Aristotle claims that when objects have an order of priority their common predicate or universal is not something apart from them. It will be convenient from time to time to refer to such objects as terms, for they are terms of an ordered series; and for a similar convenience the groups containing them will be called P-series. Aristotle’s claim is expressly used as the premiss of more than one argument in his works; and the Neoplatonists made very interesting comments on it. I wish to ask and to suggest an answer to the questions what Aristotle meant by it and why he made it. The matter was expounded some fifty years ago by Cook Wilson, not for the first time but in a way of his own which has been repeated (among others) by Sir David Ross. Their interpretation is, I feel sure, quite misleading and I believe it to be just wrong. Apart from that there are more questions to be asked about the Aristotelian passages than it was Cook Wilson’s purpose to ask and perhaps more than he recognised. Thirdly the ancient commentators’ arguments, which he ignored, are both to the point and worth considering for their own development of Aristotelianism. Some of them are echoed in the criticisms of modern idealists. These arguments are concerned with the logical relationship of species to genus. I shall try to shew that Aristotle’s thesis about P-series raises the crucial problem how an “appropriate differentia” is to be distinguished from any apparently defining characteristic; and to solve this is to discover how the relation of a species like man or dog to the genus animal differs from the relation of a quasi-species like male or female.

This last problem occupies the last part of this article, and one or two remarks about the method of dealing with it are best made before we come to it. I shall suggest that classification in genera and species (which I sometimes call division, without implying dichotomy) is primarily concerned with material substances, that for a certain differentia to be appropriate or not is for certain steps to belong or not to belong to a certain causal process, and that the type of cause which is relevant is the

material cause. This belongs to the logic of Aristotelian science, and it is open to the well known ambiguity that can be described as the ambiguity between methods of discovery and of proof. Our concern is with the latter. The account I give is therefore systematic and in one sense over-systematic or ideal; it represents, I believe, Aristotle's theory, but his practice does not always come up to it and indeed like all practice is inconsistent. But there is no contradiction here since we have a theory outlined in the first book De partibus animalium and one which entirely accords with the account given by the Metaphysics of genus and species in terms of matter and form. Certainly the Historia animalium refers to differences between animals in "modes of subsistence, in actions, in characters and in physical parts" (487a11-12): but is it recognised that this book represents the field work and that it draws on popular distinctions (such as 'tame' and 'wild'). The theory of De part an. is explicit; animals should be classified according to their material parts. (And those who find a different point of view in Historia animalium seem to overlook the force of 401a14-19.) Similarly De generatione animalium which is concerned with process in the animal kingdom emphasises that matter is necessary to the final cause as the vehicle of the efficient cause (742a32-35).

No doubt Aristotle's theories underwent change. But in the problems which concern us here such a coherent account seems to me to emerge that I do not think any other justification is needed for using passages from different parts of the Corpus. The division of animals into footed (or sometimes land animals) and then two-footed (or sometimes rational) is not meant to represent his zoology but to illustrate his logic.

The metaphysical thesis

What does Aristotle mean when he denies that the universal of a P-series is παρὰ τὰ εἴδη; there are two possibilities. He means to deny that it is separable from the specific terms, that is, to deny that it is one of the secondary substances of the Categories. Alternatively he means to deny that it is logically related to the series's terms as genus to species. The first interpretation would be a metaphysical one; the second would be a logical one, equivalent to denying that there the universal is predicated essentially and unequivocally of the terms. Cook Wilson opted for the


2 1 644b7-11; cf. 642b10-20, 643a35-61; Pol. IV 1290b21.