ARISTOTLE ON THE SUBJECT OF PREDICATION

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In "On a Fregean Dogma," F. Sommers[1] showed that it was an unwarranted dogma of contemporary logic that all predications must be to a singular subject. One consequence of this dogma is that concept or universal introducing terms cannot be the proper (logical) subjects of any subject-predicate sentences. Such terms are always logical predicates regardless of their grammatical role in any sentence.[2] Now K. Gyekye[3] has attempted to foist this dogma upon Aristotle himself.

Gyekye cites Aristotle's thesis that universals such as white, walking, etc. cannot exist *per se*, but must inhere in an individual primary substance such as this dog or Socrates. Thus, to use Gyekye's example, in the sentence 'Piety is a virtue' while 'piety' is the grammatical subject, it cannot be the logical subject. 'Piety' is a universal introducing term and, purportedly, can only be a logical predicate. The logical subject must be a primary substance introducing term, a term which refers to an individual or a name. So, while the grammatical form of 'Piety is a virtue' is 'VP', the logical form is '$(\exists x)(Px \: . \: Vx)$'.

But how are we to read '$(\exists x)(Px \: . \: Vx)$'? Something is both pious and a virtue? Something is both piety and a virtue? The difference here matters. We can read 'V' in both 'VP' and '$(\exists x)(Px \: . \: Vx)$' as 'is a virtue'. But, how do we read 'P'? In 'VP' it clearly refers to the universal piety. It is like a name here. So in '$(\exists x)(Px \: . \: Vx)$' we should be inclined to read 'P' uniformly as a universal term introducing piety rather than as the predicate term

1. In I. Lakatos, ed. *Problems in the Philosophy of Mathematics* (Amsterdam, 1967).

2. See *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, ed. P. Geach and M. Black (Oxford, 1960), pp. 48-50.

3. "Aristotle and a modern notion of predication," *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, vol. XV (1974), pp. 615-618.