The aim of this paper is to argue for a twofold thesis: (a) for Aristotle the verb ‘katêgorein’ does not as such stand for statemental predication, let alone of the well-known ‘S is P’ type, and (b) ‘non-statemental predication’ or ‘categorization’ plays an important role in Ancient and Medieval philosophical procedure.

1 Katêgorein and katêgoria in Aristotle

Aristotle was the first to use the word ‘category’ (katêgoria) as a technical term in logic and philosophy. It is commonly taken to mean ‘highest predicate’ and explained in terms of statement-making. From the logical point of view categories are thus considered ‘potential predicates’.1 It may be useful to have a closer look at the claims involved in this widespread view.

1.1 Aristotle’s use of symplôkê

Immediately in the opening lines of his short treatise entitled Categories (2, 1a16-17) Aristotle says that he intends to deal with ‘things that are said without combination’. At first glance the term ‘combination’ (symplôkê literally means ‘inter-weaving’) seems to indicate the conjoining of an onoma and a rhema by means of the copula (esti, ‘is’) which thus acts as the very instrument of the symplôkê and also as the sign of its assertion by the speaker. This interpretation, however, calls for a critical examination.

Certainly, for there to be a statement (assertion) some kind of symplôkê (or synthesis) is required. Yet, in recognizing this condition two things should not be overlooked: (1) not every symplôkê makes up

a statement and (2) some serious doubts may be raised about the assumption that, for Aristotle, it is the copula that accomplishes the *symplókê* (*synthesis*) by means of which the statement comes into being.\(^2\)

Aristotle makes it perfectly clear that not every meaningful combination of words (in the general sense of English ‘phrase’) makes up an expression ‘involving combination’ (*kata* *symplókên*) in the technical sense as set out at *Categ.* 2,1a16ff. In point of fact, Aristotle treats (1,2a1) phrases such as ‘in the Lyceum’ and ‘in the marketplace’ as ‘lacking combination’ (*aneu* *symplókês*). What he really understands by ‘things said which involve combination’ may be gathered from Chapter 4 of the *Categories*. Here he clearly implies that every expression lacking combination signifies an item in some one category. In the same chapter Aristotle remarks (2a4ff.) that none of the ‘uncombined’ items can make up an affirmation (*kataphasis*) just by itself and that an affirmation is the result of a combination of items taken from different categories. However, the word ‘affirmation’ (*kataphasis*) should not lead us to believe that *symplókê* is concerned with statement-making as opposed to merely calling up things for discussion (that is, using single or complex expressions merely on the *onomazein* level). So Ackrill rightly argues (1963:73) that an expression such as ‘white man’ (*leukos* *anthrôpos*), which is the result of a combination of two items from two different categories, is an expression ‘involving combination’ (*kata* *symplókên*).

Of course, many commentators link up Aristotle’s use of *symplókê* as a technical term with Plato’s use of the same term in *Sophist* 262 A-B, where it obviously stands for the ‘inter-weaving’ of words (onomata and rhemata). As I have argued elsewhere,\(^3\) this inter-weaving is an indispensable requirement for statement-making. It is not, however, a sufficient condition for producing a statement-making expression. For there to be a statement the assertion of the ‘interwoven combination’ is required. In other words the *logos* has to become a *logos* *eîrêmenos*.

So far, this much can be said for sure:\(^4\) if there being a *symplókê* is


\(^3\) Plato’s *Sophist*, A Philosophical Commentary, Amsterdam etc. 1986, 282ff.; 313ff.

\(^4\) The rather complicated roles played by *symplókê* and *synthesis* in the domain of