who admits the existence of sensible properties and non-sensible substrata (if there are any), can explain both the origin of property words as well as the origin of substance words in the language. This is a great advantage to constituent views that countenance sensible properties, and one that cannot be equaled by Platonism until a convincing answer to the *Problem of Terminological Origin* has been offered.

5.5.2 That Underliers Are Not *Per Se* Sensible

I will here defend the second half of the second premise in the argument at the beginning of part five. I will take it to have been established that there exist some sensible properties on the strength of the arguments above, and that—depending on your theory of perception—we are either directly aware of these properties or they present some phenomenal character to our experience (I will here speak in terms of the latter theory). If there are sensible properties, it seems to me that it follows quite naturally that the underlying bearers of properties are not *per se* sensible.
To see this, consider again the experience of the sky-blue, Hesburgh duck. There you are, veridically experiencing this sky-blue duck. In fact, it’s a rather friendly duck. It’s on your lap, and you’re petting it. As you introspect your experience, abstract from the phenomenal sky-blueness, the phenomenal character of continuous quantities, of shapes, of textures, of smells, etc. Of course, they are still there in your experience, since you cannot really make them go away without changing your situation, but bracket them from your concentration and then ask yourself this question: what is left of phenomenal duckness? The answer, it seems to me, is nothing at all, and, hence, the underlier whose properties you are experiencing (if there is one) itself presents nothing to experience. Phenomenal duckness, is nothing more than the unity of the phenomenal characters presented by many properties.

To assert otherwise would be to assert a redundant phenomenology—i.e. there would be the multifarious phenomenal character that the duck itself presents to experience and each of the phenomenal characters of its individual sensible properties. But isn’t this to insert something pleonastic into experience that is not really there? What is left over of this multifarious character of phenomenal duckness once one abstracts from the characters associated with the individual properties? Are you not stealing from phenomenal duckness itself, when you go ignoring each of the phenomenal characters associated with each of the duck’s sensible properties in this abstractive process?\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{166} Contrast with this the circumstance in which you abstract some phenomenal smell from an experience that also has phenomenal sky-blueness. By abstracting from the smell, you would not be stealing anything from phenomenal sky-blueness.
Perhaps the point would be clearer to some in reverse, namely, if we go adding things rather than taking them away via abstraction. Earlier, in the case of the Hesburgh duck, I asked you to imagine two experiences, one before the duck was sky-blue and another afterward. In that second experience, something new was on the experiential scene—viz. phenomenal sky-blueness. Baam! There it is. It was not there before in your experience, but there it is now. You have no problem, moreover, identifying it and isolating it from the other phenomenal characters of your experience. By “isolating it,” I do not mean that you could have a phenomenally sky-blue experience without that experience also having other phenomenal character—e.g. without the phenomenal character of some shape—for experience always contains a multiplicity of phenomenal characters. I mean only that you have no trouble telling that it was phenomenal sky-blueness that arrived on the scene in the second experience, and that you are not confused about it perhaps being some other character, for you can tell phenomenal sky-blueness apart from things like phenomenal roundness, phenomenal saltiness, etc. with ease. Just as easily, you can tell phenomenal sky-blueness apart from all the phenomenal character of experience taken together. You would have no great trouble, moreover, indicating phenomenal sky-blueness to someone else, if they were confused what you meant by saying that you had a sky-blue experience. You might get a sky-blue crayon and hand it to them and say “like this.” If they said “oh, I get it,” but then drew crayon shape for you on a blackboard, you could say, “I see how my gesture and words could have given you the wrong idea; rather what I meant is that my experience was like this,” and then draw a messy patch of sky-blue marks on paper, so as to try to clear up for them that you were speaking of color phenomenology rather than shape phenomenology.
Now, suppose you think—contrary to what I am asserting—that phenomenal duckness is something other than merely the union of phenomenal characters of many sensible properties. Imagine another set of two experiences, one earlier, one later. In the first experience, let there be unified the phenomenal characters of all the sensible properties that a duck typically presents to experience, but missing from this experience is phenomenal duckness, and this is conceivable, for, as you assert, phenomenal duckness is something different than merely the union of the phenomenal characters presented to sensation by typical duck properties. Let the second experience differ from the first only in that phenomenal duckness is now added to what was already there.

Now answer these questions: what newly arrived on the scene? Is it as easy to identify what is new in this second experience as it was to identify phenomenal sky-blueness as what was new in the second experience of the first set of experiences? In the second set, can you as easily tell phenomenal duckness apart from each of the individual phenomenal characters as well as all of the characters together as, in the first set, you could tell phenomenal sky-blueness apart from each as well as all of the characters? If someone held my opinion—viz. that phenomenal duckness is nothing over and above the union of many sensible properties—could you indicate what had newly arrived on the scene in the second set as you did with phenomenal sky-blueness in the first?

I wager that it is not easy to say what is new, how it differs from the other characters—each or all of them—or to indicate it to me if I am confused about your meaning, and the reason for all of this is that phenomenal duckness is nothing over and above the union of many sensible properties. There simply is nothing new in the second experience of the second set, and this is because phenomenal duckness was already
present in the first set as the union of the phenomenal characters of many sensible properties. There is not much more that can be said to motivate these points. This is why Locke does not present an argument for non-sensible underliers, so much as ask his reader to agree that there are sensible properties and then introspect their own experience and find that there is no additional idea of substance beyond the union of the ideas of certain sensible properties, for he notes: “whether any one has any other clear idea, further than of certain simple ideas co-existent together, I appeal to every one’s own experience.”

It is worth pointing out that both the Platonist and the constituent ontologist who is friend of sensible properties eschew the redundant phenomenology that I speak of above. Whatever they make the items most familiar to sensation—whether underlier or properties—they make sure to make the other item sensibly elusive. This is a point that could bear more attention in philosophical discussions about seeing that x is F. As I pointed out above, the constituent ontologist who is a friend to sensible properties has an elegant way of dealing with this kind of statement that does not require either 1) saying that we see that sensible items stand in relations to invisibilia, or 2) affirming the redundant phenomenology that everyone seems eager to avoid. Avoiding this redundant phenomenology seems to me like a very good idea regardless of what one thinks is per se sensible. Theories that avoid it, anyway, are better than theories that do not, because there just is not unique phenomenology presented by both underliers and properties; one or the other exhausts what is sensible about sensible familiar items. The question, then, is

167 Ibid.
this: which is it? I have argued that it is properties, for otherwise we would not have acquired many of their terms. Substance terms, however, on the constituent view that accepts the existence of some sensible properties, can be acquired merely by experiencing the union of many sensible properties.

Above I gave reasons for accepting the existence of sensible properties. Affirming their existence is the simplest and most straightforward way explaining the origin of many property words in our languages, and Platonists have no easy time explaining the origin of these words by means of an alternate theory. There are, therefore, sensible properties. Having affirmed the existence of sensible properties, if we wish to avoid a redundant phenomenology that experience does not support, then we must affirm that underliers are not per se sensible. But then some properties are per se sensible, and underliers are not, and this is the second premise of the argument that I set out to defend.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have both explained the coherence of constituent ontology and defended its truth. The former was accomplished by showing how the constituent view follows naturally from certain common aesthetic intuitions, the second was accomplished by defending a simple argument whose conclusion was the truth of constituent ontology, and whose more controversial premise—viz. the truth of constituent aesthetic intuitions—I defended in detail with a discussion of the Problem of Terminological Origin. I hope this defense of the coherence and truth of constituent ontology not only helps relationalists/Platonists to understand the wide appeal of constituent ontology in
both historical and contemporary philosophy, but also gives them occasion either to
answer the problem raised or to abandon/augment their Platonism for/with a constituent
ontological strategy that makes use of sensible properties.
CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation has been twofold: 1) to show that Aristotle’s ontology—viz. his doctrines of hylomorphism and accidental unities—is indeed a constituent ontology, and 2) to show that, by being so, it is not only not incoherent on account of having committed a category mistake, but is in fact coherent and better off than many versions of contemporary Platonism. In the process of achieving these aims, I have also defended constituent ontology more generally against the universal scope of van Inwagen’s claims; the same reason given, moreover, for preferring Aristotle’s ontology to versions of contemporary Platonism that do not posit sensible properties—viz. that it can account for the origin of many of our property words—is a reason for preferring most constituent ontologies to these Platonisms.

My motivations for undertaking these demonstrations are various. The most basic are straightforward; I wish to correct a tendency in contemporary Aristotelian scholarship to be deflationary about the real difference between matter and form, and I wish to defend an entire branch of ontology against the mistaken claim that it commits a category mistake.

My more remote motivations include the following. The moderate dualism of hylomorphism is one of its most important features. If talk of the soul/body distinction within composite substance is just talk, and corresponds to nothing in reality, then Aristotle’s questions and answers about the immortality of the intellectual soul are nonsense. I happen to think that his questions and answers concerning the intellectual soul are very interesting, and so my defense of the presence of this moderate dualism in
Aristotle’s philosophy is in the service of inspiring further inquiry into some of Aristotle’s most important questions—viz. what the exact nature of the soul really is and whether it has the capacity to survive the corruption of the composite substance.

The act/potency distinction is also at the root of important theological doctrines. The doctrine of Divine simplicity, anyway, is only intelligible in the sense that it is a denial of the kind of composition found in created substances, and especially created physical substance. If created substances are not really composite as to their essence and existence, however, then it is hard to imagine what is being denied by theologians when they say that God is unlike created things in His simplicity. And so, even though I have immediate historical and philosophical points in mind in defending Aristotle’s moderate dualism and constituent ontology’s freedom from a category mistake, I also wish to maintain the intelligibility and importance of certain questions about the soul and God and to open further inquiry in to these topics.

I have left for another discussion the question of the superiority of Aristotle’s ontology to other constituent accounts. This question deserves a book unto itself. Loux and van Cleve have already done some work arguing for the necessity of a notion of substance distinct from that of a mere bundle of properties. The most obvious reason for positing this distinction is that if Socrates is this individual man as an underlier of properties, and not a bundle of properties, then he can get a tan without ceasing to be himself, which fits our intuitions nicely, since no one prepares to attend the funeral of a friend simply because he is headed to the beach.

I find this a compelling reason to posit underlying substance, but I think that there are many other reasons to prefer a substance account like Aristotle’s to other constituent
ontologies. For one thing, substantial form is an interesting candidate for the solving of certain unity questions that persist in contemporary philosophy. While many answers to the special composition question have been posited, not a great deal of work has been done investigating the role that substantial form might play in answering such a question. Certainly, Aristotle saw substantial form as answering some kind of question about the unity of physical things. This much is clear from *Metaphysics* VII.17. Whether this question aligns perfectly with the special composition question, or is different in important ways, is something that bears further investigation. Certainly, there is a *prima facie* reason for seeing substantial form as a necessary and sufficient condition for the unity of a physical whole—viz. on Aristotle’s account it is a *cause* in some sense of such wholes, and being a cause of something is often a way of being a necessary and sufficient condition of its obtaining. The causal nature of form is already something that would make it a quite different answer to unity questions than the answers posited by van Inwagen in *Material beings*. If it turns out that hylomorphism has additional resources for solving questions about the unity of physical wholes, something that certainly looks true at a glance, this would be a reason for preferring it to other constituent accounts.

All of these questions and more bear further investigation. Here I have tried only to retrieve the moderate dualism of Aristotle’s constituent ontology and defend that ontology against those who would suggest that it is unintelligible on account of being constituent.


