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Sketches Of The History Of Man

In Two Volumes

Home, Henry

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Sect. 1. On the Five Predicables.

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family, and could not have been otherwise than as they are. The remaining chapters contain many minute observations concerning the equipollency of propositions both pure and modal.

C H A P. II.

Remarks.

SECT. I. *On the Five Predicables.*

THE writers on logic have borrowed their materials almost entirely from Aristotle's Organon, and Porphyry's Introduction. The Organon however was not wrote by Aristotle as one work. It comprehends various tracts, wrote without the view of making them parts of one whole, and afterwards thrown together by his editors under one name on account of their affinity. Many of his books that are lost would have made a part of the Organon, if they had been saved.

The three treatises of which we have given a brief account, are unconnected with each other, and with those that follow. And although the first was undoubtedly compiled by Porphyry, and the two last probably by Aristotle, yet I consider them as the venerable remains of a philosophy more ancient than Aristotle. Archytas of Tarentum, an eminent mathematician and philosopher of the Pythagorean school, is said to have wrote upon the ten categories. And the five predicables probably had their origin in the same school. Aristotle, tho' abundantly careful to do justice to himself, does not claim the invention of either. And Porphyry, without

without ascribing the latter to Aristotle, professes only to deliver the doctrine of the ancients, and chiefly of the Peripatetics, concerning them.

The writers on logic having divided that science into three parts; the first treating of simple apprehension, and of terms; the second, of judgement, and of propositions; and the third, of reasoning, and of syllogisms. The materials of the first part are taken from Porphyry's Introduction, and the Categories; and those of the second from the book of Interpretation.

A predicable, according to the grammatical form of the word, might seem to signify, whatever may be predicated, that is, affirmed or denied, of some subject. And in this sense every predicate would be a predicable. But the logicians give a different meaning to the word. They divide propositions into certain classes, according to the relation which the predicate of the proposition bears to the subject. The first class is that wherein the predicate is the *genus* of the subject; as when we say, *This is a triangle, Jupiter is a planet.* In the second class, the predicate is a *species* of the subject; as when we say, *This triangle is right-angled.* A third class is when the predicate is the specific difference of the subject; as when we say, *Every triangle has three sides and three angles.* A fourth when the predicate is a property of the subject; as when we say, *The angles of every triangle are equal to two right angles.* And a fifth class is when the predicate is something accidental to the subject; as when we say, *This triangle is neatly drawn.*

Each of these classes comprehends a great variety of propositions, having different subjects, and different predicates; but in each class the relation between the predicate and the subject is the same. Now it is to this relation that logicians have given the name of a *predicable*. Hence it is, that altho' the number of predicates be infinite, yet the number of predicables can be no greater than that

that of the different relations which may be in propositions between the predicate and the subject. And if all propositions belong to one or other of the five classes above mentioned, there can be but five predicables, to wit, *genus*, *species*, *differentia*, *proprium*, and *accidens*. These might, with more propriety perhaps, have been called *the five classes of predicates*; but use has determined them to be called *the five predicables*.

It may also be observed, that as some objects of thought are individuals, such as, *Julius Caesar*, *the city Rome*; so others are common to many individuals, as *good*, *great*, *virtuous*, *vicious*. Of this last kind are all things expressed by adjectives. Things common to many individuals were by the ancients called *universals*. All predicates are universals, for they all have the nature of adjectives; and, on the other hand, all universals may be predicates. On this account universals may be divided into the same classes as predicates; and as the five classes of predicates above mentioned have been called the five predicables, so by the same kind of phraseology they have been called *the five universals*; altho' they may more properly be called *the five classes of universals*.

The doctrine of the five universals or predicables makes an essential part of every system of logic, and has been handed down without any change to this day. The very name of *predicables* shews, that the author of this division, whoever he was, intended it as a complete enumeration of all the kinds of things that can be affirmed of any subject; and so it has always been understood. So that it is implied in this division, that all that can be affirmed of any thing whatsoever, is either the *genus* of the thing, or its *species*, or its *specific difference*, or some *property* or *accident* belonging to it.

Burgerfdick, a very acute writer in logic, seems to have been aware, that strong objections might be made to the five predicables, considered as a complete enumeration; but unwilling to al-



low any imperfection in this ancient division, he endeavours to restrain the meaning of the word *predicable*, so as to obviate objections. Those things only, says he, are to be accounted predicables, which may be affirmed of *many individuals, truly, properly, and immediately*. The consequence of putting such limitations upon the word *predicable* is, that in many propositions, perhaps in most, the predicate is not a predicable. But admitting all his limitations, the enumeration will still be very incomplete: for of many things we may affirm truly, properly, and immediately, their existence, their end, their cause, their effect, and various relations which they bear to other things. These, and perhaps many more, are predicables in the strict sense of the word, no less than the five which have been so long famous.

Altho' Porphyry, and all subsequent writers, make the predicables to be, in number, five; yet Aristotle himself, in the beginning of the Topics, reduces them to four; and demonstrates, that they can be no more. We shall give his demonstration when we come to the Topics; and shall only here observe, that as Burgerfick justifies the fivefold division, by restraining the meaning of the word *predicable*; so Aristotle justifies the fourfold division, by enlarging the meaning of the words *property* and *accident*.

After all, I apprehend, that this ancient division of predicables, with all its imperfections, will bear a comparison with those which have been substituted in its stead by the most celebrated modern philosophers.

Locke, in his Essay on the Human Understanding, having laid it down as a principle, That all our knowledge consists in perceiving certain agreements and disagreements between our ideas, reduces these agreements and disagreements to four heads: to wit, 1. Identity and Diversity; 2. Relation; 3. Coexistence; 4. Real Existence (*a*). Here are four predicables given as a complete e-

(a) Book 4, chap. 1.

numeration,

