

# From *Ousia* to *Jittai*: A Problematic Translation<sup>1</sup>

NAKAHATA Masashi 中畑正志

Professor, Kyoto University

esse Graeci οὐσίαν vel ὑπόστασιν dicunt, nos uno nomine Latine substantiam dicimus, et οὐσίαν Graeci pauci et raro, ὑπόστασιν omnes. (Marius Victorinus, *Adversus Arium* PL VIII 1138C)

## I

### §1. Introduction

In the Meiji period, Nishi Amane (西周 1829–1897), a philosopher who was extremely influential in the introduction of Western philosophy into Japan, adopted *jittai* (実体) as a translation of the English word “substance”, and in doing so provided this long-established Japanese expression with a new philosophical meaning. Subsequently, Japanese scholars translated οὐσία, a fundamental concept of Aristotelian philosophy, as *jittai*, simply because this Greek word has traditionally been translated as “substance” or its equivalents (“Substanz”, “sostanza”, etc.) in the West. Thus, ordinary Japanese readers have always been compelled to understand Aristotle’s concept of οὐσία in indirect translation.

In 2013, the project of a new Japanese translation of the complete works of Aristotle (with Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店 as publisher) was launched. As one of the three editors, I proposed to put an end to the use of *jittai* in this project in the belief that Aristotelian scholars had long been aware of many problems created by

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<sup>1</sup> This article is the partial English translation of my article “Transplanting, Grafting, and Crossbreeding — a Journey into the Labyrinth of *Jittai*”, which is based on a presentation given at the International Research Center for Philosophy, at Toyo University 東洋大学国際哲学研究センター, held on 28 February 2015. A draft of this translation was prepared by Atsushi Hayase. I am grateful to him for his sensitive and meticulous work. I have written up the final version on my own, and so I am solely responsible for any errors contained.

translating οὐσία as “substance”. I thought that the commissioned translators would readily accept my proposal (though I was convinced that this would astonish many Japanese scholars specialising in modern or contemporary Western philosophy). However, my expectation was betrayed: some of the translators expressed strong disapproval at my proposal. When I exchanged opinions with them, I came to realise that what lay at the bottom of our disagreement was not just problems involved in the interpretation of Aristotle’s philosophy, but also those involved in the long history of the translation and interpretation of οὐσία via the Latin word *substantia*.

In this article I would like to analyse and clarify some conceptual complications that have caused the transformation of οὐσία into *jittai* in the history of philosophy.

## §2. The Japanese word *jittai* (実体)

Since I believe the Japanese word *jittai* is unfamiliar to most readers, I would like to start by clarifying our common understanding of the term. Many Japanese dictionaries I consulted list the following two basic meanings under the entry of *jittai*:

- (1) true form or character; content or essence (*jisshitsu* 実質), and
- (2) the self-identical entity that underlies a constantly changing thing; concrete particulars in Aristotle’s philosophy, etc.

The first is the original, time-honoured meaning of *jittai*, while the second is derived from Nishi’s translation of the English word “substance”.

Why did Nishi adopt *jittai* as the translation of substance? I suggest that he understood the English word “substance” to designate the body or a thing that has or contains other attributes, and he thought that *jittai* could refer to such a thing. On various occasions (e.g. Nishi 1870–1873) he paraphrased *jittai* as “true body” (*masashiki tai* 正シキ体), “true thing” (*masashiki mono* 正シキ物), or “the true thing that has a shape or form” (*masashiki nari aru mono* 正シキ形アル物), and distinguished it from “the things that are added or attributed to it” (*tsukitaru mono* 附キタルモノ) or “the things that are contained in it” (*sono uchi ni fukumitaru mono* ソノウチニフクミタルモノ).

This concept of *jittai* as body or thing is not Nishi's pure invention. Firstly, a certain usage from Chinese classical literature may collaborate with him. Just like numerous other Japanese expressions, *jittai* has its origin in Chinese classical literature. Some dictionaries of Chinese expressions provide "true concrete thing" as the first meaning for 実体, quoting an example from Lu Ji's (陸機 261–303) *Fuyun Fu* (『浮雲賦』):

有輕虛之艷象，無實體之真形

I find the beautiful shape of superficial and empty things, but not the real form of true concrete things. (*My translation*)

Second, *jittai* was connected with the Latin *substantia* via the Portuguese *substancia* long before Nishi proposed his translation. The Jesuit missionaries compiled a Japanese to Portuguese dictionary (*Nippo Jisho* 『日葡辞書』) and published it in 1603, which has the following entries:

Jittai: Macotono tai. Verdadera substancia

Tai: Substancia

Taiyô: Substancia & accidente

Set against these historical backgrounds (I am not certain if Nishi knew about them), it seems fairly natural for the Japanese scholar who understood "substance" as true body or thing to translate it as *jittai*. Moreover, there is one more merit of this translation that is worth mentioning: it has successfully transferred the non-technical meaning of the English "substance" into Japanese (see (1) above).

It was not the case, however, that scholars in the Meiji period accepted Nishi's translation without further ado. Inoue Tetsujirô 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944), another influential Japanese philosopher, for instance, translated several words including substance as *jittai* in his *Dictionary of Philosophy* (*Tetsugaku Jii* 『哲学字彙』).<sup>2</sup> It may be of particular interest to note the fact that he used *jittai* as a translation of "substratum", the word that has traditionally been used by Western scholars to translate another of Aristotle's philosophical jargon, ὑποκείμενον. In Japan, ὑποκείμενον is usually translated as *kitai* (基体).

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<sup>2</sup> According to Hida's general index for Inoue's *Dictionary of Philosophy* (Hida 2005), Inoue proposed *jittai* as translations for "thing in itself", "Ding an sich", "entity", "Noumenon", "reality", and "substratum" as well as "substance".

Thus, having clarified the concept of *jittai* sufficiently for my purpose, I would like to turn to the examination of its philosophical sense ((2) above). In spite of the fact that this sense was invented in order to translate a concept that originally came from Aristotle's philosophy, I shall point out that serious problems have been created by understanding and translating Aristotle's οὐσία as *jittai*. These are not the sort of problems, I submit, that are avoidable if we choose a different translation, for the concept of substance or *substantia* has been and still plays an important role in the history of thought. Indeed, it may not be an exaggeration to say that these problems will affect the currently accepted framework of philosophical thinking in general.

## II

### §3. Background to Aristotle's concept of οὐσία

The Greek οὐσία is a substantive that is formed on the feminine participle (οὔσα) of the verb εἶναι, which means "to be". Both in the early history of this term and in Aristotle's thoughts, οὐσία never lost its close connection with the original verbal form. Thus, for instance, Aristotle claims that the inquiry "which investigates being (τὸ ὄν) as being (ἣ ὄν)" comes down to the attempt to answer the question as to "What is οὐσία?", for the concept of οὐσία can be detected at the heart of "being", which has many meanings (see *Metaph.* Γ.2 1003a33–b19). It is then necessary to look at the basic meanings of the Greek verb "to be" (εἶναι) or its participle form "being" (ὄν) before working on Aristotle's concept of οὐσία.

A still prevalent way to analyse the meanings of "to be" or its equivalents in modern languages ("sein", "être", etc.) is to adopt the copula-existence dichotomy. J. S. Mill firmly stated that we should adopt this dichotomy, claiming that the failure to understand it was the main source of confusions about the equivalent Greek and Latin concepts (ὄν, οὐσία, ens, entias, essentia) (Mill 1843: bk. 1. ch. 4, sect. 1). Of course, the credit of the discovery of this dichotomy does not belong to him. Mill himself attributed it to his own father's, i.e. James Mill's, work (Mill 1829). Even though researchers in various branches of language sciences occasionally expressed their criticisms against this dichotomy or its variations, e.g. the existence-predication-identity trichotomy, this kind of analysis has been widely accepted as useful ways for understanding the concept of "to be".

It is Charles Kahn who levelled fierce and trenchant criticisms against reading this dichotomy into Greek literature. He has been working on this Greek verb for more than 40 years, and published several books and many articles on this issue (see especially Kahn 1973 and 2009). His contentions have changed in nuance and scope throughout his career, but I think I can summarise his main achievements in the following point. He has shown that, contrary to the common belief, the existential use was not fundamental to the verb εἶναι for both ordinary people and philosophers in Antiquity. By pointing out the significance of the veridical use, he has demonstrated that the copula-existence dichotomy does not constitute a suitable framework for understanding this verb. In my view, Kahn has provided ample textual evidence against the prevalent view that analyses the meanings of εἶναι in terms of the copula-existence dichotomy. It is true that Martin West had a different opinion. He examined the uses of the verb “to be”, reconstructed as *h<sub>1</sub>es-*, in the Indo-European language family, and claimed that it is not the veridical or predicative uses, but the adessive use (“be there, be available” or “vorhanden sein, sich befinden”) that is the primary sense of εἶναι<sup>3</sup>. However, it is sufficient for my purpose if it is admitted that the oldest or the most basic sense of εἶναι is not existence. I am not going to enter into the discussions held by these eminent scholars. At any rate, I am of the opinion that, when we discuss Greek philosophers’ ideas about the concept of εἶναι, we must always take into consideration its historical linguistic circumstances. And this is especially true in the case of Aristotle’s concept of οὐσία which can be detected at the heart of the common and ordinary use of εἶναι. And this brief review of the basic uses of εἶναι shows that we do not have to presuppose the copula-existence dichotomy when we attempt to specify the meaning of οὐσία.

What then was the linguistic environment of οὐσία, the substantive form of εἶναι, like? First, let us consider its ordinary usages. This term first made its appearance in the 5th century BCE; we cannot ascertain a single instance in Homer or Hesiod. According to Motte and Somville 2008, among the extant works written before Plato’s time, we find 201 instances provided by 12 different authors. Virtually all of these instances have an economic sense: this term means “property”, “wealth”, “heritage”, and the like. There are a couple of exceptions, but it is simply

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<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Francesco Ademollo for making me notice this article, and for giving me a warning that I am too much dependent on Kahn’s studies. In this connection I should also note that many Greeks preferred to use the verb ὑπάρχειν when they mean “to be there” or “exist”. Cf. Glucker 1994.

not easy to determine the meaning of οὐσία for these cases, and some scholars even suspect corruptions in the text (e.g. Diggle 1981 on Euripides *Ion* 1288). Second, if we look for technical usages in philosophy and medicine, we may obtain some interesting results. There is not a single instance of this term in the fragments, or extant direct quotations, of the so-called Pre-Socratic philosophers. (Note that what was once regarded as Philolaus' fragment (B11DK) is now generally agreed, mostly under the influence of Burkert 1962, to have been written much later than his time.) However, in medicine we find some noteworthy instances. The anonymous *De arte* (probably written from the late 5th to the early 4th century BCE) in the *Corpus Hippocraticum* contains four non-economic instances of οὐσία that show a fairly clear connection with the verb εἶναι (2.3; 5.8; 6.13, 15). This usage seems to be a device for turning the sentence “*x* is in reality *F*” into the noun form, and it is possible to translate these instances as “real nature” as opposed to mere “name”.

#### §4. Οὐσία in Plato

A crucial turning point for the usage of οὐσία came with Plato's works. It is not the case that Plato provided a new, special meaning with this term. On the contrary, he always used this term in a more or less natural sense in which its connection with the verb εἶναι was clearly observable. Here I shall concisely survey some important usages of this term found in Plato's works (for a comprehensive, though in my view not quite impeccable, survey, see Motte & Somville 2008).

[1] In the early dialogues there are two important meanings of οὐσία:

- (i) a specific nature or property (see *Chrm.*168d, where οὐσία means the nature of something as compared with the nature of another thing, e.g. the nature of “less” as opposed to that of “more”, and *Prt.*349b, where it means the nature that underlies the names of the five virtues, “wisdom”, “self-control”, “courage”, “justice”, and “piety”), and
- (ii) a thing about which Socrates asks his “What is *F*-ness?” question (see *Euthphr.*11a8<sup>4</sup> and *Men.*72b1<sup>5</sup>). (This second meaning is derived from what Kahn calls the predicative use of εἶναι.)

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<sup>4</sup> *Euthphr.* 11a6-b1: τὸ δ' ὅτι ἐστὶν οἷον φιλεῖσθαι, διὰ τοῦτο φιλεῖται. καὶ κινδυνεύεις, ὃ Εὐθύφρων, ἐρωτώμενος τὸ ὅσιον ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν, **τὴν μὲν οὐσίαν** μοι αὐτοῦ οὐ βούλεσθαι δηλῶσαι, πάθος δέ τι περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγειν, ὅτι πέπονθε τοῦτο τὸ ὅσιον, φιλεῖσθαι ὑπὸ πάντων θεῶν· ὅτι δὲ ὄν, οὔπω εἶπες.

[2] In the middle dialogues, Plato puts forward the fully fledged theory of Forms, and allocates an important role in this theory to the concept of οὐσία. Examining the *Phaedo* from this respect, we obtain the following three meanings:

(iv) the real or essential nature of *F*-ness (76d9, 77a2),

(v) the very thing that is *F* or what *F*-ness is (65d13,<sup>6</sup> 92d9), and

(vi) a thing about which Socrates and his interlocutors ask questions or give answers (78d1).

It may be possible to draw a single thread from (iv), (v), and (vi): when Socrates asks “What is *F*-ness?”, he wants to know the real or essential nature of *F*-ness or to find the very thing that is *F* or what *F*-ness is. These meanings of οὐσία are all consistent with the veridical use and the predicative use (which includes the identity use). However, it is (v) that makes up the hinge: (v) is expressed in the manner that clearly shows its correspondence to Socrates’ “What is *F*-ness?” question (see footnotes 4–6), and so it is reasonable to take this usage to provide clear direction for the correct understanding of Plato’s concept of οὐσία throughout his dialogues. Additionally, (vi) seems to endorse this interpretation; it shows that οὐσία can designate the objects of Socrates’ question even in the middle dialogues. Socrates’ “What is *F*-ness?” question is then a principal source for Plato’s concept of οὐσία, and we can find instances of this kind even in his latest works.<sup>7</sup>

[3] In the late dialogues we find instances of οὐσία that seem to designate *beings* more generally than the ones discussed above, and are not restricted to the objects of Socrates’ questions (see *Tht.* 179d, 185c, 186a–e; *Sph.* 246a–c, 251d–252b; *Phlb.* 26d, 27b et al.). I suggest that even these instances, which include οὐσία as contrasted with “becoming” (γένεσις), belong to the usage that is derived from the predicative use of εἶναι.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Men.* 72a8–b3: ἀτάρ, ὃ Μένων, κατὰ ταύτην τὴν εἰκόνα τὴν περὶ τὰ σμήνη, εἴ μου ἐρομένου μελίττης περὶ οὐσίας ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν, πολλὰς καὶ παντοδαπὰς ἔλεγεσ αὐτὰς εἶναι, τί ἂν ἀπεκρίνω μοι, εἴ σε ἠρόμη·

<sup>6</sup> *Phd.* 65d11–e1: Ἄλλ' ἄλλη τινὶ αἰσθήσει τῶν διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐφήσω αὐτῶν; λέγω δὲ περὶ πάντων, οἷον μεγέθους πέρι, ὑγείας, ἰσχύος, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐνὶ λόγῳ ἀπάντων τῆς οὐσίας ὃ τυγχάνει ἕκαστον ὄν·

<sup>7</sup> Among the middle and late dialogues the connection of the concept of οὐσία with the “What is *F*-ness?” question is fairly obvious in the following places: *Phd.* 78d1; *Phdr.* 237c3, 245e4, 270e3; *Rep.* VII 534b3–4; *Tht.* 202b6, 207c1, 3; *Lg.* II 668c6, X 891e9, 895d4. Cf. also *Epist.* VII 342b.

<sup>8</sup> It is likely that most of the Platonists might not express substantial disagreement over this issue. However, I think if we pay more attention to this point, new light will be shed on, for example, the reasons why Plato found our sensible world defective. At present, two opposing interpretations are particularly influential among scholars, i.e. the traditional

One might object here that the battle of gods and giants over οὐσία described in the *Sophist* (245a5sq.) is in fact the battle over *existence*, because the question addressed in this passage is the existential one: which of the two kinds of things, i.e. bodies or Forms, should we consider really to exist? The giants claim that bodies are οὐσία while gods claim that incorporeal Forms are.

However, I think that even in this passage the predicative use of εἶναι is recognised at the core of the οὐσία in question, though I do not mean to claim that we should rule out existence altogether as the meaning of this οὐσία. To see this, it is important to pay close attention to the Eleatic stranger’s proposal that identifies οὐσία with the “capacity” or “power” (δύναμις). Having made the giants admit that there are incorporeal οὐσία, he proposes the definition or mark (ὄρος) of οὐσία as the capacity of acting and being acted upon.

T1 Eleatic Visitor: I’m saying that a thing really is if it has any capacity at all, either by nature to do something to something else or to have even the smallest thing done to it by even the most trivial thing, even if it only happens once. I’ll take it as a definition that *those which are* amount to nothing other than *capacity*.

Theaetetus: They accept that, since they don’t have anything better to say right now (*Sophist* 247d–e, tr. N. White in Cooper and Hutchinson 1997).

As Cornford (1935: 234–236) noted, in Plato’s time a methodical procedure of examining the capacity of acting and being acted upon was regularly employed by medical practitioners. In the *Phaedrus* (270c–d), Socrates suggests that Hippocrates employed such a procedure in order to examine the nature of body and soul.<sup>9</sup> He is in my view alluding to the fact that Hippocrates and his followers administered drugs or applied other medical treatments to a patient and then checked his or her body’s reactions. Plato thought that the function or power of things can only be determined by such a procedure, since it does not have colour or shape or other perceptible properties (see *Rep.* V 477d). When the οὐσία of a certain thing is identified through such a procedure, it is impossible to distinguish the question as to

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“constant change” interpretation and the recently proposed “compresence of opposites” interpretation. I think I can say something about the process of becoming (γένησις, γίγνεσθαι) in the sensible world from a different point of view.

<sup>9</sup> For the usages of δύναμις in Hippocrates and Plato, see Souilhé 1919.



whether or not the thing in question *exists* from the question of *what it is like*.<sup>10</sup> This is true even for the other instances of οὐσία in Plato's dialogues that are customarily translated as existence (e.g. ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας used for the status of the Form of the Good in *Rep.* VII 509b8–9). I do not think it is right to understand these instances independently of the concept of “what *F*-ness is”.

### III

#### §5. The senses of οὐσία in Aristotle

With this historical background in mind, let us consider what Aristotle meant by the word οὐσία. Notice that I am *not* going to consider (1) what οὐσία is for Aristotle, *but* (2) in what sense he used the word οὐσία. The first question asks what he takes οὐσία to refer to. To answer this adequately, one must examine the whole works of Aristotle, with particular focus on the *Metaphysics*. It is this question that Aristotelian scholars have been trying to answer since Antiquity. The question I am going to address in this article is not so ambitious. That well-known distinction between *sense* and *reference* in the case of definite descriptions would help us see the difference between these two questions. For example, “the oldest person in this room” always has the same sense, but refers to a different person depending on the time and location in which it is used. Thus, this description will refer to one person if it is used in this symposium I am attending, and another if it is used in a different conference tomorrow in Kyoto. The referent of a definite description is determined only in relation to the world, whether real or merely assumed, in which it is used. In the case of philosophical concepts, we can also observe a corresponding distinction, though it will be merely relative and not as clear as we have observed in the case of definite descriptions. Still, when we reflect on the history of the understanding of the word οὐσία, this distinction is important. On the one hand, it is clear that Plato's and Aristotle's οὐσία *referred to* different things, for Plato made it refer to Forms while Aristotle denied the existence of such entities. On the other hand, it does not follow from this that these two philosophers endowed it with different *senses*. It is possible

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<sup>10</sup> Later on Stoics referred to and attached profound importance to this definition of οὐσία. However, Stoics understood this definition in their own ways: when they claim in reference to this definition that all beings are bodies, they have in mind their existence rather than “what they are”. Perhaps we should admit that such a view is implied in the claim of the materialistic giants in the *Sophist* (but not in the Eleatic visitor's proposal).

that they understood οὐσία in more or less the same way, but made it refer to different things on account of their different understandings of the external world or the cognitive abilities of human beings (just as the referent of “the oldest person in this room” varies depending on the occupants of the room in question). When we ask which aspect of οὐσία Aristotle inherited from Plato and what he added to it or what he changed, we have to take note of the difference between questions (1) and (2). Obviously it is question (2) that is relevant for our *translation* of the word οὐσία.

Now according to a predominant interpretation, Aristotle uses οὐσία in two different senses: (A) “particular thing” and (B) “essence”. In published translations, when understood in sense (A), οὐσία is usually translated as “substance” in English and *jittai* (実体) in Japanese, but when understood in sense (B), it is usually translated as “essence” in English and *honshitsu* (本質) in Japanese (though admittedly some translators choose to translate οὐσία in both these senses consistently as “substance” or its equivalents as long as it does not sound too unnatural). As a matter of fact, many scholars believe that this distinction is implied in Aristotle’s own words. In chapter 8 of Book Δ of the *Metaphysics* he first enumerates several examples of οὐσία and then summarises them in two senses. In W. D. Ross’ standard translation this summary runs as follows:

T2 It follows, then, that substance has two senses, (a) the ultimate substratum, which is no longer predicated of anything else, and (b) that which is a ‘this’ (τόδε τι) and separable — and of this nature is the shape or form of each thing. (*Metaph.* Δ.8. 1017b23–26. trans. by Ross in Barnes 1984)

Among the examples offered immediately before T2, the simple bodies and the bodies or animals that are made up of the simple bodies are examples of sense (a), while the internal causes of these bodies (e.g. soul), the immanent elements which limit and mark these bodies as “some this” (τόδε τι, for this expression see my argument below, pp.40–41), and “what it is by nature” or essence, are all examples of sense (b). When compared with that distinction between senses (A) and (B) above, it will obviously turn out that (a) and (b) respectively correspond to (A) and (B). Thus, Aristotle seems to endorse the translators’ distinction. In addition to this, scholars suggest that sense (B) or (b) comes from Plato’s concept of οὐσία, while sense (A) or (a) is Aristotle’s own, as it was probably developed from his criticisms

against Plato. According to these scholars, it is οὐσία in sense (A) or (a) that should be identified with the οὐσία as distinguished from quantity or quality in the Aristotelian categories.

However, I do not think this line of interpretation is correct. To begin with, this interpretation will make it difficult to see the unity of the concept of οὐσία. With those two distinct senses of οὐσία in mind, a famous Japanese scholar once asserted that “there are two kinds of οὐσία: one is the particular, existential οὐσία, and the other the universal, ideal οὐσία” (Imamichi 1980). Yet, such an assertion would imply that οὐσία is practically homonymous, comprising a deep conceptual chasm within it. Is it really true that the concept to which Aristotle attached special importance both in his use and in his analysis is just a hotchpotch of such heterogeneous elements? To say that Aristotle’s concept has (not ambiguous but) rich connotations seems to me merely a smoke screen for hiding real problems involved in this interpretation. Next and more importantly, I have several reasons for thinking that the basic sense of the οὐσία of the categories, which scholars have regularly translated as “substance” or *jittai*, is not “individual” or “thing”, and so it is not “substance” either. In the rest of this article I would like to explain some of these reasons, as long as space permits, by selectively discussing important points. For now I shall postpone a thorough and detailed examination of the relevant texts of Aristotle and many interpretations previously proposed by scholars.

First, it should be noted that the οὐσία of the categories is used interchangeably with “what *x* is” (τί ἐστὶ). Oehler’s exhaustive survey of the locations which enumerate one or more categories (Oehler 1984: 289–292) indicates that Aristotle mentions the first category as οὐσία in 28 places maximum, as “what *x* is” (τί ἐστὶ or τί) in 21 places (out of which three places might be better read as “something” (τι) instead), and as “some this” (τόδε τι or τόδε) in about 18 places. It is plausible, I think, to consider οὐσία and “what *x* is” to be almost synonymous; it is unlikely that they just happen to *refer to* the same thing. A comparison with other categories seems to confirm this. Throughout the locations enumerated by Oehler, the expressions for quantity and quality are almost invariant. Consistency, then, seems to require that the first category is invariant not just in *reference* but also in *sense*. If one objects that only when Aristotle focuses on the *formal* aspect of οὐσία does he use “what *x* is” instead of οὐσία (and so these two concepts are not synonymous), I shall answer that he uses these two concepts interchangeably even in the so-called *Organon* in which the notions of form and matter do not appear (in fact, he uses the expression “what *x* is” in four out of six places which enumerate several

categories: *APo.* 83a21, 85b20; *Top.*103b22; *SE* 178a7). This clearly shows that Aristotle's occasional use of "what  $x$  is" is not directly related to his distinction between the formal and material aspects of οὐσία.

Second, let us examine the meaning of τόδε τι which is regularly used by Aristotle interchangeably with the οὐσία of the categories, and which, as we have observed, is also used in T2 above. Greek grammar teaches us that τόδε is a demonstrative pronoun and τι is an indefinite pronoun, each being used both substantively and adjectively. Accordingly, setting aside the exceptional view that takes this phrase as the juxtaposition of two substantives, we have the following two options: either (1) that we take it as "a/some this" (where τόδε is substantive and τι is adjective), or (2) that we take it as "this something" (where τόδε is adjective and τι is substantive). Note, however, that our decision for the grammatical construction will not settle the issue, we still have to face the question of the sense of this expression.

Many scholars, including W. D. Ross who was very influential on Aristotelian studies in Japan, have understood that the sense of τόδε is "individuality" or "singularity" on the grounds that it is the demonstrative pronoun that points to a thing located in the close vicinity of the speaker. If this view was correct, then the sense of τόδε τι would be "any individual, singular entity that can be pointed to by 'this'", or to put it more concisely, "a specific individual or particular thing". Indeed, many Japanese scholars following this line of interpretation, *translated* the οὐσία of categories as "this individual" (*korenaru kobutsu* これなる個物) or "the individual referred to by 'this'" (*kore to shijisareru kobutsu* これと指示される個物) even when it is juxtaposed with the expression "what  $x$  is" (τί ἐστι or τί), as at for example, *Metaph.* Z.1. 1028a11–12.<sup>11</sup>

However, Aristotle's usages of τόδε τι seem to show, at least in the context in which οὐσία is at issue, that the sense of τόδε τι is not "individuality" or "singularity", but "a thing that is defined in a certain specific way". Aristotle's juxtaposition of τόδε τι with "what  $x$  is", as at for example, *Metaph.* Z.1. 1028a11–12, is the sign of a close conceptual connection between them. Also, Aristotle's argument in chapter three of Book Z of the *Metaphysics* offers further evidence. In this argument he rules out matter as οὐσία because he thinks that matter is not defined either as "something" (τι) or as "of certain quantity" (ποσόν) or in any other way, while οὐσία must be τόδε τι and separate (1029a20–30). The obvious

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<sup>11</sup> Ross's translation in Barnes (1984) has: "for in one sense it means what a thing is or a 'this'".

implication is that, in contrast to matter, οὐσία is defined in a specific way. This is in accordance with T2 (b), where τόδε τι is grouped together with shape or form. On the basis of these observations, I suggest that τόδε is not used as a demonstrative pronoun for individual things, but as *a variable substitute for any specific nominal expression that answers the question as to “What is x?”*.<sup>12</sup> The relation between “What?” (τί) and “this” (τόδε) in these cases is parallel with the one between “What ... like?” (ποῖον) and “such and such” (τοῖονδε) in the cases in which τοῖονδε is used as a variable substitute for any specific quality that answers the question as to “What is x like?” (see *Phy.* III.1. 200b27, III.2. 201b26; *Metaph.* K.9. 1066a16, N.2. 1089a14).

Third, it is wrong to suppose that the *referents* of οὐσία are just individuals or things. In the *Categories* (1b4–5), they are put forward (if literally translated) as “the some human” (ὁ τις ἄνθρωπος) or “the some horse” (ὁ τις ἵππος). It is true that they refer to what we think of individuals or things, but Aristotle does not say that they can be replaced with proper names, such as Socrates, or Plato, or with “individuals” (καθ’ ἕκαστα). The fact is that he purposefully and artificially created this kind of expression by combining a definite article, an adjectival indefinite pronoun, and a noun in order plainly to show how we should understand οὐσία. When logically analysed, it will turn out that this expression is created by individualising a certain species or sort. I think it is plausible that the article indicates that the thing under consideration is a specific single thing, and that the indefinite pronoun indicates that it can be any one of the members of the species mentioned. Thus, this expression refers to any specific single thing that belongs to a certain species. It is not the expression that simply refers to individuals or particulars.

Finally, the relation between οὐσία and ὑποκείμενον needs reconsideration. In spite of all the problems discussed above, scholars might nevertheless insist on translating οὐσία as substance or *jittai*, believing that one of the two senses of οὐσία is identical with ὑποκείμενον, the self-identical entity that underlies a constantly changing thing, the entity that can rightly be called “thing” or “individual”. However, I think they have jumped to the conclusion too hastily. Certainly, Aristotle uses the concept of ὑποκείμενον in order to distinguish οὐσία from the other categories in the *Categories*, and uses it as one of the criteria for settling the question as to what is qualified as οὐσία in the *Metaphysics* (e.g. at T2 above). However, this does not support their identification of the οὐσία of the categories with ὑποκείμενον, for

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<sup>12</sup> Here I agree with Preiswerk 1939, Ushida 1991, and Burnyeat 2001.

Aristotle uses the former to classify predicates and beings, but he does not use the latter for this purpose. I would like to elaborate on this a little more, starting again with a quick review of the linguistic environment of ὑποκείμενον.

[1] The Greek word ὑποκείμενον is a present participle form of the verb ὑποκεῖσθαι. This verb consists of the preposition ὑπό (“under”) and the verb κεῖσθαι, which is used as a passive form of τίθηναι (“to place, put”). Thus, the literal meaning of ὑποκεῖσθαι is “to be put under” or “to lie under”. It is a commonplace word, and used, for example, by Homer for the firewood under a kettle (*Il.* 21.364, used as separable verb) and by Thucydides for the foundation of a building (*Th.*1.93). In addition to these literal or physical senses of the verb, we can also ascertain various metaphorical senses in its earliest usages. For example, it means “to be appointed” in Pindar’s *Olympian Odes* (1.85) and “to be set as principles” in Herodotus’ *Histories* (2.123). These are just a few examples of the metaphorical use of the verb, in which both of the components, i.e. ὑπό and κεῖσθαι, have senses far wider than their literal or physical senses.

[2] Aristotle’s technical term ὑποκείμενον should be understood in close connection with these metaphorical senses of ὑποκεῖσθαι, for he derives this term from his own use of the verb in question. Consider, for example, his most basic analysis of change in chapter seven of Book 1 of the *Physics*. In this argument, Aristotle first mentions the verbal form ὑποκεῖσθαι at 190a15 and thereafter uses both the verbal form (at 190b3) and the participle form (at 190a35, b10). He says that there must be some single thing “that lies as a foundation” (ὃ ὑπόκειται 190b3) in the process of change. I suggest, then, that so long as this term is understood in close connection with the verbal form, as “lying as a foundation”, it has a meaning *only in relation to the context* in which it appears. Only when it appears in the context in which we speak or think of the process of change, does ὑποκείμενον refer to the thing that lies as a foundation for our locution and understanding of “x comes into being” or “x becomes y”. It is not the case, then, that the word ὑποκείμενον itself refers to some kind of *entity* that provides the foundation for the process of change, as many scholars usually suppose, nor should this word be translated as “substratum” or *kitai* (基体).

[3] We can find further evidence for this characteristic nature of ὑποκείμενον in the *Categories*. Aristotle employs the concept of ὑποκείμενον to set up the two criteria for his classification of beings in the following way (*Cat.* 2.1a20–1b9).

	things not inherent in a ὑποκείμενον	things inherent in a ὑποκείμενον
things that are not spoken of a ὑποκείμενον	(I) a particular human being	(III) a particular white
things that are spoken of a ὑποκείμενον	(II) human being, animal	(IV) white, colour

Here the word ὑποκείμενον — which has a special sense in this specific context — is correlated to “things that are spoken of it” and “things inherent in it”. Thus, for example, a particular human being, a primary οὐσία, is a ὑποκείμενον for the human being, a secondary οὐσία, and so the latter is spoken of the former (*Cat.* 5.2a21–22). The animal is related to the human being as a genus to its species, and so the former “lies as a foundation” for the latter (*Cat.* 5. 2b19–20). I therefore suggest that when Aristotle says “*x* is spoken of some underlying thing” or “*x* is inherent in some underlying thing”, he means that only in relation to *y*, something different from *x*, is it possible for *x* to exist or to be spoken of.

If I am right, then the ὑποκείμενον does not refer to a specific kind of entity, as the οὐσία or quality or quantity of the categories do. Indeed, we should regard the categories as *ontological* concepts, and the ὑποκείμενον as a *meta-ontological* concept for distinguishing and organizing the categories. One would, then, be making a disastrous “category mistake” if one were to identify the ὑποκείμενον with the οὐσία of the categories. It is wrong to translate this οὐσία as substance or *jittai* on the grounds that it is identical with the ὑποκείμενον understood as a thing or individual thing.

These are my reasons, admittedly presented far more concisely than the issue deserves, for thinking that the basic sense of the οὐσία of the categories is not “substance” or *jittai*. What is it then? I think my discussion points to an interpretation that is considerably different from the dominant one: the basic sense of the οὐσία of the categories is “what *x* is” as corresponding to the question “What is *x*?”, and Aristotle inherited this sense from Plato. His manner of introducing the οὐσία in the *Categories* supports this interpretation. When he introduces the οὐσία of the categories and explains it through examples, he does not mention “a particular human being” nor “the particular horse”, but “human being” and “horse” (ἄνθρωπος, ἵππος) (1b28). He mentions the former only later when he sets out to analyse it with the concept of ὑποκείμενον. The οὐσία of the categories is initially posited as something corresponding to the question “What?”, just as the other categories are

posited as things corresponding to the questions “How much?” or “What . . . like?” Being a particular thing is not a requirement for something to be a οὐσία at this stage. I therefore suggest that Plato and Aristotle made the word οὐσία refer to different things not because Aristotle changed the *sense* of this word, but because they had different understandings about the external world and the cognitive abilities of human beings.

Why then does Aristotle’s concept of οὐσία have the two usages (τρόποι 1017b23) observed in T2: (A) particular things or living beings and (B) their essence or form? I answer this question very briefly, first by saying that (A) comes into focus when the following two conditions are satisfied. First, an inquirer has in mind the question “What  $x$  is?” as contrasted with the other kinds of questions such as “What  $x$  is like?” (quality) and “How much  $x$  is there?” (quantity). The second condition is that he thinks of ὑποκείμενον, something that underlies the object of investigation, when he is trying to answer the question “What  $x$  is?”. Primary οὐσίαι, particular things or living beings, can be such ὑποκείμενα, and these things come under consideration in the investigation as to “What  $x$  is?” as contrasted with “What  $x$  is like?” or “How much  $x$  is there?” Next, I suggest that (B) comes into focus when this investigation has been completed. In answer to the question “What  $x$  is?” about particular things or living beings, the inquirer shows “what  $x$  is”, i.e. essence or form.

Aristotle’s discussion in chapter nine of Book 1 of the *Topica*, in which he minutely analyses the procedure or strategy for dialectical argumentation, clearly shows that the concept of οὐσία has its origin in the context of question and answer. There he puts forward “what  $x$  is” instead of the word οὐσία he used in the *Categories*, making use of the expression that manifestly corresponds to the question “What  $x$  is?”, just as the quantity corresponds to “How much  $x$  is there?” and the quality to “What  $x$  is like?” One can observe here that Aristotle also inherits the dialectical background of Plato’s concept of οὐσία.

Notice, however, that I am not saying that we should rule out “existence” as the meaning of οὐσία. So far, I have discussed that the sense of οὐσία should be understood in close connection with the verb εἶναι, and οὐσία basically means “what  $x$  is” even in the case of the οὐσία of the categories, and it does not mean their “existence” as separated from their “what  $x$  is”. I am not denying that οὐσία is a basic existent or that which exists as an underlying thing for other phenomena in this world (e.g. a particular colour or size or movement), because Aristotle clearly admits such a status to the *referents* of the word οὐσία.



Thus, I think translating οὐσία as “substance” or *jittai* is misleading. It conceals the close relation between οὐσία and εἶναι, or “what *x* is”, from readers who read Aristotle only in translations, and the Japanese word *jittai* will lead them to work out a meaning that Aristotle did not intend to convey, as we have seen in section one. This is not just a problem of translation, but actually a problem of our philosophical thinking. I am deeply concerned that the traditional translation has almost led us to forget about the history of thoughts over being, though of course I am here not talking about Heidegger’s *Seinsvergessenheit*!

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